

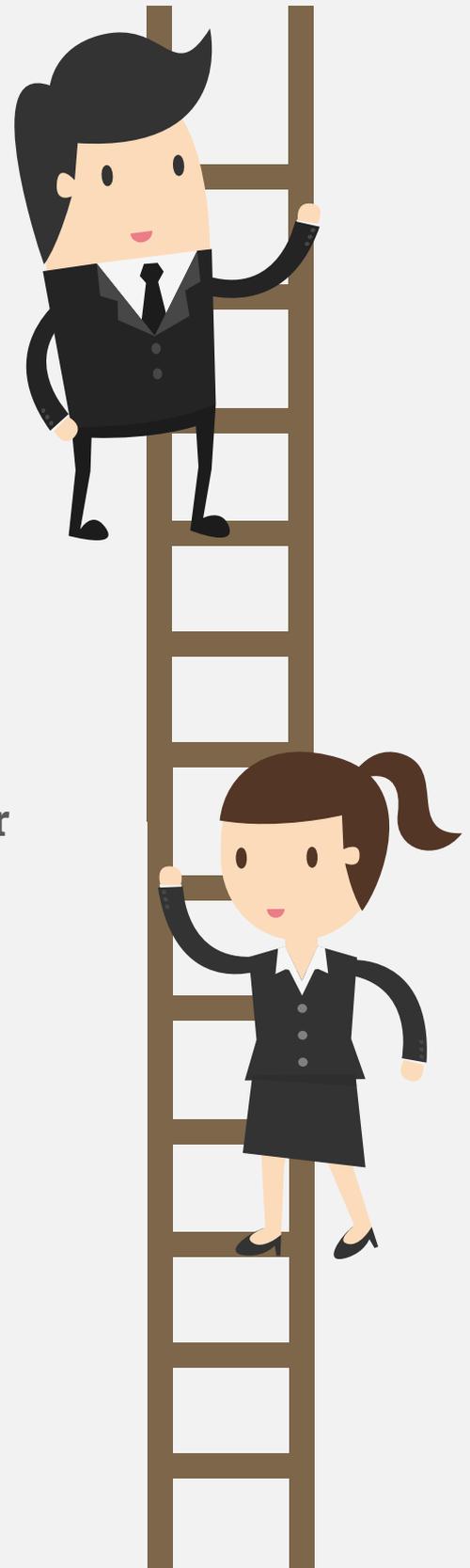
CORE
CENTRE FOR
RESEARCH ON
GENDER EQUALITY

**INSTITUTE
FOR SOCIAL
RESEARCH**

CORE **Corporate Study**

**Barriers and opportunities for gender
equality in the business sector**

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About the CORE Corporate Study

The CORE Corporate Study examines attitudes, ambitions and conditions for careers among employees of ten large and mid-sized companies in various industries (e.g. construction, technology, media and finance).

It is a mixed-method study combining survey data, including a bias experiment (2,830 executives) and in-depth interviews (nine experts and 30 executives) as well as the companies' data on their gender balance and equality measures. The companies in the study have been working systematically with equality targets for several years and thus represent "best case" companies.

The study has been financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Equality and the Norwegian Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries. The research has been carried out in collaboration with [Equality Check](#).



Nine main findings highlight a paradox

Equal attitudes and commitment, but gender differences in careers remain

Where do we find gender differences?

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| <p>1 Clear gender differences in income and careers</p> | <p>2 No lack of targets and measures in the companies</p> |
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Level 1 – Challenges in the process of being addressed

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|---|-------------------------------------|
| <p>3 No differences in preferences and ambitions</p> | <p>4 No unconscious bias</p> |
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| <p>5 Non-exclusive environment. Equal perceived opportunities</p> | <p>6 Women more often experience sexual harassment</p> |
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Level 2 – Addressing more complex challenges

