



FamiliesAndSocieties



**Stockholm
University**

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**In the best interest of the child:
policy responses to growing family diversity**

by:

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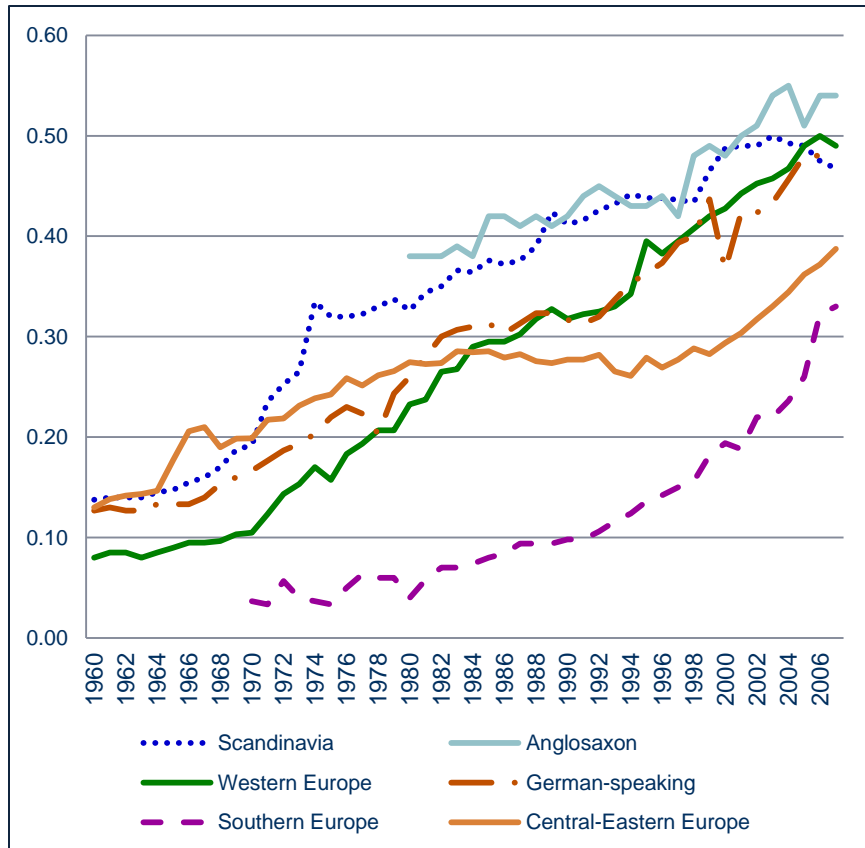
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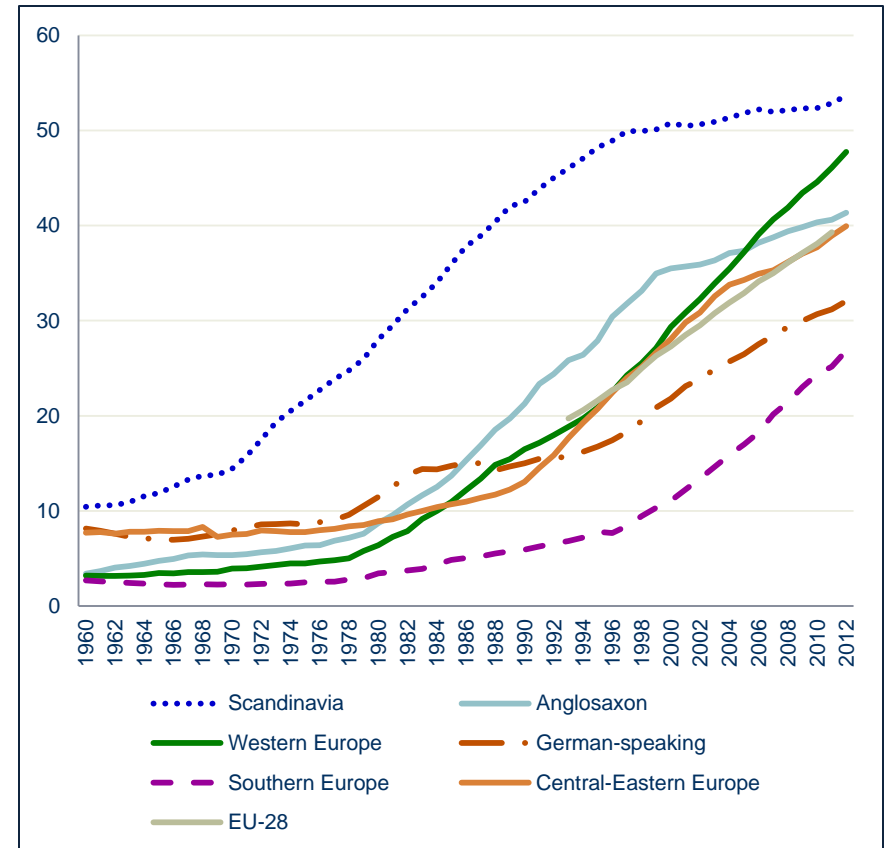
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Total divorce rates, 1960 - 2007



