

# Summer Skills Bulletin 2024

Occupational gender segregation in Ireland:  
unlocking labour supply to meet key skills needs



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## 1. Introduction

Gender-based occupational segregation refers to a situation where there is an unequal distribution of males and females across job roles<sup>1</sup> and the European Commission considers it to be one of the contributing factors relating to the gender pay gap.<sup>2</sup> There appears to be no universality in terms of gender segregated occupations – some occupations are male-dominated in some countries, but gender-balanced or female-dominated in others. Gender segregation can also change over time; increased female labour force participation may actually lead to an increase in gender segregation (for a time at least).

Although there are numerous reasons to want to alleviate occupational gender segregation, the focus of this report is on how reducing gender segregation could unlock a supply of labour, particularly of importance for those occupations with skills shortages. The report explores occupations where gender segregation is occurring along with their key characteristics. In addition, the extent to which hours of work and family structures differ across gender segregated occupations is explored as longer working hours may act as a deterrent for entry or remaining in certain roles, particularly for those with caring responsibilities. Identifying if these patterns differ in male- or female-dominated occupations provides valuable insights for those examining ways to reduce gender segregation in the Irish labour market.

The report examines employment indicators using the latest data (Quarter 4 2023) from the CSO Labour Force Survey data.<sup>3</sup> Each occupation at detailed Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) 4-digit level was classified as female-dominated, male-dominated and mixed gender occupations using Eurofound's definition<sup>4</sup> detailed in Table 1. Following an overview of occupational gender segregation in Ireland's workforce, a further examination of the family structure for those employed in gender segregated roles, and the average usual hours worked in these occupations are explored.

**Table 1.** Occupational gender segregation definition

Level 1	Level 2
Female dominated	Female dominated (> 80%)
	Mainly female (60–80%)
Mixed gender	Mixed (40–59%)
Male dominated	Mainly male (60–80%)
	Male dominated (> 80%)

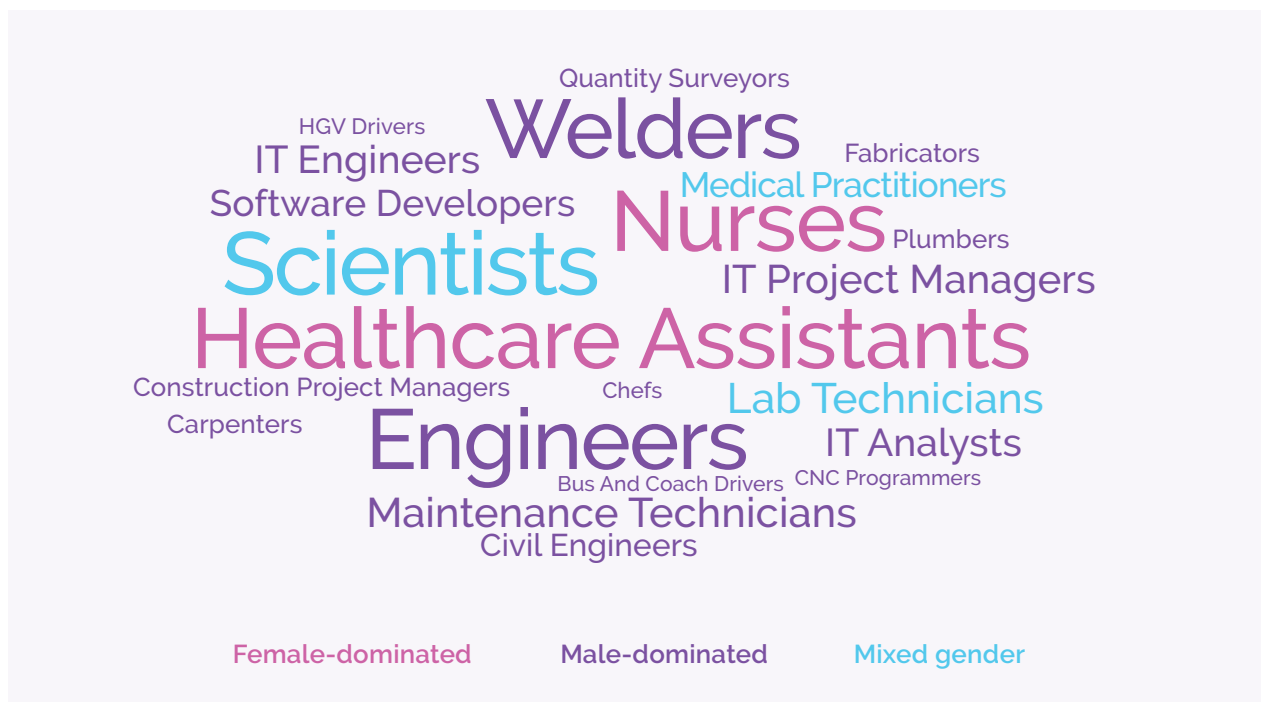
Source: Eurofound

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- 1 Das, S., & Kotikula, A. (2018). Gender-Based Employment Segregation: Understanding Causes and Policy Interventions. Washington, DC: World Bank.
  - 2 European Commission. (2022). Gender Equality and Work-Life Balance Policies during and after the COVID-19 crisis. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
  - 3 Results are based on analysis of strictly controlled Research Microdata Files provided by the Central Statistics Office (CSO). The CSO does not take any responsibility for the views expressed or the outputs generated from this research.
  - 4 Eurofound (2024). *The changing structure of employment in the EU: Annual review 2023*, Eurofound research paper, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

## 2. Occupational gender segregation and skills shortages

Addressing skills shortages is inextricably linked to occupational gender segregation. Accessing only half of the labour supply pool to meet demand in key skills areas makes bridging the skills gap more difficult. The National Skills Bulletin 2023<sup>5</sup> identified a number of occupations which were experiencing skills shortages. Figure 1 details these occupations by level of occupational gender segregation. Most occupations experiencing skills shortages are those which are also dominated by one gender (the exception being scientists, lab technicians and medical practitioners). Although a small number of shortages relate to female-dominated occupations (i.e. nurses and healthcare assistants), the majority of shortages occur in occupations which are male-dominated. This highlights the importance of gaining further insights into patterns associated with gender segregated occupations to identify potential solutions required to reduce the dependence on one gender in meeting skills needs.

**Figure 1.** Occupations identified as having skills shortage by occupational gender segregation



Source: Skills shortages extracted from the National Skills Bulletin, 2023; Gender segregation derived from SLMRU analysis of CSO LFS data

### 3. Profile of occupational gender segregation in employment

The occupational breakdown of gender segregated employment was relatively evenly split in quarter 4 2023 between female-dominated and male-dominated occupations, accounting for 41% and 42% respectively (Table 2). Those employed in mixed gender occupations accounted for a smaller share at 16%.

At a more detailed level, 18.7%, or 505,000 persons, were employed in occupations where at least 80% were female, whereas 22.6%, or 610,500 persons, were in occupations where at least 80% were male.