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| <p>7 Infrastructure of working life</p> | <p>8 Infrastructure of family life</p> |
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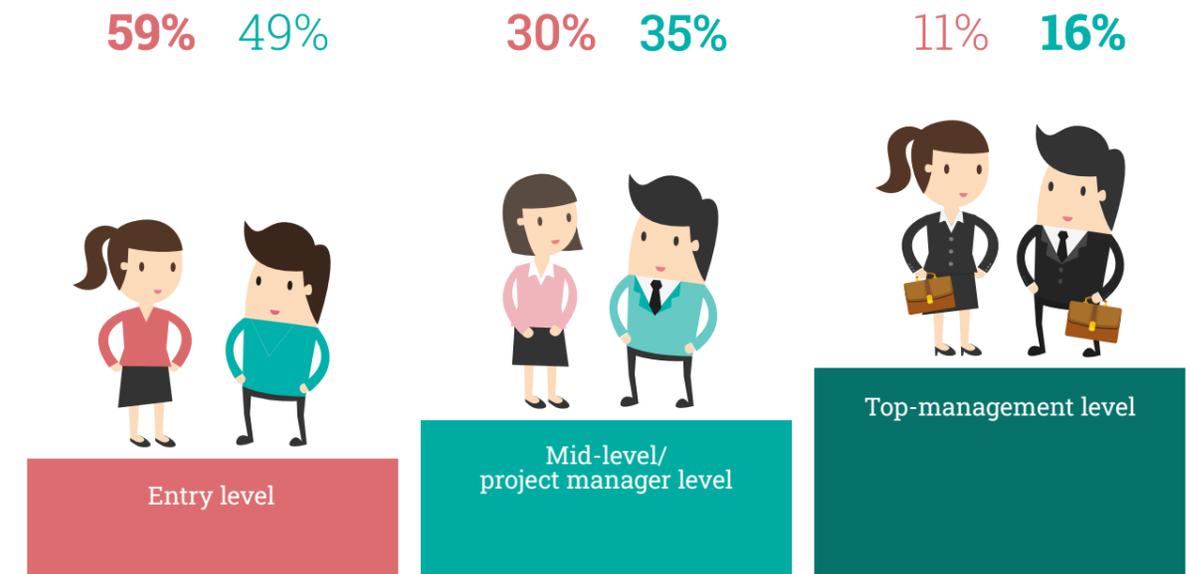
- 9** Gender differences in care responsibilities

1. Clear gender differences in income and careers



The study shows **clear gender differences in income and career patterns** within the companies. **Men are overrepresented** in the highest positions, in positions with profit and loss responsibility and in highly paid positions.

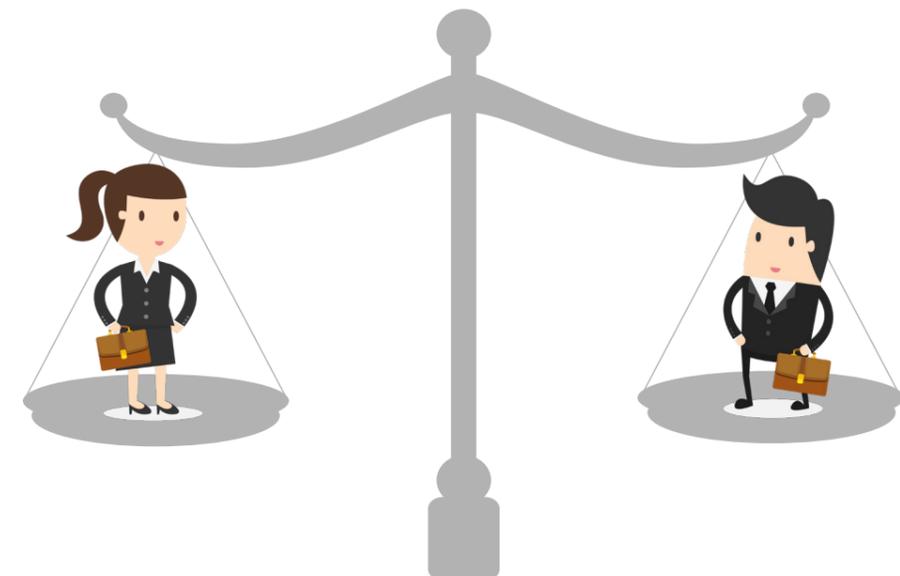
Percentage of women and men at different levels



- Women are in the majority at entry level and in positions without profit and loss responsibility; men are in the majority at top-management level and in positions with profit and loss responsibility.
- This pattern, however, only holds for women and men with children.
- The differences cannot be explained by age or education.

