



9th European Sociological Association Conference

**ESA2009**

European Society **or** European Societies?

02 - 05 September 2009

Lisboa - Portugal

ISCTE

# Gender, Work and Family: Fast forward or replay?

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centro  
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In contemporary context of economic downturn becomes pertinent to reassess previous analysis based several research projects assessing the interplay between gender values, the sphere of work and family life by exploring data from ESS (2002, 2004 and 2006).

In moments of uncertainty the reflexive character of European societies promotes not only debate around the economic and financial grounding of the social world, but also provides a scenario for questioning some established regimes structuring social life, as the gender regimes.

Is our aim to:

Open the analytical and theoretical hypothesis that the financial crises might carry a particular gender order crises;

Highlight a hidden rationality behind gender, work and family.

**1.**  
Global masculinity  
main characterists

**2.**  
Reassessing  
previous data

**3.**  
Gender order:  
between conflicting  
trends

**4.**  
Economic downturn  
global masculinity  
downturn

## Global masculinity main characterists

Particular institutions become dominant in world society.

Patterns of masculinity embedded in them become global standards.

Transnational business masculinity based on multinational corporations and global finance markets is the emergent dominant form of masculinity. Becoming a raw model for masculinity.

Recognize the existence international trade and global finance markets are inherently an arena of gender formation and gender politics. We can recognize the existence of a world gender order.

Masculinity formed in the globalized economy matrix is in a strong position to claim hegemony in the gender order – the context supplies dominance resources.

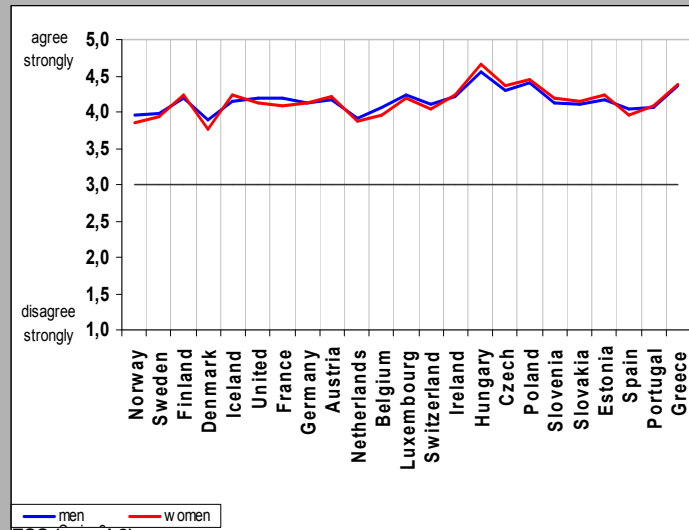
Hegemony in contemporary gender order is connected with patterns of :

- Trade;
- Investment;
- Risk;
- Success;
- Concentration of economic and cultural power.

## Reassessing previous data

fast forwarding a scenario of passage from more traditional gender values towards gender equality and, paradoxically, replaying older gender inequalities

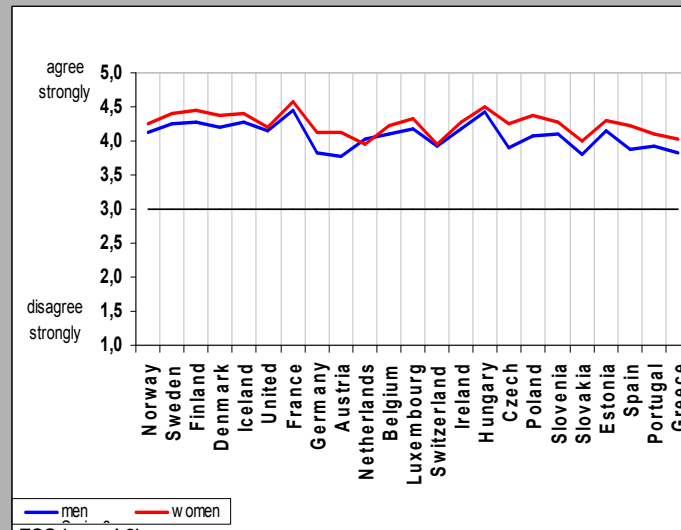
## A person's family ought to be his or her main priority in life



