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# Parenting Leave Policies in Malta and Inequalities





# Parenting Leaves in Malta: Types of Leave and Design Elements - analysed through the gender equality lens



# Parenting Leave Policies in Malta

- **Maternity/ Paternity/ Parental Leave**

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- Urgent family Leave
- Parental bereavement leave
- Miscarriage leave



# Understanding the Context

## Parenting leave policies cannot be seen in isolation

- It is fundamental to look at the **position of women and men in the labour market** and focus on **work family conflicts**
- Assess how **gender roles** are evolving in **relation to paid and unpaid work**

# Understanding the Context – Employment Rates

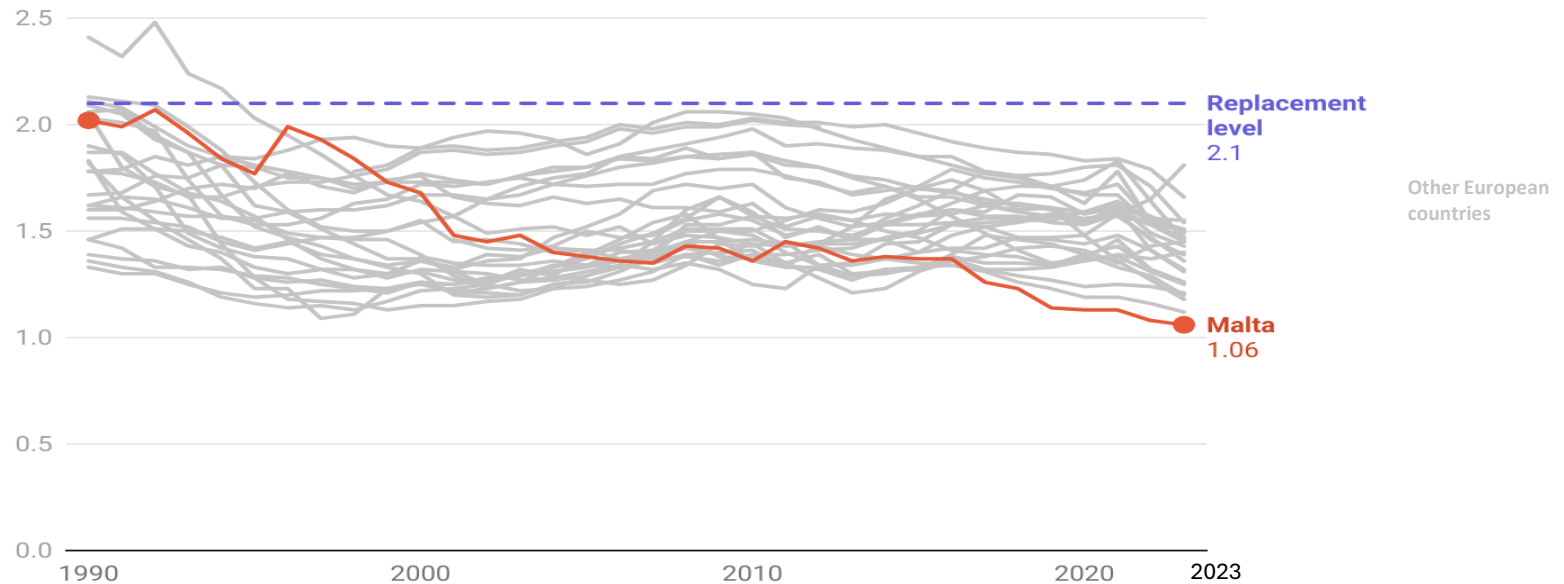
**Table 4. Employment rates by sex and age group**

Age group	Males	Females	Total
	%		
	July-September 2025		
15-24	55.0	46.9	51.2
25-54	94.8	85.8	90.8
55-64	73.9	50.7	62.7
<b>Total (15-64)</b>	<b>87.0</b>	<b>75.1</b>	<b>81.6</b>

NSO LFS Q3/2025 (<https://nso.gov.mt/labour-market/labour-force-survey-q3-2025>)

# Context: Malta's fertility rate (1.06) - lowest-low

Timeline showing fertility rates of European countries including Malta since 1990 to 2023



# Maltese Context

- 67.6% of women
- 58.6% of men

Reported having difficulties **fulfilling their family responsibilities at times or frequently -More women than men seem to be struggling**

Data Source: Borg & Camilleri, 2024 , NCPE.