2. High awareness, clear targets and measures taken in the companies

The companies have had **gender balance and diversity on their agenda** for several years. The executive top management has supported the initiatives and included them in the companies' strategies.



Level 1: Challenges in the process of being addressed

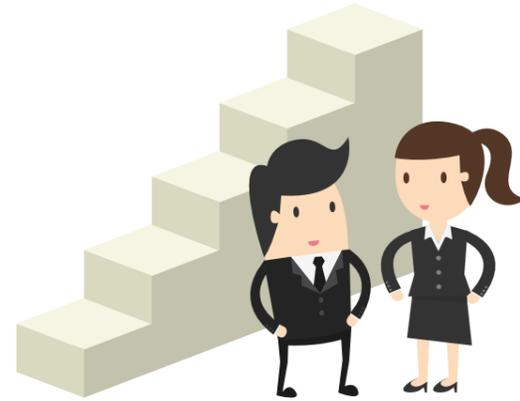
Attitudes, perceived opportunities, bias and harassment

3. No differences in preferences and ambitions

Both women and men equally rank **professional ambitions and work-family balance as most important in a job**, followed by career development and good pay.

Ambitions and preferences for pay and career **correlate with actual income and career**, but cannot explain the gender difference in careers.

Equal ambitions and preferences appear insufficient to change gender differences in careers.



4. No unconscious bias against women or mothers

The study included an experiment that involved **assessing a fictional candidate for an operational management position**. The experiment tested whether bias explains why women are under-represented in management positions. The experiment shows:

• **No systematic preference of men.** All other factors held equal, a female candidate is assessed higher than a male candidate.



• **There are no double standards.** Characteristics such as experience, availability, personality and whether the candidate has children are not assessed differently based on the candidate's gender.

• **Having to balance commitments at work and at home** may be one reason why there are few women in executive-level positions. Candidates who often are available for customers and colleagues outside normal working hours are considered to be more suitable for management positions than those who seldom are available.



An absence of bias and prejudice toward women is of great value, yet it appears insufficient to change gender differences in careers.

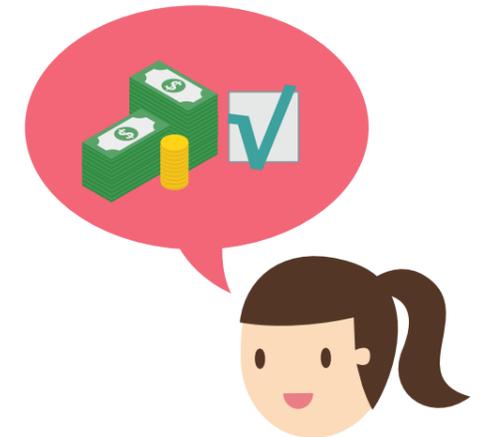
5. No experiences of exclusion

• Both **women and men feel included and recognised** and experience that they can say what they think.

• **Women negotiate for pay and promotion as much as men do.** Women and men are equally likely to have a plan for their career development.

• Many companies do a good job in promoting equality and inclusion, but **gender differences in careers appear to remain**, despite the experienced inclusion.

• Experiencing inclusion and recognition are important factors for job satisfaction and preventing attrition, but we find **no correlation between equality in experienced opportunities and gender differences in actual careers**.



6. Women experience sexual harassment more often than men do

• **Women experience sexual harassment more often** than men do, and are more likely to know others who have been affected. Sexual harassment is reported more often in male-dominated working environments.

• Women in operational positions or with profit and loss responsibility report sexual harassment more often than other women.

• Experiences of sexual harassment do not explain the remaining gender differences in careers and income.

Measures in level 1: Inclusive culture and complaint reporting systems

1. Include clear targets for gender balance and equality in strategies and key performance indicators (KPIs). Adjust strategies and measures to tackle the most pressing problems in line with updated knowledge.

