

UNDERSTANDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS REGARDING THE GENDER PAY GAP IN NORWAY

**REPORT BY THE GENDER PAY GAP AND GENDER
CARE GAP PROJECT**

Julia Orupabo and Ragni Hege Kitterød

Institute for social research
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Preface

This report presents results from interviews with key people in businesses, at workplaces and in unions in Norway conducted as part of the *Gender Pay Gap and Gender Care Gap* project, which was funded by an EEA-grant and headed by Professor Carles X. Simó Noguera and Professor Capitolina Díaz at the University of Valencia. One main objective of the project was to analyse, both statistically and discursively, the gender wage gap and the relationship between the gender wage gap and the gender care gap in different types of welfare states, namely Spain, Norway and Iceland. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used. The quantitative analyses are based on various internationally harmonised surveys, while the qualitative analyses are based on focus group interviews carried out among parents in dual-earner families in the participating countries, and individual interviews carried out with key people in businesses, at workplaces and in unions. The Norwegian research team also received some funding from the Centre for Research on Gender Equality (CORE), which is located at the Institute for Social Research in Oslo. In addition to this report, the Norwegian team has also written a report based on the focus group interviews.

We are grateful for the constructive comments and advice from the project leaders, Professor Carles X. Simó Noguera and Professor Capitolina Díaz at the University of Valencia, as well as from our colleagues Mari Teigen and Sigtona Halrynjo at the Institute for Social Research.

1 Introduction

Norway is a welfare state with a large universal welfare system, a large public sector, generous work-family reconciliation policies, small wage differences and a large degree of social mobility (Esping-Andersen, 1999; Barth, Moene and Wallerstein, 2003; Løken, Stokke and Nergaard, 2013). The Norwegian educational system is characterised by a high degree of inclusiveness. At the elementary level, all children attend a school run by the municipality or a privately-run school subsidised by public funds. Secondary and tertiary education is free and centrally regulated (Arnesen and Lundahl, 2006; Reisel, 2011). Children start school at the age of 6. Ten years of schooling is mandatory, and all children/young people have the right to 13 years of schooling. Extensive work-family policy measures facilitate the combination of employment and unpaid family work for both mothers and fathers. A symmetrical family model where women and men share paid and unpaid work equally between them is a political objective. Gender equality in labour market participation and wages is also an important ambition. Employment rates in Norway are generally high. Women's employment has risen sharply in the past decades, and is now nearly as high as men's. For instance, in 2014, 81 percent of women and 86 percent of men in the age group 25-54 were gainfully employed (see figure 1). Unemployment rates are low for both women and men, which is illustrated by the small difference between the employment rate and labour force participation rate in figure 1.

In spite of high gender equality ambitions, Norway, like the other Scandinavian countries, has a strongly gender-segregated labour market, with high percentages of women in the public sector and in education, health and social work, and the concentration of men in the private sector and in manufacturing and finance (Bettio and Verashchagina, 2009; Reisel and Teigen, 2014). Female-dominated occupations are generally less well paid than male-dominated occupations. Women are also severely under-represented in top management positions (Reisel and Teigen, 2014). In spite of some convergence occurring in recent years, there is still a significant gender gap in wages in Norway (Barth et al., 2013). Since the control of

resources and monetary rewards are not evenly distributed across labour market positions and sectors, a segregated labour market is a cause for concern. Women may be excluded from access to certain goods, and the concentration of men and women in different types of jobs with different wages, responsibilities and career ladders may promote and reinforce a traditional division of housework and childcare in families. Peoples’ conceptions of certain types of work as typical female or male tasks may also become cemented.

In this report, we explore how the social partners in the labour market – e.g. unions and employers, understand and explain the gender pay gap in Norway. This knowledge might provide insights into the dominant conceptions and explanations regarding a gender-based pay gap in the labour market in Norway and into possible remedies to reduce it. The data comes from in-depth interviews with key persons in businesses and unions in Norway conducted as part of an international project called Gender Pay Gap and Gender Care Gap, which was funded by an EEA-grant and headed by the University of Valencia. Before presenting the study, we provide some more information about the work-family policies and practices in Norway as well as about labour relations and the gender gap in wages and income.

Figure 1: Labour force participation and employment among women and men, 25-54 years. Percent



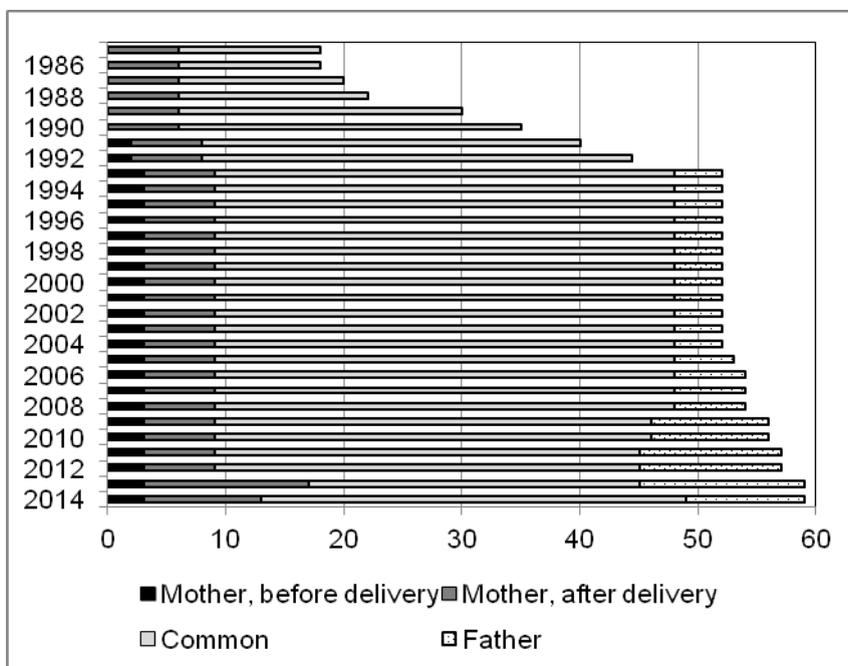
Source: The Norwegian Labour Force Survey, Statistics Norway.

2 Work-family policies and practices

A dual-earner/equal-sharing family model has been an ambition in Norwegian work-family policies for decades, although there has also been a strong focus on parental choice and flexibility in parents' employment and childcare arrangements. Policy measures that promote a more traditional division of labour between the parents, such as a cash-for-childcare benefit for children who do not attend kindergarten, and tax deductions for couples where one or both partners has a very low income, are now gradually being scaled back, while the parental leave scheme and kindergarten coverage has been greatly improved.