ESS (round 2)

2004

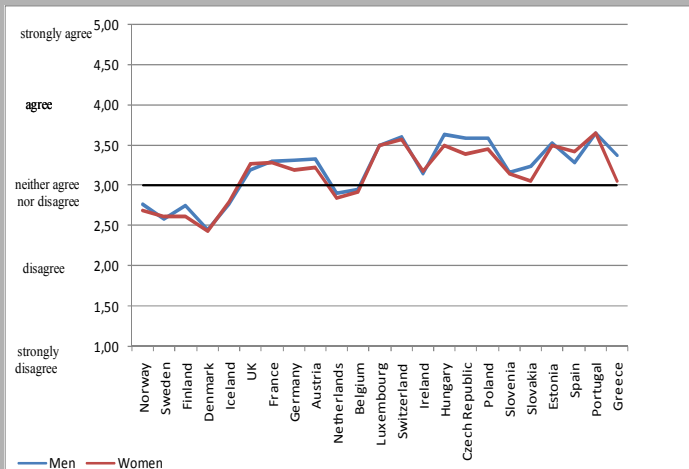
## Men should take as much responsibility as women for the home and children



ESS (round 2)

2004

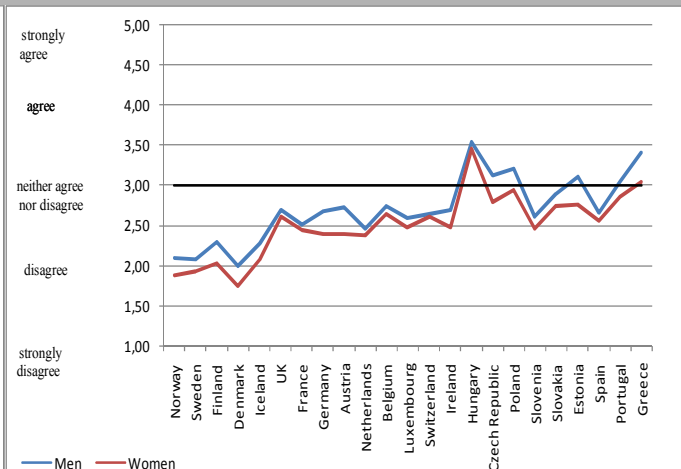
## A woman should be prepared to cut down on her paid work for the sake of her family



ESS (round 2)

2004

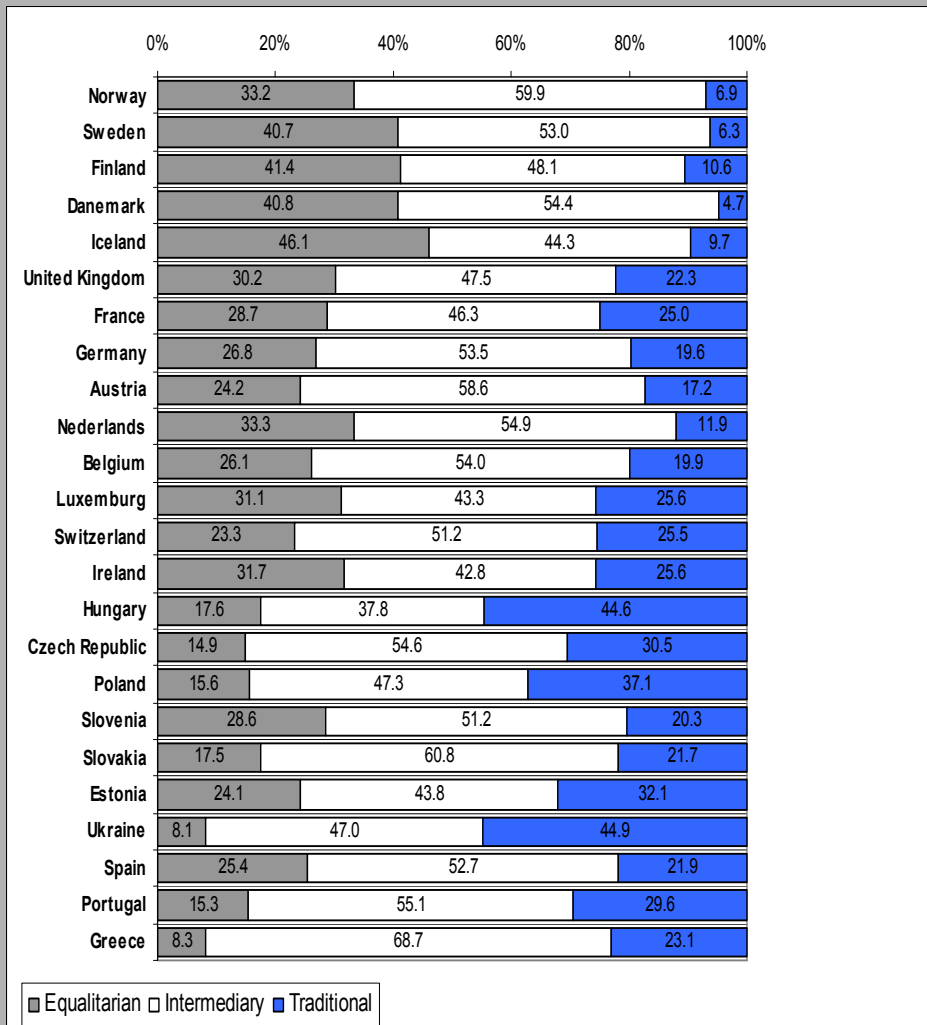
## When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women