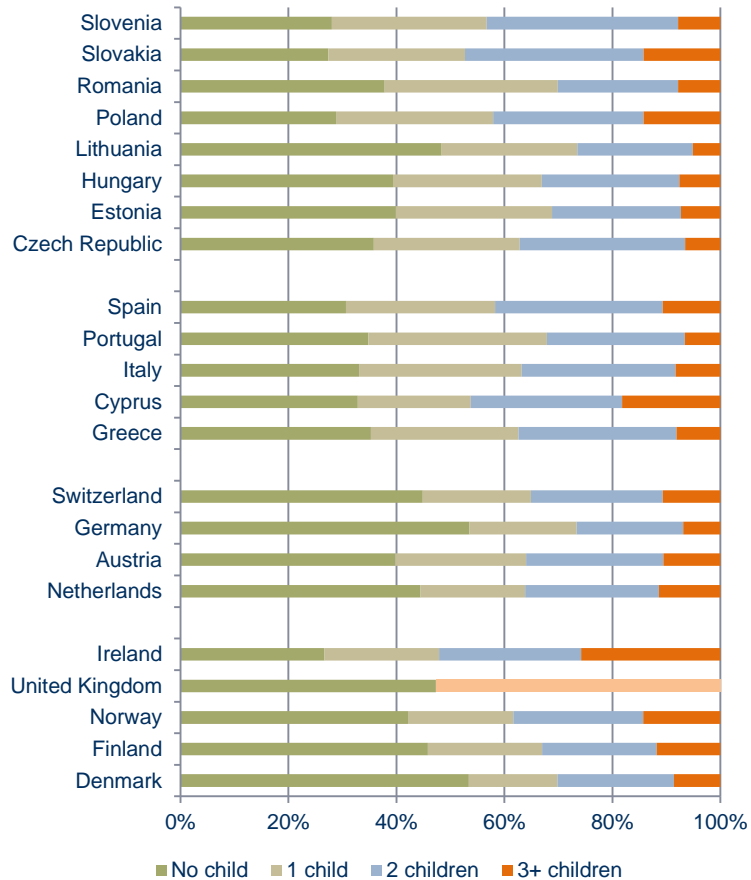
Extramarital childbearing, 1960-2012



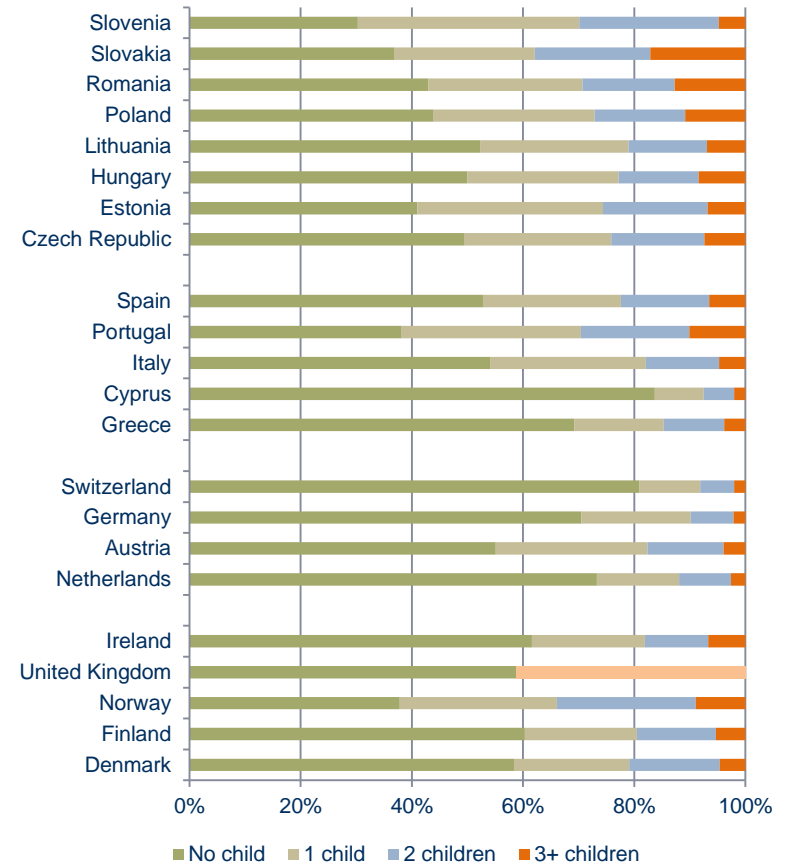


Marriage & children, age 20+, 2010

(OECD Family Database)



Cohabitation & children, age 20+, 2010





Growing family diversity and child well-being

Major trends contributing to the growth in family diversity:

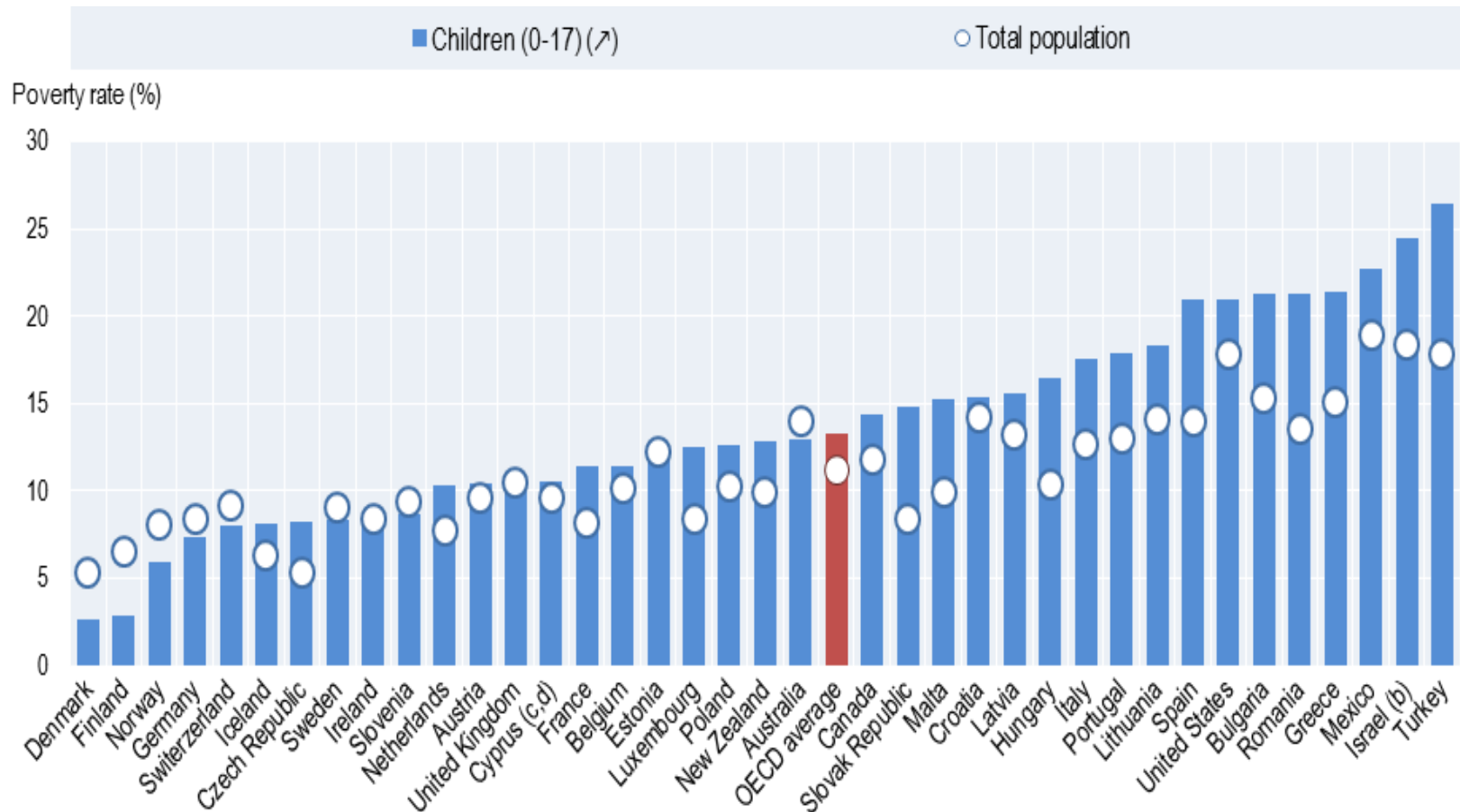
- Increasing divorce rates
- Increasing extramarital childbearing (such births occur mainly in non-marital cohabitation, but also to single mothers)
- Children are raised in marriages as well as in cohabiting relationships, the latter of which being associated with much higher dissolution risks than formal unions