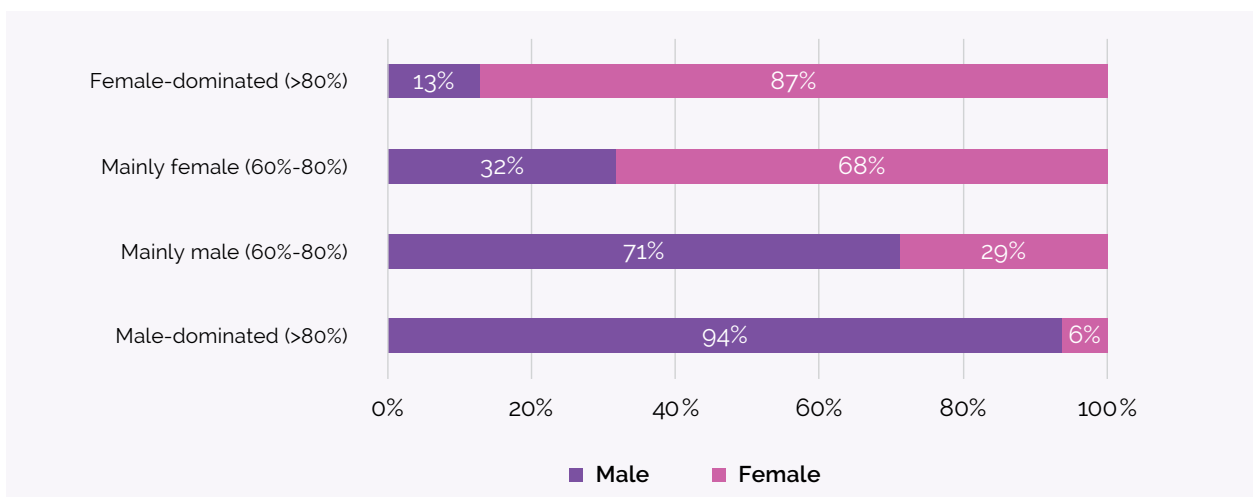
**Table 2.** Breakdown of employment by level of occupational gender segregation, Quarter 4 2023

	Total employment* Q4 2023	Share of total employment
<b>Female-dominated</b>	<b>1,113,500</b>	<b>41.3%</b>
<i>Of which:</i>		
Female dominated (>80%)	505,000	18.7%
Mainly female (60%-80%)	608,500	22.6%
<b>Male-dominated</b>	<b>1,141,800</b>	<b>42.4%</b>
<i>Of which:</i>		
Male dominated (>80%)	610,500	22.6%
Mainly male (60%-80%)	531,300	19.7%
<b>Mixed gender</b>	<b>440,300</b>	<b>16.3%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,695,600</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data  
 \*excludes when occupation was not stated

When examined by gender and detailed level of gender segregation, a difference emerges (Figure 2). While 13% of those employed in female-dominated (>80%) occupations are male, only 6% employed in male-dominated (>80%) occupations are female (this translates to 65,000 males in female-dominated (>80%) occupations and 38,000 females in male-dominated (>80%) occupations).

**Figure 2.** Employment by level of occupational gender segregation and gender, Quarter 4 2023



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

## Occupational gender segregation by occupation

Table 3 provides examples of occupations by level of gender segregation along with occupations where the gender is more equally divided (mixed gender roles). Females account for the majority share in occupations such as nursing, primary teaching, across administrative roles and care workers. Those employed in occupations including farmers, electricians, carpenters and HGV drivers are predominantly male. Mixed gender occupations occur across financial, medical and educational professional roles.

**Table 3.** Example occupations by level of gender segregation, Quarter 4 2023

Female-dominated	Male-dominated	Mixed gender
Nurses	Farmers	Accountants
Primary teaching	Electricians	Finance analysts/managers
Administrative roles	Carpenters	Medical practitioners
Care workers	Civil engineers	FE/HE teaching professionals
Hairdressers	HGV drivers	
Educational support assistants	Warehouse operatives	
HR officers	Mechanics	
	Welders/fabricators	

Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

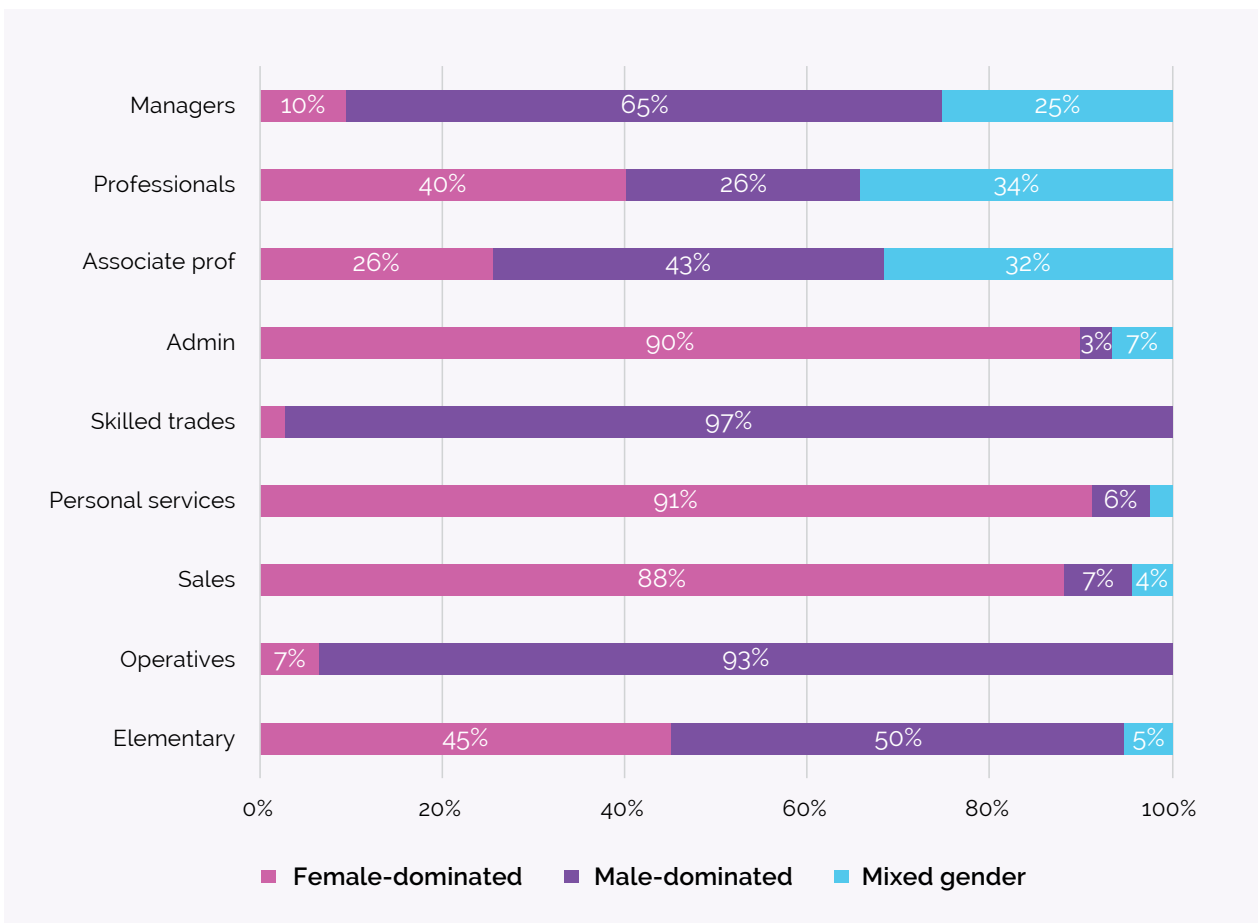
Figure 3 provides a breakdown of gender segregation at broad occupational level.