ESS (round 2)

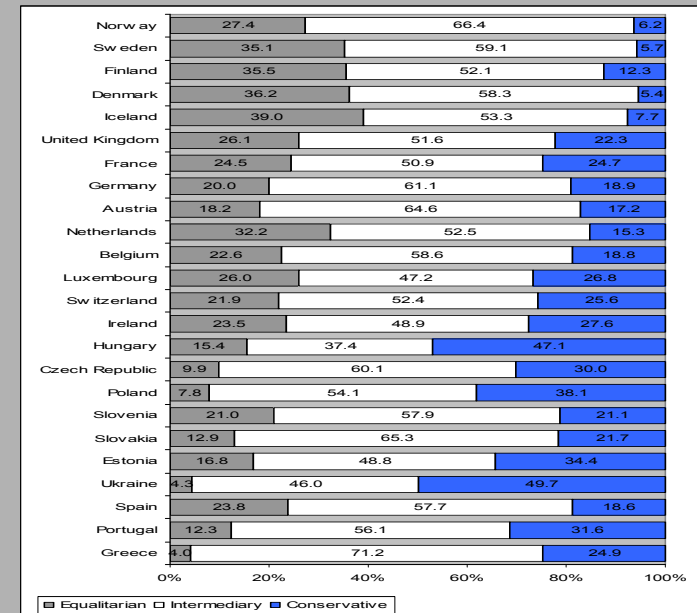
2004

# Equalitarian, intermediary and traditional, by country and sex

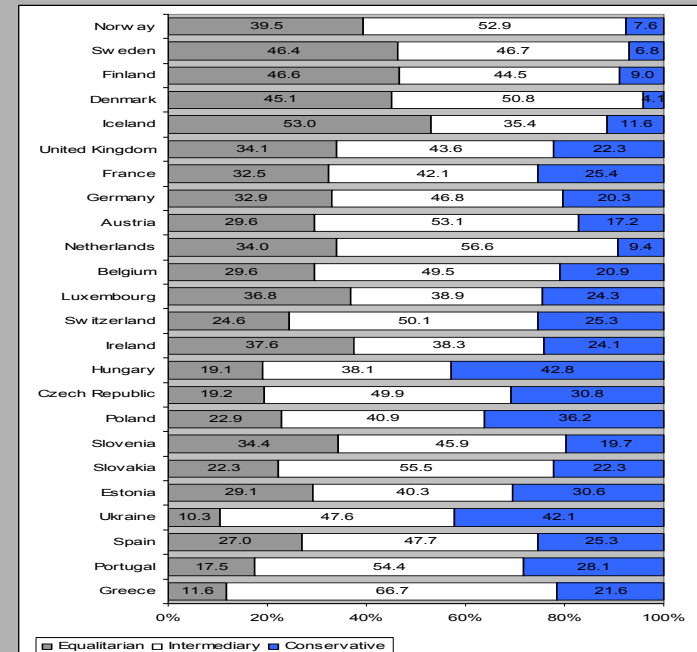


ESS (round 2) 2004

Men



Women



Women, across Europe, transform private life and gender social relations.