The parental leave period is now 49 weeks with full pay or 59 weeks with 80 percent wage compensation. Ten weeks are reserved for each of the parents, and, in addition, the mother has the right to three weeks of leave prior to delivery. The remaining weeks (26 or 36 weeks depending on the compensation rate) can be shared according to the parents' wishes. In 1993, Norway was the first country in the world to introduce a fathers' quota in the parental leave scheme. The total leave was extended by seven weeks, of which four weeks were reserved for the father and could not be transferred to the mother. This quota has subsequently been gradually extended. In 2013 it was up to 14 weeks, but in 2014 it was reduced to ten weeks by a new right-wing government (see figure 2). Most eligible fathers make use of all or part of the quota, but few take more than the quota (Grambo and Myklebø, 2009). Studies suggest that fathers acquire improved parenting skills during their parental leave, particularly if they have leave without the mother's presence (Brandth and Kvande, 2003; Bungum, 2013). In 2007, the father's quota was made more flexible and may now be taken on a part-time basis and/or split into separate blocks until the child is three years old. This may enable more fathers to make use of the quota, but may also make it more difficult for fathers to draw a clear boundary between childcare and work demands, so the mother may have to step in and assist when the father needs to work (Brandth and Kvande, 2015).

Figure 2: Parental leave, maximum number of weeks (80% wage compensation). 1985-2014



Both trade unions and employers' organisations emphasise the close linkage between work-family policies and gender-equality policies. They regard the fathers' quota as being very important, since it may facilitate employment among mothers and make it clear for employers that the birth of a child implies that fathers as well as mothers need to have spells away from work. In particular, the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO), which is the largest employers' organisation in Norway, stresses the importance of having a large fathers' quota in the parental leave scheme, since it promotes gender equality in working life and ensures the best possible use of both women's and men's skills (Kristin Skogen Lund,¹ Aftenposten 21. September 2014). The confederation would also like to extend the quota so that one third of the parental leave is reserved for each parent

¹ Kristin Skogen Lund is Director General of the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise.

and one third can be shared according to the parents' wishes. In line with this, an Equal Pay Commission that was appointed in 2006 in order to discuss the persistent gender pay gap in Norway recommended the reserving of a larger part of the parental leave for fathers (NOU 2008:6).

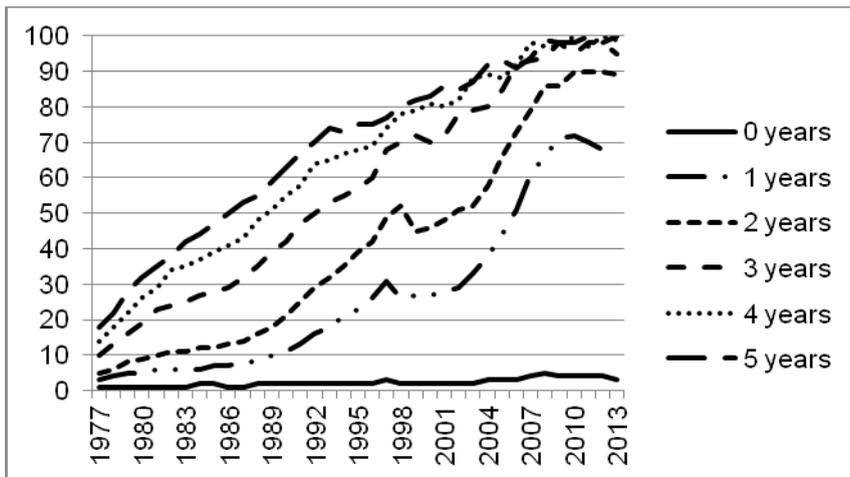
The majority of young children in Norway are enrolled in day-care; 80 percent of children aged 1-2 and 97 percent of children aged 3-5. Historically, there has been a large unmet demand for day-care in Norway, particularly for the youngest children, but following a political agreement in 2003 on the expansion of the day-care sector, the percentage of children in publicly subsidised day-care grew quickly. The change in coverage for children at different ages is demonstrated in Figure 3. Places are now heavily subsidised and the quality is generally good (Ellingsæter, 2014). All children who reach the age of one by the end of August in the year of application are guaranteed a place. Opening hours are usually from seven or eight o'clock in the morning until five o'clock in the afternoon. Few kindergartens are open during evenings or nights. Kindergartens are now regarded as a good care arrangement for children by most parents (Kitterød, Lyngstad and Nymoen, 2012) and are also seen as important arenas for learning social and cognitive skills, and for securing equal opportunities and reducing inequalities between children from various social backgrounds (NOU, 2012:1).

Although the employment rate among women is high in Norway, women still often work part-time and rarely have very long hours, while men rarely work part-time, but often work more than the standard work hours, which are 37.3 hours per week in Norway. The difference between women's and men's working hours is partly related to the fact that women and men are concentrated in different sectors and occupations. Part-time work is widespread and accepted in many female-dominated occupations (Kjeldstad, 2006),² while some male-dominated workplaces are characterised by a culture of long-hours (Abrahamsen, 2002). According to the Norwegian Work Environment

² Most part-time work in Norway is carried out because the employee wishes to work part-time, but in certain occupations there are also many part-time workers who would prefer to work longer hours but are not given this opportunity.

Act, parents with children below the age of ten have the right to work reduced hours, unless this is of significant inconvenience to the employer.

Figure 3: The percentage of children in different age-groups in kindergarten in Norway. 1977-2013.



Source: Children in kindergarten, Statistics Norway

It is now quite common in Norway that in couples, both partners work approximately the same number of hours in the labour market, but the female partner still works least in a significant number of couples (Kitterød and Rønsen, 2012). Women rarely work more than their partners and this is the case even though women now outnumber men in higher education in Norway. Men who put in long hours in the labour market usually have a partner who works less and takes the main responsibility for housework and childcare. Women who work long hours tend to have a partner who works long hours himself. This is also the case for top managers. Whereas the partners of female top managers work full time or long hours, the partners of male top managers often work part-time or not at all (Teigen, 2012). A recent study of men and women in top management positions in Norway revealed that while male top managers usually can count upon a partner to take care of the family logistics, this is not the case for female top managers, who have more responsibility for childcare and domestic chores themselves and typically juggle career and family together with

a hardworking spouse, and who often have a private cleaner and help from relatives (Halrynjo, 2015). Moreover, in a study of women and men in high-commitment career occupations, Halrynjo and Lyng (2009, 2010) found that even though women and men initially have equally strong preferences regarding a career, women tend to change to a more family-friendly job when children arrive, while this is rarely the case for men. However, women seldom “opt out” of employment in order to become full-time housewives in Norway (Kitterød and Rønsen, 2013), which is said to be the case in the USA (Belkin, 2003).