**Female-dominated occupations** accounted for a majority share in administrative, personal services (e.g. childcare and care workers, hairdressers) and sales occupations; they accounted for a 40% share of professional occupations (due to the high volume of nurses and teachers employed in this category) and 45% of elementary occupations (e.g. cleaners, hospitality workers).

**Male-dominated occupations** held the highest share in managerial, skilled trades (e.g. farmers, construction trades, chefs) and operative occupations. In addition, over 40% of those employed in associate professional roles were in male-dominated occupations (e.g. technicians, protective services) and 50% in elementary occupations (e.g. elementary agricultural and construction roles, security officers, warehouse operatives).

**Mixed gender occupations** were primarily in high-skilled roles across managers, professional and associate professional occupations.

**Figure 3.** Employment by level of gender segregation and broad occupation, Quarter 4 2023










Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

\*numbers employed in mixed gender occupations in skilled trades and operatives too small to report

### Occupational gender segregation by sector

Over 90% of employment in the agriculture and construction sectors in quarter 4 2023 was in male-dominated occupations; in addition, 79% of employment in transport and storage, and 71% in the ICT sector were in male-dominated jobs (Table 4). Female-dominated occupations accounted for the higher share of employment in health & social work, education and wholesale & retail sectors but with lower shares of 83%, 79% and 54% respectively.

**Table 4.** Share of employment in male- and female-dominated occupations for selected sectors, Quarter 4 2023

Male-dominated		Female-dominated	
Agriculture – 95%		Health & social work – 83%	
Construction – 92%		Education – 79%	
Transport & storage – 79%		Wholesale & retail – 54%	
ICT – 71%			

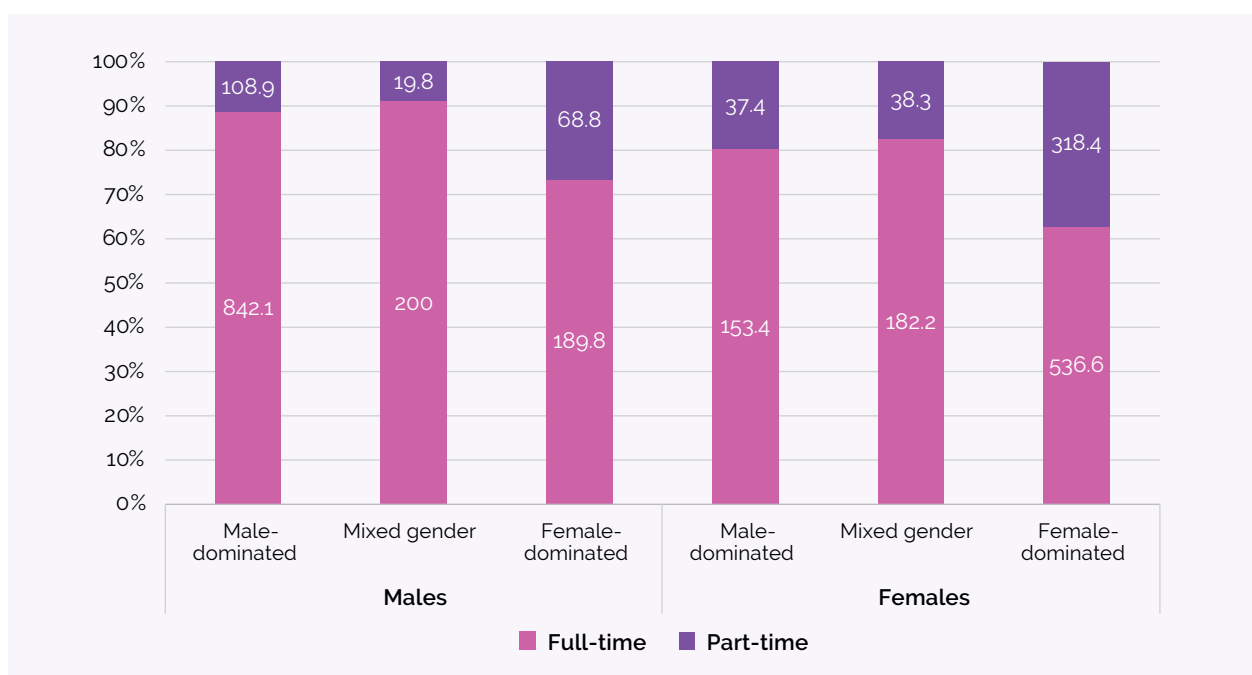
Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data.

### Occupational gender segregation by full-time/part-time status

**Males:** In quarter 4 2023, 86% of males were in full-time employment; for male-dominated occupations, the share was 89%, and for female-dominated, 73% (Figure 4). The share was highest for males in mixed gender occupations (91%).

**Females:** Those in mixed gender occupations also had the highest share employed in full-time roles (83%), above the overall share for females of 69%. This is likely related to a relatively high proportion of employment in professional/associate professional roles in mixed gender occupations. Females in female-dominated occupations had both the highest share working part-time (37%) and the largest volume (almost 320,000 persons); this accounted for 81% of all females working part-time.

**Figure 4.** Employment by level of gender segregation, gender and full-time/part-time (000s and %), Quarter 4 2023



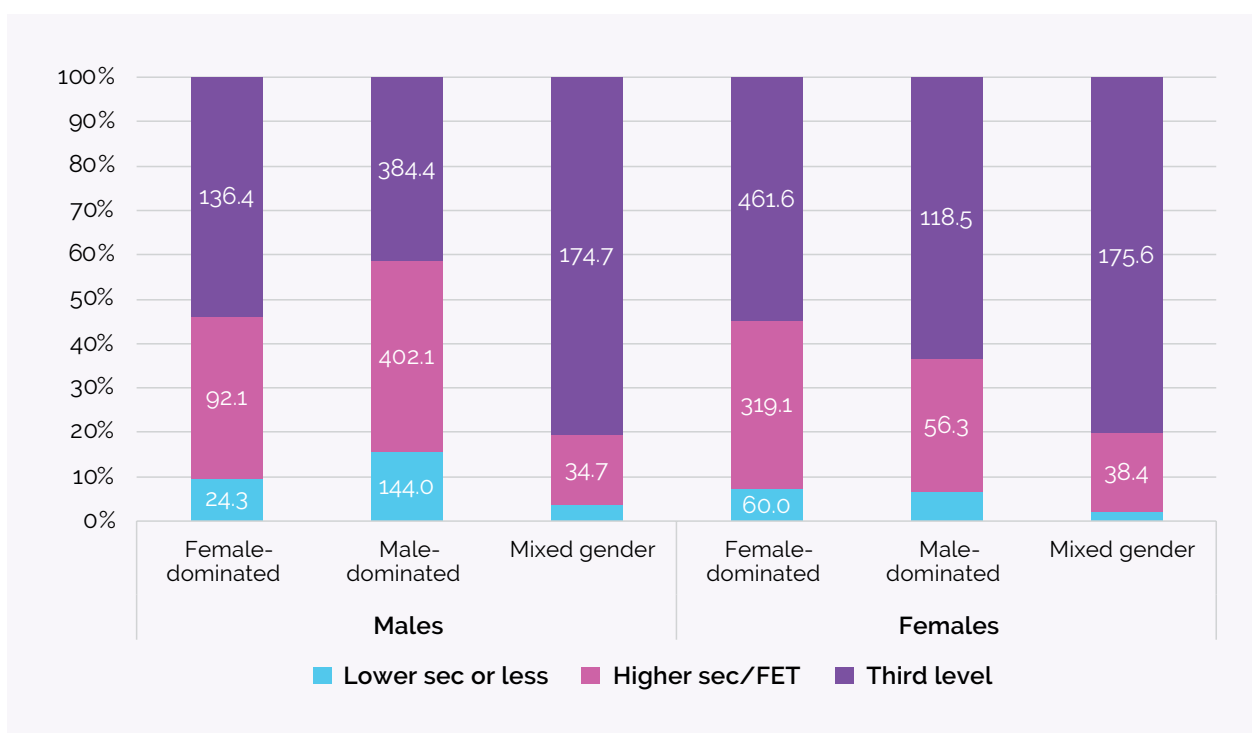
Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

