

# WOMEN IN THE JOB MARKET BARCELONA 2017-2024

Jobs, poverty from the gender perspective  
and hidden realities  
May 2025



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# 1 Introduction

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This chapter will present the general background, goals and theoretical background of the research and will conclude with a brief overview of the organisation of the document.

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This report offers a comprehensive snapshot the results of research conducted to understand the job market from the gender perspective. The starting point for this research is the 2016 report ‘Dones i treballs. Una aproximació al mercat de treball de Barcelona des de la perspectiva de gènere’ [Women and Work. An Approach to the job Market in Barcelona from the Gender Perspective], and the goal of this report is to update the 2016 document to the extent possible.

The research will analyse the job market as follows:

- Adopting a gender perspective to examine issues such as work intensity, employment sectors, double employment, polarisation, wage gaps, etc.
- Focusing on the city of Barcelona within the Barcelona Metropolitan Region.
- Taking into account key indicators for monitoring the job market from the gender perspective and identifying the causes of entrenched gender inequality, poverty and financial insecurity among women.
- Examining possible initiatives.

Against this backdrop, the goals for tackling the research were as follows:

- To analyse gender differences in the job market: access, conditions, insecurity, etc.
- To analyse the phenomenon of poverty in terms of work intensity, the wage gap, access to public services and housing and quality of housing through these differences and from a social exclusion and gender perspective.
- To analyse the implications of issues such as part-time work, temporary contracts, employment sector, unemployment levels and employability, all from a gender perspective.
- To analyse the impact of the informal economy and care work on the phenomenon of women’s invisibility in the job market.
- To update the indicators from the 2016 document to identify trends in the phenomenon over time.
- To involve a network of subject-matter experts to collect information and ideas that bring nuance to the quantitative indicators from a more qualitative perspective.
- To define a set of profiles that characterise the situation of women in the job market.
- To establish a list of possible initiatives, based on the results of the research, that would allow a future strategy to be developed.

<sup>1</sup> Gurvitch, G. (1974). *Teoría de las clases sociales*. Ediciones de bolsillo.

<sup>2</sup> Bourdieu, P. (2011). *Las estrategias de la reproducción social*. SXXI editores.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Laufer J., Ravet H. and San José Á. (2023). *El trabajo puesto a prueba por el feminismo: Entrevista a Margaret Maruani. Cuadernos de Relaciones Laborales*, 41(1), 11-27. <https://doi.org/10.5209/crla.88027>

The way data and discourses are analysed is clearly shaped by the theoretical approach of the research, which frames these interpretations within a specific conceptual context. The concepts guiding the approach are the following:

- **Social mobility:** individuals' ability to move within the socioeconomic system depending on different factors (income distribution, educational level, access to public services, distribution of power, etc.). This concept is closely linked to social equality and redistribution.
- **Social stratification:** each of the layers created by the socioeconomic system, access to which is determined by the factors governing social mobility. This concept of stratification should not be confused with the concept of social classes, even though they may be complementary. While stratification is more of an objective categorisation of social strata based on factors, social class is a much more subjective sense of belonging that involves a certain level of organisation or common goals. We will use the work of Georges Gurvitch<sup>1</sup> to make these distinctions and categorisations.
- **Social space:** conceptualised by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu,<sup>2</sup> it refers to the differences in individuals' ability to establish relationships and positions within the social structure depending on their access to different forms of capital (economic, symbolic, cultural, social). We could say that it identifies how people play their cards within society.
- **Social reproduction:** another concept introduced by Pierre Bourdieu,<sup>3</sup> it links the structures of distribution of these forms of capital to the conflicting mechanisms to ensure their continuity.
- **Distinction between work and employment:** a concept developed by Margaret Maruani<sup>4</sup> that makes it possible to transcend or complement analyses that focus on the sexual and social division of labour by viewing labour as the set of conditions in which a professional activity is carried out and employment as access to the job market. From this perspective, employment and this access to the job market are what change women's social status. Indeed, for years, this claim was seen as a higher priority than job quality. This view of employment as a factor of autonomy is crucial in understanding issues such as informal or domestic work, as well as access to income, services and housing.

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The gender perspective has always been sorely lacking in the job market. Gender has been rendered invisible throughout the history of labour, with all analyses of the job market focusing on a single, male subject (Prieto, 2024). The gender perspective in the job market means highlighting gender inequalities in relation to the working world. It also centres the social reproduction of life in our analyses, closely linking the sphere of work to the caregiving system and reproductive work. This critical perspective on the relationship between gender and work reveals a clear distinction between working and accessing the job market, considering the unequal position of women in both areas. Working contrasts the social reproduction of life with production in the context of paid work (Maurani, 2002), placing women in an unfair and unequal position in terms of access to decent, high-quality jobs. This distinction between productive and reproductive work has obscured women's subordination to men, and also, therefore, women's challenges accessing work on an equal footing.

Current challenges involve a transformation of inequalities, which for women as a whole translates into greater polarisation and harsher working conditions due to not only gender issues but also other variables such as class, ethnicity and disability. This heterogeneity imposes a model of work dynamics in which women are once again facing multiple forms of discrimination. In recent decades, studies of the job market with a gender perspective not only highlight the existing inequality but also reveal how gender inequality is a structural feature of work dynamics that instead of reducing the gap is transforming these unequal dynamics into other kinds of discrimination (Torns and Recio, 2012).

The significant increase in women in the job market has come with greater socioeconomic vulnerability, as reflected in job insecurity and impoverishment associated with working hours, as well as other forms of subordination such as harassment and wage discrimination. Once again, concepts such as double presence or total workload emerge in analyses to help explain these current gender inequalities in the job market, with the nearly exclusive double presence of women in the reproductive/productive activity dichotomy.

From the gender perspective, discussing working women means discussing and understanding inequality in the dimensions that make up labour dynamics. Including a gender perspective opens the door to highlighting how the activity we call 'work' governs the organisation of society and daily life, concealing and subordinating social reproduction and caregiving work and fragmenting the relationship between men and women from a hierarchical and asymmetrical position.



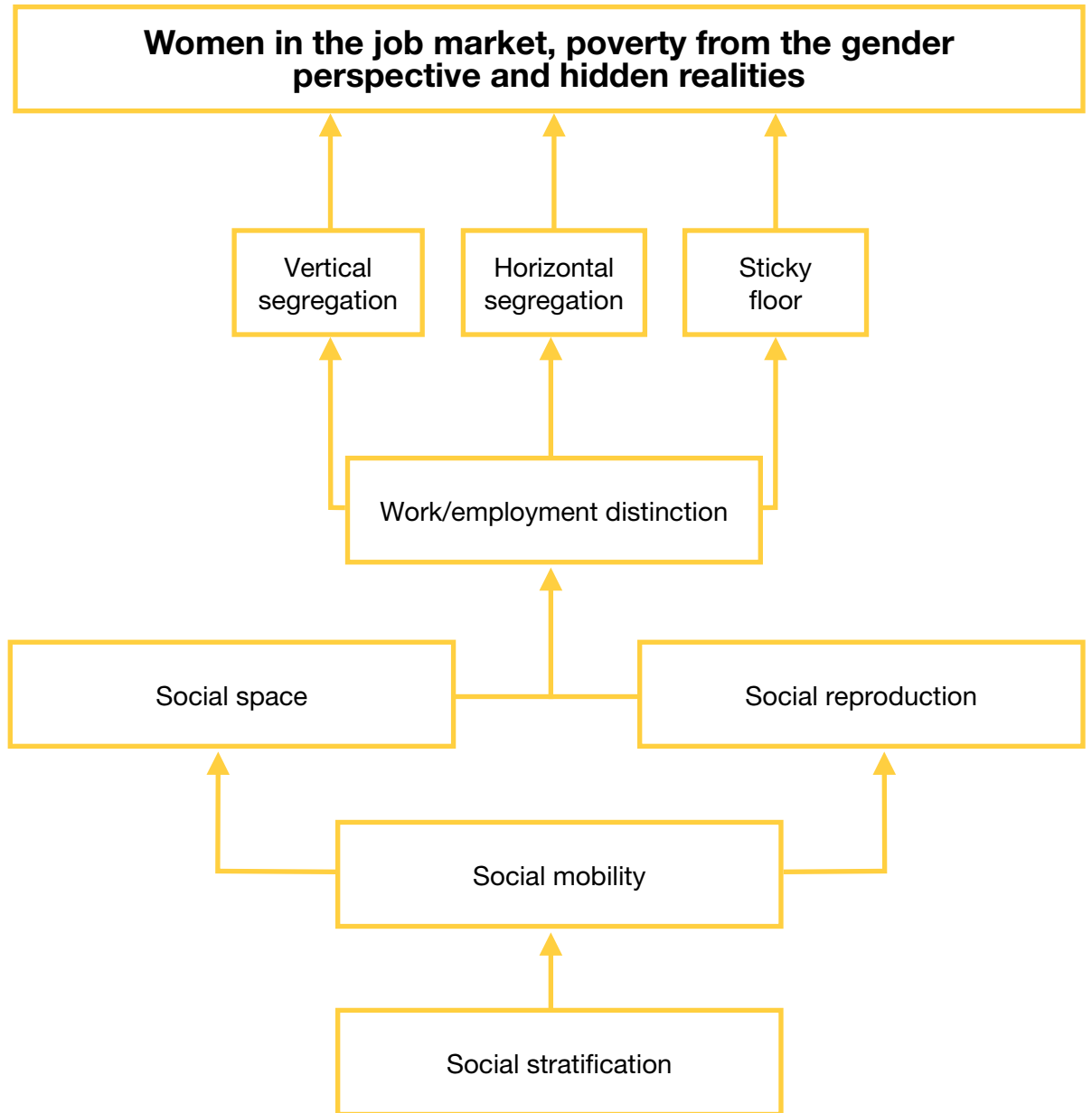
Addressing and analysing cases of the severe vulnerability and exclusion of working women in the city of Barcelona involves, first and foremost, intersectionality (Davis, K., 2009). This concept helps us understand how gender dynamics intersect with other forms of inequality, establishing positions of subordination and exclusion of women linked to the productive/reproductive system in contemporary societies. At the same time, the systems that produce inequality have to do with gender in relation to social class, origin, sexual orientation and other factors, which create social hierarchies that impact the career paths and personal lives of the wide range of women living in the city of Barcelona and ultimately aggravate their vulnerability compared to men in their same situation. Therefore, to understand the factors that lead to a greater risk of female poverty, we must take into account that the job market is highly unequal not only in terms of gender but also in relation to the interaction between gender and other social, economic and cultural factors that must be taken into consideration (hooks, b., 2015). This shows how gender in interaction with other factors of inequality shapes precarious career paths for women and leads to chronic exclusion.

The city is becoming increasingly diverse, and international mobility and labour mobility to cities in the industrial North (Sassen, S. 2007) have led to new social dynamics that have changed the parameters of inequality and the factors of social exclusion. In this regard, the concept of global care chains (Pérez-Orozco, A and López, S., 2011) must be included in the analysis of labour mobility. Immigrant communities in cities, and specifically foreign-born women in Barcelona, play a major role in these chains, and analyses should include the impact of unequal job markets in the destination city on immigrant women. Not only do they access the market at a disadvantage, but the invisibility and financial insecurity associated with domestic work and caregiving are becoming increasingly entrenched, reproducing unequal gender dynamics in both productive and reproductive work. This inequality, in which immigrant women are the ones to take on caregiving work, is exacerbated by social, economic, cultural and administrative factors that increase the risk of social exclusion among foreign nationals in situations that already involve a great degree of vulnerability to begin with.

Socio-demographic transformations such as the ageing of the population, linked to the factors mentioned above, also impact poverty from the gender perspective in today's societies. This is a poverty risk factor that must be considered for women, who currently have a higher life expectancy in Western societies. This reality means taking into account the cascade effect (Moré, P., 2024) in relation to careers shaped by unequal work dynamics and pay, such as the fact that women hold the majority of part-time contracts and face constant career interruptions due to domestic caregiving responsibilities, which in turn have an impact on income and social security contributions, driving the impoverishment of women in the city.

These current challenges are the core factors and themes structuring our analysis of working women in Barcelona, and they must be addressed if we are to explain the persistent hidden realities of gender-based socioeconomic vulnerability.

Figure 1. Conceptualisation of the research



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Following this introduction, the report is organised into four chapters:

**Methodology.**

The next chapter defines the methodological framework of the research, setting out the methods and techniques used and combined in the triangulation of results.

**Descriptive analysis.**

This chapter compiles data that update the indicators used to explain the situation of women in the job market and the phenomenon of poverty from the gender perspective and presents the changes observed.

**Data analysis.**

Having described the quantitative data, we present an analysis that interprets the information found in the research process and defines the situation of women in the job market and poverty from the gender perspective. This section includes the qualitative perspective to strike a balance between the data and social perceptions on the research topic.

**Possible courses of action.**

The interpretation, and the definitions it provides, will be the foundation for exploring a series of critical issues and presenting a list of possible courses of action to address them that could be undertaken in the future. The initiatives are based on the analyses conducted and the experts' work during the implementation of qualitative techniques.



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# 2 Methodology

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This research combined quantitative and qualitative research techniques and methodologies to gain the fullest picture possible of women in the job market. This chapter explains the methodological underpinning of the report.

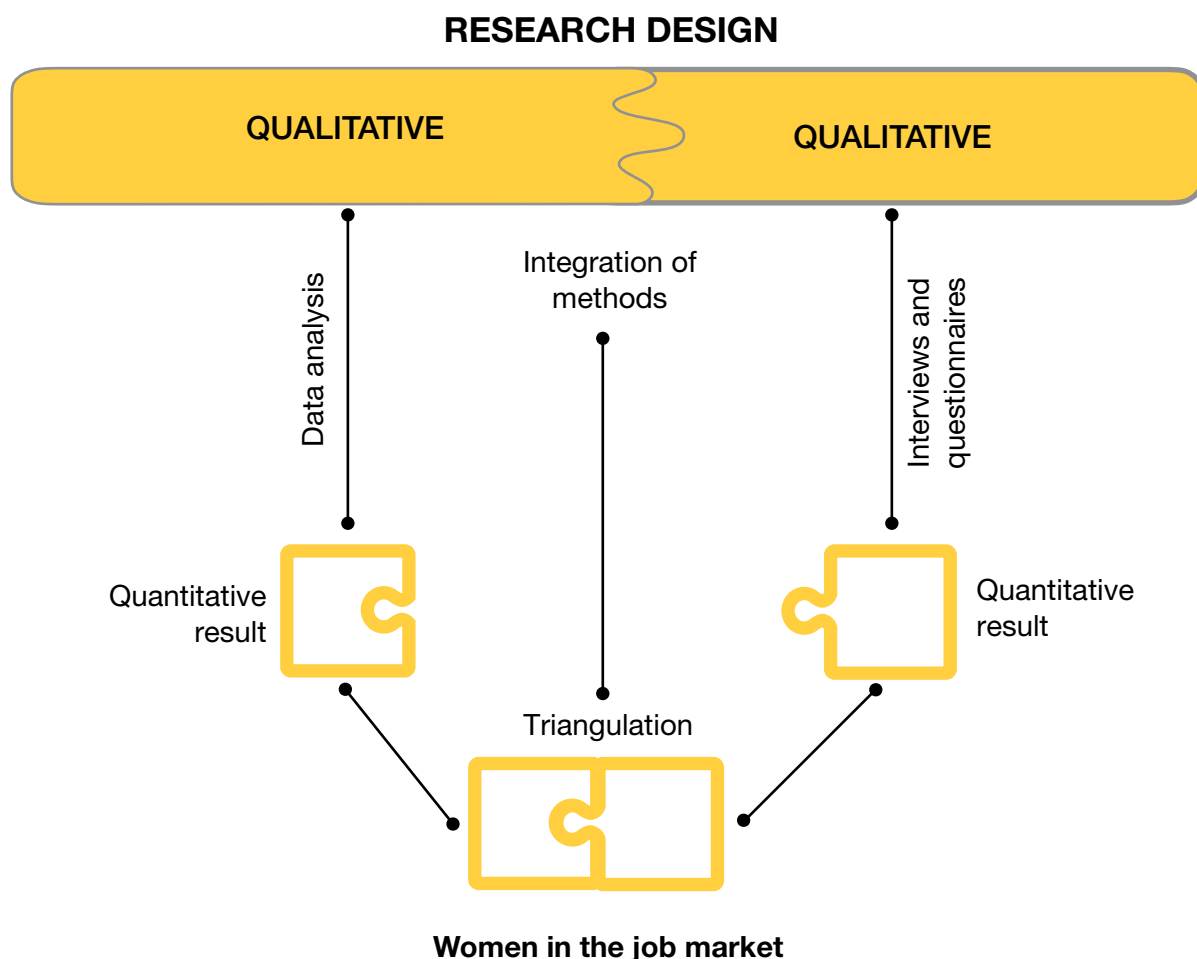
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The research presented in this report has two basic parts. The first is quantitative research based on existing databases for the subject, and the second is qualitative research based on the experiences of individuals and organisations with expertise in the field, which links the data to the real-world issues at hand. This choice demonstrates a commitment to methodological integration and triangulation, defined as the application of both quantitative and qualitative methods and techniques to combine results and thus portray the situation studied as accurately as possible. This triangulation enhances methodological effectiveness by arriving at the results through different channels that offset the limitations of each of them individually. In this case, data analysis gives us a picture of reality that is largely divorced from social perceptions and specific experiences, which we gain through the qualitative methodology and the narratives that emerge in interviews. On the other hand, the qualitative methodology gives us results based on subjective evidence that the data allow us to adjust in a broader objective approach.

The quantitative part of the research was undertaken by updating the content in the 2016 document 'Dones i treballs. Una aproximació al mercat de treball de Barcelona des de la perspectiva de gènere' [Women and Work. An Approach to the job market in Barcelona from the gender perspective]. To do this, we identified secondary sources with data that can help us to describe the situation of women in the job market based on a series of analytical categories that emerged from existing indicators and a combination of the theoretical approach and the research goals. The categories are the following:

- Insecurity.
- Gender-based employment segregation.
- Feminisation of poverty.
- Work intensity.
- Temporary work.
- Employment sectors.
- Unemployment and duration/employability.
- Caregiving and domestic work.
- Informal economy.
- Social exclusion, access to income and the wage gap.
- Access to services and housing.
- Working poor women.
- Single-mother families.
- Reasons women work reduced hours.
- Relationship between pay and work intensity.
- Difficulty returning to the job market.

Figure 2. Methodology



The databases used for data collection were the following:

- Statistical Institute of Catalonia (IDESCAT).
- Spanish Public Employment Service (SEPE).
- National Statistics Institute (INE).
- Barcelona Dades.
- Metròpoli Institute.