Men have become far more involved in domestic work in recent decades, but on average, women still spend more time on housework and childcare than men (Kitterød, 2013). In particular, women seem to have the main responsibility for organising and managing the family’s everyday life (Smeby and Brandth, 2013). Even though most children are now enrolled in kindergarten or in an after school programme, parents are expected to spend a lot of time with their children and be actively involved in their homework and leisure activities. Most parents derive a lot of pleasure and reward in being with their children (ibid).

Although the generous work-family policies in Norway do ease the combination of employment and work for both parents, some researchers maintain that they have some unintended consequences for the position of women in the labour market, such as the concentration of women in public sector jobs, high part-time rates among women, relatively few women in top positions in the private sector and a persistent gender gap in wages (Mandel and Semyonov, 2006; Datta Gupta, Smith and Werner, 2008). The compressed wage structure in the Norwegian labour market also makes it expensive to outsource housework, which could otherwise facilitate the working of long hours by both partners in a couple.

One important feature of the Norwegian labour market is the dominance of women in public-sector jobs and the concentration of men in private-sector jobs. Public-sector jobs are usually regarded as more family friendly than private-sector jobs, and according to Schøne (2015) the public sector still seems to be more attractive for women with young children. Women with children are more likely to work in the public sector than women without children, and the difference increases with the number of children. However, a similar pattern is not found for men. Women’s increased likelihood for having public sector employment compared with women without children increases over

time and is higher six years after the birth of a child than one year after the birth. It has also been shown that the “wage punishment” of having children is lower in the public sector than in the private sector in Norway, although the wage punishment has been somewhat reduced in the private sector in recent years (Barth et al., 2013).

3 Wage and income differences between women and men

In spite of a small reduction in recent decades, there are still significant wage differences between women and men in Norway. According to Statistics Norway, women's wages now on average constitute 86.4 percent of men's wages (see table 1).³ This may seem strange since younger generations of women have more education than younger generations of men. However, the gendered wage gap is partly related to the above-mentioned gender segregated labour market in Norway, with women and men in different sectors, industries and occupations.

The difference between women and men's wages is greater in the private than in the public sector, but there are also differences within the public sector. While there is a significant wage gap in health enterprises, the wage gap is more modest in municipalities and county municipalities, where women's wage on average constitutes 92.4 percent of men's wage. However, both women and men have lower wages in the municipal administration sector than in health enterprises. The difference is particularly large for men, which partly reflects the fact that men in health enterprises are often medical doctors. In central government (public administration), women on average earn 90.9 percent of men's wages. Both women and men have significantly higher wages in central government than in the municipalities. While

³ To compare the earnings of full-time and part-time employees, the earnings of part-time employees are recalculated as if they were working full-time. This is called full-time equivalents. The statistics on gender wage differences are based on monthly earnings, which include basic salaries, variable additional allowances and bonuses, but not payment for overtime. <https://www.ssb.no/en/arbeid-og-lonn/statistikker/lonnansatt/aar>. Since part-time work is more common among women than men, these statistics do not reflect the actual income differences between women and men in Norway, but the differences in wages if the people were working full-time.

for men the wages are highest in the health enterprises (49,900 NOK), for women the highest wages are in central government (42,200 NOK per month). This may reflect the fact that there are many highly

Table 1. Women and men's monthly wages, women's wage in percent of men's wage, and women as a percentage of all employees, by sector, level of education, industry and occupation. Full-time equivalents. 2014.

	Women's monthly wage, NOK	Men's monthly wage, NOK	Women's wage in percent of men's wage	Women in percent of all employees
All	38,800	44,900	86.4	52.1
Public/private sector				
Private	37,900	44,900	84.4	38.8
Public, all	40,000	45,000	88.9	70.1
Public sector, health enterprise	41,700	49,900	83.6	75.1
Public sector, municipality and county municipalities	38,900	42,100	92.4	76.8
Public sector, central government	42,200	46,400	90.9	48.2
Level of education				
Primary and lower secondary	30,800	34,200	90.1	49.2
Upper secondary	35,400	43,000	82.3	47.7
University, undergraduate (4 years or less)	42,100	52,500	80.1	63.4
University, graduate (5 years or more)	51,300	63,400	80.9	47.5
No or unknown education	31,400	35,300	89.0	35.8
Activity sector (industry SIC2007)				
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	40,200	41,900	95.9	15.7
Mining and quarrying	60,800	66,300	91.7	20.2
Manufacturing	38,800	43,100	90.0	23.8
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	48,400	51,900	93.3	23.2
Water supply, sewerage, waste	40,800	38,500	106.0	18.7
Construction	39,700	39,400	100.8	9.1
Wholesale and retail trade: repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	33,000	39,900	82.7	52.1

Transportation and storage	38,200	42,100	90.7	24.2
Accommodation and food service activities	28,100	30,600	91.8	57.5
Information and communication	48,000	56,200	85.4	32.1
Financial and insurance activities	47,800	67,900	70.4	49.8
Real estate activities	44,700	54,100	82.6	39.4
Professional, scientific and technical activities	45,900	58,100	79.0	42.1
Administrative and support service activities	33,600	36,700	91.6	43.9
Public administration and defence	42,200	46,700	90.4	49.3
Education	41,200	44,000	93.6	65.8
Human health and social work activities	38,100	43,500	87.6	82.2
Arts, entertainment and recreation	36,200	40,300	89.8	58.1
Other service activities	34,000	44,600	76.2	59.4
Occupation				
Senior officials and managers	54,300	68,100	79.6	39.4
- Directors and chief executives	60,100	78,500	76.6	30.4
- General managers of small enterprises	39,900	53,000	75.3	48.7
Professionals	47,400	56,400	84.0	52.0
Technicians and associate professionals	40,500	49,900	81.2	59.9
Clerks	34,600	35,700	96.9	54.6
Service workers and shop and market sales workers	31,200	33,100	94.3	69.8
Craft and related trade workers	33,800	36,300	93.1	6.0
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	32,300	37,000	87.3	14.6
Elementary occupations	29,000	30,900	93.9	60.8

Source: Wage statistics, Statbank, Statistics Norway

educated women working in central government and also many female high-ranking managers, although most of the top managers are men. Moreover, the public administration is probably less characterised by a long working-hours culture, or by wage definition and wage negotiation procedures that promote gender differences in wages, than is the case in some private-sector companies. It is worth noting that women constitute less than 50 percent of the employees in central government positions, which is clearly a lower percentage than elsewhere in the public sector (see table 1).

The significant gender wage difference in the private sector is very much related to the fact that women and men work in different occupations. Using data on white collar workers in the private sector for the period 1980-1997, Nielsen, Høgsnes and Petersen (2004) showed that the wage gap within occupations was modest, even without controlling for individual factors in the analysis. When comparing women and men who worked in the same occupation and for the same employer, they found only a very small wage inequality. Hence, when asked about a possible gender pay gap in Norway, people may say that there is a significant gender wage gap in society at large, although they do not see a clear wage gap between men and women at their own workplace.