2. Develop and maintain a culture of equal ambitions and preferences where inclusion and equal opportunities are experienced.

3. Maintain awareness of potential bias, especially including a perspective of broad-ranging dilemma training.

4. Develop and maintain complaint reporting systems for sexual harassment, as well as procedures for detection and follow-up.

5. Regularly check status through employee surveys or broader studies that make it possible to compare status and development with other companies.



Many companies have already introduced level 1 measures. Although the study shows that these measures are not enough to change career patterns, they are nevertheless important. A culture will not automatically be experienced as inclusive. It must be built, maintained and updated.

Level 2: Addressing more complex challenges

Conditions in working life and family life

7. Infrastructure of working life: Clear gender differences in working hours, work pressure and experienced demands

Both men and women work long hours. Long working hours are particularly common in high-level positions and in positions with profit and loss responsibility.



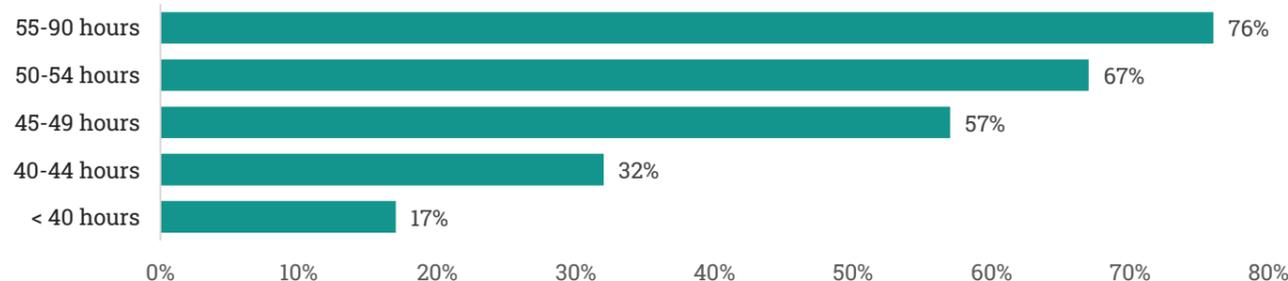
Average working hours per week at different levels

Entry level	Mid-level/project manager level	Top-management level
41.0 hours	45.2 hours	50.5 hours

- **Men work longer hours than women.** Men are also more likely to be in positions with profit and loss responsibility and high-level positions. In such jobs, there are clearly higher expectations of being available outside normal working hours, delivering at short notice and coping with high work pressure.
- Employees in high-level positions, in positions with profit and loss responsibility and with high incomes report **greater work pressure, longer working hours and greater expectations of availability** to customers and clients.
- There are **small differences in working hours** between women and men without children, but fathers clearly work longer hours than mothers.

Who works longer hours than they would like?

Actual working hours and perception of working too much:



Long working hours is not an ideal

Half of the executives report that they work longer hours than they want. Those who work long hours often feel that they work much more than they would prefer.

Why do you work longer hours than you want?

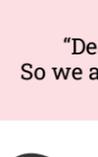
Assignments and deadlines require it

"I don't know anyone with an interesting job who doesn't work every hour of the day. So basically, you either work long hours and have a really cool job, or you don't work at all"



Customers and clients expect speedy results

"Everything we do is projects – projects, projects, projects with tight schedules, and those schedules are often tightly linked to other deadlines"



Competition for assignments – everyone wants to do a good job

"Deadlines are getting tighter and tighter. We have to work more and more efficiently. So we always want to get things done, accomplish things, but sometimes we should probably stop and rethink our priorities"



International competition

"Unfortunately, I think it is necessary to work so much because you are competing not just with the best here in Norway, but also in Europe and around the world"

Experienced demands and expectations in own position

To some, a large or a very large degree:

Appearing energetic and engaged



Top-management level	98%
Mid-level/project manager level	96%
Entry level	91%

Delivering results at short notice



Top-management level	98%
Mid-level/project manager level	94%
Entry level	86%

Tackling consistently high work pressure



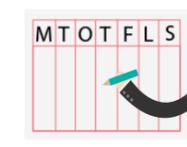
Top-management level	95%
Mid-level/project manager level	87%
Entry level	80%