Challenges for policy making regarding child well-being:

- Increasing proportion of children who experience non-intact family living in their childhood (i.e. children living with their mothers only or in reconstituted families)
- Increasing time spent in non-intact family living during childhood



Poverty rates for children, 2012 (OECD Family database)





Single parent households and child-poverty

Share of single parent households of all households (2013 - Eurostat):

EU-28 average : 4.2%

Scandinavia (but Finland), Anglosaxon countries, and Western Europe (but NL): above EU-average (highest: level 7.6% in Iceland and Ireland)

German-speaking countries (but Germany), Southern Europe (but Portugal), Central-Eastern Europe (but the Baltic states): below EU-average (lowest in Greece: 1.5%)

Child poverty (2012 - OECD):

Southern Europe and Central-Eastern Europe: above OECD-average

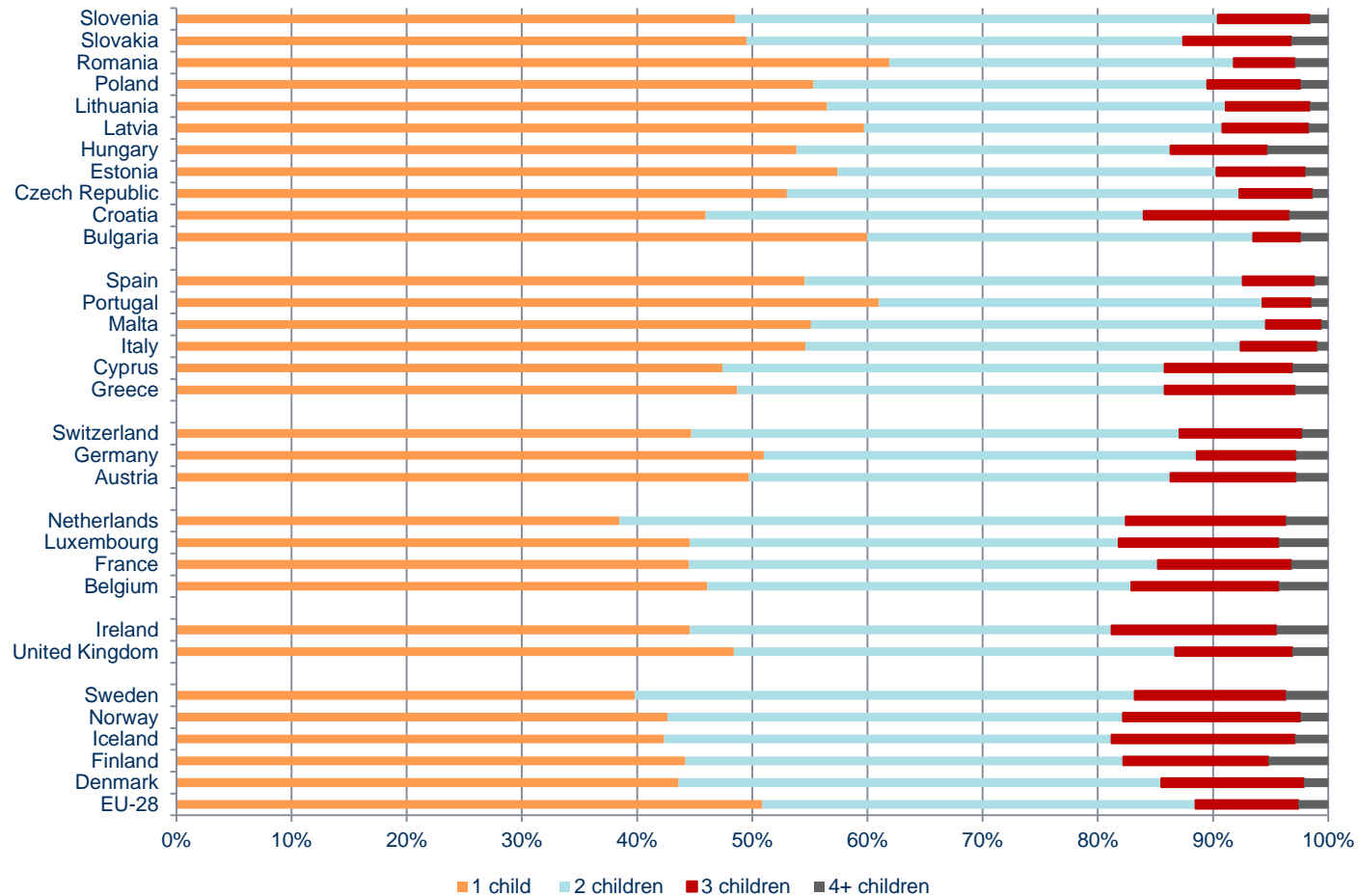
Scandinavia and German-speaking countries: much below OECD-average

→ No straightforward link at the macro-level



Distribution of households with children by the number of children, 2013

(Eurostat)