The gender wage gap is larger among the highly educated than the lesser educated (see table 1). This is partly explained by the fact that highly educated women tend to work in the public sector, where wages are usually lower than in the private sector, with many highly educated men working in the latter sector. For instance, women with an undergraduate degree are typically nurses or teachers, which are usually public sector professions in Norway and require three or four years of professional training. Men with an undergraduate degree may become, for instance, computer or construction engineers after finishing an undergraduate engineering school, or work in commerce and finance, which are typical private sector jobs. Women with education at the graduate level also work in the public sector more often than men, for instance as high school teachers or civil servants. Looking at women's and men's monthly wages (table 1), we see that there is less difference between the wages of highly and lesser educated women than between the wages of highly and lesser educated men.

The gender wage gap also varies significantly across activity sectors (industries) in Norway, with the largest gap being in financial

and insurance activities, where women's wages on average constitute only 70.4 percent of men's wages. In the construction sector, there is almost no pay gap at all, but this industry is very male dominated. Only 9 percent of the workforce in this sector are women (see table 1), and these women probably represent a very select group of women. In human health and social work activities, with is a very female-dominated industry, women's wages constitute on average 87.6 percent of men's wages, which is partly due to the fact that men are typically medical doctors, while women are typically nurses or nursing assistants. Although women now tend to outnumber men in the younger generations of medical doctors in Norway, they still constitute the large majority of the nurses and nursing assistants.

As can be seen in table 1, the gender wage gap also varies across occupational groups, with the largest gap being among senior officials and managers. Although there are now many female leaders in Norway, women are underrepresented in the highest ranks and particularly in top management positions (Halrynjo, Teigen and Nadim, 2015). Female managers are more concentrated in the public sector than is the case with male managers, with wages in this sector usually being lower than in the private sector.

Moreover, having children also impacts men's and women's wages differently in Norway. Østbakken (2014) shows that women with children on average have lower wages than women without children, while the opposite pattern applies to men. The wage difference between women with and without children was somewhat reduced in the 2000s, while the wage difference between men with and without children increased. However, the difference between mothers' and fathers' wages did not fall in the period. Having children increases the wage difference between women and men, and the impact of children strengthened in the period. Although there has been a significant increase in fathers' time spent on housework and childcare in Norway, mothers still, on average, spend more time on domestic duties than men (Kitterød, 2013). Based on the Norwegian time use surveys conducted in 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010, Kitterød and Rønsen (2014) found that fathers with young children (0-2 years of age) now spend less time on paid work and more time on family work than fathers with teenagers, while this was not the case in 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010. However, the impact of having young children is still larger for mothers than for fathers, at least when the children are very young.

The gender difference in income is usually more pronounced than the gender difference in wages. While gender difference in wages are important in order to analyse, for instance, gender discrimination, gender differences in productivity or depletion of human capital due to child care duties, gender differences in income give a better understanding of women's and men's access to and control over resources. In order to give an idea of the gender difference in income in Norway, we present some figures for women and men's gross income (table 2) and working income (table 3).

Table 2: Gross income among women and men aged 17 +, NOK. 2014

	Women	Men
Percent		
Less than 100,000	13	11
100,000-299,999	35	20
300,000-499,999	34	30
500,000-999,999	17	31
1,000,000 +	2	8
Total	100	100
Average	338,900	503,600
Number of observations	2,049,896	2,055,843

Source: Tax statistics (Table 06655), Statbank, Statistics Norway.

Table 3: Working income among women and men aged 17 +, 2014. Number of basic amounts(Gs).

	Women	Men
Percent		
0 G	27	21
1-0,99 G	11	10
1-2,99 G	16	11
3-4,99 G	23	17
5-6,99 G	16	20
7-8,99 G	4	10
9 G +	3	11
Total	100	100
Number of observations	2,049,896	2,055,843

Source: Tax statistics (Table 06248), Statbank, Statistics Norway.

¹ In 2014, the basic amount in the National Insurance Scheme was 88,380 NOK.

Gross income is the sum of total wages and salaries, pensions, entrepreneurial income and property income. In 2014, women's average gross income amounted to 338,999 NOK, which constitutes about 67 percent of men's gross income (table 2). Almost half of all women have less than 300, 000 NOK in gross income, while this is the case for about three out of ten men. The gender difference in gross income reflects, among others things, that women often work shorter hours than men, have less well paid jobs, and also have less property income.

Working income (income that gives the right to national insurance benefits) includes earned income (wages, salaries and entrepreneurial income), and benefits that substitute earned income (for instance sickness and rehabilitation benefits). Table 3, which presents women and men's working income, measured in the number of basic amounts in the National Insurance Scheme ("G"), demonstrates that women's working income is clearly lower than men's. For instance, only 23 percent of all adult women have a working income that amounts to at least 5 "Gs", while this is the case for 42 percent of all men. Moreover, more women than men, 54 vs 42 percent, have a working income lower than 3 "Gs".

4 Labour market relations

The Norwegian model of labour market relations has developed over more than a century of collective bargaining and organised interest representation in political arenas (Løken, Stokke and Nergaard, 2013). The authors highlight six important characteristics of the model:

- 1) Universal welfare arrangements and a large public sector
- 2) High employment among both men and women
- 3) Small wage differences and a large degree of social mobility
- 4) Strong collective stakeholders
- 5) Centrally co-ordinated wage formation and local bargaining at the company level
- 6) Close co-operation between the government, employers' association and trade unions as well as strong co-determination and participation at the company level

Trade union membership is above 50 percent and affiliation to employer's associations in the private sector is 60-65 percent in Norway. As explained by Løken, Stokke and Nergaard (2013), co-operation between employers and employees is based on four pillars that work in combination:

- 1) Close co-operation at the national level between a strong trade union movement, centralised employers' associations and the state.
- 2) Co-operation between employers and employees at the company level, which provides legitimacy and contributes to productivity and a low level of conflict.
- 3) Co-determination and representation on the board of directors.
- 4) Individual labour law that protects workers' rights and at the same time emphasises workers' obligations to participate in creating a sound working environment.

These pillars represent fundamental shared values and ideas based on the belief that co-operation leads to productivity and permits restructuring at the company level. According to this view, co-operation leads to a sound economy at the national level and to further increases in real wages and sound working environments for workers. Therefore, co-operation is valued by both the trade unions and the employers. This model is anchored in the protection of workers' rights on the one hand and in the maintenance of stable and predictable environments for companies on the other (ibid).

Laws and collective agreements are both used as tools to implement and maintain the model. The power of these tools resides in the recognition by the parties of both rights and obligations, the acknowledgement of a common goal that is beneficial for the community and the companies, and the recognition that the parties have both common and conflicting interests. The result is a relatively stable balance of power between labour and capital in Norway that is anchored in a so-called "class compromise" connected to historical and political developments (ibid).