## Occupational gender segregation by education level

**For males,** mixed gender occupations had the highest share with third level qualifications, at 79% (Figure 5). The share with third level was lowest for those in male dominated occupations, at 40%. In absolute terms, this relates to 384,400 persons; as such, over half (55%) of all males in employment with third level qualifications are in male-dominated occupations. Of those with at most a lower secondary education, 82% were employed in male-dominated occupations.

**For females,** a similar pattern emerges with mixed gender occupations accounting for the highest share of persons employed with third-level qualifications, although female-dominated occupations accounted for the largest volume of persons employed with third-level qualifications.

**Figure 5.** Occupational gender segregation employment by gender and education level (000s and %), Quarter 4 2023



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

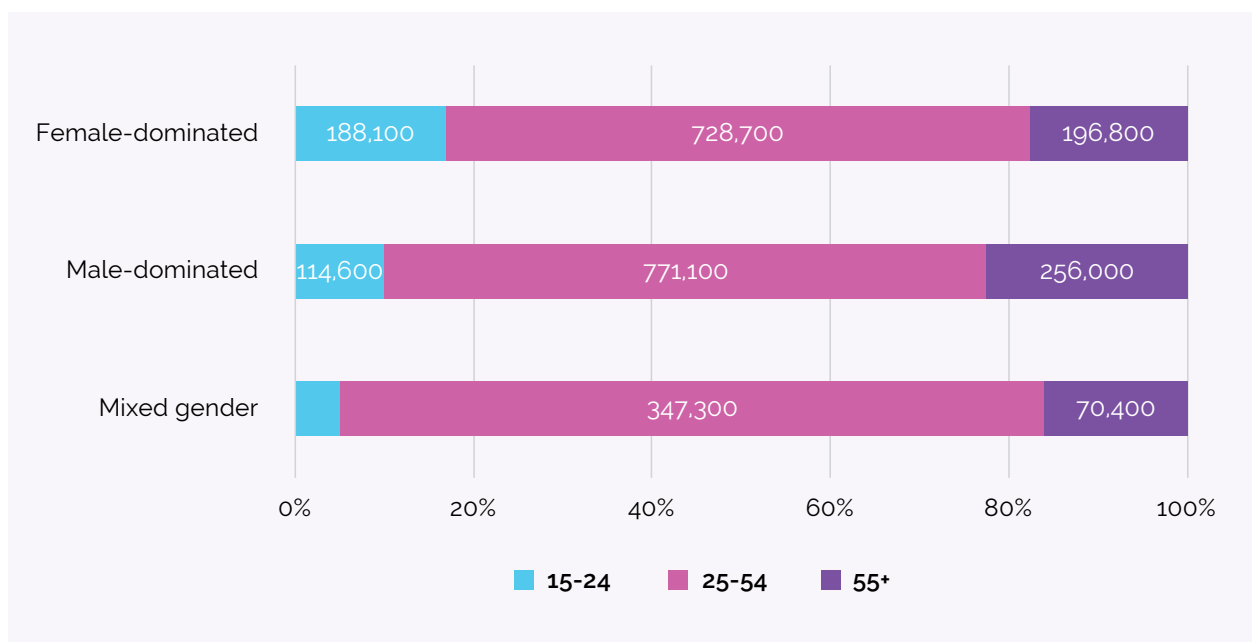


## Occupational gender segregation by age

The higher than average share of persons employed in female-dominated occupations aged 15-24 years (17% compared to 12% economy-wide) likely relates to some extent to hospitality and sales occupations within this category.

Farmers, who are classified as a male-dominated occupation tend to have an older age profile and are likely contributing to the high share in male-dominated occupations who are aged 55 years or over (22% compared to 19% nationally).

**Figure 6.** Occupational gender segregation employment by age (000s and %), Quarter 4 2023



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

In the remaining sections which examine hours of work and family structure by occupational gender segregation, the data is limited to the following:

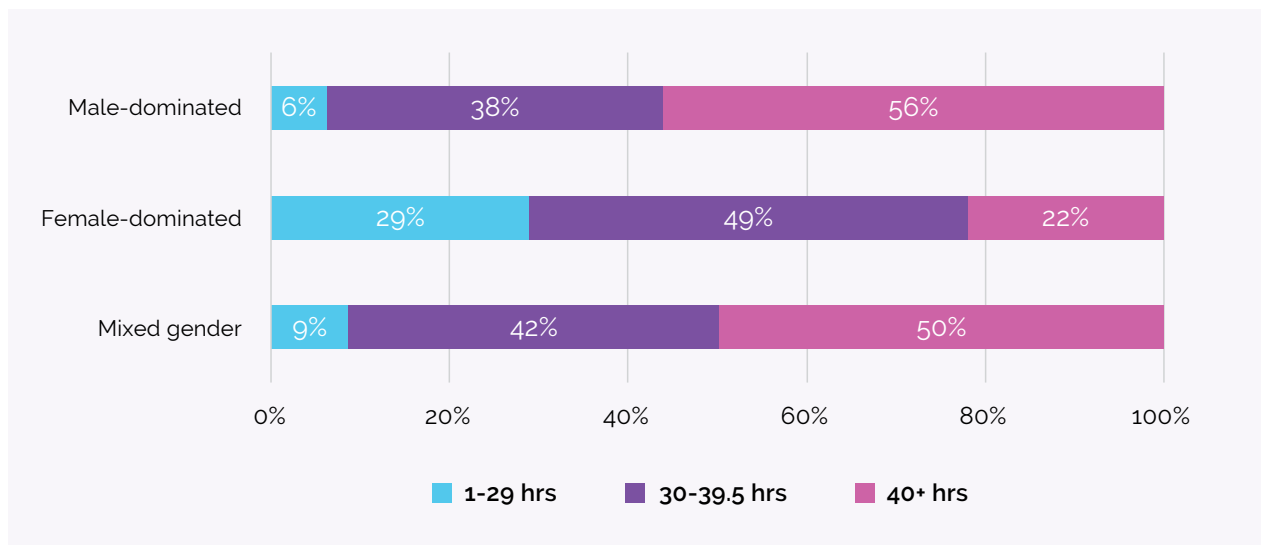
- **those aged 25-54 years**, this excludes the younger cohorts who may be combining working with study and the older age cohorts, which is likely to include farmers
- **employees**, as hours of work by self-employed persons are likely to differ from employees
- excludes those working variable hours and where usual hours of work were not stated.