In addition to the databases, we used other specific reports and studies, listed in the bibliography at the end of the document.

Regarding the qualitative part of the research, as stated previously, its goal was to contextualise the data analysis through the experiences of organisations and people with firsthand knowledge of these issues. The techniques used were group interviews and an open-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire was only used for organisations that could not attend any of the group interviews. The design of the scripts for the group interviews and the questionnaire include the same categories defined in the quantitative work in order to organise the topics to be addressed, specifically:

**Main topics.**

- Description of the situation of women in the job market.
- Reasons for this situation.
- Assessment of the trends involved.
- Groups most affected by inequality.
- Hidden realities.

- Reasons for reduced work intensity (voluntary or involuntary).
- Challenges in rejoining the job market.
- Actions taken to reverse the situation and proposals.

**Related sub-topics for further discussion.**

- Occupational segregation and sectors.
- Feminisation of poverty:
- Access to services and housing.
- Social exclusion.
- Single-mother families.
- Productive and reproductive sphere.
- Caregiving/temporary work and intensity.
- Wage gap.
- Inequalities: origin, gender, disability.
- Training and educational level

To facilitate reflection and share the research, a presentation and discussion space was also set up as the starting point for the qualitative research.

Following the presentation, which brought together 21 people representing 17 organisations, we scheduled three group interviews: two general interviews that were attended by ten organisations and one specific interview on inclusion and disability that was attended by six organisations. Finally, to facilitate the participation of those who could not attend the group interviews, we provided an open-ended questionnaire to which two organisations responded.

The organisations that participated in the presentation, the three group interviews and the open-ended questionnaire were the following:

- Office of the Chair of the CESB.
- Institut de Persones amb Discapacitat-Barcelona [Barcelona Institute for People with Disabilities].
- Xarxa per la Inclusió Laboral de Barcelona [Barcelona Labour Inclusion Network].
- Dones pel futur [Women for the Future].
- FEM Foundation.
- Caps Association.
- ACIDH.
- AURA Foundation.
- Barcelona City Council Feminism and LGBTI Community Department.
- Formació i Treball [Training and Work] Foundation.
- Femarec SCCL.
- Més que Cures [More than Caregiving] Association.
- Barcelona Neighbourhood Plan.
- Municipal Tax Office.
- Càritas Barcelona.
- Barcelona Metropolitan Strategic Plan.
- Escola de la Dona [Women's School]. Barcelona Provincial Council.
- Barcelona Activa.
- Taula del Tercer Sector [Third Sector Board].
- HEBE Association.
- BAYT AL THAQAFI Foundation.
- Surt Foundation.
- Municipal Institute of Social Services.
- Xarxa de dones cosidores [Women's Dressmaking Network].
- Sindicat de Mares [Mothers' Union].



Figure 3. Map of stakeholders

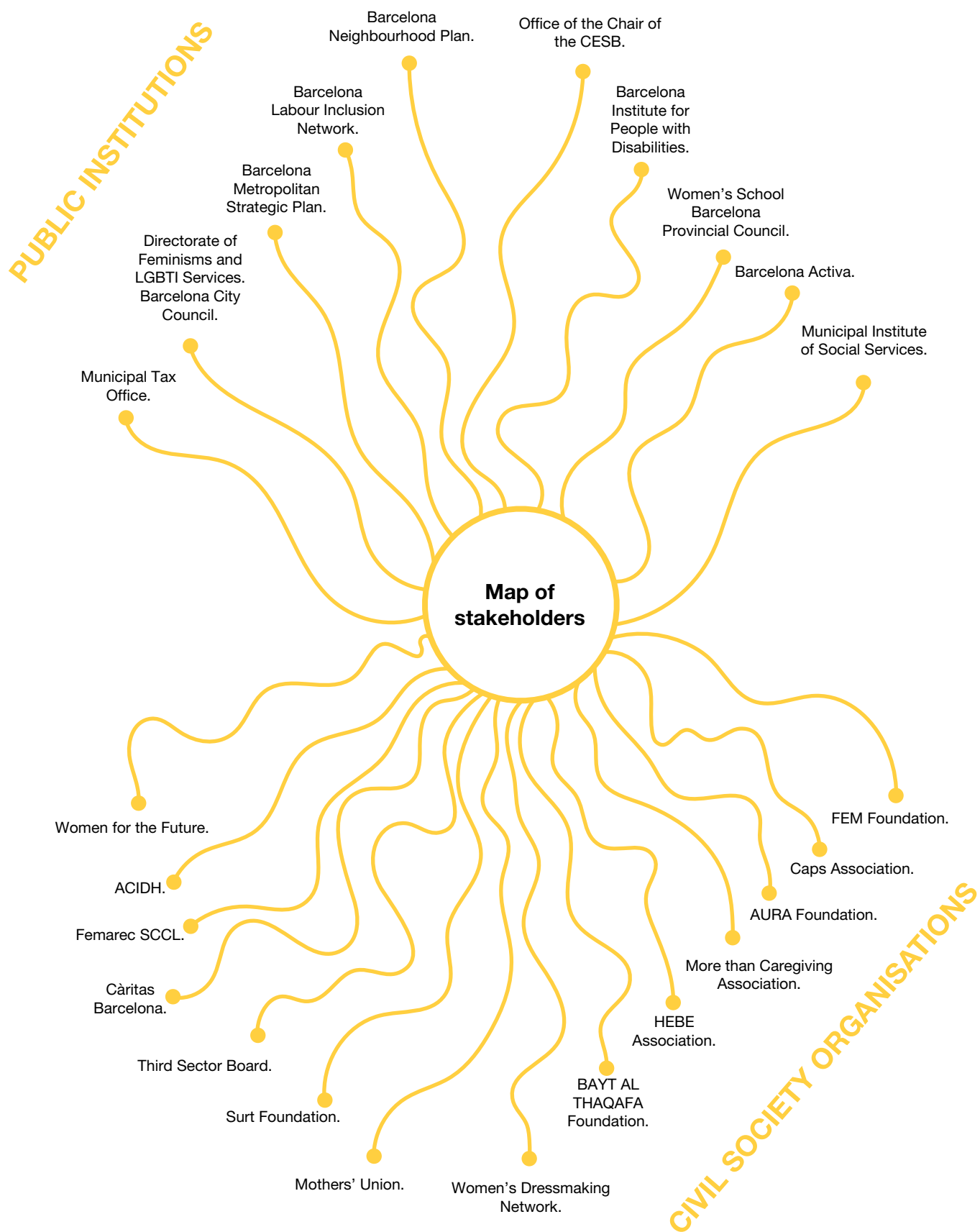
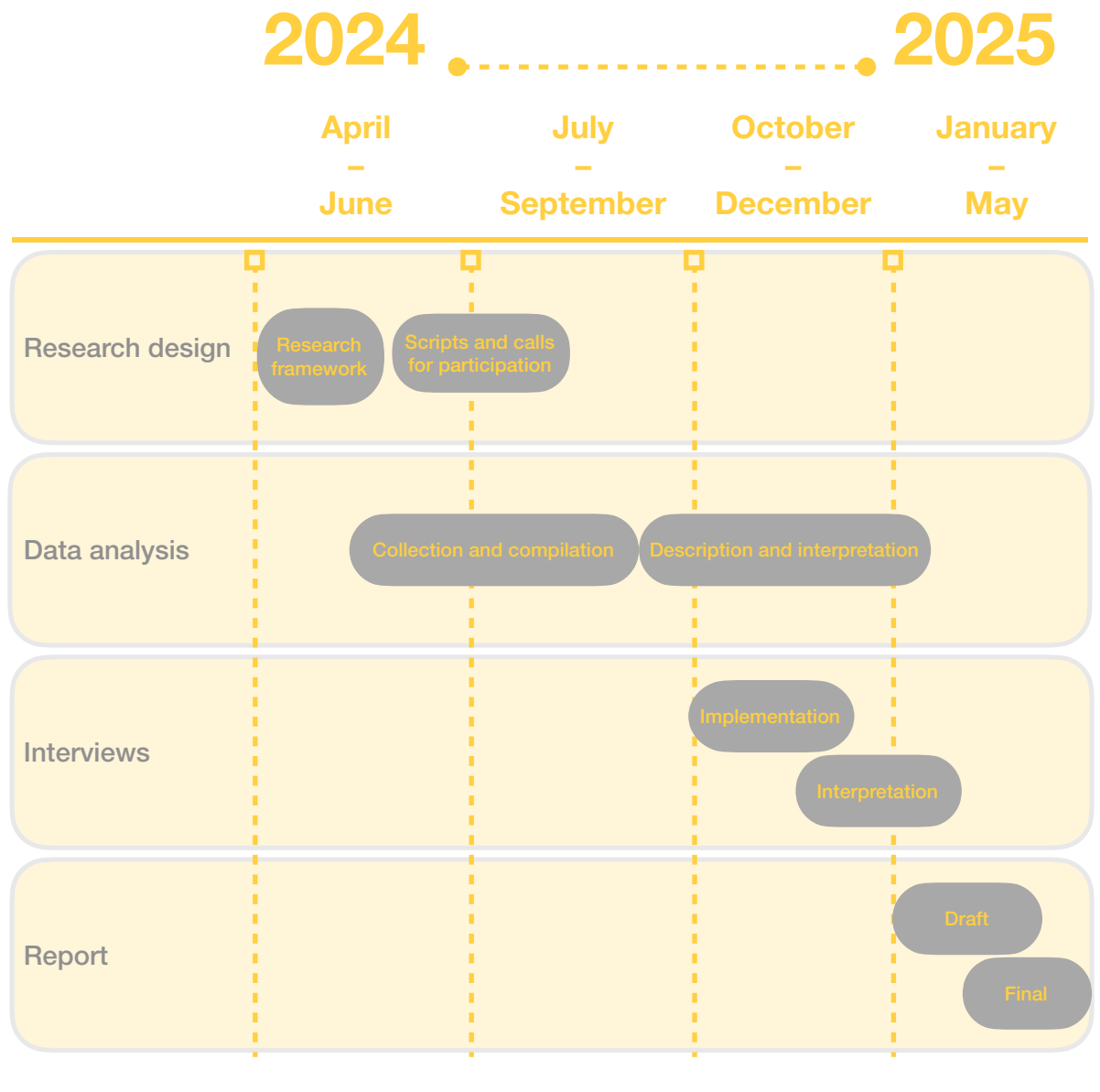


Figure 4. Work timeline



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# 3 Descriptive analysis

Population characteristics from the gender perspective

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Below is a data-based demographic, social and educational profile of women in the city of Barcelona.

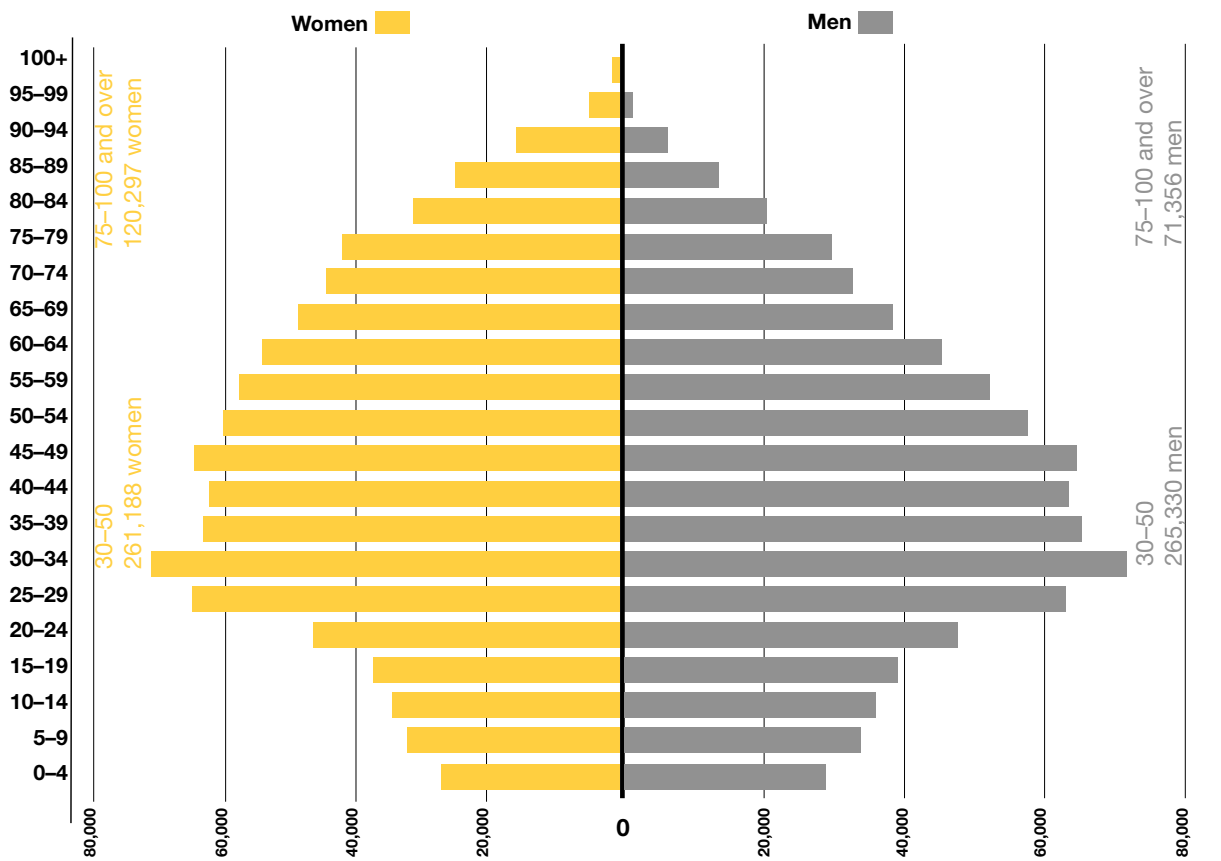
### 3.1

## Women in the overall population structure

<sup>5</sup> The data can be found at: [https://bcnroc.ajuntament.barcelona.cat/jspui/bitstream/11703/135562/5/La\\_poblacio\\_de\\_Barcelona\\_2024.pdf](https://bcnroc.ajuntament.barcelona.cat/jspui/bitstream/11703/135562/5/La_poblacio_de_Barcelona_2024.pdf)

The population of the city of Barcelona reached 1,702,814 in 2024,<sup>5</sup> a 2.6% increase compared to 2023 that marks an upward trend and contrasts with the population declines seen in 2021 and 2022. The population is more or less evenly divided between men and women, with women representing 52.3% of the total population. As in any other European city, the age distribution shows a clear trend towards an ageing population, with a low replacement level at the base of the pyramid and a large population in the central brackets that will age in the coming years. If we analyse the data by gender, we see that the proportion of women increases in older age groups due to their greater longevity.

Figure 1: population pyramid. Barcelona 01/01/2024



Source: Original, using data from the Department of Statistics-Barcelona City Council.

The data in the municipal register show that women make up 61.22% of the over-70 population, 71% of those aged 90 to 95 and 78.7% of those over the age of 95. As such, women are the majority in almost all groups, especially from the age of 45 onwards.

**Table 1: population by age and gender and percentage of women in each age bracket. Barcelona, January 2024.**

Age	Female	Male	TOTAL	%WOMEN
0-4	27,470	29,271	56,741	48.41
5-9	32,099	33,864	65,963	48.66
10-14	34,215	36,265	70,480	48.55
15-19	37,192	39,428	76,620	48.54
20-24	46,748	47,653	94,401	49.52
15-19	65,127	62,923	128,050	50.86
30-34	71,172	71,821	142,993	49.77
35-39	63,271	65,238	128,509	49.23
40-44	62,313	63,653	125,966	49.47
45-49	64,432	64,618	129,050	49.93
50-54	60,564	57,666	118,230	51.23
55-59	57,872	52,196	110,068	52.58
60-64	54,349	45,484	99,833	54.44
65-69	48,874	38,472	87,346	55.95
70-74	44,123	32,788	76,911	57.37
75-79	42,438	29,721	72,159	58.81
80-84	31,173	20,279	51,452	60.59
85-89	25,070	13,461	38,531	65.06
90-94	15,714	6,362	22,076	71.18
95-99	5,059	1,369	6,428	78.70
>=100	843	164	1,007	83.71
<b>Total</b>	<b>890,118</b>	<b>812,696</b>	<b>1,702,814</b>	<b>52.27</b>
<b>Total 70 and over</b>	<b>164,420</b>	<b>104,144</b>	<b>268,564</b>	<b>61.22</b>

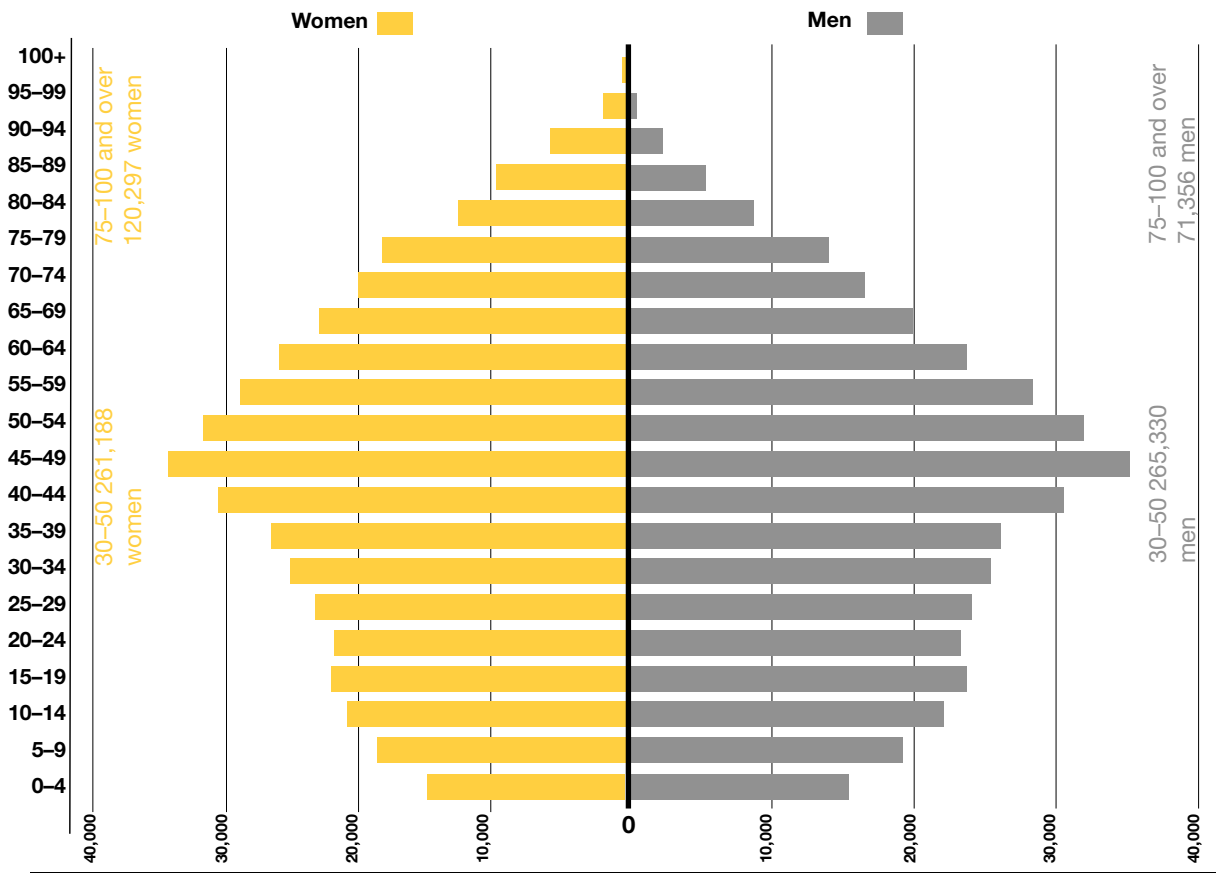
Source: Original, using data from the Department of Statistics-Barcelona City Council.