5 Data and methods

The analysis in this report draws on in-depth interviews with six key people in businesses and unions in Norway. The interviews were conducted as a part of the *Gender Pay Gap and Gender Care Gap* project, which was funded by an EEA-grant and headed by Professor Carles X. Simó Noguera and Professor Capitolina Díaz at the University of Valencia. One main objective of the project was to analyse, both statistically and discursively, the gender wage gap and the relationship between the gender wage gap and the gender care gap in different types of welfare states, namely Spain, Norway and Iceland. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used. The quantitative analyses are based on harmonised surveys such as the Wage Structure Survey, the European Survey on Income and Living Conditions and the Harmonised European Time Use Survey, while the qualitative analyses are based on individual and focus group interviews carried out among dual-earner couples and key people in businesses, at workplaces and in unions in Spain, Norway and Iceland.

In this report, the qualitative individual interviews are analysed. The people that were interviewed are responsible for collective bargaining negotiations and/or participate in the management of human resources. The sample consisted of three women and three men. Details of the interviewees' backgrounds are provided in Table 4. The interviews were conducted and tape recorded by Opinion AS in January 2015, pursuant to the guidelines issued by Kuo Experience, which is the market research company in Spain that was responsible for collecting a large part of the qualitative data in the project. The interviews were analysed by the Norwegian research team. They lasted about one hour and were conducted at the interviewees' offices. The questions focused on the interviewees' own workplace as well as on the labour market more generally. The interviewees were asked about their viewpoints and thoughts about the situation of women and men in the labour market today, differences between Norway and other countries, possible gender differences in present day Norway in terms of

employees' competence, productivity, career ambitions and wages, the availability of work-family-reconciliation measures at their workplace and the use of these measures by different groups of employees, and also whether they could think of any remedies in order to reduce the gender-related wage and care gaps in Norway.

Table 4. Interviewee profiles

Gender	Age	Occupation	Segment
Female	55	Partner and CEO	Employment Office
Male	54	CEO	Trade Union/Labour union
Male	49	CEO/entrepreneur	Manager/entrepreneur
Female	51	Department Director	Public Administration
Female	58	CEO	Business Association
Male	37	Senior Advisor	Trade Union/Union of merchant

6 Results: Equal opportunities – but different values?

The interviews with the social partners in the labour market reveal two different understandings or descriptions of reality when it comes to a possible gender pay-gap in Norway. In the following section, we outline the main features of these two understandings; one that we call *gender equality* and one that we call *gender differences*. The main argument in the *gender equality* understanding is that there are no differences between men and women in the labour market. Norwegian men and women have equal opportunities and in fact, there is not really a wage-gap in Norway. Here we can differentiate between three explanations or interpretations of gender equality: (1) ‘Gender-blindness’, (2) Flexibility, and (3) The Nordic welfare state model. The two first interpretations relate to the conditions in the interviewees’ work contexts, whilst the latter relates to their general perspectives on the Norwegian case. The main argument in the *gender difference* understanding is that there is a pay gap and that this reflects men’s and women’s different choices and opportunities. Here we can distinguish between two explanations or interpretations that legitimise the gender difference: (1) Gendered choices and identities in work life, and (2) Gendered structures in achieving a family-work balance. We will start by introducing the understanding called *gender equality*.

Gender equality

Several of the interviewees in our study argued that there were no differences between female and male employees in their work organisation. Some of them even felt uncomfortable answering questions about gender differences. Rather than seeing gender as relevant, they emphasised the role of competence:

I do not think about men or women. We focus on competence, the skills that are necessary in our organisation. So, I really don’t see

such differences. The differences are bigger within one gender-group than between men and women (male interviewee, trade union).

We are objective. It is not the employee's gender that defines the results, but her or his competence (female interviewee, public administration).

By neglecting the role of gender differences, the interviewees activate an interpretation that can be conceptualised as '*gender blindness*'. In this view, men and women have equal opportunities in the Norwegian labour market. It is individuals' objective competence that defines their career chances and outcomes. This interpretation can be seen in relation to the characteristics of the interviewees' working environments:

Women are as confident and competent as men. To succeed in this job you do not need to have macho skills or attitudes. Being a good advisor is about being clear and strong in challenging situations. Frankly, it's more women than men that manage this role (male interviewee, manager/entrepreneur).

To be a negotiator in collective bargaining used to be typical men's work. Today, more and more women are becoming involved. This has changed the character of the work. It's more structured. We do not sit up all night negotiating any more. We do things more systematically because women have so many different tasks. So today you are not seen as a woman, but as a professional. I have been in this business for a long time. When I first started, I remember a meeting in which the other party, a male negotiator, became so angry with me that he threw all his papers at me, cursed and said: 'I will not sit here listening to a young blond hag'. You do not hear such things anymore (female interviewee, business association).

It is not 'macho skills' that are valued, but skills that are more gender-neutral that are defined as the ideal competence in these work organisations. In the first quote these are seen as being skills that more women possess than men. In the second quote, the skills and competence that are valued are seen as a result of a historical change – when women became involved, this changed the requirements and

definitions of competence. The interviewees' conceptions and descriptions of the labour market as 'gender-blind' can partly be explained by the notions of competence and skills requirements in their own working environment. In their everyday working life, they experience that both female and male employers and employees have equal opportunities to be recognised as competent professionals. In this context, some of them also point to the fact that several of their company's leaders or partners are women.

The impact of the work environment when it comes to 'gender blindness' is also related to working conditions. Five of the six interviewees work in organisations with family-oriented arrangements, such as flexible working hours.

Flexibility makes it easier to combine work with family. You can go home early, and then work after the kids have gone to bed (male interviewee, trade union/Union of merchants).

We get a lot of possibilities regarding being 100 percent at work even when you have a family. We have a lot of flexibility because you can work at home (female interviewee, business association).

The gender-equality understanding is also supported by an emphasis on *flexibility*. Flexible working hours enable a work-family balance. The arrangement is considered to be directly targeted at families. Picking up and dropping off children from/at day-care is easier to arrange in flexible work environments. If you go home early, you have the possibility to work again after the children are asleep, or when you have spare time. As the interviewee states above, you can work 100 percent even when you have a family.

Still, even though the interviewees work in environments where there is room for flexibility, they also describe an environment that demands full-time workers:

We have a few historic instances where some employees worked part time. But is it really possible? You cannot share this kind of work. (...). You don't enter this profession if you do not have professional pride. (...) Everyone that works here knows that they have to work overtime. Women do not work less than men, or leave

early to pick up children at school or kindergarten. No one works part-time here (male interviewee, manager/entrepreneur).