Women are more modern and equalitarian than men.

Conflicting trends:

Women - change

Men – uncomfortable conservation

Contributing for **dominant intermediary position** across countries and between men and women.

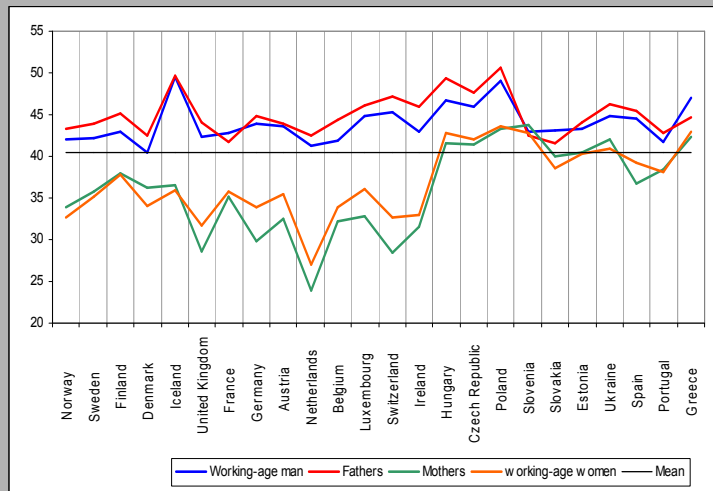
Global masculinity as a difficult relation with gender equality trends

Men feel in a threatened position - women ascendent.

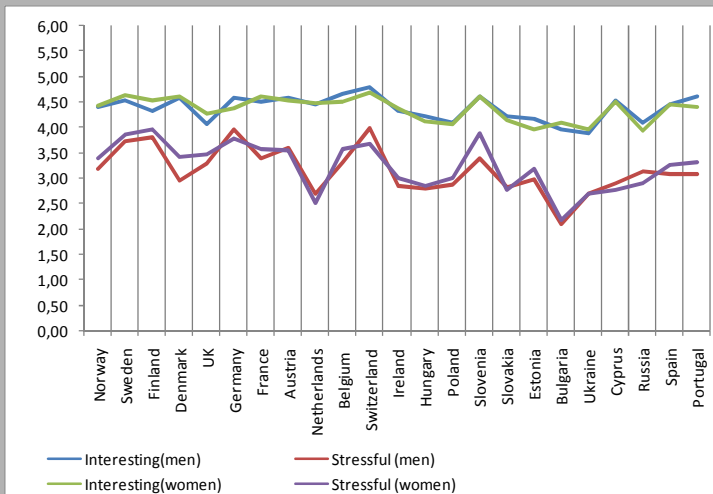
There is no equivalence between a solid confidence on men's position in the world and what their actual power and wealth might show.

Men concern with expressive dimension of life as a new dimension for symbolic gains – equalitarian at ideological level (equal responsibilities home and children)

## Hours worked weekly by working age men and women, fathers and mothers with children under the age of 12



## How much of the time do you find your job interesting and stressful



Clear female presence on the labour market.  
Equal patterns of satisfaction and stress in work between men and women.

Fathers work longer hours – persistence of traditional investment in professional career after children born.

Self-perception as family providers. Goes along with global masculinity based on economic rationality.

This masculine attitude contradicts the ideal of male entrance in the domestic sphere and gender equality in family.