Occasional overtime



Top-management level	95%
Mid-level/project manager level	89%
Entry level	77%

General commitment over 37.5 hours per week



Top-management level	95%
Mid-level/project manager level	88%
Entry level	74%

Being available for customers outside normal working hours



Top-management level	87%
Mid-level/project manager level	75%
Entry level	56%

• Experienced demands and expectations – such as meeting short deadlines, working overtime when required, handling work pressure and competing for customers – are **the same for women and men**. However, as men with children often have more support at home than women with children, it takes less effort for them to meet the demands.

• Women and men without children experience these demands and expectations to an equal degree and find it equally easy to fulfil them. In contrast, fathers more often have a position with high expectations at work, whereas mothers find such expectations to be more challenging to square with their family commitments, given their lack of ground crew.

8. Infrastructure of family life: Gender differences at home contribute to gendered conditions for investing in careers

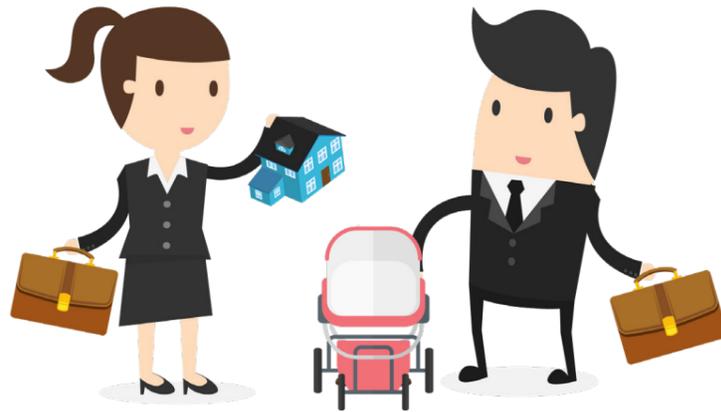
The study finds few or no differences in income and careers between women and men without children, but **clear differences between women and men with children.**

Equal attitudes to working life and family life

Most believe that the ideal for a family with small children is that **both parents work similar hours and share responsibilities at home.** In the study, 93 per cent of women and 88 per cent of men agree with this.

At the same time,
53% of women and **47%** of men

agree that a top-level career implies “anytime, anywhere” availability to work that requires sacrifices in one’s family life.



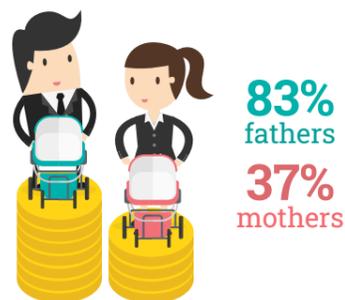
Different conditions for investing in a career

- **Mothers face more unfavourable conditions for career investment than fathers.** Despite similar preferences and ambitions, men with children more often have a partner who works less, earns less and has a job with less responsibility and status – and who takes a greater share of responsibility for care and housework.

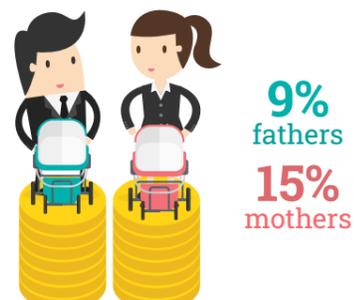
- Women with children typically have a partner who works more, earns more and has a job with more responsibility and status – and who takes a smaller share of responsibility for care and housework.

Who has the higher income?