If you work part-time in this organization, you will end up being somewhat outside the mainstream. You will miss important meetings and be excluded from the arenas where essential decisions are made (female interviewee, public administration).

The social partners in the labour market work in organisations where full-time employment is the norm and expectation. They have few or no employees that work part time. In this way, the flexible worker is closely linked to continuous availability. As one of the interviewee puts it “in my organisation you have to be available twenty-four-seven. This goes for both men and women”. Because the work provides such flexibility, it is expected of you to work the days you are not visibly at the workplace, and still provide those tasks given to you regardless of the work environment. The interviewees in our study work in organisations in which full-time employment is expected. Flexibility is viewed as the key policy to keep women and men with family responsibilities in full-time positions. This shapes the interviewees’ views on men’s and women’s possibilities and career-outcomes in the labour market.

The third factor that legitimises the social partners’ understandings and descriptions of gender equality in wages is their interpretation of the impact of the *Norwegian welfare model*. The interviewees emphasise different welfare state arrangements when they argue that men and women have equal opportunities in the labour market. Here the interviewees highlight historic changes in Norway:

The situation for women today is so much better than it was a few decades ago. The welfare state provides us with the possibility to combine family and work. We have kindergarten and after school arrangements, which make it possible for women to work full-time. Women are the winners and men are the losers in the education system. This will lead to major changes in the future. We have equal pay and non-discrimination legacies. Only in some industries, the male-dominated industries, do we still have more work to do when it comes to gender equality (male interviewee, trade union/Union of merchants).

Men previously took on leading positions, responsibilities, and were the family's breadwinner. But these things have changed. Women and men now meet the same expectations in working life. (...) There is also a priority to get women into top positions. And we are now seeing the results (female interviewee, business association).

The social partners also compare Norway to other European countries in order to emphasise the impact of the Nordic welfare model when it comes to gender equality:

The part-time share among women is lower today. Women work more and more. (...) the kindergarten coverage is 90 percent. These things matter. We have a different culture in the Nordic countries. Other countries remain where we were in the thirties. You know, women stopped working after they were married and had children (male interviewee, trade union/Union of merchants).

There are only minor consequences of taking maternity leave. Your career chances don't disappear. Women aren't constrained anymore because we have statutory rights. It is also viewed as something positive. I think there is more gender equality in Norway than other countries. The Nordic countries are quite special (female interviewee, business association).

The social partners in the Norwegian labour market highlight the high rates of social mobility and generous universal social policies, especially education and measures for women and families, as important factors for fostering equal opportunities and promoting the position of women in the Norwegian labour market.

Gender differences

Even though several interviewees highlighted that the Norwegian labour market is characterised by equal opportunities for men and women, there are also examples of what we have conceptualised as a description or understanding of *gender difference* in the interview material. The main argument here is that the pay gap reflects men's and women's different choices and opportunities.

We have equal pay for equal work. Men and women earn the same when they are doing the same job. The pay gap between men and women can be explained by differences between industries. (...) As long as we have equal opportunities and equal treatment – is there a problem that men and women have different interests and choose different careers? (male interviewee, trade union/Labour union).

We have gender equality in Norway. Men and women have the same opportunities, but they have different needs and preferences (female interviewee, Employment Office).

The social partners in the labour market explain the gender pay gap as being based on the conditions of different industries. Control of resources and economic rewards are not evenly distributed across sectors and industries in the labour market. This is also a dominant explanation in the research on the pay gap in the Norwegian labour market. Around a quarter of the wage difference between men and women who have equally long educations and are the same age can be explained by the pay gap between industries (Schøne, Barth and Østbakken, 2014).

The interviewees also highlight that men and women have different skills and choose different social roles in the workplace. The social partners tend to associate women with identities and characteristics such as passive, being driven by feelings or care-orientated, while male workers are seen as active, competition-driven and goal-orientated.

Men are more driven by competition. Women take a passive role when it comes to salary negotiations. Men demand more. Women do not know their value, and this creates differences (female interviewee, Employment Office).

Men are more into competition and goals. Women are more focused on their own role and what they have contributed. They are more concerned with the social game. Men, on the other hand, focus on achieving a goal, building a nation, or making a difference (female interviewee, Public Administration).

Men are better at highlighting their skills. They are astute and use tricks to gain a position. This is my theory. When it comes to salary negotiations, men are better than women. This is about value differences between men and women (male interviewee, trade union/Labour union).

One of the interviewees also highlighted different institutional arrangements in salary negotiations as an important dimension when explaining the gender pay gap. When salaries are negotiated locally and not centrally, women tend to lose out. As she puts it; “it’s tough to negotiate your own salary. Women are more careful when it comes to negotiating, but that doesn’t mean they aren’t competent or shouldn’t be paid more”.

The interviewees explain some of the gender pay gap by highlighting men and women’s individual choices, skills and identities in the labour market. In this way they use a supply-side approach - the processes by which different groups move into different career tracks, to explain the gender differences. The gender pay gap is seen as a result of employees’ choices and preferences. Supply-side perspectives have in particular been criticized for ignoring the fact that gender is not something to be seen as an addition to ongoing processes of selection and differentiation, but is instead an integral part of those processes (Acker, 1990). As Donald Tomaskovic-Deveys (1993:7) argues “their emphasis on voluntaristic behaviour obscures the reality that gender and race are not only individual attributes but also social processes that influence the struggle for social closure and job evaluation in workplaces”. The social partners’ gender labelling of skills and career profiles such as ‘passive’ or ‘goal-orientated’ certainly demonstrates the impact of culture and symbolic representations of gender in the labour market. Scholars have focused on the way the ideals of the good worker are made dependent on gender or race (Reskin and Roos, 1990; Carter, 2003; Dyer, McDowell and Batnitzky, 2010). Jobs carry race-related and gender-related labels that identify them as ‘appropriate’ or ‘inappropriate’ for different categories of people (Kaufman, 2010). Symbolic representations of gender can serve as resources in the workplace and different groups may have different opportunities when it comes to converting such resources into power (Adkins, 2001).

The interviewees also highlighted the relation between the care gap and the pay gap, in order to explain the gender differences. Here they mention structural differences between the sexes:

The more children a woman has, the less she works. But the more children a man gets, the more he works. This can be explained by the pay gap between different industries. Men earn more than women. So when it comes to family priorities, the financial consequences are smaller if the women work part-time (male interviewee, Trade Union/Labour union).

Rather than focusing on individual choices and identities in working life, the informants emphasise structural differences when it comes to explaining the care gap. Hence, they argue that the fact that women more often than men work part-time and prioritise family life is related to the fact that women more often than men work in the public sector and in occupations where part-time employment is widespread and accepted, and is not therefore a result of the women's values or gendered identities.