Family types and child-poverty

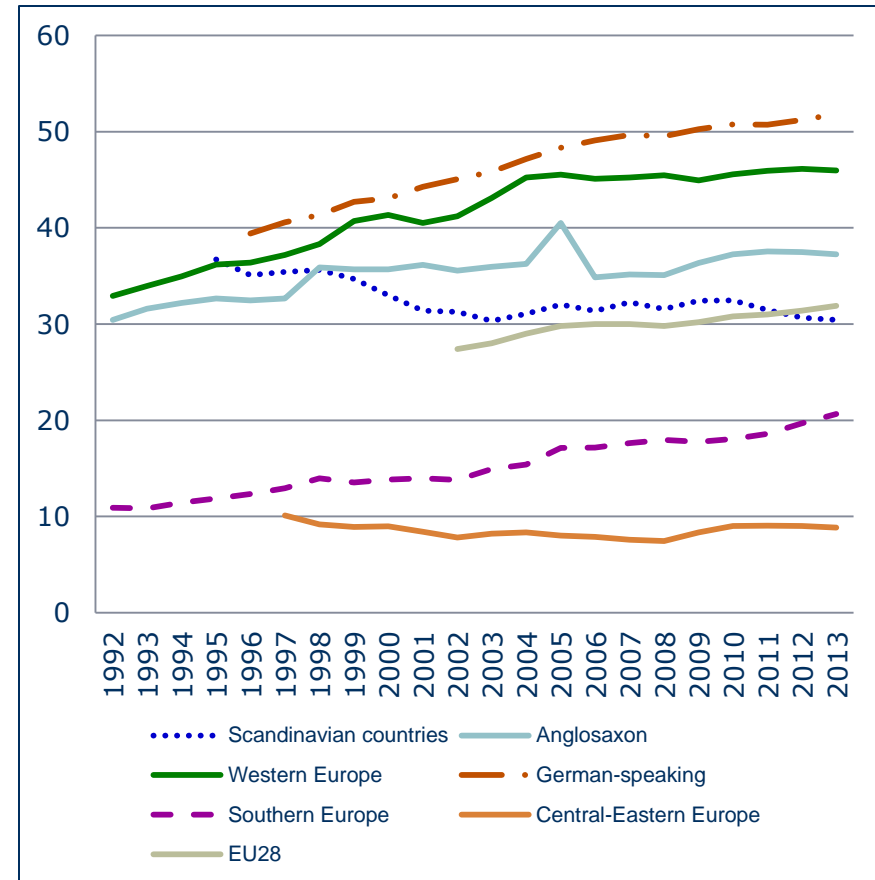
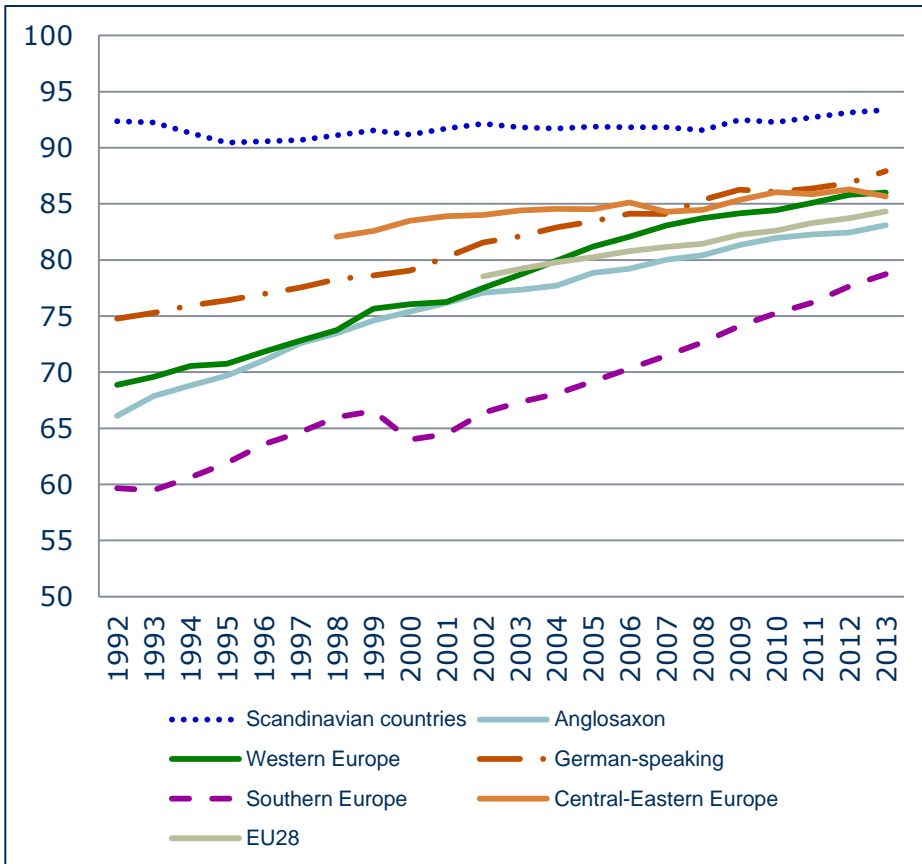
The macro-level linkages between child poverty and vulnerable family types (i.e. single parents and large families) are less straightforward at present:

- Child poverty is not especially low in countries with small proportion of single parent families, limited prevalence of large families and high share of one-child households (as in Southern Europe and CEE countries)
- We do not necessarily find high child poverty rates in countries with above-average share of single-parent households, low prevalence of one-child families and not negligible proportions of large families (as in Scandinavia)
- Policy responses are required that counteract vulnerability beyond usual measures of poverty-reduction (these are measures promoting women's employment, work-life balance, and father's family involvement)