# Understanding the gendered Maltese Context

- **96.5%** - Partners agree in principle on equal roles when it comes to the care of children
- **1% of men** take on most of the responsibilities in relation to the care of the children, while **46.6% of women, claim to do so**
- **32.7%** claim to share the care responsibilities between the partners - **more males report they are doing so**

Data Source: Borg & Camilleri, 2024, NCPE.



# Inequality-Reducing and Inequality-Generating Elements of Parental Leave Design in Malta



# Looking at family leaves, their adequacy and impact

	Duration	Impact
<b>Maternity Leave</b>	<b>Duration:</b> 18 weeks (126 days) <b>Compensation:</b> 14weeks at full, 4weeks at sick-pay level ( <b>€25.19</b> )	Mothers are rushed back to work
<b>Paternity Leave</b>	<b>Duration:</b> 10 days <b>Compensation:</b> 100%	Compared to Maternity leave, there is a gap of 16 weeks (116 days) between the parents
<b>Parental Leave</b>	<b>Duration:</b> 4 months <b>Compensation:</b> €25.19 Euro daily for 2 months only	Given the low daily rate, it discourages fathers + poorer families to take this leave + Law is convoluted
<b>Leave for when children are sick</b>	None	Parents constrained to find other solutions

# Parental Leave - Restrictions

Cap 318. Provided that parental leave shall be paid for a period of two (2) months, at the same rate established for the sickness benefit entitlement under the Social Security Act, and parental leave shall be paid as follows:

- (a) fifty per centum (50%) of entitlement will be paid, where the child or children for whose care parental leave was granted has or have not attained four (4) years of age;
- (b) twenty five per centum (25%) of entitlement will be paid, where the child or children for whose care parental leave was granted has or have attained the age of four (4) years but has or have not yet attained the age of six (6) years; and
- (c) twenty five per centum (25%) of entitlement will be paid, where the child or children for whose care parental

# Parenting Leave Policy in Malta- Latest changes

- **The Urgent Family Leave** (increased to 32 hours (from 15 hrs) - 1/2 from Vacation Leave, 1/2 from Sick Leave) (April 2025)\*
- **Parental bereavement leave** - Up to 7 days, fully paid refundable (death of a child under 18) (Jan 2026)\*\*
- **Miscarriage leave** – Up to 7 days, fully paid refundable (Jan 2026)\*\*\*

\*<https://legislation.mt/eli/sl/452.88/eng>

\*\*<https://legislation.mt/eli/ln/2025/275/eng>

\*\*\*<https://legislation.mt/eli/ln/2025/274/eng>



# What do we know about the take-up rates?

- **No data exists** regarding the uptake of family leaves in the **private sector**.
- **Data is only collected for workers in the Public Sector/service** by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality- NCPE

(See <https://ncpe.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Annual-Report-2024-online-version.pdf>)

# Take up rates in the Public Sector/Service regarding Family leaves and Reduced Hours

Family leave and reduced-hours measures are overwhelmingly used by women:

- **Parental leave:** 564 women (**98.1%**) vs 11 men (**1.9%**)
- **Career break:** 174 women (**97.2%**) vs 5 men (**2.8%**)
- **Reduced hours (20/25/30/35/other):** women are consistently **93–95%** of uptake across each reduced-hours option

(See <https://ncpe.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Annual-Report-2024-online-version.pdf>)