7 Conclusion

This chapter has identified two different descriptions or understandings of reality among the social partners in Norway when it comes to the existence of a gender-related pay gap in the Norwegian labour market. Here we distinguished between a description of ‘gender equality’ on the one hand, and ‘gender difference’ on the other hand. With the first understanding, there is no gender pay gap in the Norwegian labour market, at least not at the individual company level. The interviewees state that men and women have equal opportunities and justify this using both general and specific descriptions of women’s positions in the labour market. Firstly, equal opportunities occur in welfare states where the dual-earner family model is the norm. Secondly, equal opportunities occur in specific work environments where the ideal competence is not gender labelled (gender blindness) and where flexible work arrangements exist. Such working environments reflect the interviewees’ positions in the labour market and are associated with professions that demand higher education. The understanding of gender difference is used when the social partners explain the pay gap between women and men at the societal level. The main argument is that the pay gap reflects men’s and women’s different choices and identities. Here the interviewees emphasise gender-based choices and identities in working life. When it comes to achieving a family-work balance, the social partners highlight structural differences between men and women. In this context, the care gap is seen in relation to the pay gap between men and women.

The social partners’ interpretations of Norway as a gender-equal society highlight the importance of recognising major historical changes. Over the past decades, women have entered the labour market and higher education. Due to an extensive system of work-family policies, both men and women have the possibility to combine family and work. Thus, the social partners’ interpretations of Norway as a highly gender-equal society reflect universal welfare state arrangements.

At the same time, the social partners' interpretations of gender equality reflect their position in the labour market. They work in organisations in which it is possible to work flexible hours, in which a low proportion of employees work part-time, and in which competence is defined as gender neutral. In other words, they have highly-skilled professions. However, this constitutes only one minor part of the labour market. The specific conditions of these middle class positions become evident when the interviewees explain the general gender pay gap in Norway. In contrast to the gender blindness that characterises their views on their own working environment, gendered identities and choices are seen as important explanations for gender differences in other industries and sectors. Women's gendered (bad) choices and (constrained) identities are seen as important explanations for gender segregation and the gender pay gap. Gender differences at the macro level of the society are thus explained by and reduced to individual choices and preferences. Structural differences between women and men are only considered relevant when the interviewees explain why so many women work part-time. This is problematic. Attempts that have been made to explain the persistence of gender segregation in the labour market illustrate the importance of demand-side processes, such as, for instance, statistical discrimination. This theory posits that when an employer is uncertain about the skills of an individual worker, he or she may base the employment decision on group averages. In line with this, research has shown how stereotypes about gender affect the hiring and promotion of women and minority groups negatively (Reskin, 2000, 2002). Existing evidence also illustrates how gender stereotypes constrain women's aspirations and career choices (Correll, 2001, 2004; Ridgeway, 2011).

The social partners in our study work in organisations in which full-time employment is the norm and flexibility is seen as the key policy for keeping women and men with family responsibilities in full-time positions. Although flexible working arrangements are important measures for achieving a family-work balance, flexibility is closely linked to availability requirements. Several of the interviewees in this study work in organisations that provide the opportunity to work from home, but expect that their employees work more than full-time. Previous research documents how women are constrained by such availability requirements (Skjeie and Teigen, 2003). In contrast to men, women with long working hours are often in a relationship where both

partners have careers. The ideal of continuous availability and work devotion presupposes that you have few family responsibilities that would interfere with your job demands, and may therefore be said to be a typical masculine requirement.

Furthermore, scholars have argued that flexible work policies that seek to encourage women's career advancement may have little bearing on the working hours dilemmas faced by low-wage female workers. For instance, telecommuting and working from home are not possible for front-line service jobs that require face-to-face contact. This implies that social change efforts also need to encompass work policies geared to low-wage workers (McCall, 2012; Jacobsen and Padavic, 2015). Jacobsen and Padavic (2015:82) argue that while inflexible schedules tend to be a problem for all working women, employers' tendencies to provide some women with far more work hours than they desire and others with far fewer than they can afford generates inequality between women of different classes.

The descriptions, understandings and explanations regarding the gender pay gap in Norway highlight the impact of welfare state arrangements when it comes to gender equality. Certain institutional conditions make gender less significant when it comes to achieving a work-life balance. At the same time, the social partners' emphasis on individual choices and gendered identities as explanations for the difference, as well as their belief in flexible arrangements as a key measure in achieving equality, might underestimate the structural inequalities between men and women in the labour market. The different conditions for high-wage and low-wage women workers may also be underestimated, and may contribute to the continuation of class differences among Norwegian women.

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Authors	Julia Orupabo and Ragni Hege Kitterød
Title	Understandings and discussions regarding the gender pay gap in Norway – Report by the Gender Pay Gap and Gender Care Gap Project
Summary (in Norwegian)	<p>En familiepraksis der foreldrene deltar like mye i yrkeslivet og i hus- og omsorgsarbeidet har vært en målsetting i norsk familiepolitikk i flere tiår, og Norge har nå flere ordninger som gjør det mulig for foreldre å kombinere jobb og hjem. Kvinner har nesten like høy yrkesdeltakelse som menn, men jobber oftere deltid og har sjeldnere lang arbeidstid. Arbeidsmarkedet er sterkt kjønnsdelt, både horisontalt og vertikalt. Det er fremdeles en klar kjønnsforskjell i lønn i Norge. Målt i heltids-ekvivalenter utgjør kvinners lønn 86,4 prosent av menns lønn. Lønnsforskjellen er større i privat enn i offentlig sektor, og det å ha barn har fremdeles større betydning for kvinners enn menns lønn.</p> <p>I denne rapporten presenteres resultater fra seks intervjuer med informanter som er ansvarlige for eller deltar i kollektive forhandlinger eller har personalansvar. Spørsmålene gjaldt dels for informantenes egen arbeidsplass og dels for arbeidsmarkedet generelt og dreide seg om informantenes oppfatning av kvinners og menns situasjon på arbeidsmarkedet i Norge, mulige kjønnsforskjeller i ansattes kompetanse, produktivitet, karriereambisjoner og lønn, samt tilgjengelighet og bruk av ulike ordninger på arbeidsplassen for å kombinere jobb og hjem. Intervjuene avdekket to ulike virkelighetsforståelser når det gjelder kjønnsforskjeller i lønn.</p> <p>Ifølge den første virkelighetsbeskrivelsen, er det ikke noen klar forskjell mellom kvinner og menn på arbeidsmarkedet i Norge, og det er ingen kjønnsforskjell i lønn, i det minste ikke innenfor den</p>

samme bedriften. Informantene legger vekt på at menn og kvinner har samme muligheter på arbeidsmarkedet og underbygger dette med både generelle og mer spesifikke beskrivelser av kvinners situasjon. For det første fremhever de at to-inntektsfamilien er normen i dag, at kvinners yrkesdeltakelse har økt betraktelig, og at en generøs familiepolitikk gjør det mulig for foreldre og kombinere jobb og familie. For det andre fremhever de at den kompetansen som etterspørres på arbeidsplassen er kjønnsnøytral og ikke forbindes med mannlige eller kvinnelige egenskaper. For det tredje peker de på at tilbud om fleksibel arbeidstid og hjemmekontor gjør det mulig å kombinere jobb og barn og samtidig oppfylle forventninger om å yte maksimalt og være kontinuerlig tilgjengelige for arbeidsgiver.