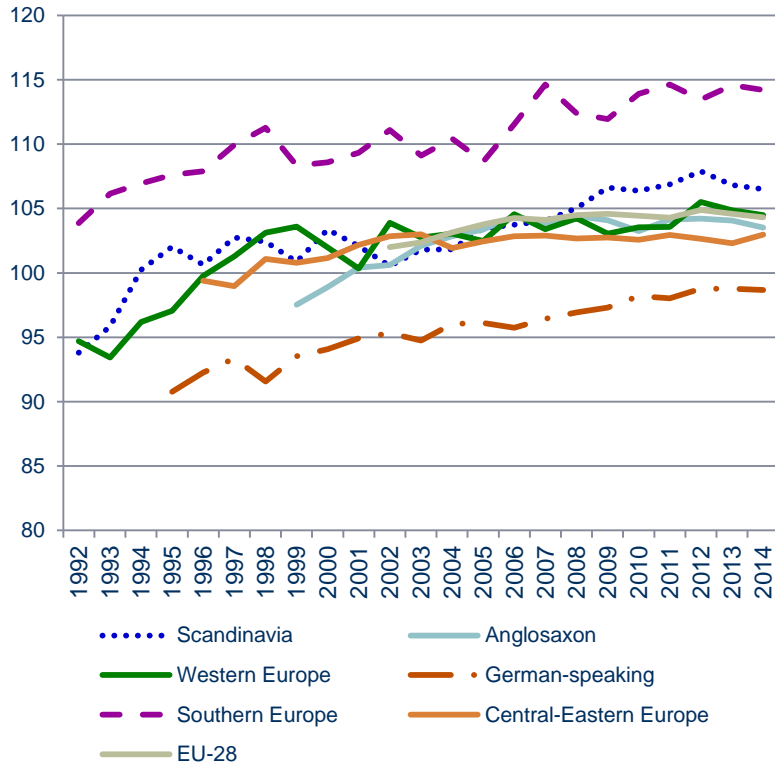
Gender differences in labour force activity, age 20-64

Female part-time work, age 20-64 (Eurostat)

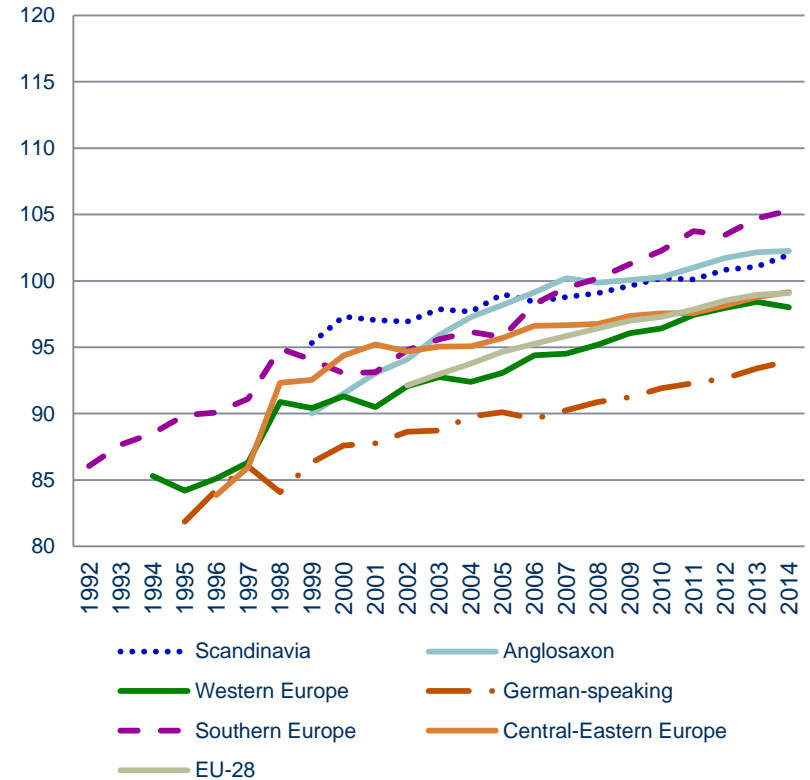




Gender differences in education, ages 25-34 years (Eurostat)