## 4. Employment by hours of work, family structure and gender segregation

### Occupational gender segregation by hours of work

Employees aged 25-54 years in female-dominated occupations had a far higher share working between 1 and 29 hours (29%) when compared to those employed in male-dominated (6%) or mixed gender (9%) occupations (Figure 7). At 56%, those employed in male-dominated occupations had the highest share employed who were working 40 hours or more.

**Figure 7.** Employees by level of gender segregation and usual hours of work (aged 25-54 years), Quarter 4 2023

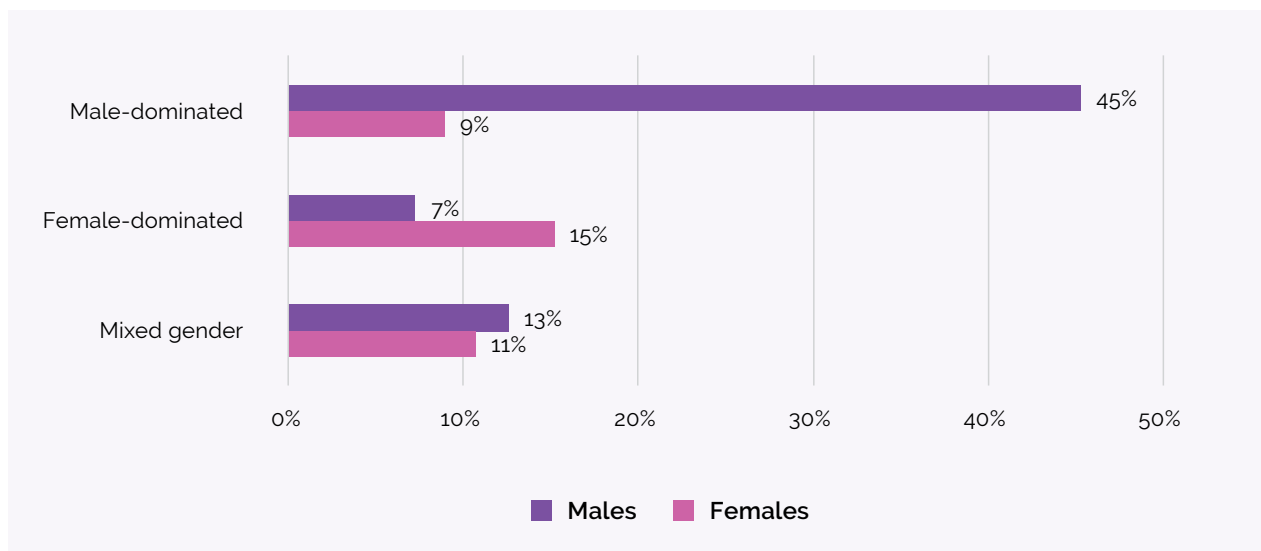


Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

\*Excludes those working variable hours and where usual hours of work was not stated

Figure 8 shows that males employed in male-dominated occupations account for almost a half (45%) of all persons employed working 40 hours or more. The long working hours that are commonplace for males in male-dominated occupations may act as a deterrent in attracting or retaining females for these roles.

**Figure 8.** Employees by level of gender segregation, gender and working 40+ hours (aged 25-54 years), Quarter 4 2023



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

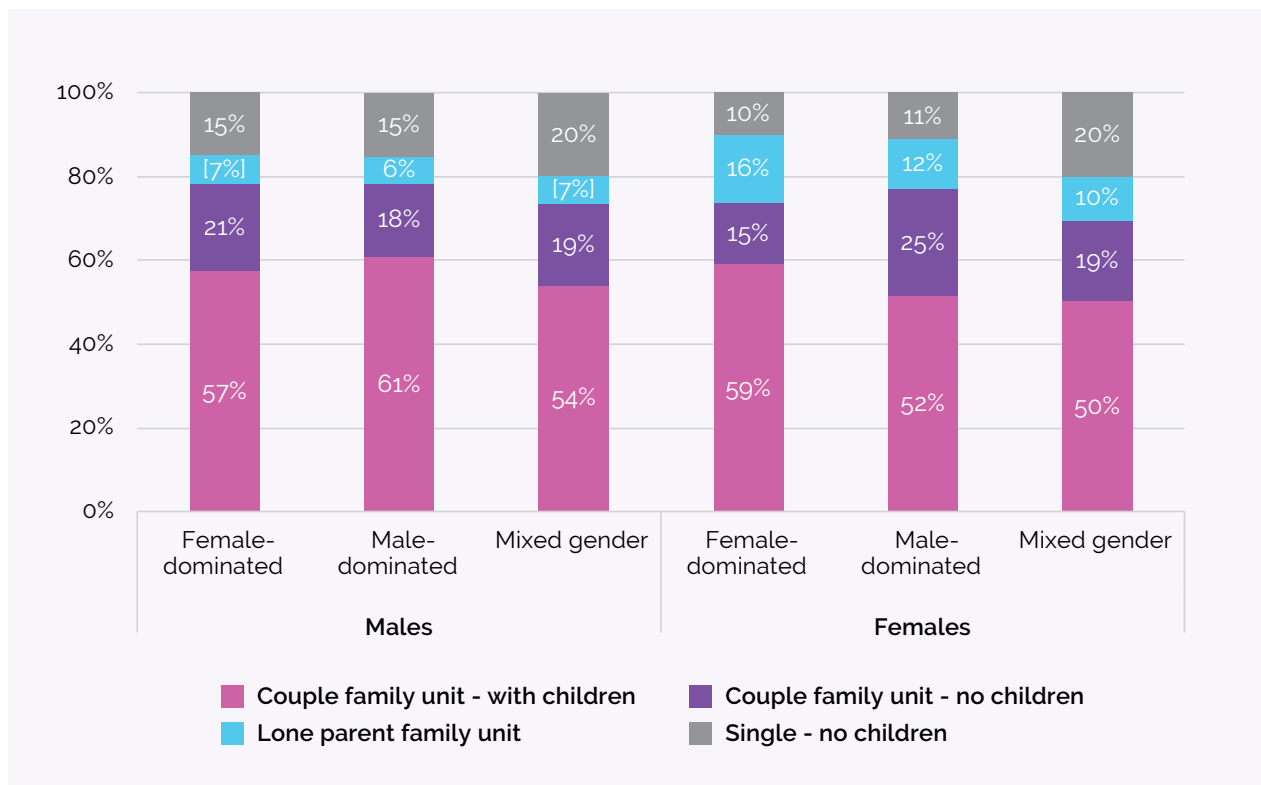
\*Excludes those working variable hours and where usual hours of work was not stated

Sectors including industry, ICT and construction combined accounted for just over half of males employed in male-dominated occupations who were usually working 40 or more hours. Although the numbers are smaller, the transportation and professional activities sectors have the highest share of males in male-dominated occupations working 40 hours or more, each at 66%. At an occupational level, the highest volume of males in male-dominated occupations working 40 or more hours a week were in ICT professionals, food preparation trades (e.g. chefs), drivers, engineers, protective services (e.g. gardai), construction trades, production managers and process operatives.