Ifølge den andre virkelighetsbeskrivelsen eksisterer det en kjønnsforskjell i lønn i Norge, noe som har sammenheng med menns og kvinners ulike muligheter og valg. Dette underbygges med to forklaringer. For det første mener informantene at kvinner og menn velger forskjellig. De jobbene som kvinner velger, gir ofte dårligere utbytte i form av lønn og arbeidsbetingelser. Kvinner og menn har dessuten ulike ferdigheter og velger ulike roller på arbeidsplassen. For det andre peker informantene på at kvinner oftere enn menn reduserer arbeidstiden sin når de får barn. Dette henger sammen med at kvinner oftere jobber i offentlig sektor hvor deltidsarbeid er vanlig og lønnsnivået er lavere enn i privat sektor.

Informantenes beskrivelser av kjønnslikestilling i arbeidslivet reflekterer at de selv jobber i middelklasseposisjoner og på arbeidsplasser som tilbyr fleksibel arbeidstid og hjemmekontor, hvor deltidsarbeid er lite utbredt, hvor de fleste har høye karriereambisjoner og stort jobbegasjement og hvor kompetansen som etterspørres er kjønnsnøytral. I andre deler av arbeidsmarkedet kan det derimot, ifølge informantene, være klare kjønnsforskjeller i lønn og arbeidsvilkår, noe som er knyttet til kjønnete valg og identiteter.

Disse forståelsene av kjønnsforskjeller i lønn viser betydningen av velferdsstatlige ordninger for at kvinner og menn skal ha samme mulighet for å kombinere jobb og hjem. Samtidig kan oppfatningen om at kjønnsforskjeller i lønn bunner i kjønnete valg

	<p>og identiteter, og troen på at fleksible ordninger på arbeidsplassen kan redusere kjønnsforskjellene, bidra til å underkommunisere strukturelle kjønns- og klasseforskjeller på arbeidsmarkedet.</p>
<p>Index terms (in Norwegian)</p>	<p>Arbeid-familie-balanse, kjønnsdelt arbeidsmarked, kjønnsforskjeller i lønn, kjønnslikestilling</p>
<p>Summary</p>	<p>A dual-earner/equal-sharing family model has been an ambition in Norwegian work-family policies for decades and several policy measures facilitate the combination of work and family for parents. Women's employment rate is now almost as high as men's, but women are more likely than men to work part-time and less likely to have long working hours. The Norwegian labour market is strongly gender segregated, both horizontally and vertically. There is still a significant gender wage gap in Norway. Measured in full-time equivalents, women's wages on average constitute 86.4 percent of men's wages. The wage gap is larger in the private than in the public sector, and having children still impacts women's wages more than men's.</p> <p>This report presents results from six interviews with people that are responsible for/or negotiate in collective bargaining, and/or participate in the managing of human resources in their company. The questions applied to the interviewees' own workplace as well as to the Norwegian labour market more generally and captured the interviewees' viewpoints about women and men's situation on the labour market, possible gender differences in employees' competence, productivity, career ambitions and wages, and the availability and use of work-family-reconciliation measures on the workplace. The interviews revealed two different understandings of reality when it comes to a possible gender pay gap in Norway, namely one of gender equality and one of gender difference.</p> <p>According to the first understanding, gender equality, there are no differences between men and women on the labour market in Norway, and there is not really a gendered wage gap, at least not at the company level. The interviewees emphasize that men and women have equal opportunities on the labour market and justify this by general and more specific descriptions of women's labour</p>

market position. First, equal opportunities occur in a society where the dual-earner-family model is the norm. Women have entered the labour market and higher education in large numbers, and generous work-family policies enable parents to combine family and employment. Second, equal opportunities occur in a work environment where the ideal competence is not gender labelled. This reflects that the informants' work in an environment where gender-neutral skills are valued. Third, equal opportunities occur in an environment where flexible work arrangements are offered, where full-time work is the norm and high work commitment is expected. Flexible working hour opportunities facilitate the combination of work and family life, but still, work devotion and continuous availability is expected.

The main argument in the second understanding, called gender difference, is that there is, in fact, a gender-related pay gap in Norway, and that this is related to women and men's different opportunities and choices. This is supported by two explanations. First, the interviewees emphasize the gendered choices in working life. The gender pay gap is explained by the fact that economic rewards and working conditions vary across sectors and industries, and also that women and men have different skills and chose different social roles at the workplace. Second, the interviewees' maintain that when children arrive, women are more likely than men to reduce their working hours. This is related to structural differences in women and men's position on the labour market in that women more often than men work in the public sector where part time is common and wages are typically somewhat lower than in the private sector.

The interviewees' descriptions of gender-equality reflect that they themselves work in high-skilled middle class professions and at workplaces where flexible work hours and home-office are offered, where part-time work is rare, where most employees have high work commitments and career ambitions, and where competence is seen as gender neutral. In contrast to the gender blindness that characterizes their views on their own work environment, the informants believe that gender differences in wages and positions in other industries and sectors are linked to gendered identities and choices.

	<p>The understandings and explanations of the gender pay gap in Norway highlight the impact of welfare state arrangement when it comes to gender equality. Certain institutional conditions make gender less significant for achieving a work-life balance. At the same time, the emphasise on individual choices and gendered identities as explanations of difference, as well as the belief in flexible arrangements as a key measure in order to obtain equality, might underestimate the structural inequalities between men and women in the labour market as well as between high- and low-wage women workers.</p>
Index terms	<p>Work-family balance, gender segregated labour market, gender wage gap, gender equality</p>

UNDERSTANDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS REGARDING THE GENDER PAY GAP IN NORWAY

REPORT BY THE GENDER PAY GAP AND GENDER CARE GAP PROJECT

This report presents results from six interviews with people that are responsible for/or negotiate in collective bargaining, and/or participate in the managing of human resources in their company. The questions applied to the interviewees' own workplace as well as to the Norwegian labour market more generally and captured the interviewees' viewpoints about women and men's situation on the labour market, possible gender differences in employees' competence, productivity, career ambitions and wages, and the availability and use of work-family-reconciliation measures on the workplace. The interviews revealed two different understandings of reality when it comes to a possible gender pay gap in Norway, namely one of gender equality and one of gender difference.

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