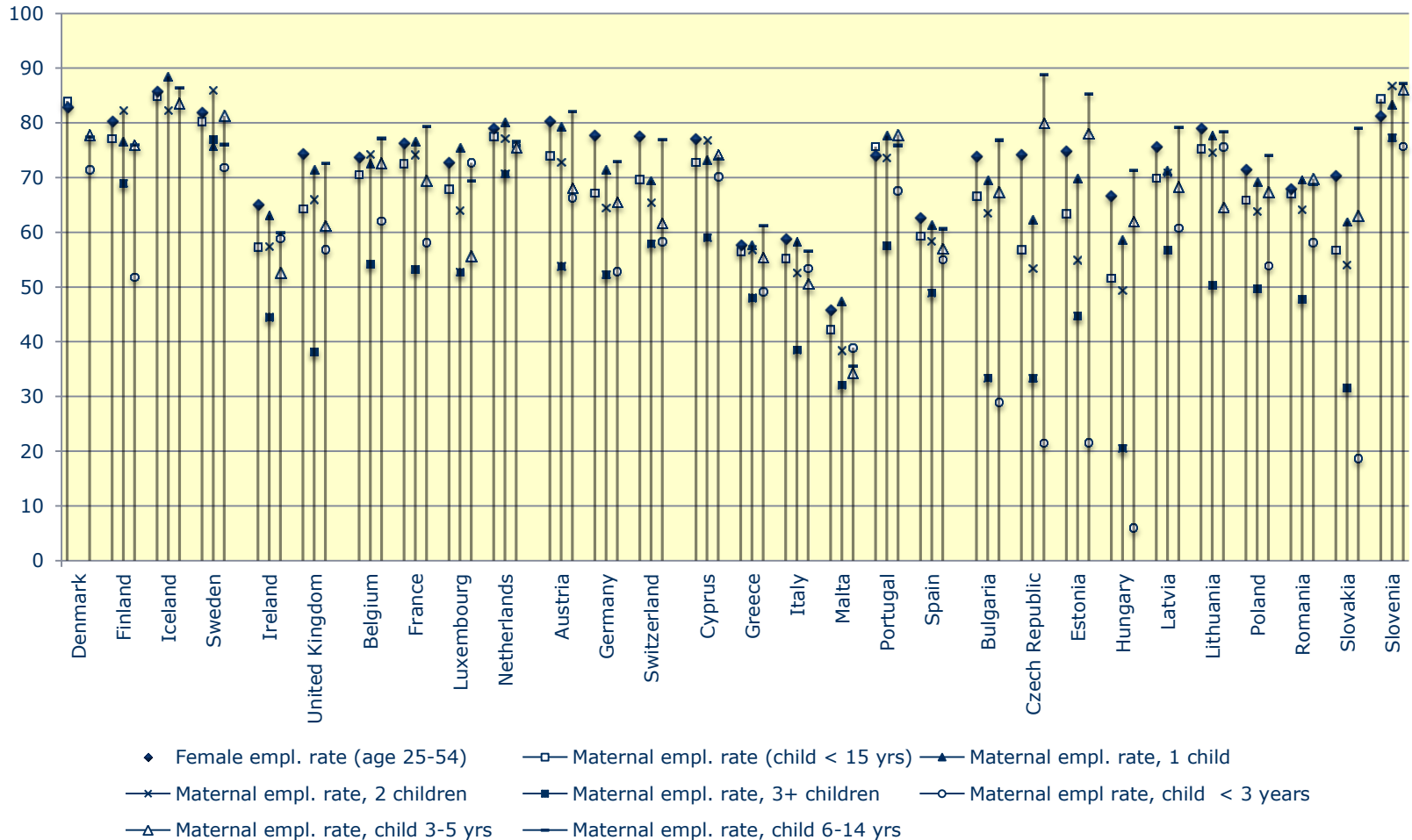


Gender differences in education, ages 25-64 years



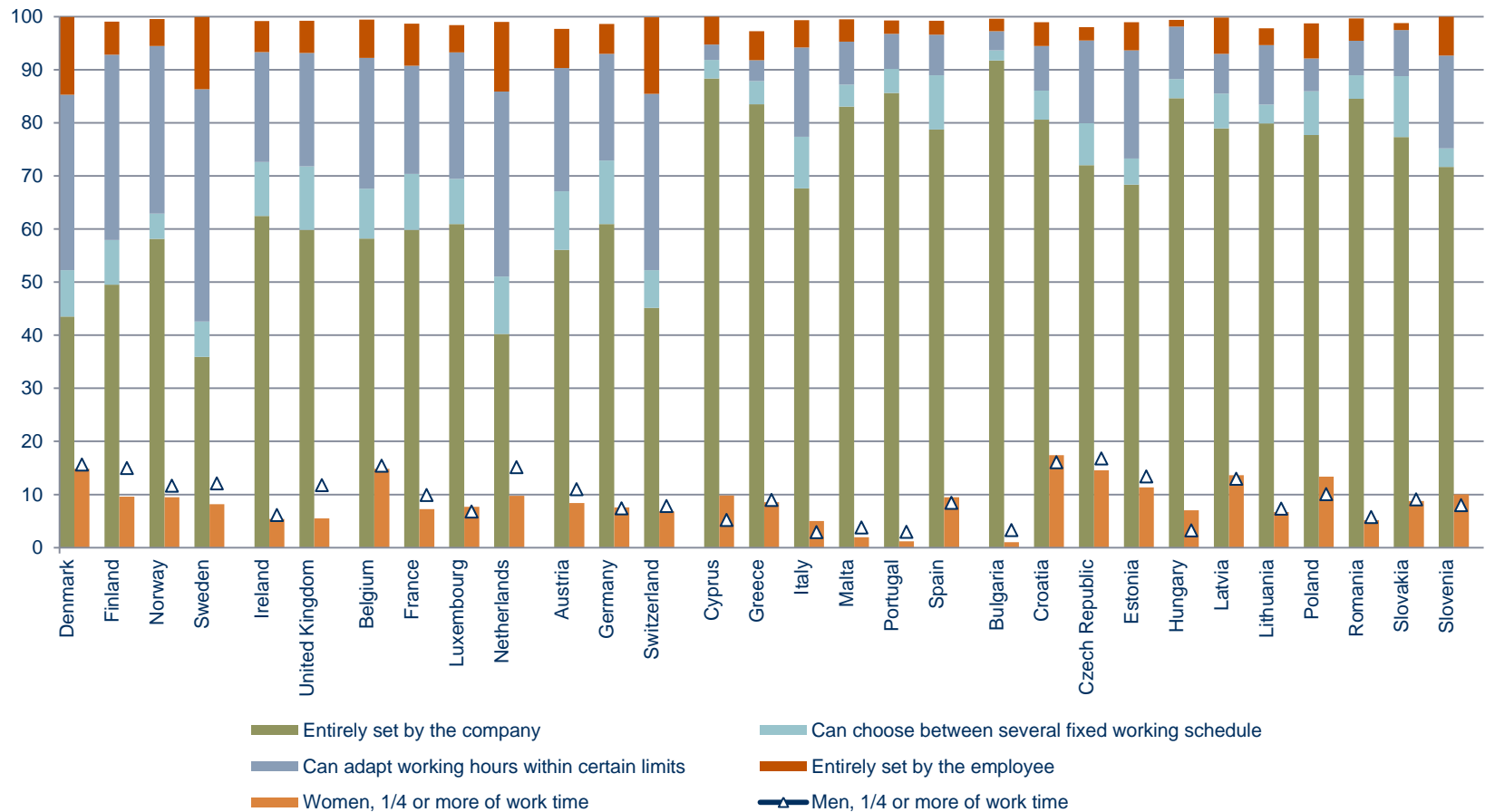


Female and maternal employment rates, ages 25-54, recent years (OECD Family Database)