## Take up rates in the Public Sector – Flexi time and Remote Working

**Flexible working (Temporal and Spatial) is less skewed, with men much closer to parity**

- **Flexi-time:** 933 women (**53.2%**) vs 820 men (**46.8%**) → closest to gender parity
- **Remote working:** 855 women (**59.3%**) vs 587 men (**40.7%**)
- **Extended remote working:** 1,240 women (**73.6%**) vs 445 men (**26.4%**)

# Take up rates – Bottom line

- **Women dominate uptake** when the **measure reduces working time or involves leave** (typically >90% female across most leave/reduced-hours categories).
- **Men's uptake is concentrated in flexible working arrangements**, where the split is much closer to parity (especially Flexi-time, where men are 46.8% of uptake).



## Final Discussion

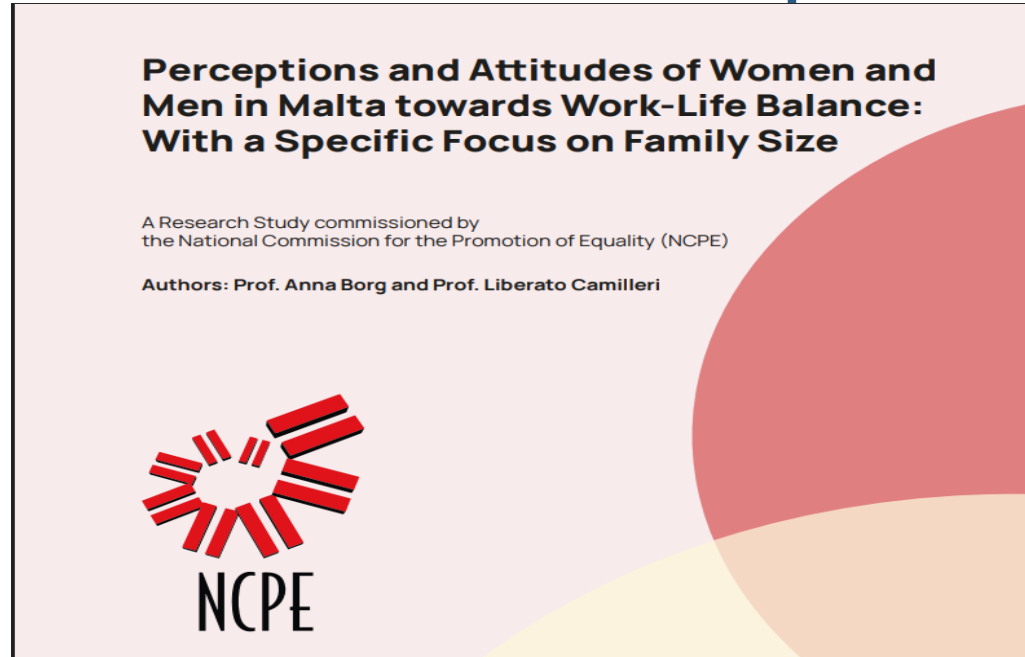


# Parenting Leave Policies in Malta and Inequalities

- **The current family leaves seem inadequate** (time wise and compensation wise) They **contribute to the gender caring gaps** between fathers and mothers and go against the spirit of the Work Life Balance Directive
- **A total revision of work-family leaves is needed** to ensure that the leave is generous (**time wise and compensation wise**) so that by both parents are encouraged to take it in ways that reduce the caring gaps between mothers and fathers and to address the work-family conflict
- Introduce **new leave for parents when their children are sick**
- **Data** on the uptake of family leaves in the Private Sector must improve.



# Parenting Leave Policies in Malta and Inequalities



•See:

[https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/bitstream/123456789/130666/1/Perceptions\\_and\\_attitudes\\_of\\_women\\_and\\_men\\_in\\_Malta\\_towards\\_work\\_life\\_balance.pdf](https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/bitstream/123456789/130666/1/Perceptions_and_attitudes_of_women_and_men_in_Malta_towards_work_life_balance.pdf)



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**Questions?**

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