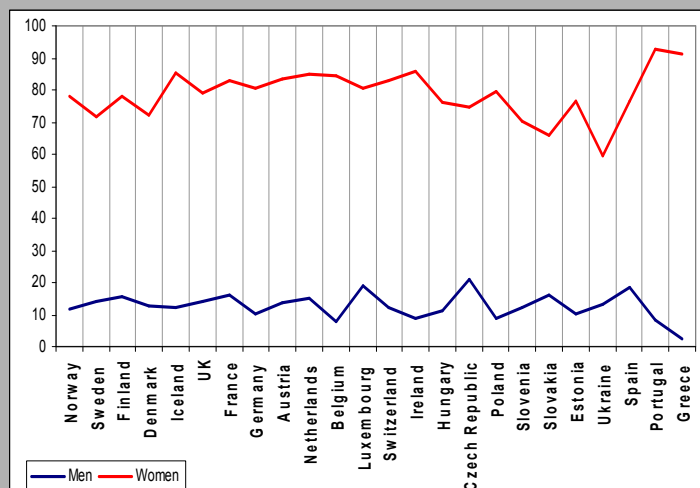
## Satisfaction with the various spheres of life, by life course and sex(%)

	Childless Until 35		Pré-school/ School children		Childless 36-50		Childless > 50		Total	
	M en	Wom en	M en	Wom en	Me n	Wom en	Me n	Wom en	M en	Wom en
Hours spent on paid work	69	69	65	73	69	67	70	73	68	70

Source: EB 60.3 and CCEB 2003



### People saying that they spend more than a half of the total time spent by the household in the domestic tasks



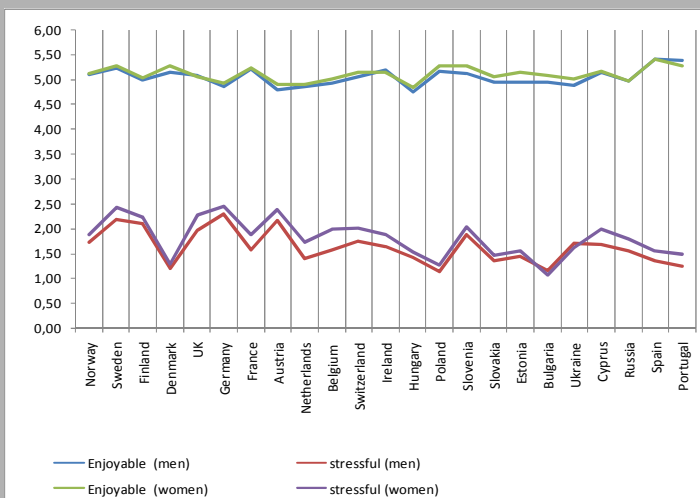
The entrance of men in domestic realm gives men a new centrality in gender order.

Men's responsibility towards home and children doesn't mean equality in the organization of household tasks and responsibilities.

Women are less satisfied with household tasks division – overburden situation.

However, both men and women perceive family time as enjoyable.

### How much of the time spent with your immediate family is enjoyable and stressful

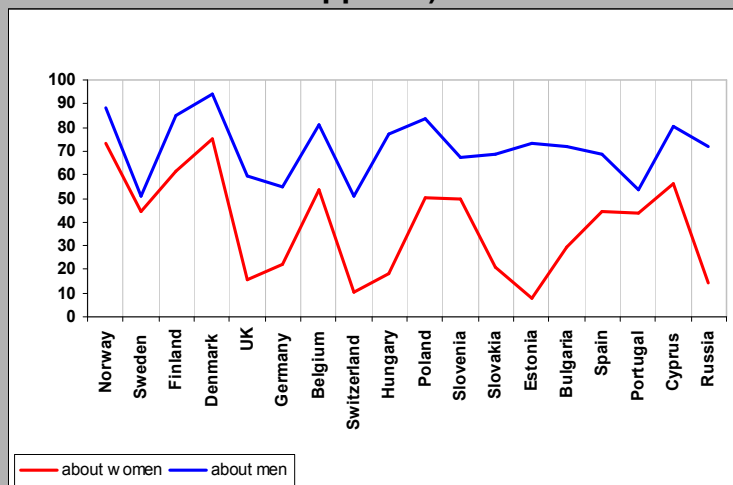


### Satisfaction with the various spheres of life, by life course and sex(%)

	Childless Until 35		Pré-school/ School children		Childless 36-50		Childless > 50		Total	
	M en	Wo men	M en	Wo men	M en	Wo men	M en	Wo men	M en	Wo men
Hours spent on household tasks	61	65	66	61	68	64	68	71	65	64
Division of household tasks	87	79	86	69	89	68	89	74	87	71

Source: EB 60.3 and CCEB 2003

**Have a full-time job while she/he has children aged under 3 (% approve + strongly approve)**



Clear different pattern for mothers and for fathers.