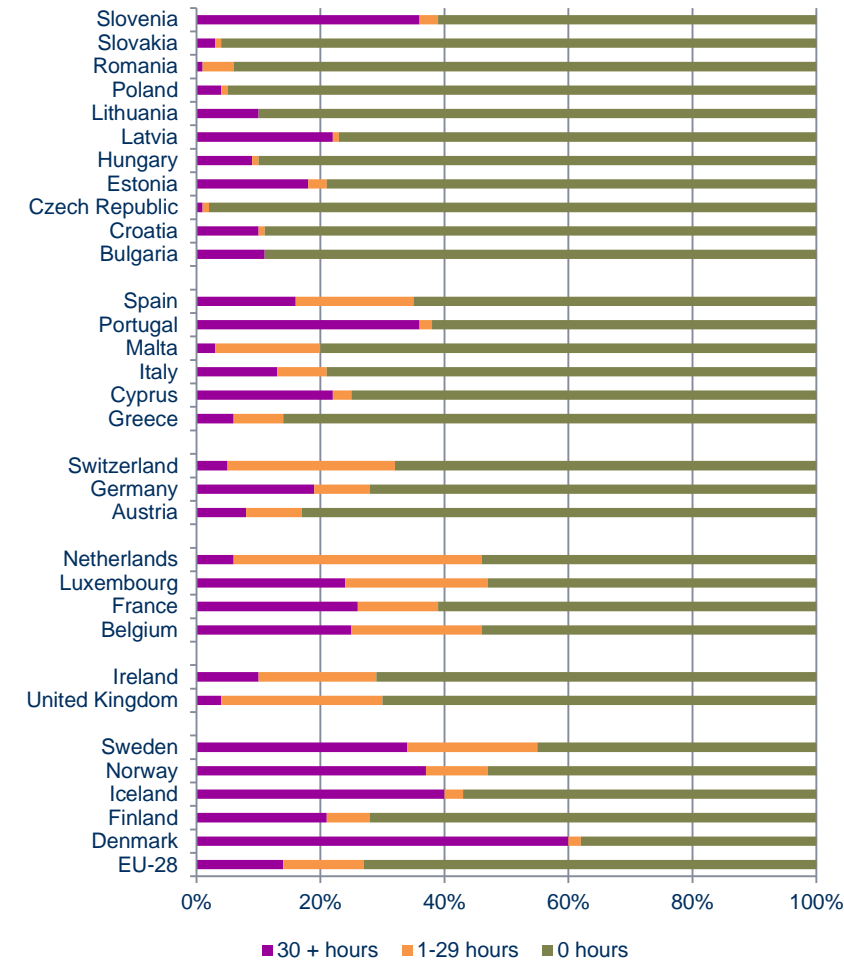


Employment flexibility working time arrangements and possibilities to work from home, 2010 (OECD Family Database)

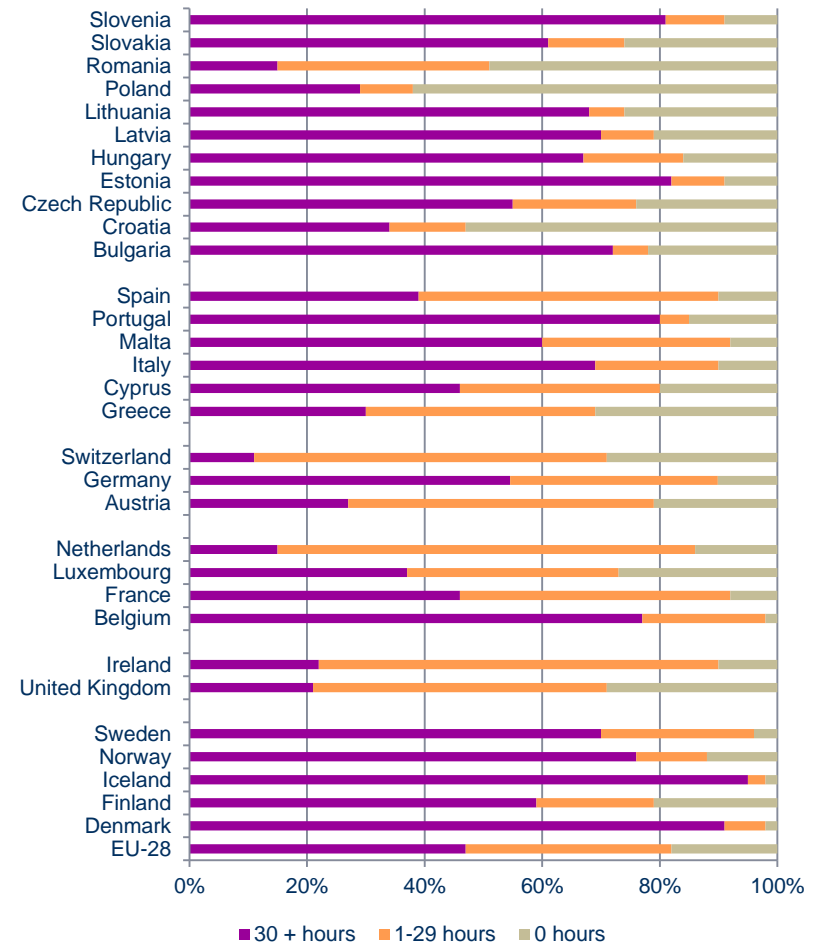




Formal childcare, below 3 years, 2013 (Eurostat)