These figures contrast with the population pyramid for Catalonia, where widespread ageing, including female ageing, holds steady, but to a slightly lesser extent. The gender distribution is less uneven in the pyramid for Catalonia, with the following statistics worth noting:

- The 25-29 age group is much larger in Barcelona than in the rest of Catalonia, where the distribution is more balanced.

- In the 30–54 age group, we find a balanced distribution in the two pyramids, with a slight majority of men in both cases, but more so in Catalonia as a whole.

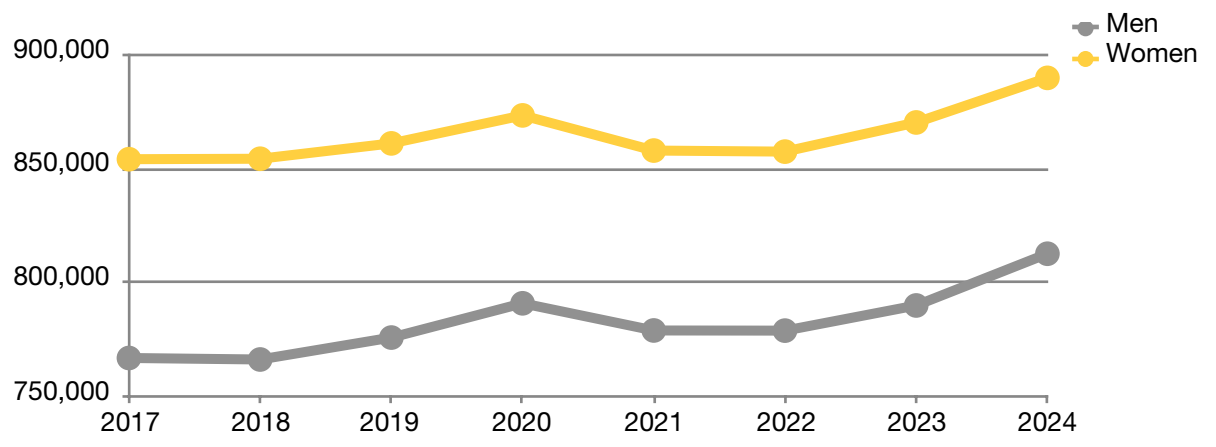
**Figure 2: population pyramid. Catalonia 1/01/2024**



Source: Original, using data from the Statistical Institute of Catalonia (IDESCAT)-Government of Catalonia.

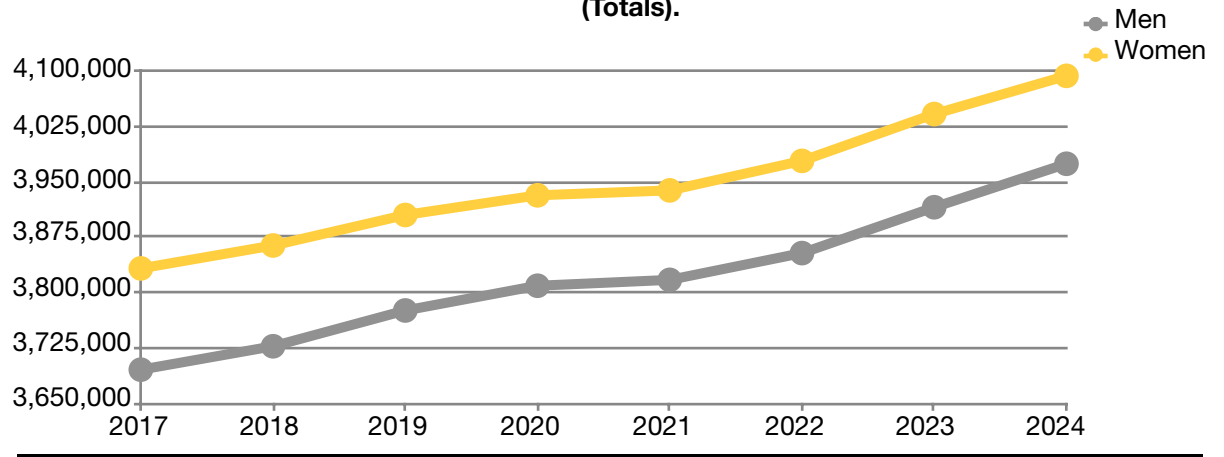
We will now look at population trends in the city of Barcelona, where we can see that women have been the majority since 2017, always exceeding the male population by more than 130,000 people. The situation is practically the same in Catalonia, with more continuous growth from 2020 to 2022, a period in which the population in Barcelona declined and levelled off slightly, but with the male-female ratio skewing female.

**Figure 4: trends in the overall population by gender. Barcelona 2017–2024 (Totals).**



Source: Original, using data from the National Statistics Institute (INE).

Figure 5: trends in the overall population by gender. Catalonia 2017–2024 (Totals).



Source: Original, using data from the IDESCAT-Government of Catalonia.

We see that the female majority in the population of Catalonia, and especially the city of Barcelona, has remained steady since 2017, with the gender distribution essentially the same. The pyramids show how the female population aged 25–34 continues to be particularly large, especially in the 25–29 age bracket. Their proportion is larger in Barcelona than in Catalonia, creating a specific dynamic. Similarly, we see that female ageing is also a trend that is stabilising over time, with an impact that we will discuss later.

## 3.2 Population movements in Barcelona and the Metropolitan Area

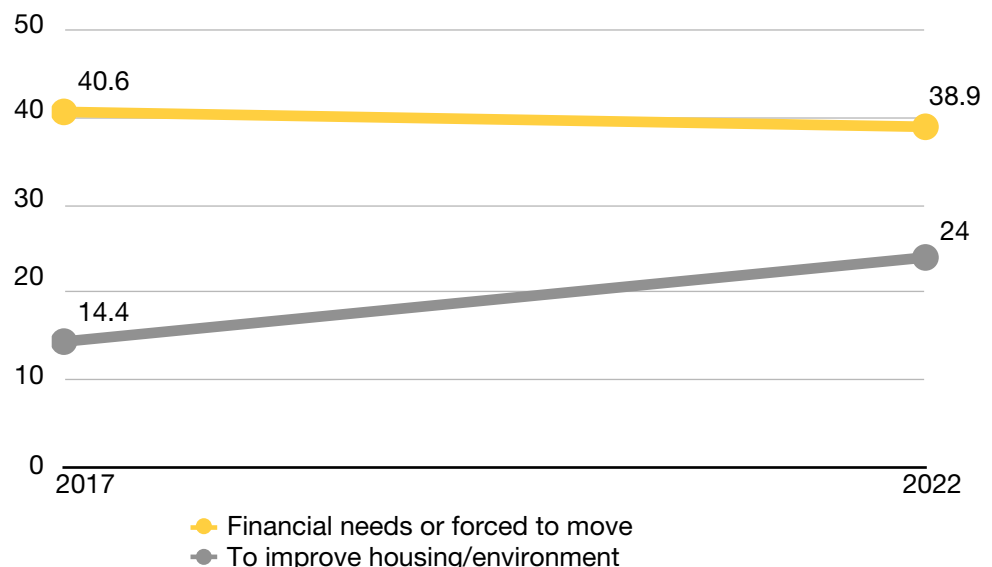
<sup>6</sup> Metròpoli Institute. (2024). *La metròpoli en 100 indicadors. L'AMB en xifres 2024*. <https://www.institutmetropoli.cat/ca/amb-en-xifres/la-metropoli-en-100-indicadors-lamb-en-xifres-2024/>

As we will see later in the report, this phenomenon is particularly salient given its implications for the life plans of people living here. Changes of residence from Barcelona to elsewhere in the Metropolitan Area have reached 66.3%, as people move to the inner belt.<sup>6</sup> The main reasons for these moves are the need to change or improve their home or residential environment (38.9%) and starting a new household or other family reasons (30.4%).

If we look at data trends since 2011, financial reasons or being forced to move has increased from 17 to 24%. Although these data are not broken down by gender, women play a key role in this residential mobility, as we will see in the next section on household types.

Later, we will see how access to more affordable housing and the need to commute to work may have a specific impact on women.

**Figure 6: main reason for moving. Population over the age of 16 who have moved in the past 5 years. Metropolitan area 2017–2022 (%).**



Source: Metròpoli Institute. (2024). *La metròpoli en 100 indicadors. L'AMB en xifres 2024*.



<sup>7</sup> Barcelona City Council (2024). *El gènere en xifres*. <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dones/ca/equitat-de-gènere/el-gènere-en-xifres>

<sup>8</sup> Household data have not changed significantly compared to the previous 2019 report, with the most notable change being the 1% drop in households consisting of two adults with children. The 2019 report can be found at the same link.

<sup>9</sup> Barcelona City Council (2024). *La població de Barcelona el 2024. Informe de resultats lectura del padró municipal d'habitants a 01/01/2024*. <https://bcnroc.ajuntament.barcelona.cat/jspui/handle/11703/135562>

Figure 11 shows that the most common household type in Barcelona is one person living alone (32%). Of these households, we see that the percentage of women aged 18–64 living alone is slightly lower than the percentage for men in the same age group, which is also the population participating in the job market. However, among over-65s, the percentage of women living alone is seven points higher than the percentage of men living alone.

The second most common category of households in the city is those made up of two or more adults over the age of 18, which account for 18.4% of the total. The third-most common household type is adults aged 18–65 without dependent children, accounting for 13.2% of the total. Fourth we find households made up of two adults with dependent children (12.3%). It is worth noting, given the topic at hand, that we find a female majority in the category of single-parent households; according to a 2024 report,<sup>7</sup> 82.4% of these households are headed by a woman.<sup>8</sup> However, a caveat is warranted, because it could be that in many cases divorced parents are sharing custody but the minor is in the municipal register as living at the mother's house. Indeed, the INE data show that custody was shared in 48.4% of divorces in 2023, and so the statistic on single-mother households should be interpreted with caution.

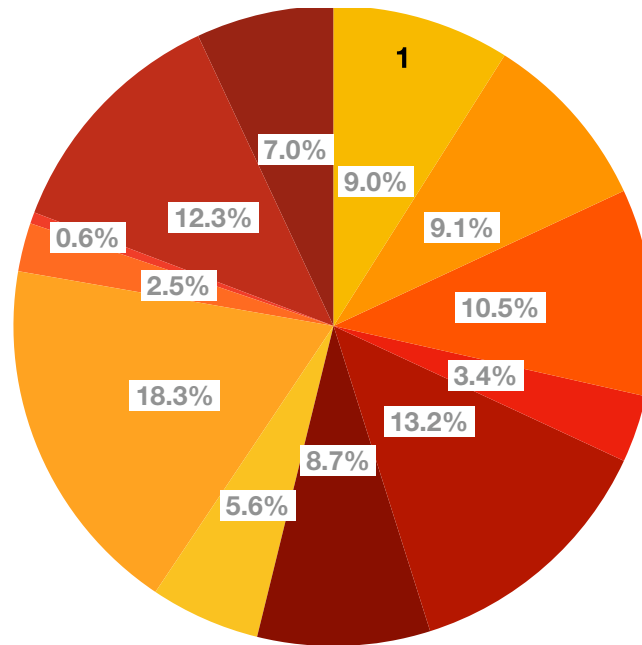
Some of the key findings of the report on the population of Barcelona in 2024<sup>9</sup> include the following:

- By combining the data, we can summarise certain characteristics of the population living in each household. One of the recurring patterns is the majority presence of women in households compared to men, as 25.3% of households have no male members but only 15.7% have no female members.
- We also find a much higher number of women living alone (60.8%) compared to men (39.2%).
- As for the makeup by number of men or women in each household, households without any men are predominant: 25.3% of households have no male members, whereas 15.7% have no female members.
- As for the structure of households, the category of single-person households (32% of the total) can be broken down by gender, with 19.5% made up of a woman living alone and 12.5% made up of a man living alone. The most common living arrangements are households with two or more people (45.8%). Notably, 18.3% of all households in the city

are made up of two or more adults with no children. Meanwhile, 3.1% of all households in the city are made up of children under the age of 18 and one adult: 2.5% a female adult and 0.6% a male adult.

- Households with minors make up less than a quarter of the total (22.4%), a figure that has remained virtually unchanged since 2016 (22%).

**Figure 11: types of households in Barcelona in 2024.**



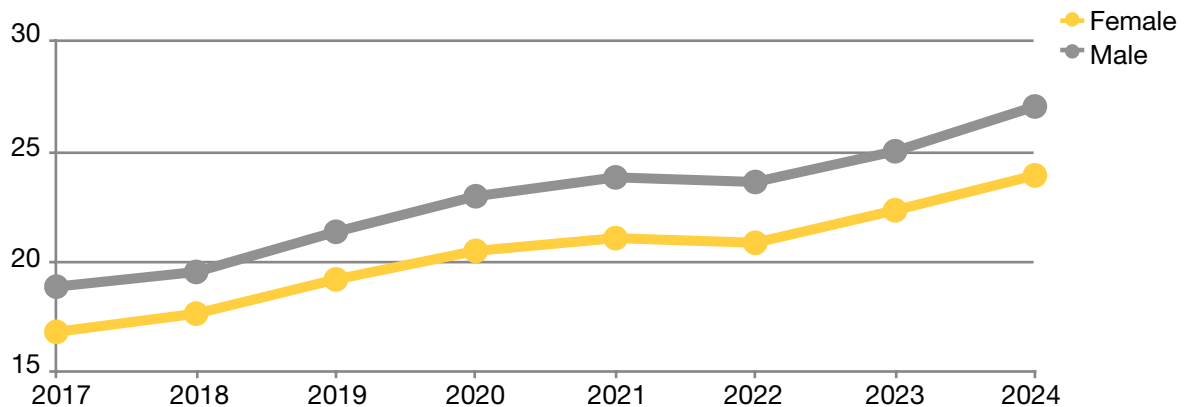
- 1 ● Single woman aged 18 to 64 years old
- Single man aged 18 to 64 years old
- Woman aged 65 or over living alone
- Man aged 65 or over living alone
- Two people aged 18 to 64
- Two people aged 65 or over
- Two people: one aged 18-64 and the other 65 or over
- Two or more adults of different ages
- One adult woman with minors
- One adult man with minors
- Two adults with minors
- Other households with one or more people under 18

Source: Original, based on the Barcelona City Council Data Portal.

\* We are using the same definition of 'foreign population' used by Barcelona City Council in its reports, where it says: *'the availability of data on place on birth makes it possible for us to consider this the variable that best reflects the diversity of Barcelona's population, beyond nationality'*. Barcelona City Council (2025). *La població de Barcelona segons lloc de naixement i nacionalitat a 01/01/2024: una Barcelona diversa*, p. 3.

The first interesting data point on this topic is that the diversity index in the city has increased significantly between 1997 and 2023, rising from 0.07% to 0.52%. The foreign-born\* population now makes up 31.26% of the city's total population, exceeding 25% for the first time in 2024. The number of foreign-born city residents has followed a steady, uninterrupted upward trend since 2000, as shown in the graph below.

**Figure 8: foreign-born population rates by gender. Barcelona 2017–2024 (%).**



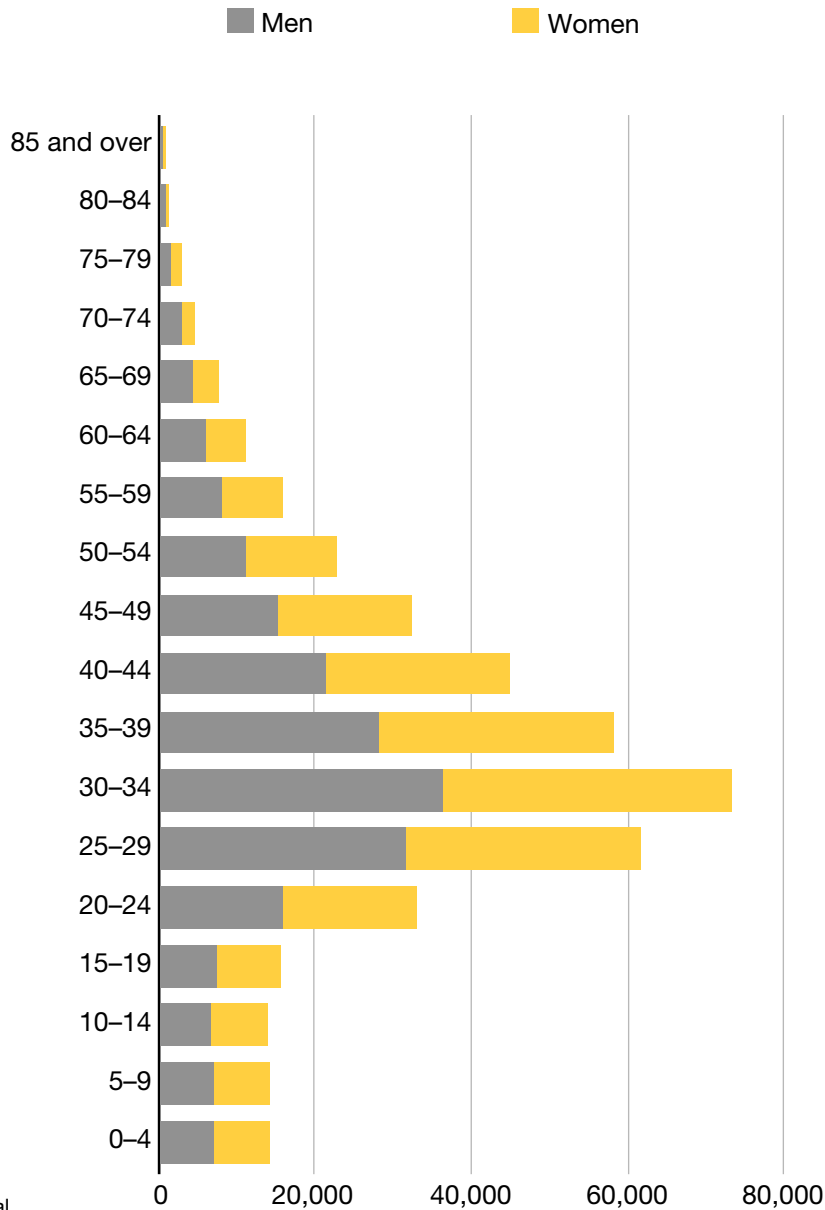
Source: Original, based on the Barcelona City Council Data Portal.