### Occupational gender segregation by family structure

Across all levels of gender segregation, at least 73% of employees aged 25-54 years were in a couple (both with and without children). Those employed aged 25-54 years in a couple with children accounted for the highest share of employment across genders and gender segregation; the highest share was for males in male-dominated occupations at 61%. Those in a lone parent family unit had higher shares for females, particularly in female-dominated occupations where they accounted for 16%. Those who were single with no children accounted for 20% of employment in mixed gender occupations for both males and females.

**Figure 9.** Employees by level of gender segregation, gender and family status (aged 25-54 years), Quarter 4 2023

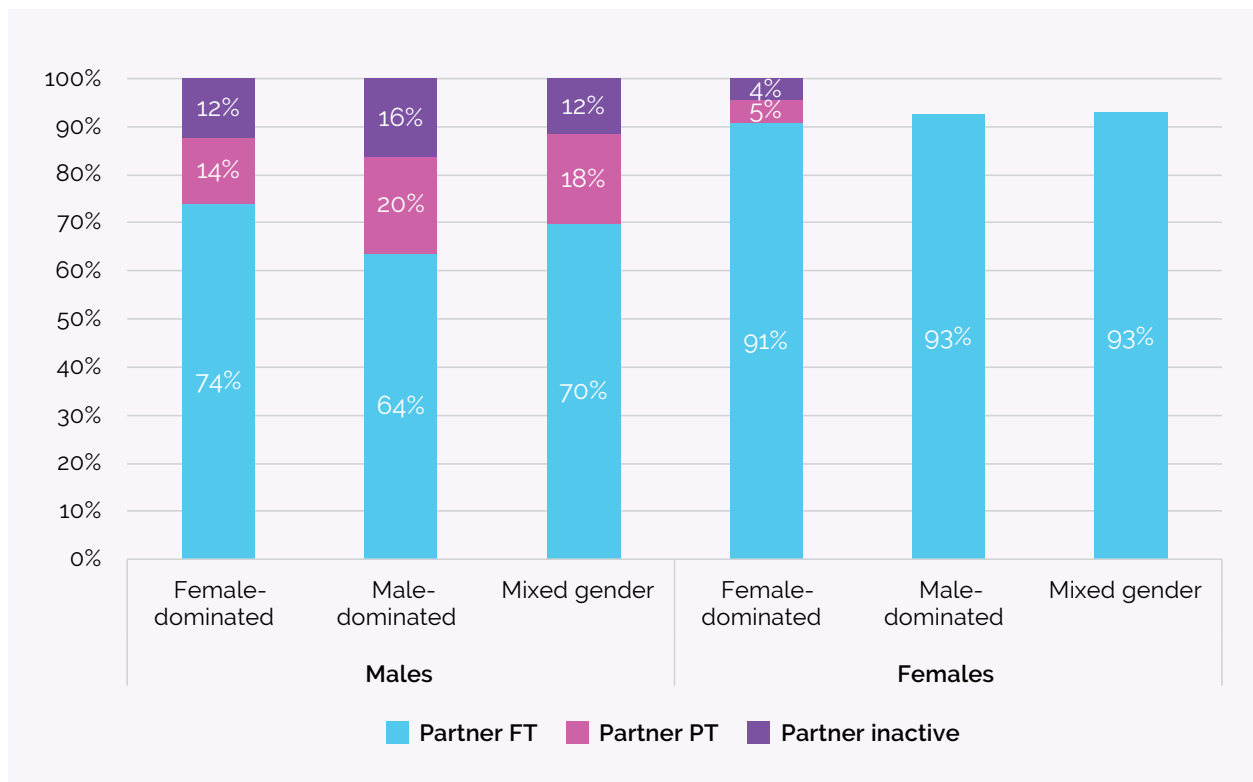


Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

\*Numbers in square brackets are small and should be treated with caution

Figure 10 examines the employment status of those with a partner across each level of gender segregation. Of those **female employees with a partner**, at least 91% had a partner who was employed full-time (the numbers employed who had a partner who was working part-time, unemployed or economically inactive were too small to report for females in male-dominated and mixed gender occupations). **Male employees** in male-dominated occupations had the smallest share with a partner working full-time, at 64%; they also had the largest share of partners who were either working part-time (20%) or whose partner was economically inactive (16%). The higher share of males, particularly in male-dominated occupations, who were potentially the main earners in a couple could have knock-on effects on hours of work.

**Figure 10.** Employees by level of gender segregation, gender and employment status of partner (aged 25-54 years), Quarter 4 2023



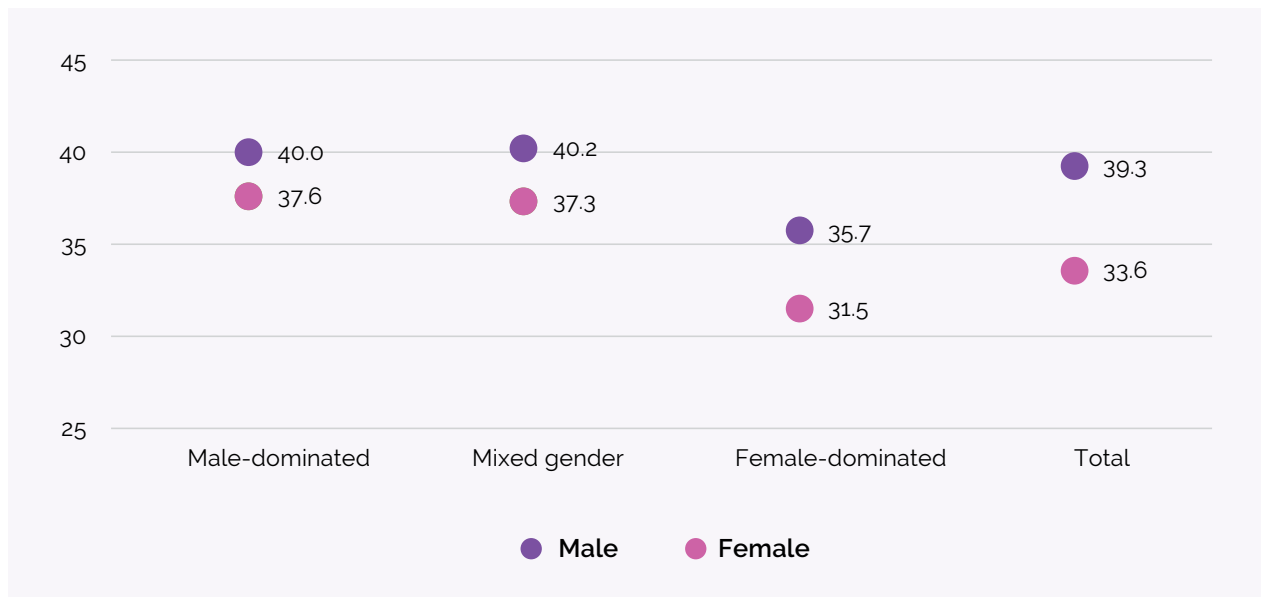
Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

Note: the number of persons whose partner was unemployed was too small to report across both gender and occupational gender segregation; the number of females employed in male-dominated or mixed gender occupations where their partner was working part-time or was economically inactive was too small to report

## 5. Average usual hours of work and gender segregation

In quarter 4 2023, males aged 25-54 years worked an additional 5.7 hours on average when compared to females (Figure 11). For both males and females, average usual hours were lowest in female-dominated occupations at 31.5 hours and 35.7 hours respectively. Average usual hours for males were highest in mixed gender occupations (at 40.2 hours) and for females in male-dominated occupations (37.6 hours).