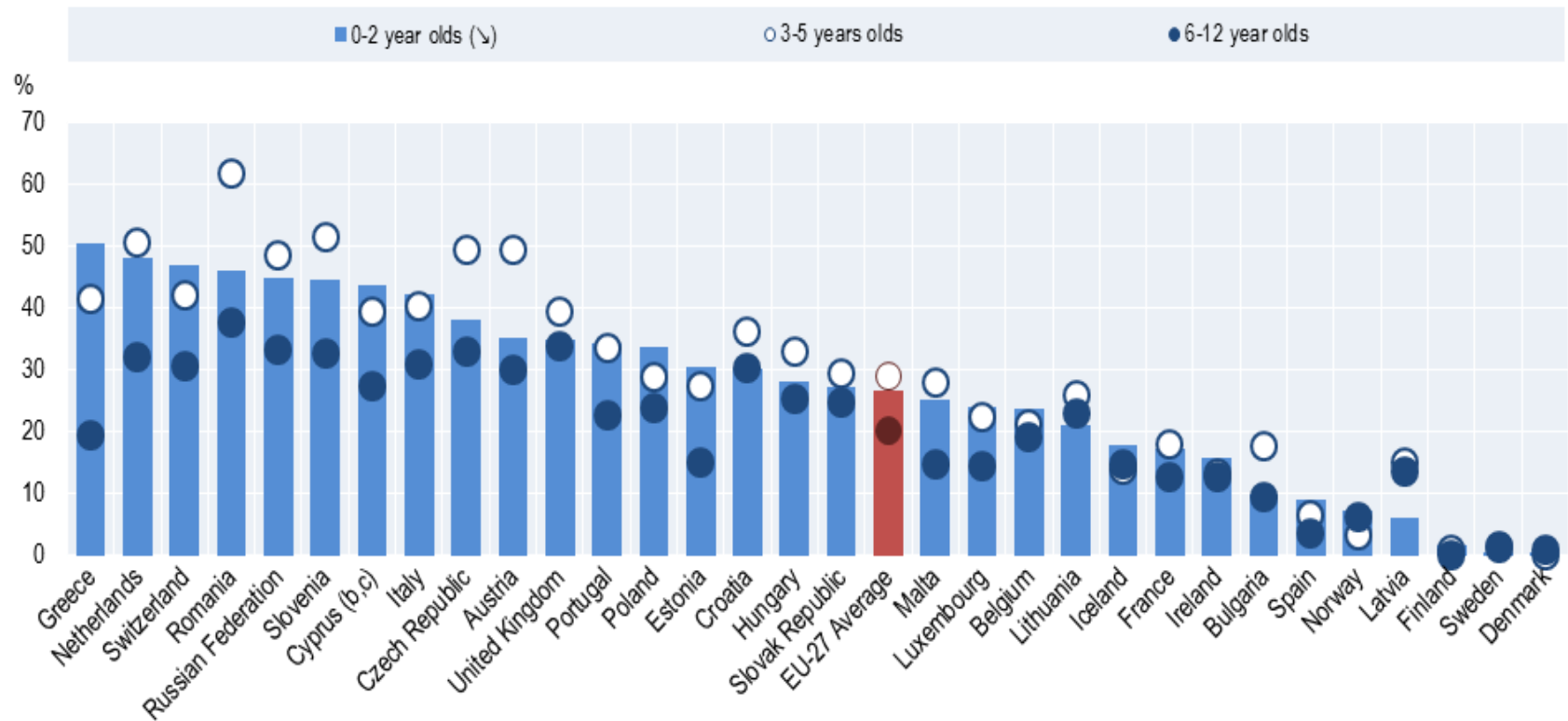
Ages 3 years – mandatory school age





Use of informal childcare by the age of the child, 2013

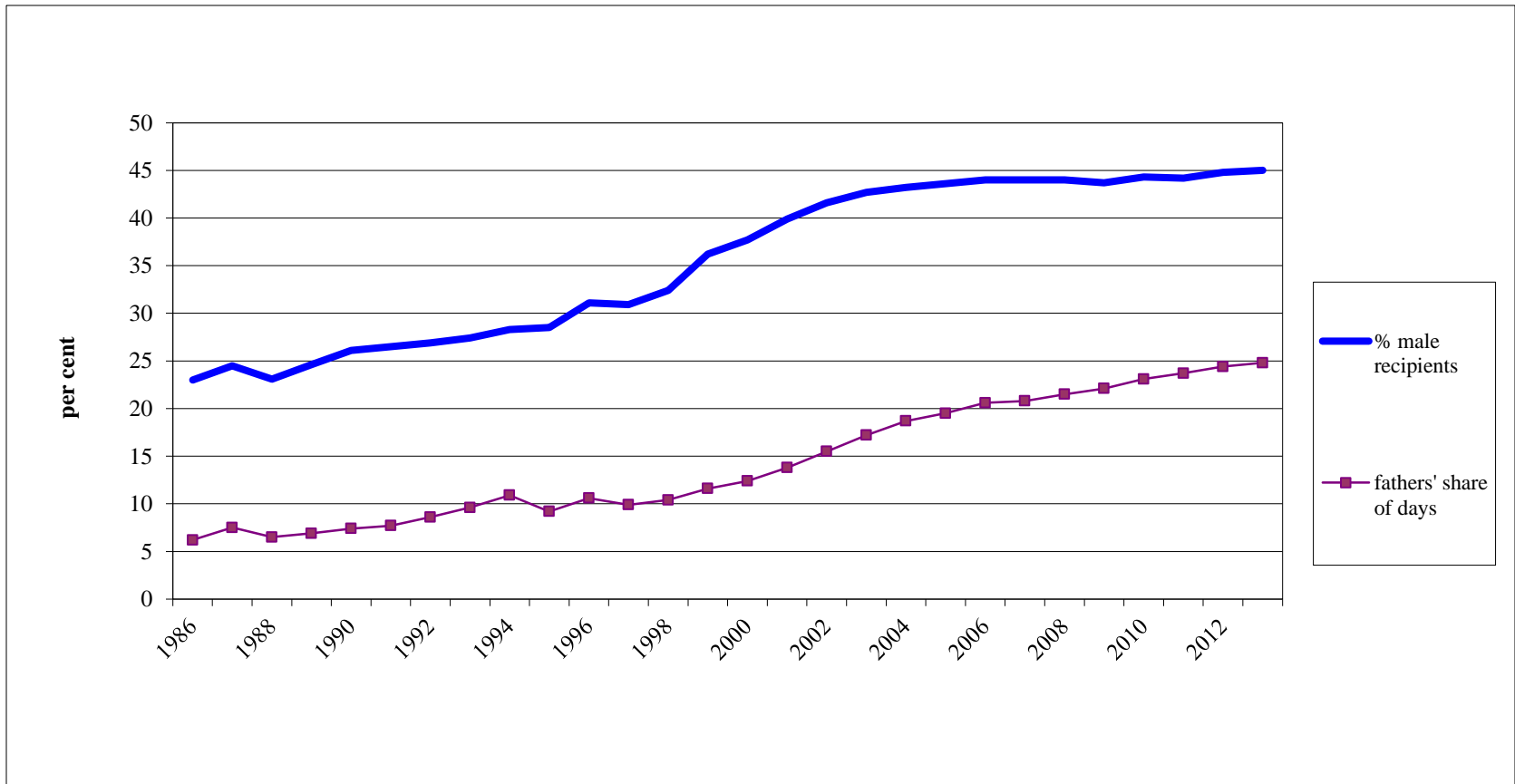
(OECD Family database)





Uptake of parental leave among fathers in Sweden, 1986-2013

(National Social Insurance Board, Sweden)





Policy responses in the best interest of the child (summary)

Policies outside the scope of usual poverty-reduction measures are essential to enhance child well-being given increasing family diversity:

- Policies promoting female labour force participation and maternal employment (less rigid labour market structures, increased flexibility)
- Policies promoting work-life balance (public childcare provision – clear quality criteria, limiting dependence on informal childcare arrangements)
- Policies promoting fathers' family involvement (parental and paternity leaves, mediating services for divorced/separated parents, joint custody incl. shared physical care for children)