The patterns among women specifically in relation to the evolution of the foreign population in the city of Barcelona are worth noting. Foreign-born women account for 23.92% of the total female population in Barcelona, 3.14 points below the percentage of foreign-born men out of the total male population in Barcelona, which stands at 27.06%. This gap has widened over the last year. This statistic is more revealing if we compare it with the distribution of the same population in Catalonia as a whole. Taking the most recent IDESCAT figures from the second quarter of 2023, the percentage of foreign-born women in Catalonia in relation to the total female population is 16.34%, compared to 17.9% for men. We see that though the difference between foreign-born men and women has decreased by more than 1.5 percentage points, in relative terms, the proportion of foreign-born women in Barcelona is substantially higher (specifically, 7.58%) than the overall figure for Catalonia.

Continuing with the analysis of the foreign-born female population, Table 3 shows that if we compare their population share with the age structure of the population, it is lower than

men's in the 0–24 and 30–59 age groups, but higher in the 25–34 and 60+ brackets. If we look at the same pattern but for the total population, in Table 2, we find several differences: the proportion of men is once again higher in the 0–24 group, but it changes in the next major group, from 30–49. We also see that women are more represented in the 20–29 groups and the 50+ group.

**Figure 9: foreign-born population. Comparison by gender and age group. Barcelona 1/01/2024 (totals).**



Source: Original, based on the Barcelona City Council Data Portal.

**Table 2: percentage of foreign-born women. Barcelona 2024 (%).**

85 or over	65.73
80–84 years old	63.42
75–79 years old	61.70
70–74 years old	57.93
65–69 years old	56.99
60–64 years old	54.08
55–59 years old	49.72
50–54 years old	48.42
45–49 years old	46.85
40–44 years old	48.18
35–39 years old	48.18
30–34 years old	49.46
25–29 years old	51.05
20–24 years old	48.55
15–19 years old	46.81
10–14 years old	47.84
5–9 years old	48.64
0–4 years old	48.39

We could conclude that, among the foreign-born population, women are represented the most in the age ranges associated with caregiving, mothers and grandmothers, and that the proportion of foreign-born women is significantly higher in younger age groups than in the total population. Similarly, we see that women in general are represented more starting at age 50, while the foreign-born female population is concentrated starting at age 60. Though the quantitative data may give us this interpretation, with a group-by-group analysis we find that the difference between men and women is minimal in some age brackets.

If we compare the proportion of women in the total population and foreign-born women in the total foreign-born population, we see that the relative proportion of women taken as a whole is greater in the 35–59 range, and especially in the 85+ group. The proportion of foreign-born women out of the total foreign-born population is only significantly higher in the case of women aged 75–79.

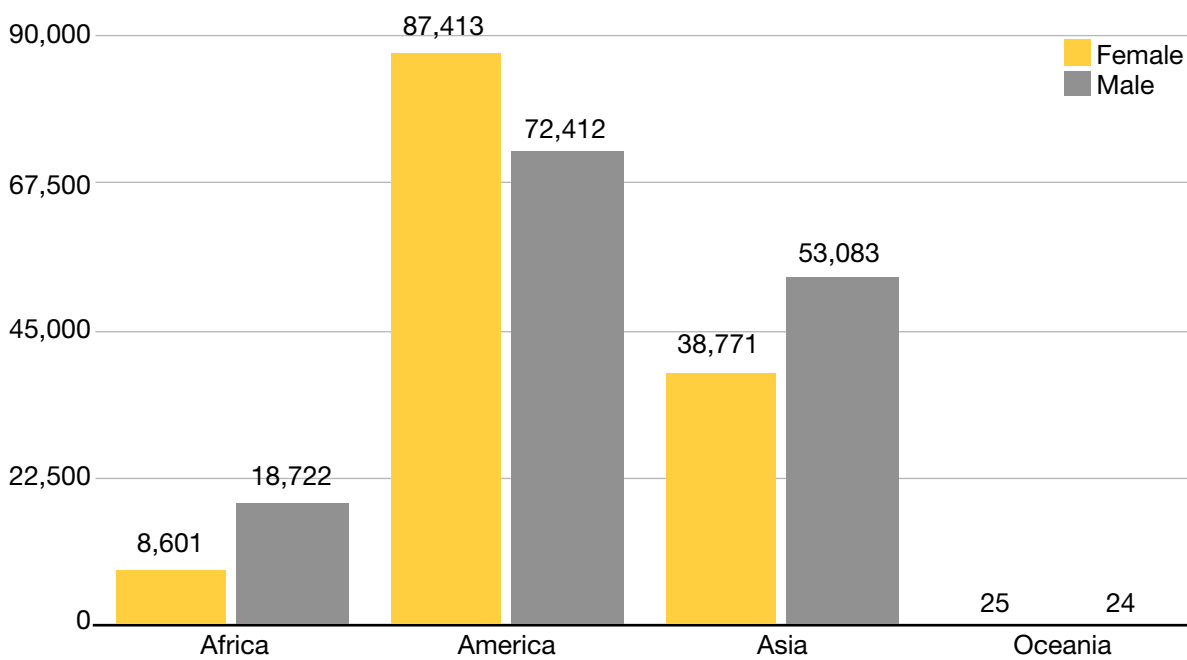
**Table 3: percentage of women for each age bracket in the total population and the foreign-born population. Barcelona 2023.**

	% Total women by age group	% Foreign-born women by age group
0 to 4	48.41	48.39
5 to 9	48.66	48.64
10 to 14	48.55	47.84
15 to 19	48.54	46.81
20 to 24	49.52	48.55
25 to 29	50.86	51.05
30 to 34	49.77	49.46
35 to 39	49.23	48.18
40 to 44	49.47	47.37
45 to 49	49.93	46.85
50 to 54	51.23	48.42
55 to 59	52.58	49.72
60 to 64	54.44	54.08
65 to 69	55.95	56.99
70 to 74	57.37	57.93
75 to 79	58.81	61.70
80 to 84	60.59	63.42
85 or over	68.61	65.73

Source: Original, based on the Barcelona City Council Data Portal.

These gender patterns among the foreign population do vary when we look at the continent of birth, with notable imbalances for some continents, as shown in the graph below:

**Figure 10: foreign-born population by continent of origin and gender. Barcelona 2024 (totals).**



Source: Original, based on the Barcelona City Council Data Portal.

The female presence in the foreign population is greater or much more balanced in places of origin with cultural or geopolitical ties to Barcelona. To properly contrast the data on Barcelona and determine whether this is a unique case, we will compare the municipal data with the data for Catalonia as a whole for 2023, which is the latest data available on both scales. At the municipal level, we see that the population from the European Union is practically gender balanced, but that the rest of Europe and the two Americas skew female. Conversely, places of origin with greater cultural differences skew male, as we see in the data from Africa, Asia and Oceania. We find the same pattern for Catalonia as a whole, but it is interesting to note that the masculinisation of the population from Africa, Asia and Oceania is even greater than in Barcelona, by 5 and almost 9 points respectively.

**Table 4: population by gender and nationality, major continents. Catalonia 2023 (%).**

	Men	Women
Spanish	48.7	51.3
Rest of the European Union	50.7	49.3
Rest of Europe	44.6	55.4
Africa	60.8	39.2
North and Central America	40.4	59.6
South America	45.9	54.1
Asia and Oceania	57.3	42.7

Source: Source: Original, using data from the IDESCAT-Government of Catalonia.

**Table 5: population by gender and nationality, major continents. Barcelona 2023 (%).**

	Men	Women
Spanish	46.71	53.28
Rest of the European Union	50.55	49.44
Rest of Europe	46.46	53.53
Africa	65.10	34.89
North and Central America	41.52	58.47
South America	46.24	53.75
Asia and Oceania	57.96	42.03

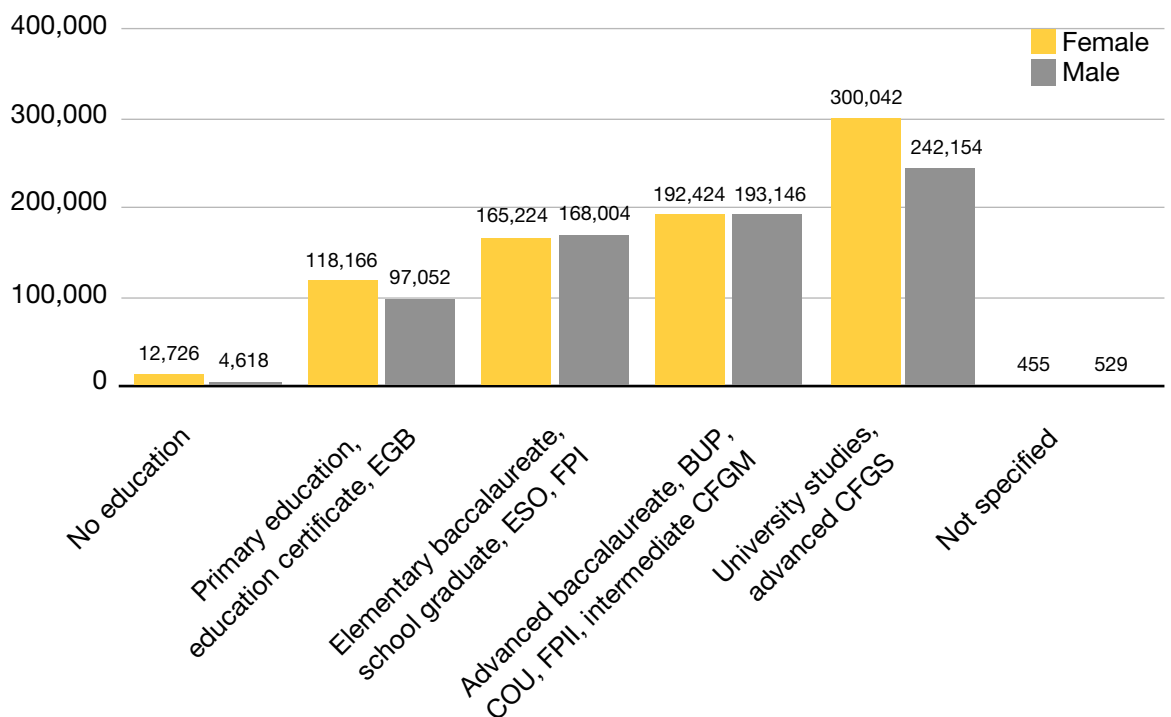
Source: Source:  
Original, using data  
from the IDESCAT-  
Government of  
Catalonia.

Finally, in the aforementioned report on the population of Barcelona in 2024, we also find household data in relation to foreign-born individuals:

- The majority of households with only foreign-born individuals are made up of couples aged 18 to 64 (23.5% of households).
- There is a symmetrical increase in the number of households with foreign-born members, with equal percentages of those where all members are foreign-born (13.3% of the total) and those in which Spaniards live with people of other nationalities (also 13.3% of the total), and both situations are showing an upward trend.

The graph below shows the different educational levels of the population over the age of 16, broken down by gender. This information is relevant given the relationship between education and job market opportunities. We see on the graph that, in general, women have a higher educational level than men, especially in terms of university and primary education, with secondary and pre-university education being more evenly balanced. On the other hand, there are almost three times as many women as men with no education.

**Figure 11: population 16 and over by educational level and gender. Barcelona 2024 (totals).**

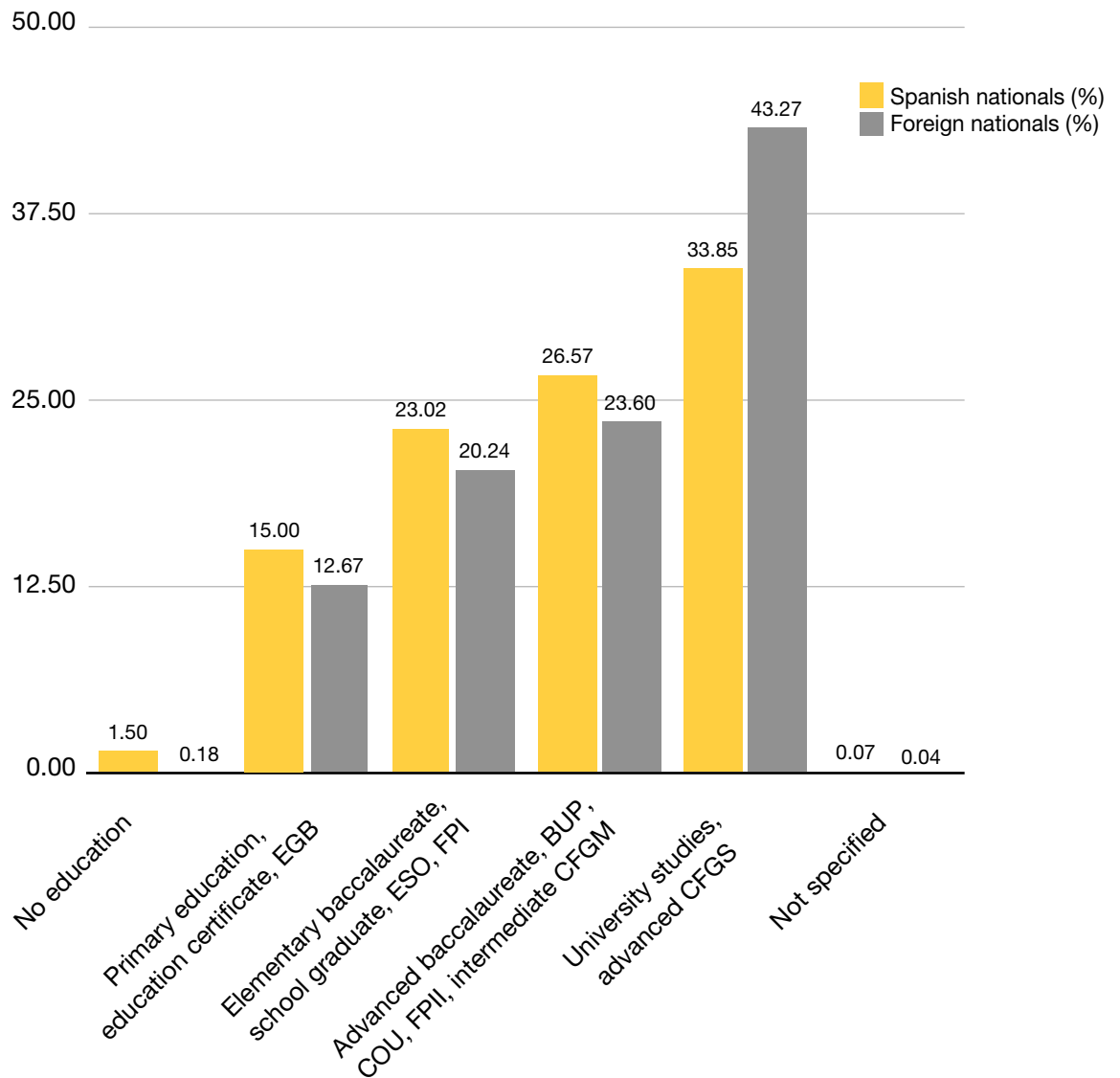


Source: Original, based on the Barcelona City Council Data Portal.

To continue with an analysis that takes into account the origin of the population, we will look at educational levels for Spanish and foreign nationals separately.



**Figure 12: population 16 and over by educational level and nationality.  
Barcelona 2024 (%).**



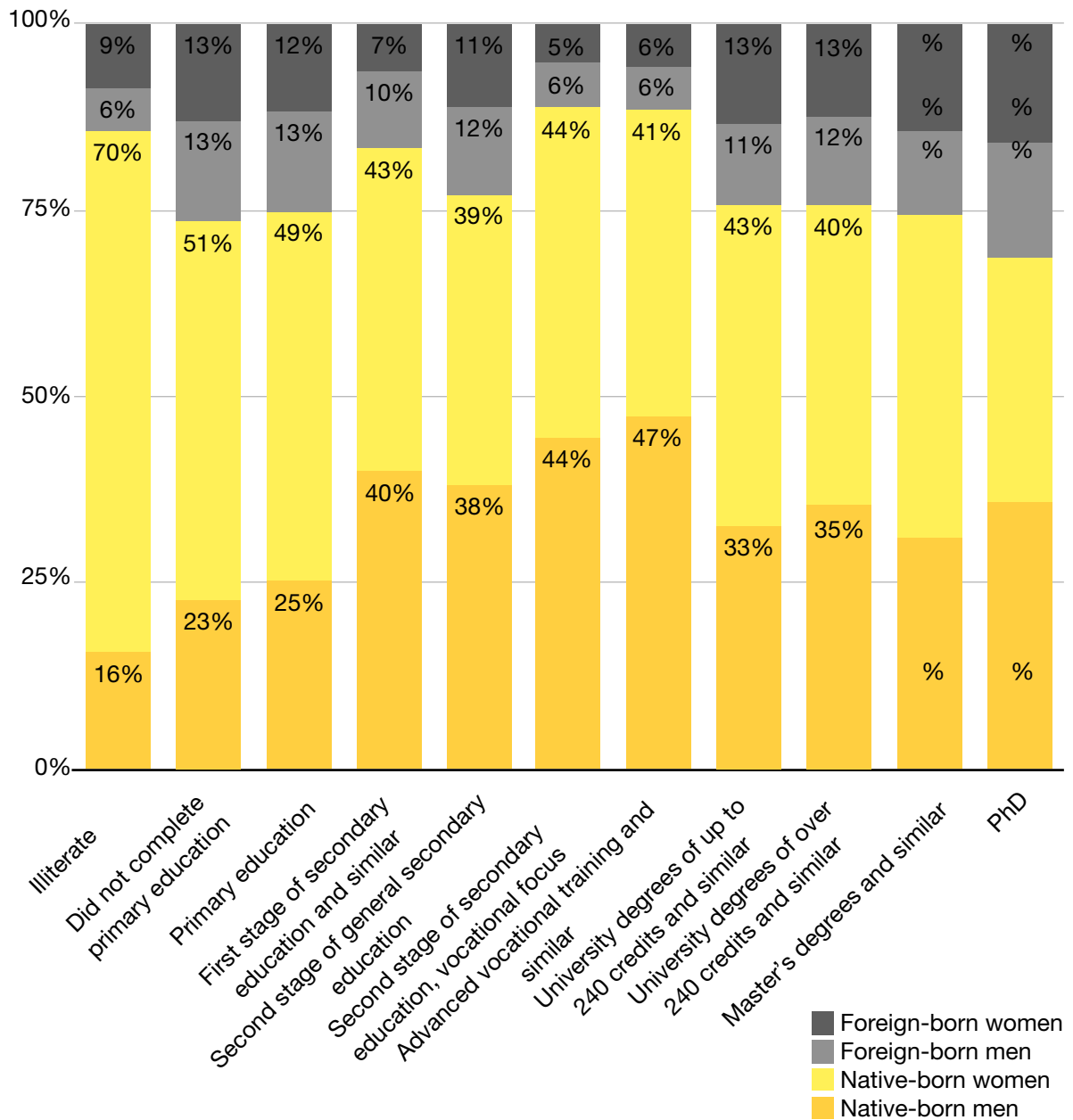
Source: Original, based on the Barcelona City Council Data Portal.