Persistent feminization of caring responsibilities.

For men there is no question:

Very strong approval across Europe.

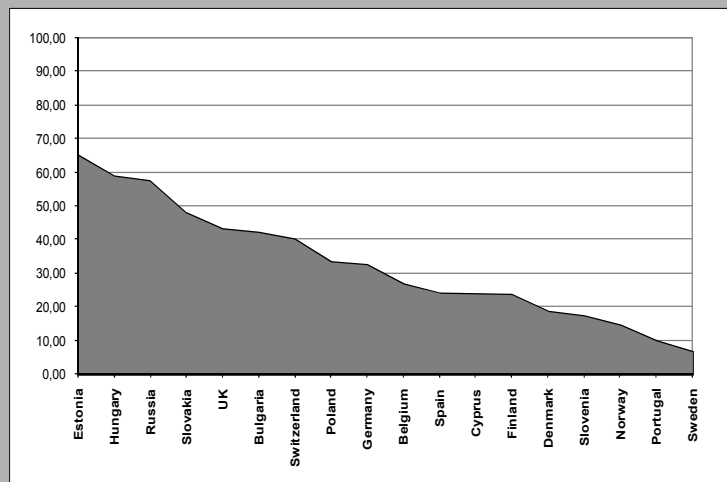
For women:

Very high approval: Nordic (except Sweden);

Moderate approval: Belgium, Poland Slovenia, Spain, Portugal.

Very low approval: UK, Germany, Switzerland, Estonia, Russia.

**Parenthood – work gender discrimination (%)**



## **Family (and connections with work) as a gender regime produces normative ambivalence.**

Gender equality values within family are clearly sustained by the majority of the Europeans while practices in the same domain point out to gender differences and inequalities.

**1.**

Besides the hegemonic masculinity deconstruction and the emergence of new patterns of femininity (women's labour market integration and men's investment in domestic realm) persists the women's association with domesticity and men's association with the productive scenario.

According the requirements for a global hegemonic masculinity:

- Identification of masculinity with the public realm and money economy and femininity with domesticity.
- Strong pressures on domestic life
- Executives are men
- Dependent wives – image produced by media

Reproduces gender differences and inequalities: long professional working hours and long home working hours (feminization). Inequalities in household tasks division.

**2.**

Produces women with her own life-project: professional life, challenging the gender unequal matrix.

# Gender order: between conflicting trends

## Trends in family

Secularization

Valuing feelings and emotions

Individualization

Women's search for autonomy and gender equality

The personal agenda for both men and women seems quite identical:

- having a job, being autonomous, having children or raising a family in different types of arrangements, sharing with partner those life events.

## Trends in Economic rationality

Economic rationality speaks a gender-neutral language of markets, individuals and free-choice. But the world is gendered.

Specific globalization: concentrates economic and cultural power, provides **resources for dominance for men.**

Conditions for the production of a **hegemonic masculinity on a world scale**: dominant form of masculinity that embodies, organizes, and legitmate gender order and regimes.

The individual of this economic world lives in a **masculine symbolic economy**: dividend for men access to power, higher wages, access to decision making positions.

# Economic downturn and global masculinity downturn



## Indicator of financial crisis.

Measures volatility in all markets and thus indicates investors movements to riskier investments (euphoria) or safer (panic). It is strongly related to risk perceptions of intervenients in the financial system.

With the breakdown of an economic rationality based on the free market may also partially crashed gender regimes based on the flows of the apparent gender neutral language of economics.

The determinant relation between gender normativity and power somewhat lost is symbolic and material supply. Because, hegemony in the contemporary gender order is connected with patterns of trade, investment, risk, concentration of economic and cultural power; these new resources for dominance lost one fundamental provider.