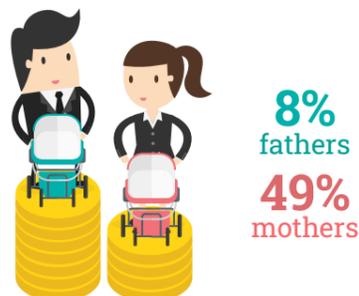
“I have higher income”



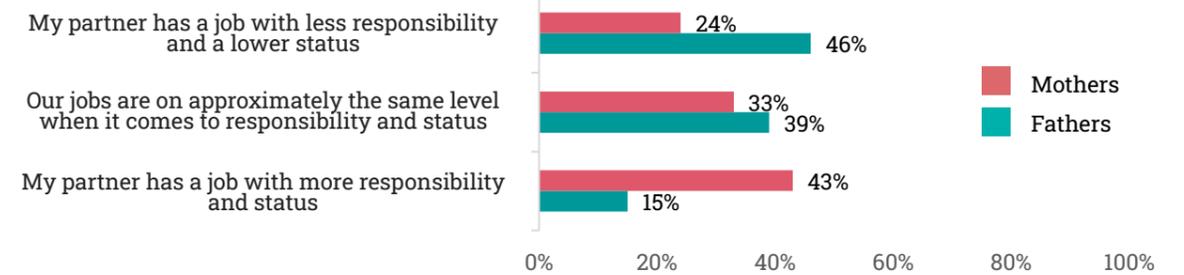
“Our incomes are similar”



“Partner has higher income”



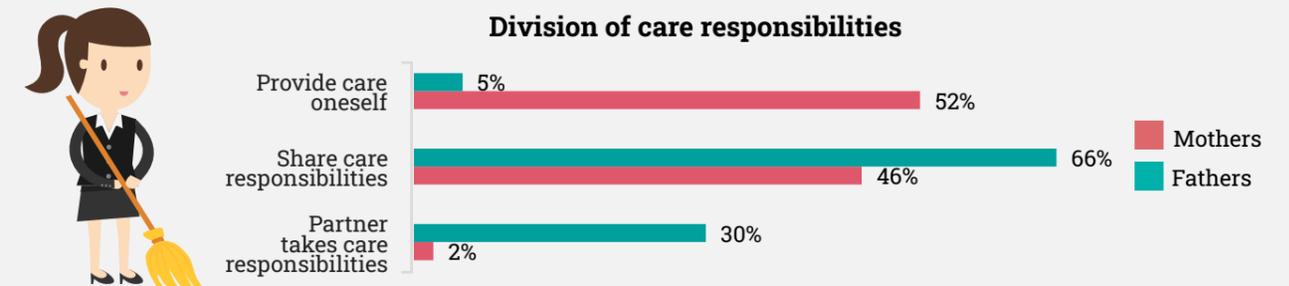
Who has the “more important” job?



- Women in the study, both with and without children, are ambitious and equality-oriented. Nevertheless, only **2 per cent of women with children have a partner who takes the main share of responsibility at home, compared with 30 per cent of men with children.**

- Men are also equality-oriented, but are much more likely to have a partner who takes more of the responsibility for childcare – and almost never a partner who takes less.

Division of care responsibilities



- **This does not mean that women in business prefer a setup where they carry most of the responsibilities at home.** Women who take most of the care responsibilities themselves are the least satisfied with their own situation. Those who share responsibilities equally at home are most satisfied – among both women and men.



Those (in most cases, women) who do the most at home are by far the least satisfied with their own division of responsibilities.



Those (in most cases, men) with partners who do the most at home are more satisfied with their own division of responsibilities.



Those who share responsibilities equally are most satisfied with how things are divided. This applies to both men and women.

- **Men more often have partners who work less and who take more responsibility at home,** and as a result have conditions more conducive to continuing to work more and to accepting exciting job opportunities with more responsibility and better pay – and thus meeting expectations of availability, long and unpredictable work hours and high work pressure.

9. Gender differences in care responsibilities, from parental leave onwards



- Both men and women take parental leave, but **men take much shorter leave** and work more during their leave than women do.
- There is a **strong correlation between working during parental leave and current income** – adjusted for age and when the child was born.