Several interesting patterns can be seen here. Firstly, it is clear that the foreign national population has more higher education, nearly 10 points above the Spanish population. Secondly, there are hardly any people with no education. Finally, there are more Spanish nationals with primary, secondary and pre-university education, but the difference is not as significant as the gap we see for higher education. We can conclude that the foreign-born population in Barcelona is clearly well-educated.

We also see these population dynamics in relation to educational level if we break it down by nationality and gender. Though IDESCAT data from 2022 are the most recent data that provide a viable comparison, we believe it is useful to show them in the graph below.

The data in the graph once again show that for all gender variables, women have higher educational levels both among foreign and Spanish nationals, except in the advanced vocational training category, where there are more men. These educational levels offer valuable insights into the work dynamics we will consider in the sections below.

**Figure 13: population age 15 and over by educational level, nationality and gender. Barcelona 2022 (%).**



Source: Source: Original, using data from the IDESCAT-Government of Catalonia.

- Women are the majority in Barcelona in absolute numbers, but if we focus on the older age brackets, we see that their share of the population increases, meaning that there is a clear feminisation of ageing in the city.
- This ageing of the female population also applies to the specific case of foreign-born women in Barcelona.
- The female population in Barcelona in the 25–34 age bracket is another factor to take into account when interpreting these data, especially considering how it then decreases in the 35–54 bracket.
- We see a steady increase of the foreign population in Barcelona, with a significant proportion of foreign-born women. Though their numbers are lower than those of men in the 0–24 and 30–59 age brackets, they make up a much larger proportion of the population over 60, suggesting that female ageing also affects foreign-born women.
- Among foreign communities, there is a tendency for culturally similar nationalities (the Americas) to have female majorities, while culturally more distant nationalities (Africa, Asia, Oceania) have male majorities. These gender differences among new arrivals has an impact on their position in the job market, as we will see later.
- There is also a steady increase in people moving out of Barcelona to other cities in the Metropolitan Area or Region, for both financial reasons and better housing.
- Typical households in the city of Barcelona are made up of people living alone, whether old or young, with a large population of women over the age of 65 who live alone. This trend has remained steady in recent years, confirming the female face of ageing.
- We are also seeing a significant rise in shared households. Taking all variations into account, it is notable that households made up of adults without dependent children account for 46% of the total, a statistic that has remained at similar levels since 2016. Taken together with the statistics on people who live alone, this shows that Barcelona is becoming a city without children.
- Although households made up of two adults with dependent children are one of the most common types, they have fallen from 13.1% to 12% since 2016. It will be interesting to watch the data on households made up of single women with dependent children in the coming years, to see if there is an increase and, if so, if these households move to other parts of the Metropolitan Area and Region. We should also pay close attention to whether or not the decline in households with children continues and becomes a trend, given the implications for policymaking in relation to caregiving and work-life balance.

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- It is clear that women have higher educational levels than men, regardless of nationality. However, it is also clear that women without an education far outnumber men without an education. Another interesting figure is the difference in type of education, with women the majority in higher education at universities, while men are the majority in advanced vocational training.

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# 4 Descriptive analysis

## Job market characteristics from the gender perspective

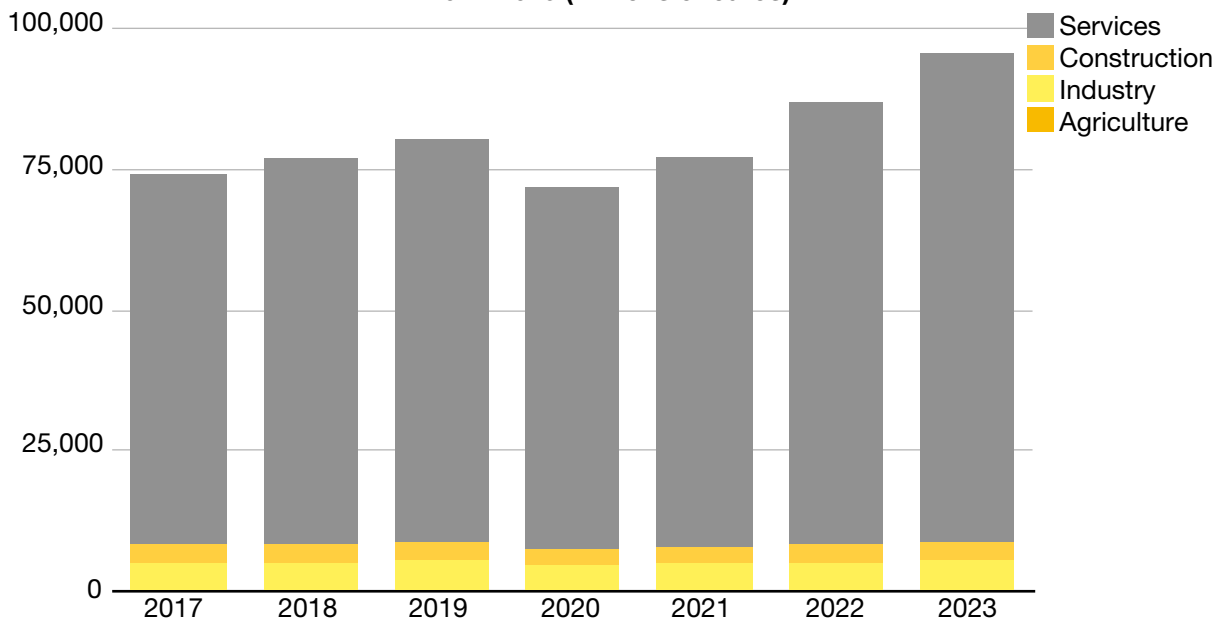
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This chapter will describe the job market in Barcelona in terms of productive sectors, social security registration, job market participation, employment, unemployment, type of contract and working hours, and educational levels and origins among female workers.

To understand the role of women in the job market, we need to start by understanding the main characteristics of this job market and the sectors with the most job opportunities. Though female job market participation rates reached an all-time high in 2024, we need other data to contextualise these figures and give us a broader perspective on women and the job market, including factors such as work intensity, working hours, temporary work and the quality of the jobs available. The productive sectors and their respective models play a key role here.

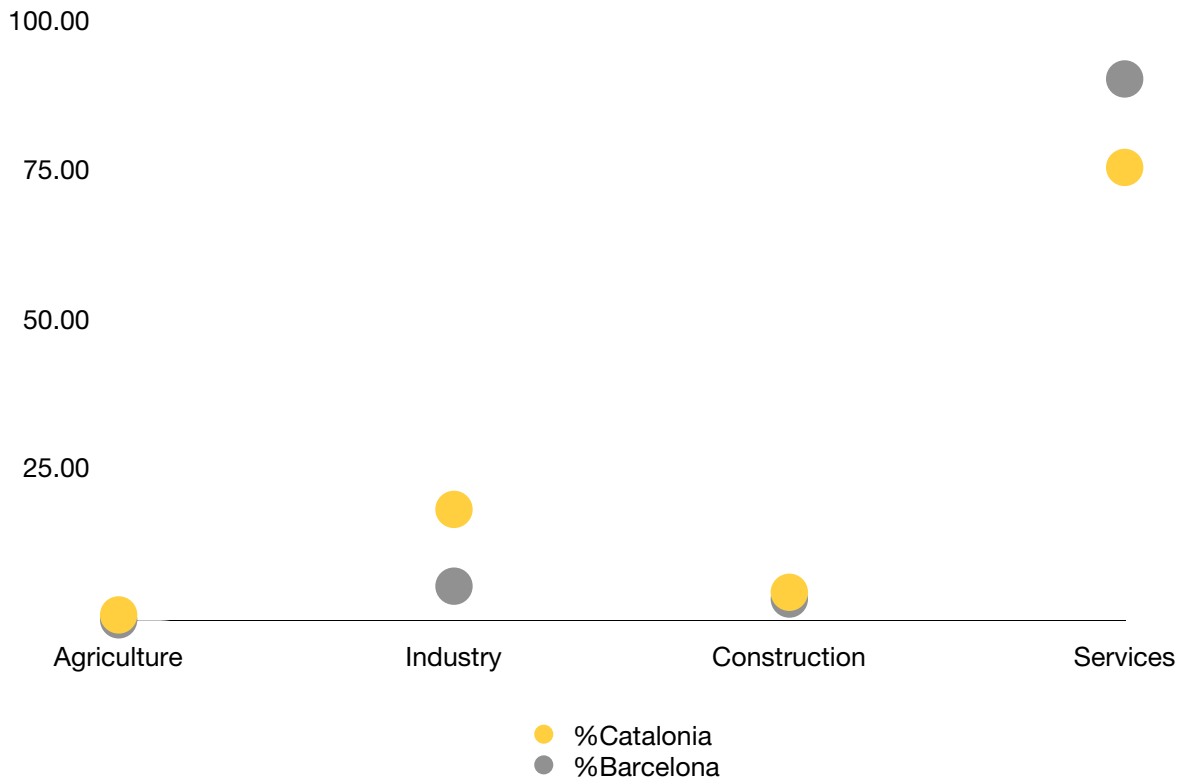
By looking at the Gross Value Added (GVA) data by sector in Figure 14, we see that the service sector ranks first as the main economic activity in Barcelona, well ahead of the other sectors at over 90%. This figure is also well above the percentage for the service sector in the rest of Catalonia (75.85%).

**Figure 14: Gross value added (GVA) by economic sector. Barcelona 2017-2023 (millions of euros).**



Source: Barcelona City Council. Municipal Data Office (OMD).

**Figure 15: share of economic sectors. Barcelona and Catalonia 2023 (%).**



**Table 6: GVA by sectors, Barcelona and Catalonia 2023 (%).**

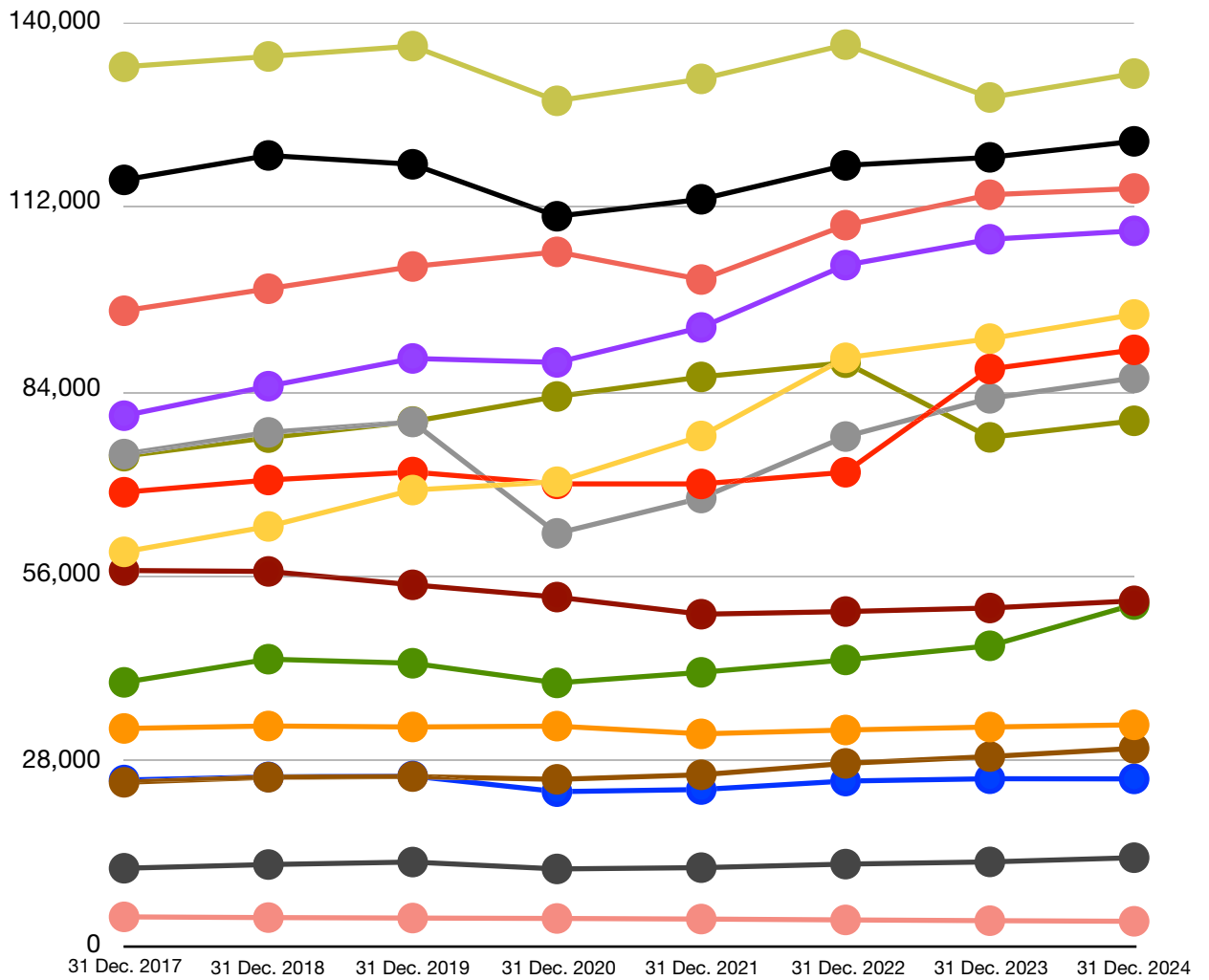
Sector	Agriculture	Industry	Construction	Services
%Catalonia	0.89	18.57	4.68	75.85
%Barcelona	0.06	5.71	3.55	90.68

Source: Source: Original, using data from the IDESCAT-Government of Catalonia.

We see the opposite pattern with the industrial sector, which is under-represented in Barcelona compared to the rest of Catalonia. The construction sector is also comparatively larger in Catalonia as a whole, though the gap is not as large. Agriculture is practically non-existent in Barcelona and is the smallest sector in Catalonia. These characteristics define a job market whose specific features we will examine further in this section.

If we compare these data with the trends in social security registrations by professional field in the city of Barcelona (Figure 16), we once again see that the service professions, both administrative and support services and retail services, continue to dominate. There was a slight drop in retail starting in 2022, but it rose again in 2024, when there was also a slight increase in administrative services. Science and technical occupations grew steadily from 2020 to 2024, and information and communications increased significantly in this period, rising from sixth to fifth place. Hospitality is also on the rise, becoming the seventh occupation with the most social security registrations, and transport and storage are also showing an upward trend. Education has seen strong growth since 2022. On the other hand, the public administration is clearly declining after having peaked in 2022, and manufacturing shows a downward trend, unlike transport and storage. Other fields have remained more or less steady.

**Figure 16: social security registrations by professional field.  
Barcelona, Q4 2017–2024 (TOTALS).**



- G. Retail and repairs
- N. Administrative and support service activities
- Q. Healthcare and social services
- M. Professional, scientific and technical activities
- J. Information and communications
- P. Education
- I. Hospitality
- O. Public administration
- C. Manufacturing industries
- H. Transportation and storage
- K. Finance and insurance
- F. Construction
- S. Other services
- L. Real estate
- T. Homes that employ domestic staff

Source: Barcelona City Council. Municipal Data Office (OMD).

All these data show a job market heavily influenced by the service sector, which continues to be the largest, with a few other emerging high-skilled fields growing alongside low-skilled ones. However, looking at registration numbers, there have been very few changes in recent years. We will now see how women fit into this service-dominated market.