**Figure 11.** Usual hours worked (average) for employees by level of gender segregation and gender (aged 25-54 years), Quarter 4 2023



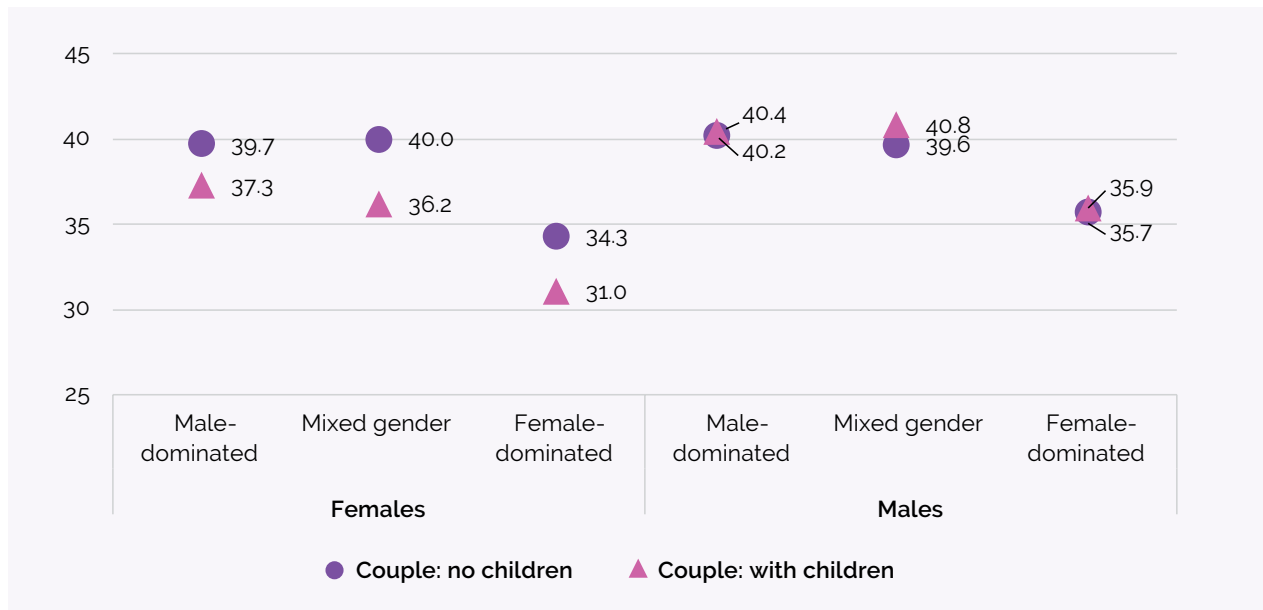
Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

\*Excludes those working variable hours and where usual hours of work was not stated

### Occupational gender segregation by hours of work and family structure

**Males in a couple with children worked marginally more hours than those without children** across all levels of occupational gender segregation, with the gap less than half an hour for each category (Figure 12). In contrast, females in a couple with children worked less hours than those without children across all levels of occupational gender segregation with a gap of almost 4 hours for those in mixed gender occupations. Females with children in female-dominated occupations worked 6.3 hours less on average than females with children in male-dominated occupations.

**Figure 12.** Usual hours worked (average) by employees by level of gender segregation and gender (aged 25-54 years), Quarter 4 2023



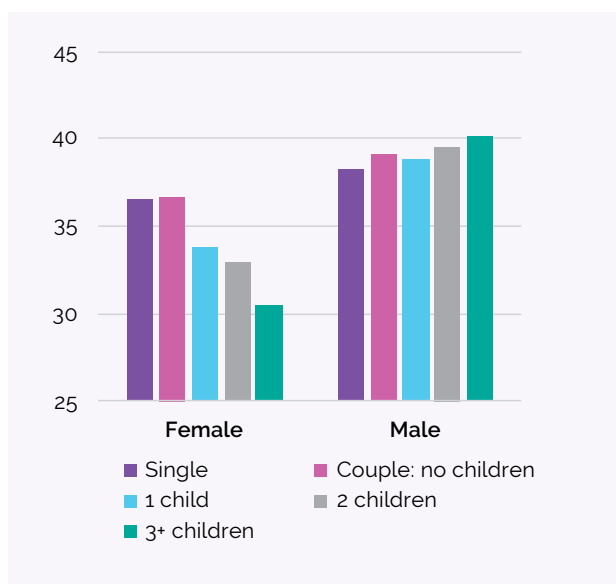
Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

\*Excludes those working variable hours and where usual hours of work was not stated

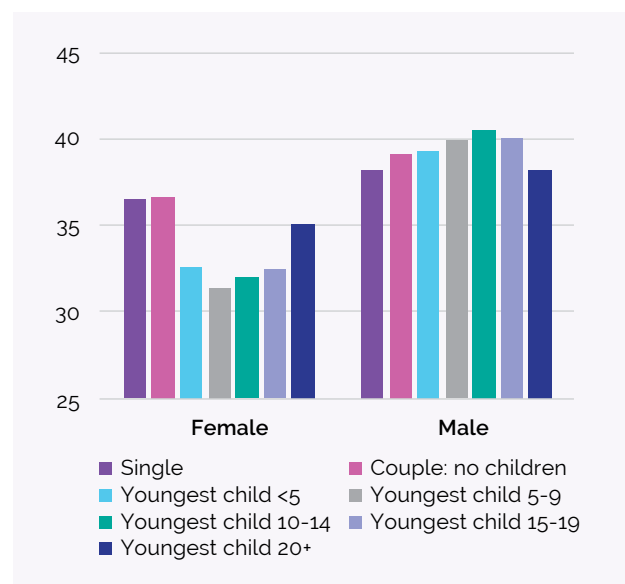
Not only do hours of work vary depending on whether a person has children or not, but also on the number of children they have and the age of the youngest child, particularly in the case of females. The average hours worked by females declined as the number of children increased, whereas it was the reverse for males (Figure 13a). Females with three or more children worked on average 9.6 hours less than males with three or more children, the largest gap across all categories.

Female employees whose youngest child was aged 5-9 years had the lowest average hours worked with hours of work increasing for each of the child age categories after this; for males the average hours worked peaked for those whose youngest child was 10-14 years and declined thereafter (Figure 13b).