Paid and unpaid parental leave with youngest child Average number of months:

■ Fathers ■ Mothers



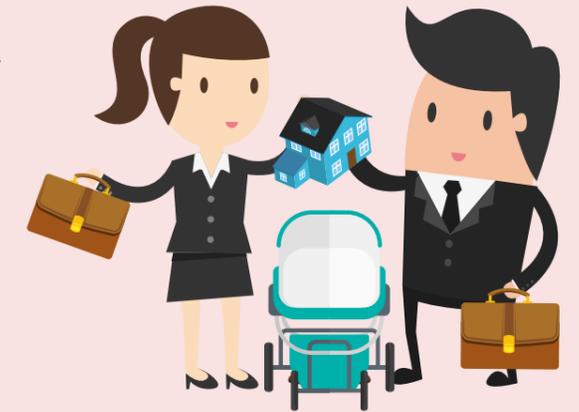
How do conditions at home and at work create gender differences?

- Having a “ground crew” at home in the form of a partner who has a “less important” job and who takes most of the responsibility at home strongly increases the probability of being in a high-level position, with profit and loss responsibility and a high income.
- Being the “ground crew” yourself reduces the probability both of having a high-level position, with profit and loss responsibility and a high income, and of being satisfied with your own work–family balance.
- Sharing responsibilities equally results in a moderate probability of a high-level position – but the highest probability of being satisfied with your own work–family balance – among both women and men.
- When we control for the situation at home – division of responsibility for care, having an au pair, and who has the “most important” job – we find that gender differences in position, profit and loss responsibility and income disappear.

Addressing the more complex challenges at level 2: Equal conditions in working life and family life

1. Mapping conditions at work

- Expectations regarding deadlines, deliveries and assignments in different career paths, and the consequences of work pressure, workload, working hours and the demand to be available.
- Paying attention to indirect demands, such as “anywhere and anytime” availability, in order to meet expectations.
- Planning to allow work and career development to be combined with care responsibilities.



2. Conditions at home

- Encourage a more equal sharing of parental leave.
- Pay attention to how leave is used by mothers and fathers, and what happens afterwards.
- Follow-up before and after parental leave: facilitation during and after leave, such as manageable workload and flexible working hours; combined with career opportunities, such as relevant responsibility, distribution of customers, projects and pay.
- Signal and facilitate that male employees can take a greater share of care responsibilities and care work.



3. Measures to create more equality despite differing circumstances

- Survey practice and policy for career development in different phases of life.
- Secure career development and career paths throughout the life course, with particular awareness of the period with young children and opportunities for career development as a mature/senior employee.
- Develop alternative career paths that are rewarding in terms of career development, professional challenges and pay – and that are attractive to both women and men.
- Regularly check status through employee surveys or studies that make it possible to compare status and development with other companies.



CORE Corporate Study

The CORE Corporate Study examines attitudes, ambitions and conditions for careers among employees of ten large and mid-sized companies in various industries (e.g. construction, technology, media and finance). It is a mixed-method study combining survey data, including a bias experiment (2,830 executives) and in-depth interviews (nine experts and 30 executives) as well as the companies' data on their gender balance and equality measures. The companies in the study have been working systematically with equality targets for several years and thus represent "best case" companies. The study has been financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Equality and the Norwegian Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries.

The research has been carried out in collaboration with Equality Check. Gender equality has been high on the agenda of the companies in the study over a number of years. Consequently, these companies can demonstrate what can be achieved by working actively on equality and diversity, as for instance facilitated by the expanded activity and reporting obligation (ARP).

Despite high awareness and support for equality in the companies, and despite targets and measures being embedded in strategy plans, the study finds clear gender differences in income and career patterns. Men are overrepresented in the highest positions, in positions with profit and loss responsibility and in highly paid positions. The gender inequities are particularly pronounced for women and men with children. Gender differences in careers and income cannot be explained by age or education.

The study first investigates the significance of preferences and ambitions, conscious and unconscious bias, perceived inclusion and sexual harassment. Secondly, the significance of working hours, work pressure and demands and expectations and gender differences in childcare responsibility are addressed.

The report summarises the status and measures for gender equality on two levels. Level 1 covers inclusion of equality in companies' strategies, awareness, surveillance of status, experienced inclusion and complaint reporting systems. Level 2 addresses more complex challenges referring to what it takes to make a career in business, such as working time, work pressure and availability. Then we analyse the conditions men and women with and without children have to meet these demands, given the gender inequality in actual childcare responsibility, despite gender-equal ideals.



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