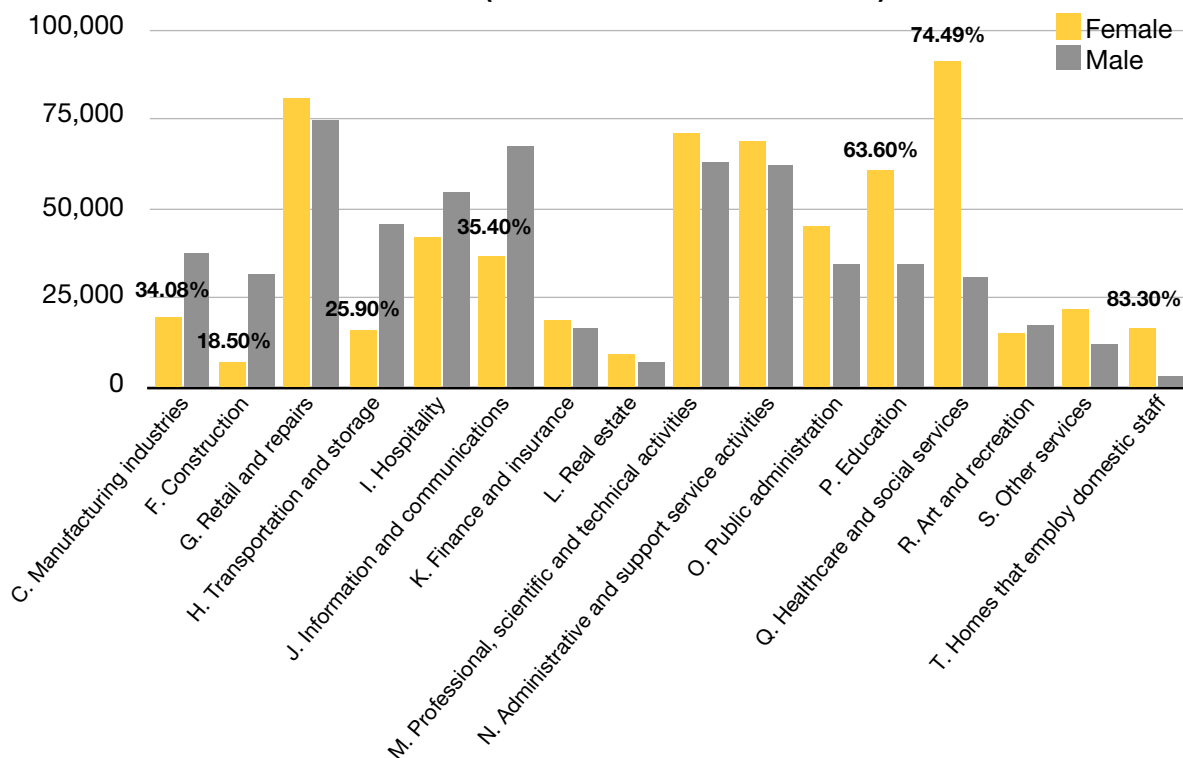
<sup>10</sup>Barcelona City Council (2024). *Les dones al mercat de treball*. <https://bcnroc.ajuntament.barcelona.cat/jspui/bitstream/11703/134389/1/Dones-mercat-treball-2024-DEF.pdf>

**Women in different economic activities.**

The first notable data point is that in the first quarter of 2024, there were 617,118 women registered with social security in Barcelona. As mentioned previously, this is the highest figure on record in recent years. According to data provided by the Barcelona City Council statistics office, female registrations account for 51.1% of all jobs in the city, above the figure for men, and although both have seen a year-on-year increase of 1.9%, the increase in female registration since 2012 shows cumulative growth of 23%.<sup>10</sup>

In breaking down the numbers by gender and economic activity sector, we see certain patterns from a gender perspective, as shown in the following graph.

**Figure 17: distribution of registration with social security by sector and gender. Barcelona 2024 (totals and % of women in bold).**



Source: Barcelona City Council. Municipal Data Office (OMD).

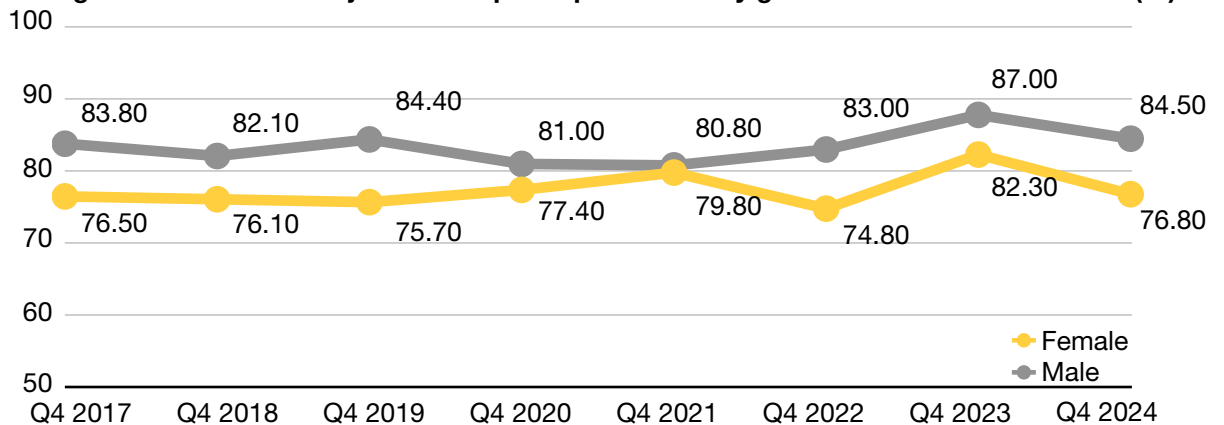
The graph reveals an almost inverted distribution of men and women in the different sectors, showing that some are clearly female-dominated while others are clearly male-dominated. The most striking example is found in caregiving work: women are much more likely than men to be registered under domestic work, healthcare and social services, other services and education. Conversely, male-dominated sectors include information and communications, industry, energy, transport and storage and above all construction. There are also imbalances in the sectors in the centre, but they are far from the sectors we have highlighted; however, there are nonetheless visible differences in many other sectors (public administration, real estate, hospitality).

**Participation and non-participation in the job market, and reasons.**

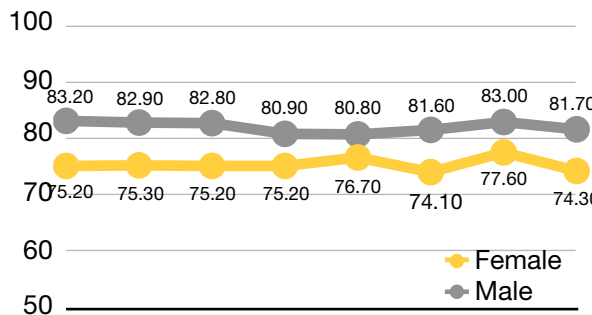
We will start by discussing the job market participation rate by gender. The specific job market participation rate among women hit a record high of 82.30% in the final quarter of 2023, following steady growth since 2022, but in 2024 it fell to figures closer to those seen in 2017. In 2021, the two rates were nearly equal, but the female rate is always below the specific job market participation rate among men in the same period. Although the increase in the female rate was slightly above the overall figure for 2023, it also saw a much greater fall in 2024.

This pattern in the female job market participation rate is seen at nearly all levels (city of Barcelona, province of Barcelona, and Catalonia as a whole), but it is much more pronounced in Barcelona.

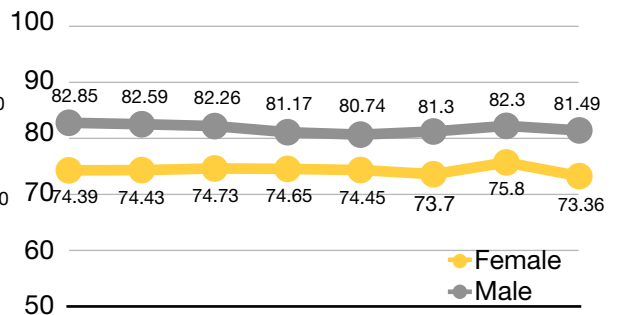
**Figure 18: trends in the job market participation rate by gender. Barcelona 2017–2024 (%).**



**Figure 19: trends in the job market participation rate by gender. Barcelona province 2017–2024 (%).**



**Figure 20: trends in the job market participation rate by gender. Catalonia 2017–2024 (%).**



Source: Barcelona City Council. Municipal Data Office (OMD).

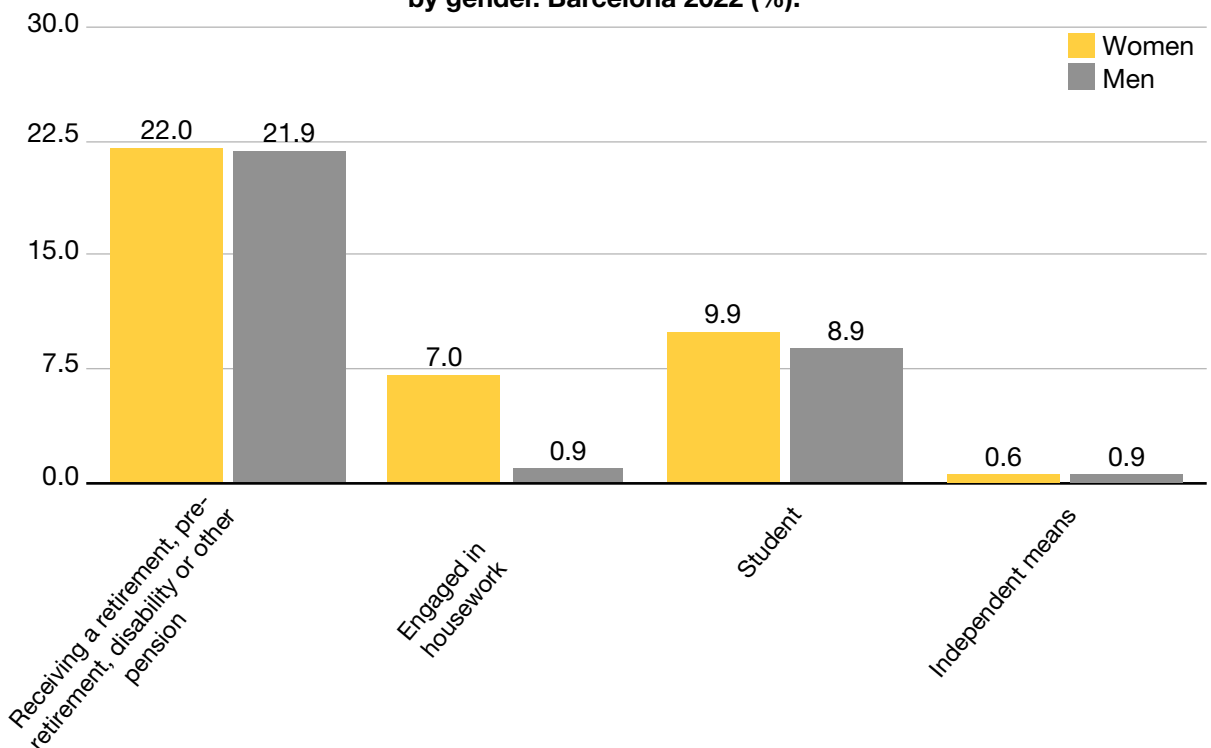
<sup>11</sup> Barcelona City Council (2024). *El gènere en xifres*. <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dones/ca/equitat-de-genera/el-genera-en-xifres>

<sup>12</sup> These data can be found at the following link: [https://www.ine.es/ss/Satellite?L=es\\_ES&c=INESeccion\\_C&cid=1259925463294&p=%2F&pagename=ProductosYServicios%2FPYSLayout&param1=PYSDetalle&param3=1259924822888](https://www.ine.es/ss/Satellite?L=es_ES&c=INESeccion_C&cid=1259925463294&p=%2F&pagename=ProductosYServicios%2FPYSLayout&param1=PYSDetalle&param3=1259924822888)

Looking closely at the trends at different levels, we see that they all dropped in the second quarter of 2020, followed by an upturn, but only in Barcelona, there were points at which the female rate was above the male rate, specifically the second and third quarters of 2021. This is not seen at the other levels or at any other point in the time series.

We will now look at the opposite situation: non-participation in the job market and the reasons for this non-participation. In Barcelona in 2022, there were more women than men in this situation, according to the 2024 'El gènere en xifres' [Gender in Figures] study.<sup>11</sup> The data from this study show that, without counting unemployed people or those looking for work, the non-participation rate was 39.5% for women, compared to 32.2% for men. In the graph below, we see how men and women also have very different reasons for non-participation in the job market. All the reasons are fairly balanced until we come to housework, where the percentage of men is almost negligible.

**Figure 21: percentage of non-participation in the job market among over-16s by gender. Barcelona 2022 (%).**



Source: Barcelona City Council. Municipal Data Office (OMD).

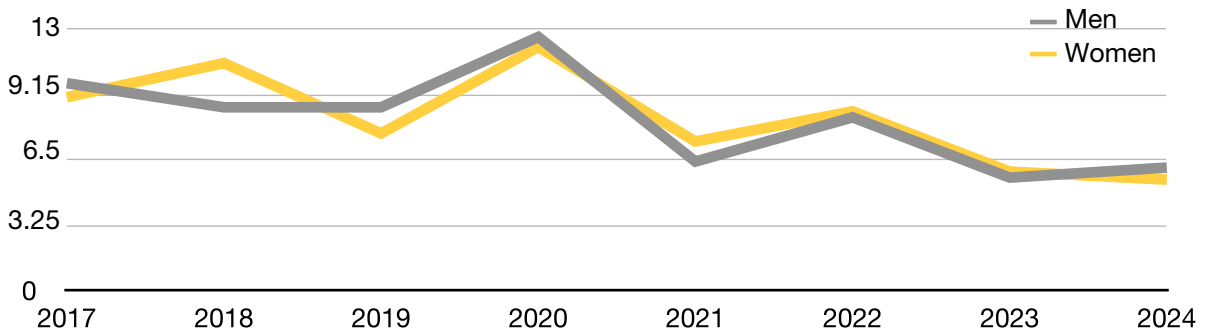
To delve further into this phenomenon, if we take the INE data for Spain based on the 2023 Labour Force Survey (EPA), we find some differences. Men's main reasons for not participating in the job market have to do with training and education (25.1%), while the main reasons cited by women have to do with taking care of children or sick, disabled or elderly adults (19.5%). Furthermore, the EPA shows that in Spain, 89.9% of the total number of people who are not participating in the job market in order to care for dependants (children, adults, the elderly) are women. Of them, 18.0% are between 25 and 34 years old; 27.6% are between 35 and 44, and of them, 26.7% could not afford childcare or other family care services.<sup>12</sup>

### Unemployment and long-term unemployment.

According to City Council data for 2024, the female unemployment rate in the city of Barcelona dropped significantly, falling to 5.5%, which is much lower than the same statistic in the province of Barcelona (8.7%), Catalonia (8.9%) and Spain (11.83%), according to the EPA. This is the lowest figure on record.

Registered unemployment in Barcelona has decreased significantly for both genders in recent years. According to the latest available data, the year-on-year evolution of female unemployment dropped 4.1 points between 2017 and 2024, compared to 4.2 for men in the same period. These are fluctuations due to COVID in 2020, followed by a drop in rates, a rise in 2022 and then another fall in 2023. In the 2024 data, the male rate is once again a few tenths higher than the female rate, as we also saw in 2017 and 2019. In any case, as shown in the table and the graph below, there is not much variation in the difference in rates by gender, except in 2018 and 2019, but if we look at the periods with lower male unemployment, the differences are greater than when female unemployment falls more.

**Figure 22: year-on-year unemployment by gender. Barcelona 2017–2024**

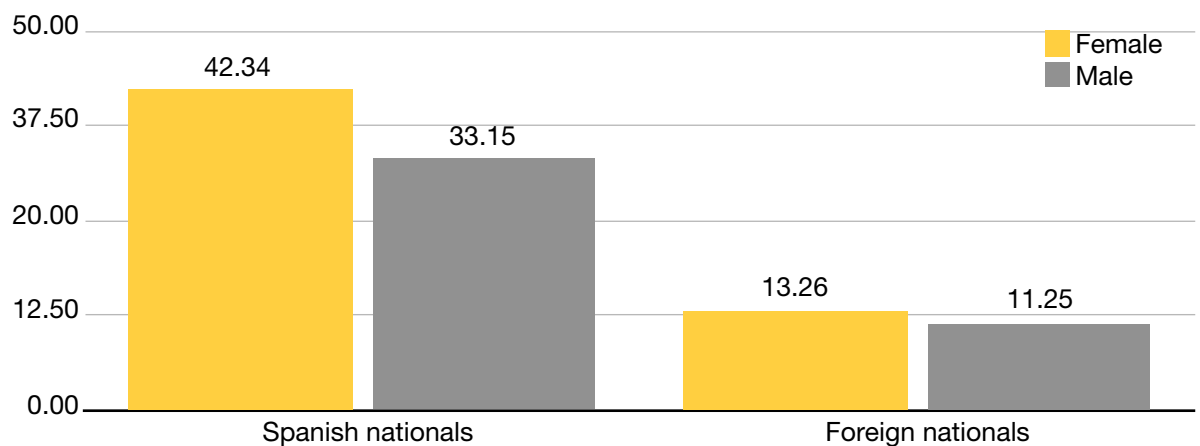


Source: Barcelona City Council. Municipal Data Office (OMD).

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Male	10.30	9.10	9.10	12.60	6.40	8.60	5.60	6.10
Women	9.60	11.3	7.80	12.10	7.40	8.90	5.90	5.50

It is worth looking at unemployment data by gender and nationality to see the patterns and determine if there are any imbalances or specific situations for foreign-born women.

**Figure 23: registered unemployment by gender and nationality. Barcelona 2024 (%).**



Source: Barcelona City Council. Municipal Data Office (OMD).

<sup>13</sup>Barcelona City Council (2023). *La Població estrangera de Barcelona. La població de Barcelona nascuda a l'estranger*. <http://hdl.handle.net/11703/133047>

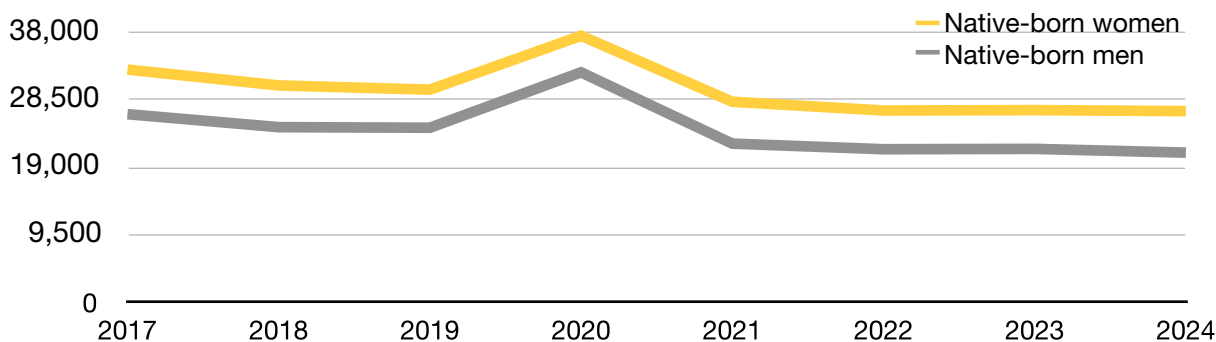
<sup>14</sup> Government of Catalonia-Observatory of Work and the Production Model (2018 and 2024). *Butlletí de població estrangera i treball*. [https://observatoritreball.gencat.cat/ca/ambits\\_tematicos/col\\_lectius\\_socials/poblacio\\_estranger\\_a\\_i\\_treball/butlleti\\_poblacio\\_estranger\\_a\\_i\\_treball/](https://observatoritreball.gencat.cat/ca/ambits_tematicos/col_lectius_socials/poblacio_estranger_a_i_treball/butlleti_poblacio_estranger_a_i_treball/)

<sup>15</sup> The data can be found at the following link: <https://www.amb.cat/web/desenvolupament-socioeconomic/politiques-de-generes/observatori-generes>

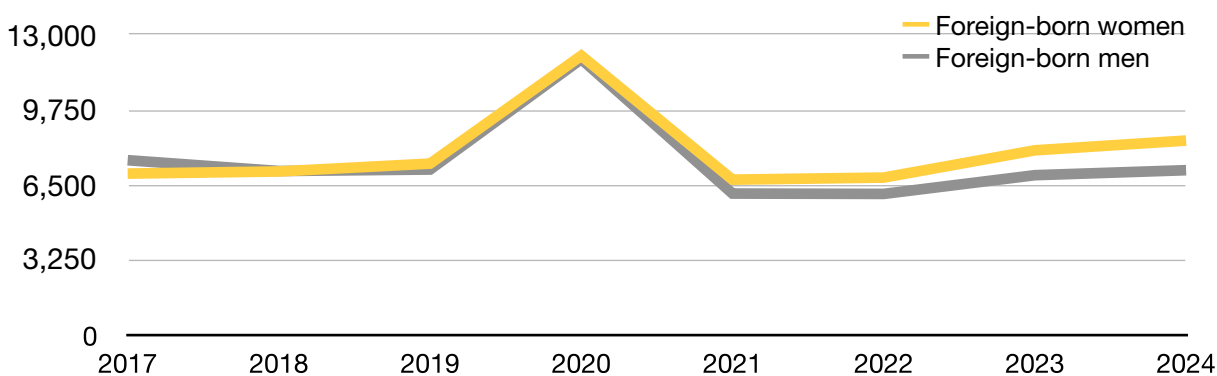
The data show that, regardless of nationality, the percentage of unemployed women is greater than unemployed men, but the figures are more balanced in the foreign-born population. If we look at the latest report drafted by Barcelona City Council's Department of Statistics and Data Dissemination in 2023,<sup>13</sup> unemployment among the foreign-born population in the city of Barcelona was 8.5% higher in 2022 than in 2019. Turning to Catalonia as a whole, foreign-born women had a higher unemployment rate than foreign-born men in 2024, with 56% of unemployed women and 44% of unemployed men in the city of Barcelona out of the total unemployed foreign-born population. The difference has grown by 8 points since 2018.<sup>14</sup>

Looking at trends in people registered as unemployed and breaking down the groups by origin, we find that the two population groups have had slightly different patterns. Both groups were equally affected by COVID, but the numbers of foreign-born people registered as unemployed have always been very similar, and it is only now that a gap between men and women seems to be emerging. Comparing the figures by origin, we also see that, although the data for the native-born population seem to be somewhat stable, for the foreign-born population it is trending slightly upward.