**Fig 13a:** Usual hours worked (average) by number of children, Quarter 4 2023



**Fig 13b:** Usual hours worked (average) by age of youngest child, Quarter 4 2023



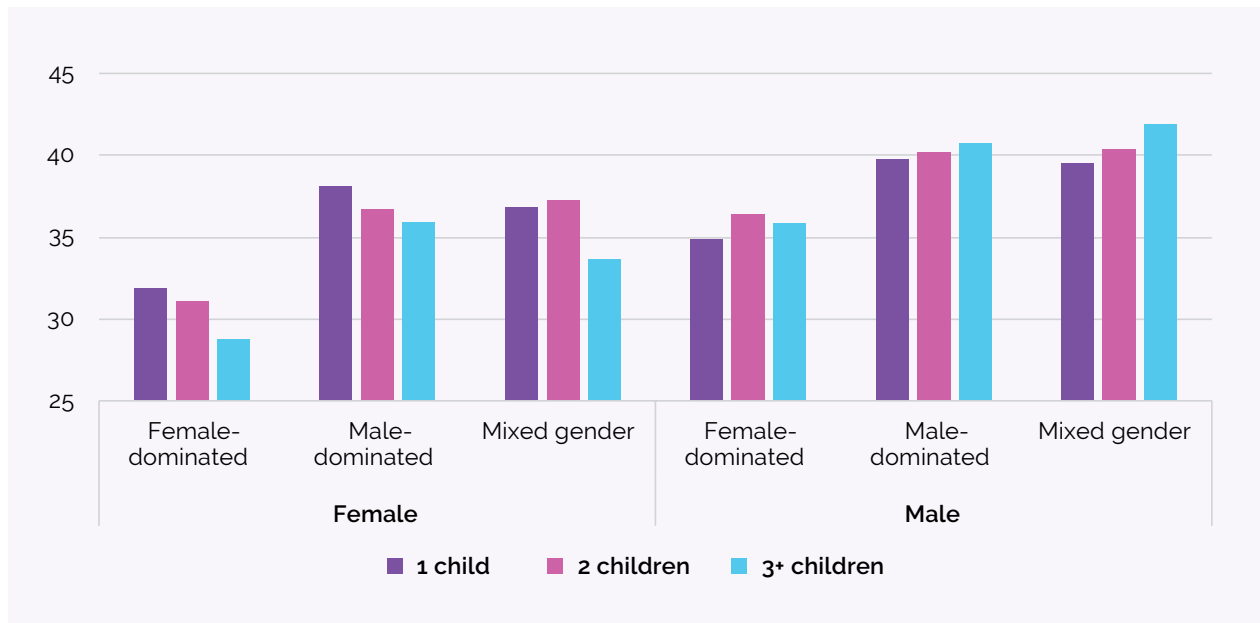
Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

\*Excludes those working variable hours and where usual hours of work was not stated; refers to employees aged 25-54 years only

**Number of children:** for females, having 3 or more children results in fewer average hours worked than those with 1-2 children or no children; this is particularly evident for those in female-dominated and mixed gender occupations (Figure 14). The extent to which females leave certain occupations after having children is not captured here but is worthy of further examination.

For the most part, average hours of work by males increased across all levels of gender segregation and number of children, with the exception of those in female-dominated occupations with 3 or more children.

**Figure 14.** Usual hours worked (average) by level of gender segregation and gender (aged 25-54 years) by number of children, Quarter 4 2023

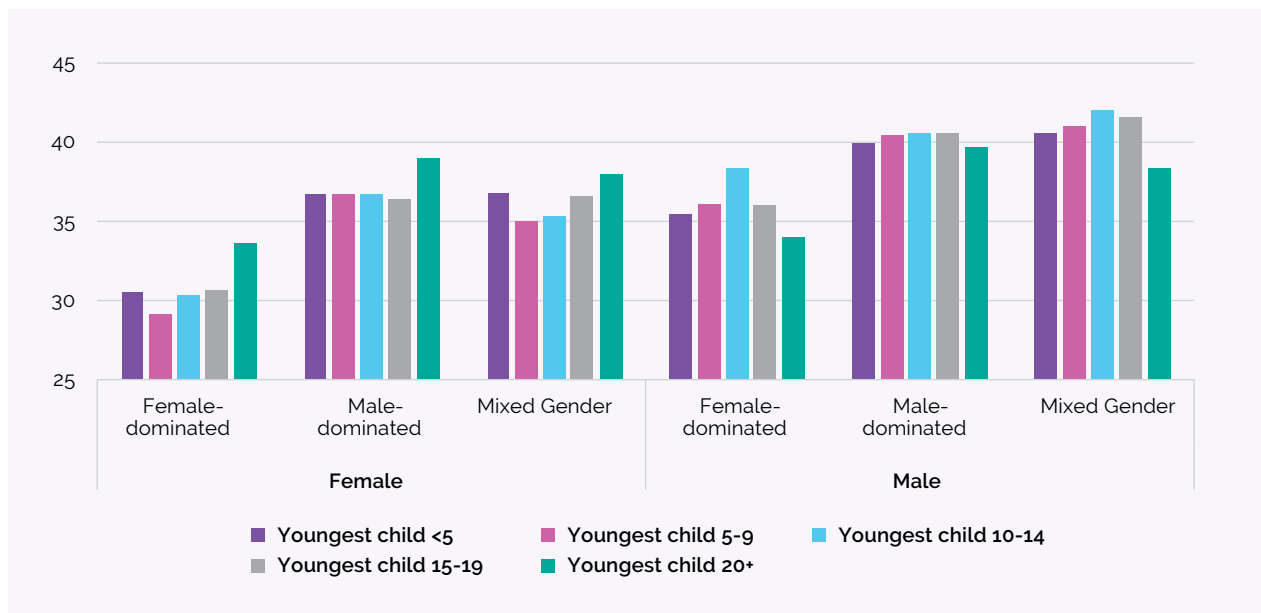


Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

\*Excludes those working variable hours and where usual hours of work was not stated

**Age of youngest child:** for those in male-dominated occupations, the age of the youngest child did not result in any noticeable variance in average hours for either males or females, with the exception of those whose youngest child was aged 20 or older; this resulted in increased hours of work for females and a fall in hours for males (Figure 15). There were different patterns by gender for those in female-dominated and mixed gender occupations with younger children, with lower average hours of work for females and elevated average hours of work for males. Further work may be warranted to determine the extent to which this impacts on promotional opportunities for females in these roles.

**Figure 15.** Usual hours worked (average) by level of gender segregation and gender (aged 25-54 years) by number of children, Quarter 4 2023



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

\*Excludes those working variable hours and where usual hours of work was not stated

## 6. Summary and conclusions

This report demonstrates that occupational gender segregation is a considerable issue as we attempt to find solutions to reduce skills shortages in Ireland. Key to tackling this is gaining further insights into some of the key characteristics of persons employed in gender segregated occupations, with a particular focus here on hours of work and family structures.

There are more males in female-dominated occupations than females in male-dominated occupations. One of the potential barriers for females entering or remaining in male-dominated occupations may be the longer average hours worked in these roles; males in male-dominated occupations account for 45% of all persons working 40 or more hours. Indeed, the highest average hours worked by females were in male-dominated occupations indicating that an expectation may exist for both genders to work longer hours in these roles.

Family structures also play a role in occupational gender segregation. Females with children work fewer average hours, particularly in the case of those in female-dominated occupations, whereas for males, average hours increase with increasing number of children and for those with younger children. Males in a couple working in male-dominated occupations have the lowest share with a partner working full-time across levels of gender segregation and gender. Being the main earner in the family may result in an increased burden to work longer hours for males in these roles.

There has been much focus in recent years on increasing female participation in education and training provision where males tend to dominate (e.g. STEM and craft apprenticeships). Without examining the working conditions of the jobs that these lead to, and in particular the hours of work and level of flexibility, long term improvements in terms of gender balance are unlikely. The working hours of males in male-dominated occupations should be the first area to be explored to determine the extent to which a reduction in hours may increase female participation. Addressing occupational gender segregation will not only unlock a larger potential supply of skills to meet demand but may also assist in reducing gender pay gaps and increasing work-life balance for both genders.



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