**Figure 24: number of native-born individuals registered as unemployed by gender. Barcelona 2017–2024 (totals as of 31/12).**



**Figure 25: number of foreign-born individuals registered as unemployed by gender. Barcelona 2017–2024 (totals as of 31/12).**



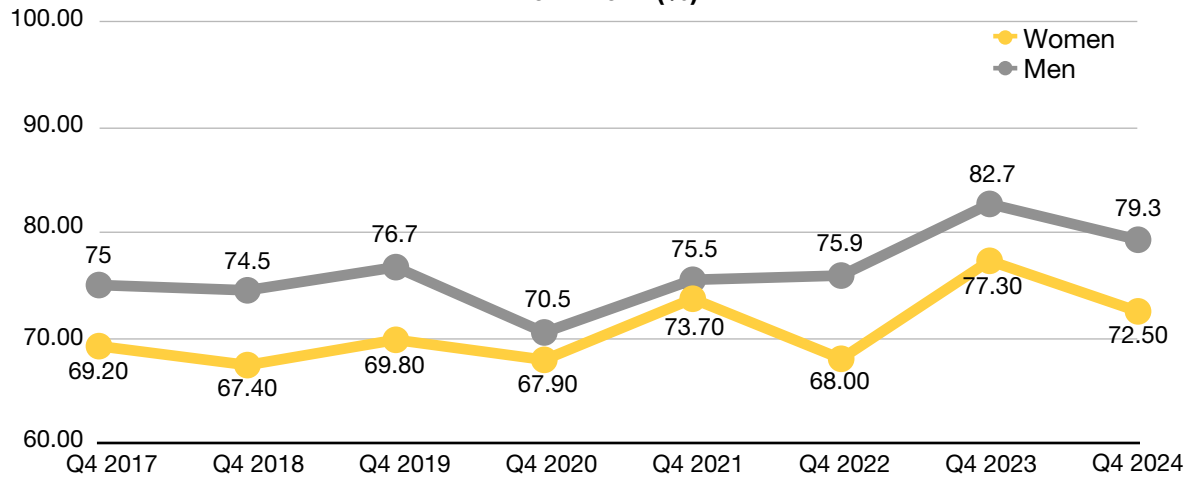
Source: Barcelona City Council. Municipal Data Office (OMD).

If we analyse long-term unemployment, we see that the data pattern is very similar. According to data from the Metropolitan Gender Observatory,<sup>15</sup> as of June 2024 63% of unemployed women in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area had been unemployed for over 24 months, a statistic that was 60% in the city of Barcelona. While 40% of unemployment in Barcelona is long term, nearly 60% of people in this situation are women.

## Employment, contracts and working hours.

If we look closely at the specific male and female employment rates, we see that the female rate hit 77.3% in 2023. It increased significantly in the 2020–2021 period, remained fairly stable and then fell again in 2022, before once again reaching figures similar to 2021 in 2024. The 2024 figure is the third-best on record. The 2023 figure is the highest on record, with a year-on-year increase of 8.9%. The male employment rate has always been higher than the female employment rate. In 2021, the two percentages came very close, but ultimately the female rate dropped and the gap between them widened again. The recent drop in the female employment rate has now once again increased this gap, which is clearly lagging behind with a difference of 6.8%.

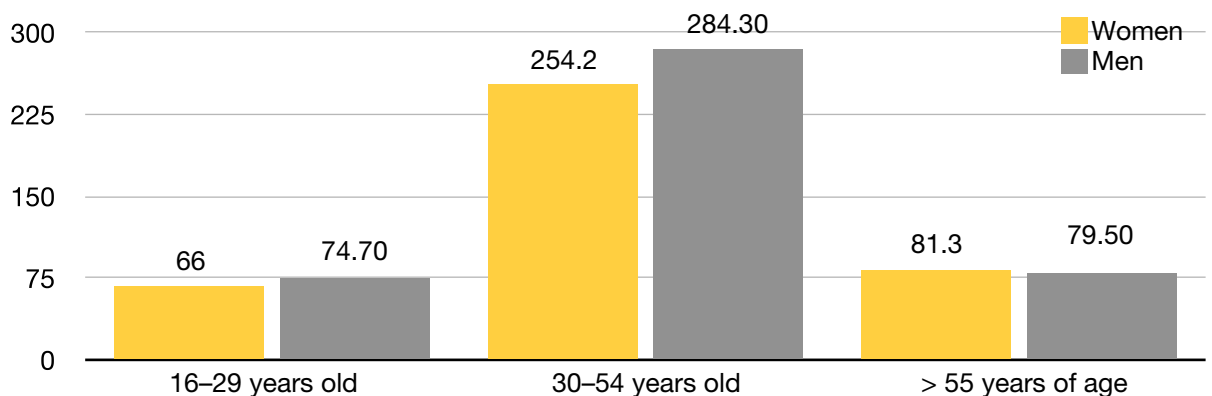
**Figure 26: trends in the specific employment rate by gender. Barcelona 2017–2024 (%).**



Source: Barcelona City Council. Municipal Data Office (OMD).

Analysing the data by age, we find that according to 2024 Barcelona City Council data, the highest level of employment for both men and women is found in the 30–54 age range, with lower levels of employment among young people and the very elderly.

**Figure 27: total employment among women by age. Barcelona 2024 (in thousands).**

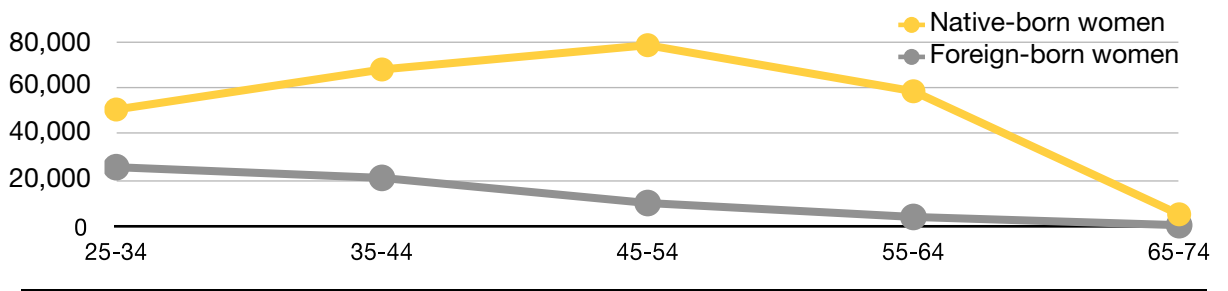


Source: Barcelona City Council. Municipal Data Office (OMD).

For foreign-born women, who show a particular pattern, we can only use data from the 2021 census, but they are nonetheless shown here given the importance of the dynamics they reveal.

**Figure 28: total employment among women by age and nationality. Barcelona 2021 (in thousands).**

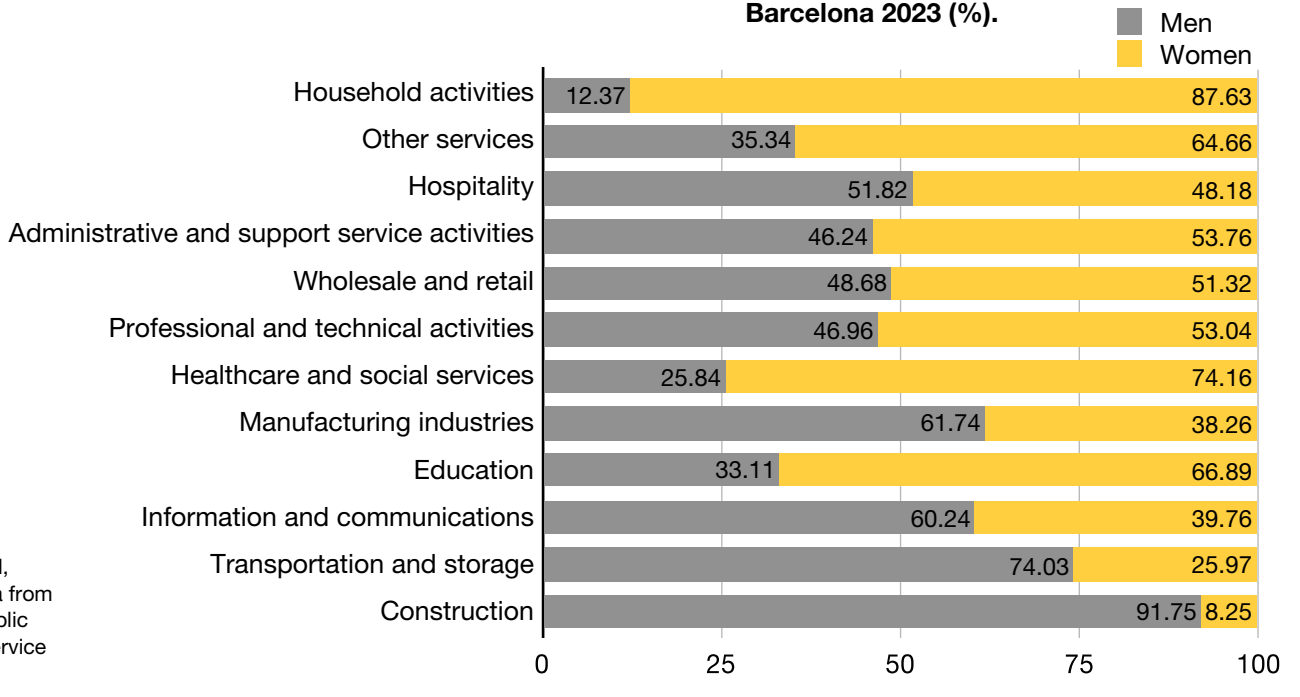
Source: Original, based on data from 2021 Census. We are also including data on native-born women for an effective comparison.



Peak employment for foreign-born women is seen in the 25–34 age range, with a gradual decline from age 35 onwards. This contrasts sharply with the situation of native-born women, a pattern with consequences that are relevant for the topic at hand.

We will now look at the sectors where this employment is concentrated. As in the case of social security registration, we find certain sectors dominated by men and others dominated by women, as shown in the graph below for the province of Barcelona. We are using province-level data because they are more up-to-date and we have verified that their distribution is highly similar to that found in Barcelona City Council’s ‘*El gènere en xifres. Condicions de vida de les dones i desigualtats de gènere a la ciutat de Barcelona (2024)*’ [Gender in Figures: Living Conditions of Women and Gender Inequality in the City of Barcelona (2024)] document, which uses 2022 data.

**Figure 29: hires by gender and sector. Province of Barcelona 2023 (%).**



Source: Original, using 2023 data from the Spanish Public Employment Service (SEPE).

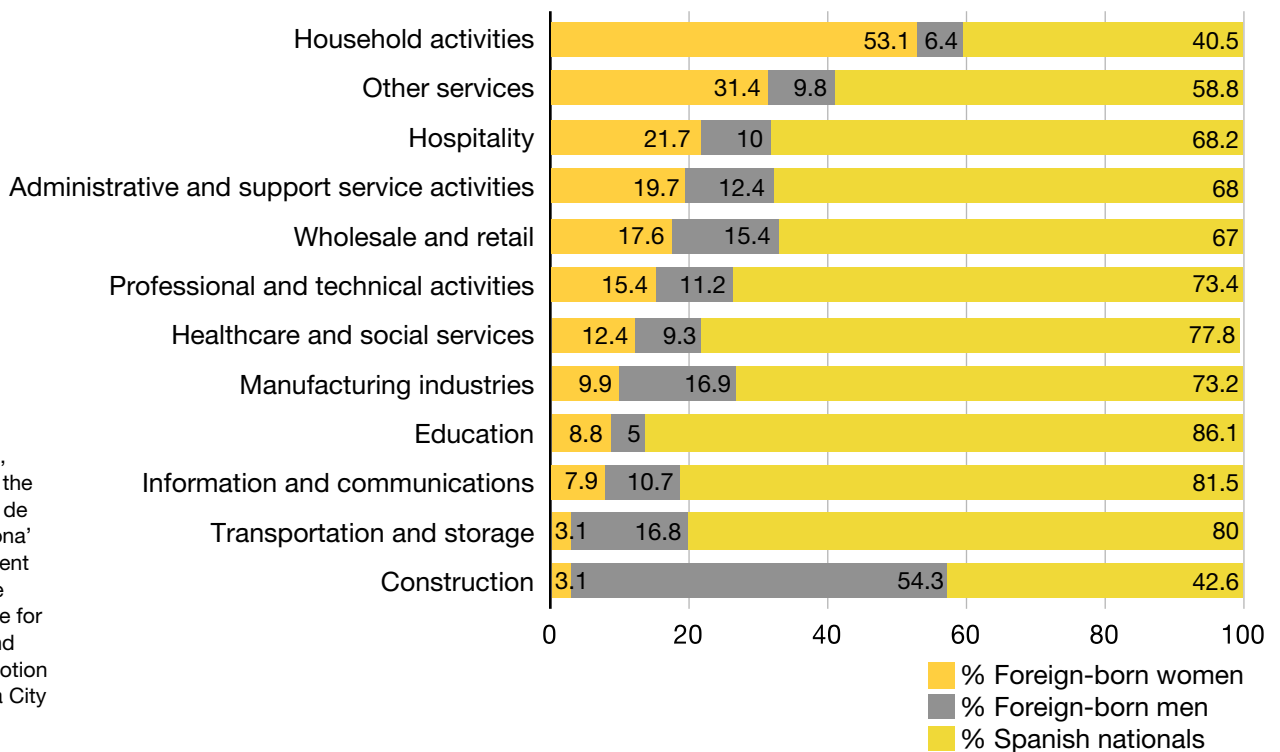
<sup>16</sup> SEPE (2024). *Informe del mercado de trabajo de Barcelona (Datos 2023)*.

As seen previously, women are especially concentrated in domestic work. According to the Spanish Public Employment Service’s (SEPE) 2023 data,<sup>16</sup> this sector accounted for 1.52% of all contracts in the province, and nearly 90% of the jobs in this sector in the province of Barcelona are held by women. They are followed by contracts in the health and social services sector, which account for 12.25% of all contracts, 75% of which are held by women. Once again, the opposite is found in sectors such as construction, transport and manufacturing, which mainly hire men.

If we look a little closer at the existing data, we find some key points in terms of analysing these data from a gender perspective. Specifically, as seen above, let us look at the variable of origin. As seen in the graph below, the data show specific situations worth highlighting.

For example, we see that domestic work is not only a female-dominated sector, it is dominated by foreign-born women. Although domestic work is the most obvious case, if we look at the proportion of foreign-born women in the different female-dominated sectors, we see that it is more significant in sectors that require lower qualifications or which may, a priori, have less job security. For example, other heavily female-dominated sectors, such as health and education, have much lower levels of foreign-born women, even though they still outnumber foreign-born men in the same sectors.

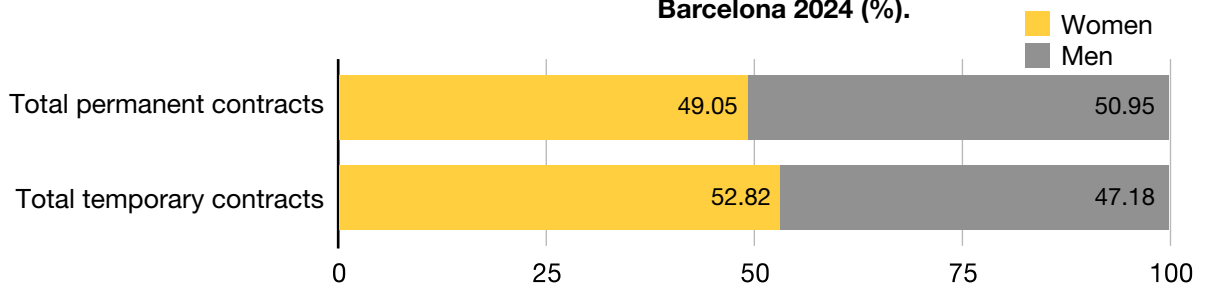
**Figure 30: hires of foreign-born workers by sectors and gender compared to Spanish nationals. Barcelona 2023 (%).**



Source: Original, using data from the 'Dones i mercat de treball a Barcelona' report. Department of Studies at the Manager's Office for the Economy and Economic Promotion 2024. Barcelona City Council.

For foreign-born women, who show a particular pattern, we can only use data from the 2021 census, but they are nonetheless shown here given the importance of the dynamics they reveal.

**Figure 31: Hires by contract type and gender. Barcelona 2024 (%).**



Source: Barcelona City Council. Municipal Data Office (OMD).



<sup>17</sup>Barcelona City Council (2024). *Les dones al mercat de treball*. <https://bcnroc.ajuntament.barcelona.cat/jspui/bitstream/11703/134389/1/Dones-mercat-treball-2024-DEF.pdf>

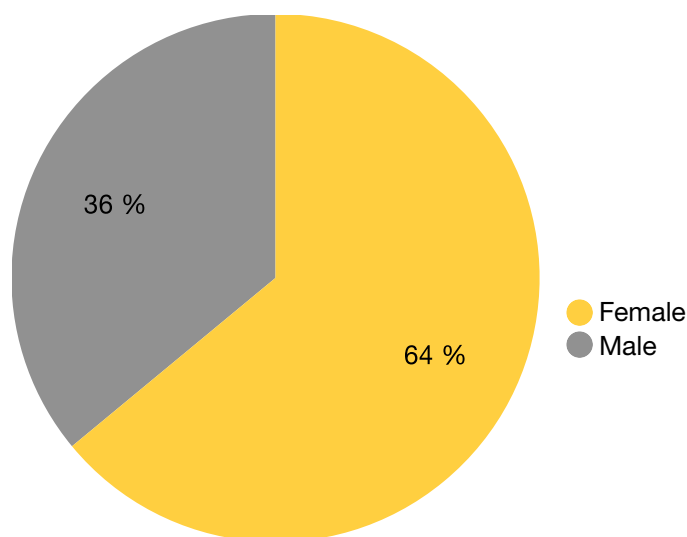
<sup>18</sup> Government of Catalonia (2024). *Dones i treball*. [https://observatoritreball.gencat.cat/web/.content/generic/documents/perspectiva\\_gendre/arxiu/Dones-i-treball-4t-trim-2024.pdf](https://observatoritreball.gencat.cat/web/.content/generic/documents/perspectiva_gendre/arxiu/Dones-i-treball-4t-trim-2024.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> ISEAK (2024). *Trabajo a tiempo parcial: precariedad laboral y brechas de género*. <https://iseak.eu/publicacion/trabajo-a-tiempo-parcial-precariedad-laboral-y-brechas-de-genero>

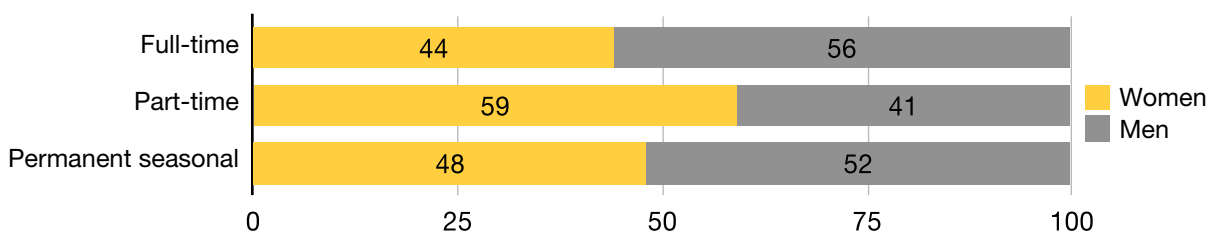
The graph shows that women account for a smaller proportion of permanent contracts, although the difference is less than 2%. It also shows that women have more temporary contracts. If we look at the data broken down by nationality, in 2023 permanent contracts among foreign-born women<sup>17</sup> accounted for 52.4%, higher than the figure for women as a whole (41.8%), but lower than the percentage of permanent contracts for foreign-born men in 2023, which stood at 60.7%. According to the latest data provided by Barcelona Activa in the fourth quarter of 2023, 15.1% of female employees in Barcelona had a temporary contract in the final quarter of 2023, four percentage points above the rate for men, which was 11.1%.

Another factor determining work intensity is whether the workday is full-time or part-time. In Figure 33, we see that women hold 59% of part-time contracts. According to data for Catalonia from the Government of Catalonia’s Productive Model Observatory,<sup>18</sup> the part-time employment rate for women was 20.9% in the fourth quarter of 2024, compared with 8.5% for men. That is, the female part-time employment rate is more than double of that of men, although the situation is better than the figure of 22% we find in Spain as a whole.<sup>19</sup> Finally, women account for 64% of the people working part-time. According to the 2023 Labour Force Survey, approximately one-third of women who work part-time do so involuntarily.

**Figure 32: part-time worker rates by gender, Barcelona, Q4 2023.**



**Figure 33: Hires by contract type and gender. Barcelona 2024 (%).**



Source: Barcelona City Council. Municipal Data Office (OMD).

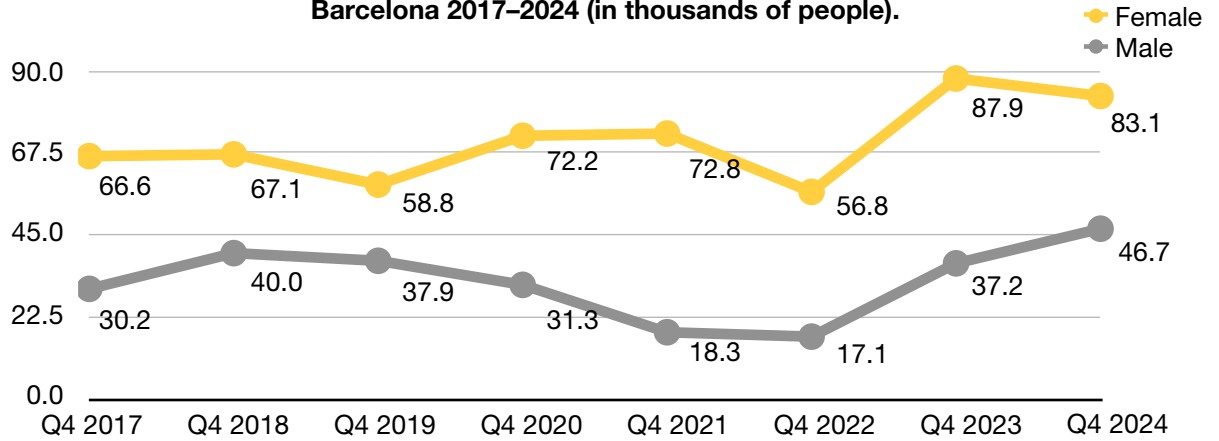
<sup>20</sup> Barcelona Public Health Agency (2022). *Enquesta de Salut de Barcelona*. <https://www.aspb.cat/es/documentos/encuesta-salud-barcelona/>

<sup>21</sup> Barcelona City Council (2022). *Enquesta sociodemogràfica de Barcelona*. <http://hdl.handle.net/11703/133448>

Source: Barcelona City Council. Municipal Data Office (OMD).

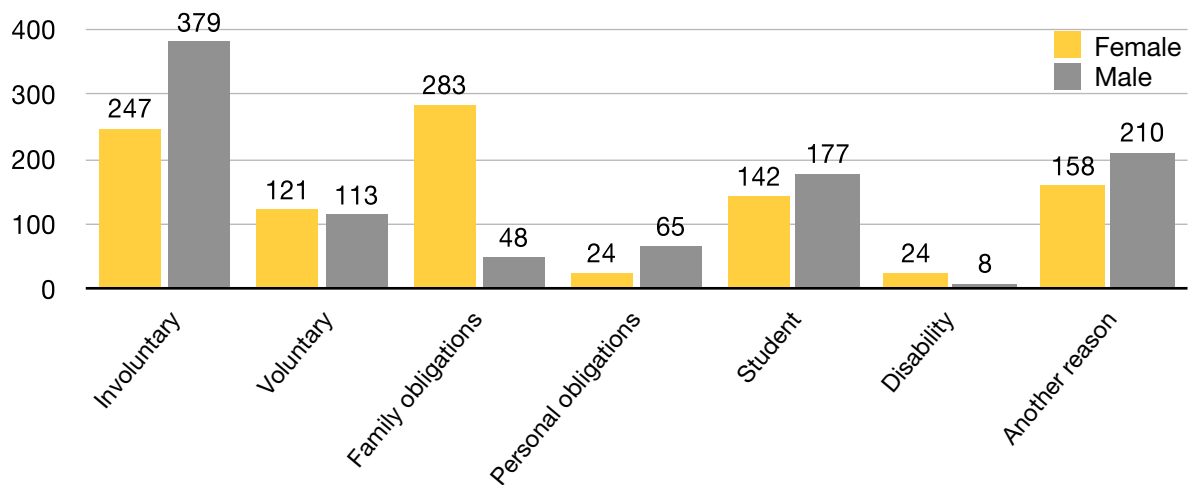
Looking at the trends in part-time employment, we see that this type of work is predominantly found among the female population. The gap between figures for men and women has not narrowed significantly at any point on record, and for women, the figure from the fourth quarter of 2023 is the highest on record. These part-time employment figures have a number of implications that will have to be defined carefully in the interpretation section of this report.

**Figure 34: trends in the population of part-time workers by gender. Barcelona 2017–2024 (in thousands of people).**



To properly analyse part-time work from the gender perspective, we should also look at the reasons for this employment situation to determine if it is involuntary or voluntary and, in the latter case, the reasons for choosing part-time work. To understand these reasons, we will use the latest Barcelona Health Survey, from 2022.<sup>20</sup> Among the women surveyed, the main reason cited for having a shorter workday was ‘family obligations’ (28.3%). However, only 4.8% of the men surveyed decided to work a shorter day due to ‘family obligations’. If we look at the answers to the question, ‘Are you the person who spends the most time on housework and caregiving (buying groceries, cleaning, cooking, caring for children or the elderly, etc.)?’ in the results of the city of Barcelona’s Socio-Demographic Survey<sup>21</sup> conducted in 2022, we find that 66.4% of women answered in the affirmative, compared to only 38.3% of men who reported spending time on household tasks.

**Figure 35: reasons for part-time work by gender. Barcelona 2022 (totals).**



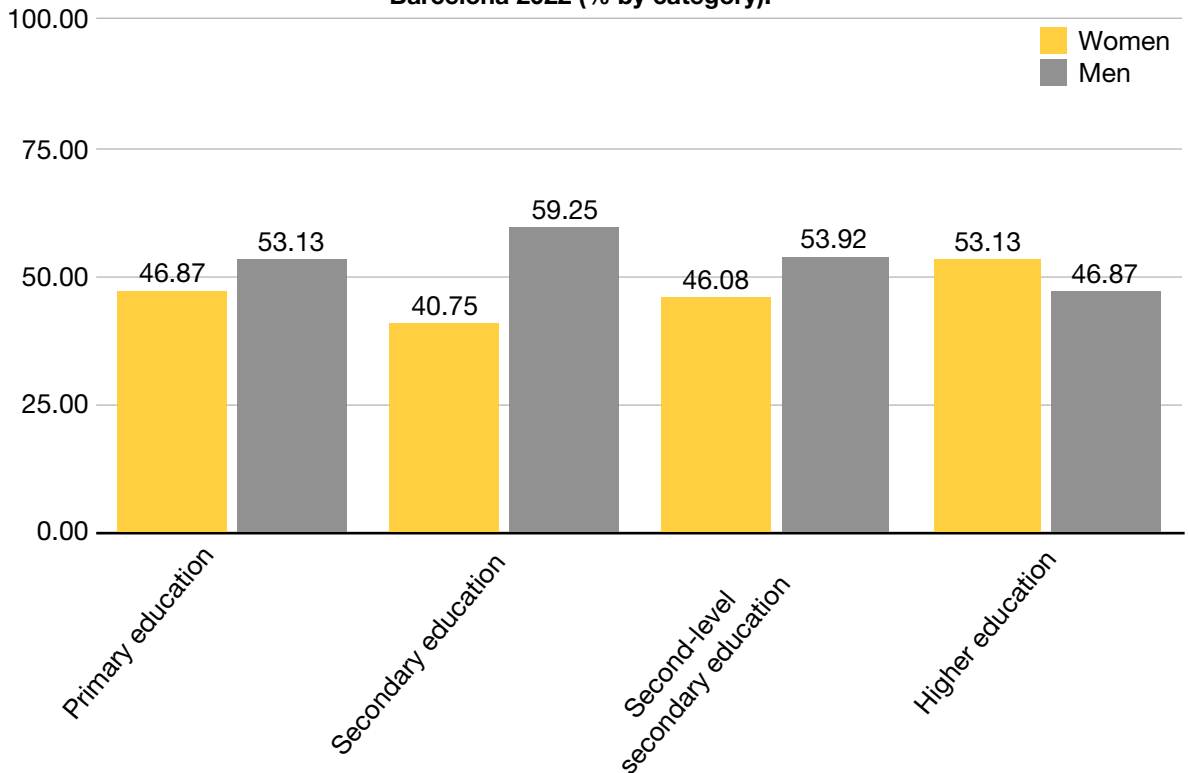
Source: Original, based on data from the 2022 Barcelona Health Survey. Barcelona Public Health Agency.

In terms of the reasons for working fewer hours, we see major differences by gender, which we will also explore later in order to gain a holistic picture of the phenomenon. It is worth noting that there is still a social perception that women are charge of caregiving and household chores, regardless of the group answering the question, as seen in Figure 35.

### Education and the job market.

A key factor in describing the job market is the education and skills of the people in it and their relationship with the demands of the companies offering jobs. Below are several variables that can help us describe these dynamics.

**Figure 36: employed population 16 and over by educational level and nationality. Barcelona 2022 (% by category).**

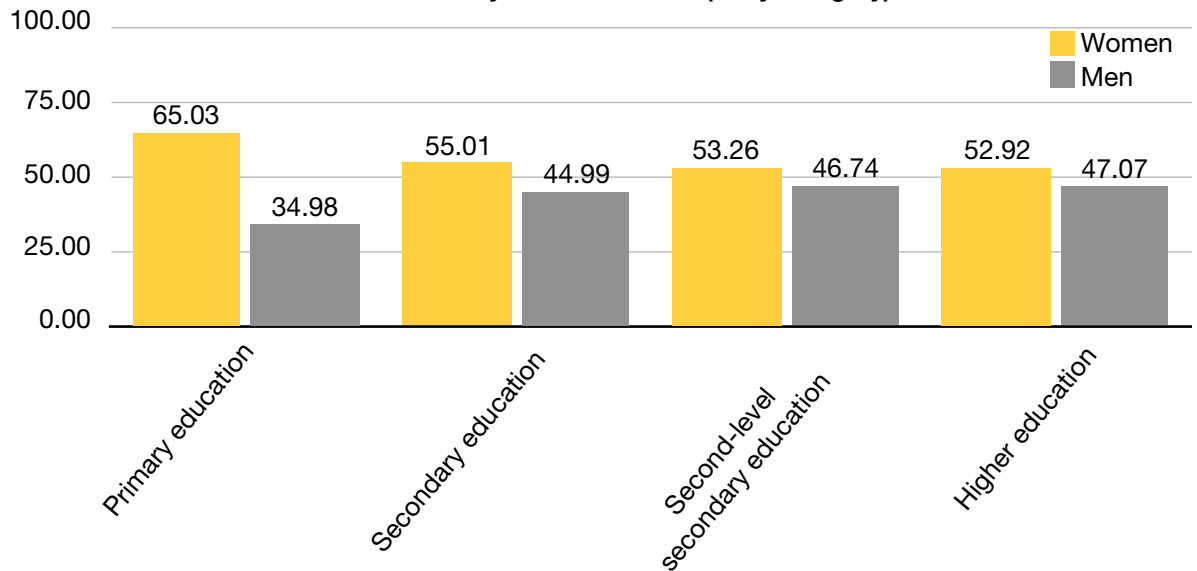


Source: Source: Original, using data from the IDESCAT-Government of Catalonia.

First, we have the data on employed individuals by educational levels from Figure 36. These data are from 2022, but they provide a starting point for our analysis. We see how there are more employed men at each educational level except for higher education, where there are more employed women. This is consistent with the fact that more women have a higher education, but if we continue analysing the data, we see other noteworthy patterns. Given that more men are hired at all educational levels below higher education, it seems that women have to have the highest educational levels to be employable. In other words, if the employer has to choose a man or a woman at lower educational levels, it seems they choose a man.

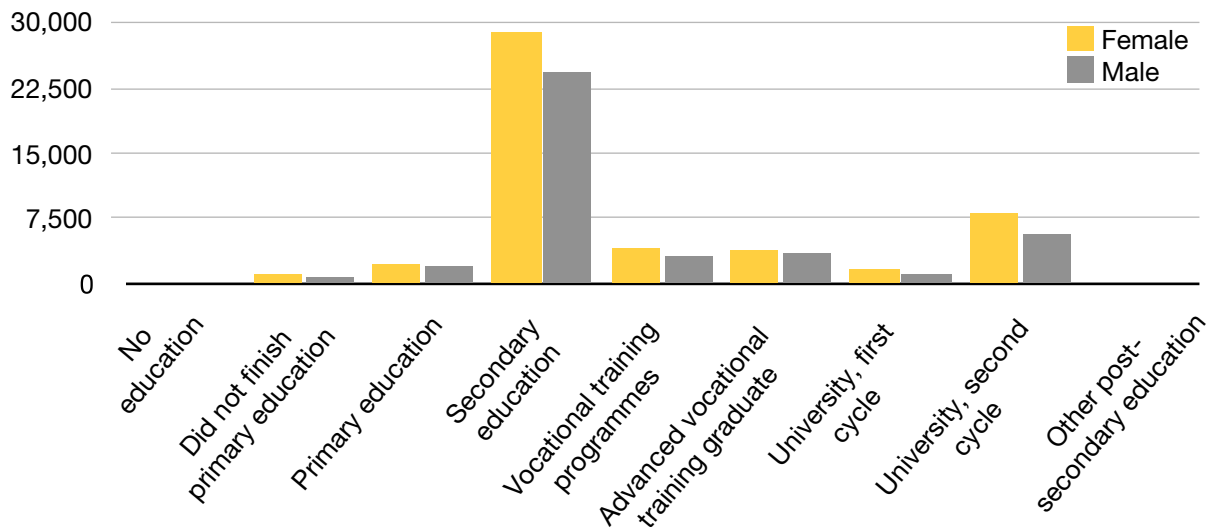
This correlation should be taken with caution, but when we look at the data on non-participation in the job market in the 2022 census and Barcelona City Council data on job seekers in December 2024, we see that women have higher rates of non-participation at all educational levels and that women make up the majority of job seekers at all educational levels. It seems true, then, that a lack of education penalises women more than men.

**Figure 37: population 16 and over not participating in the job market, by educational level and nationality. Barcelona 2022 (% by category).**



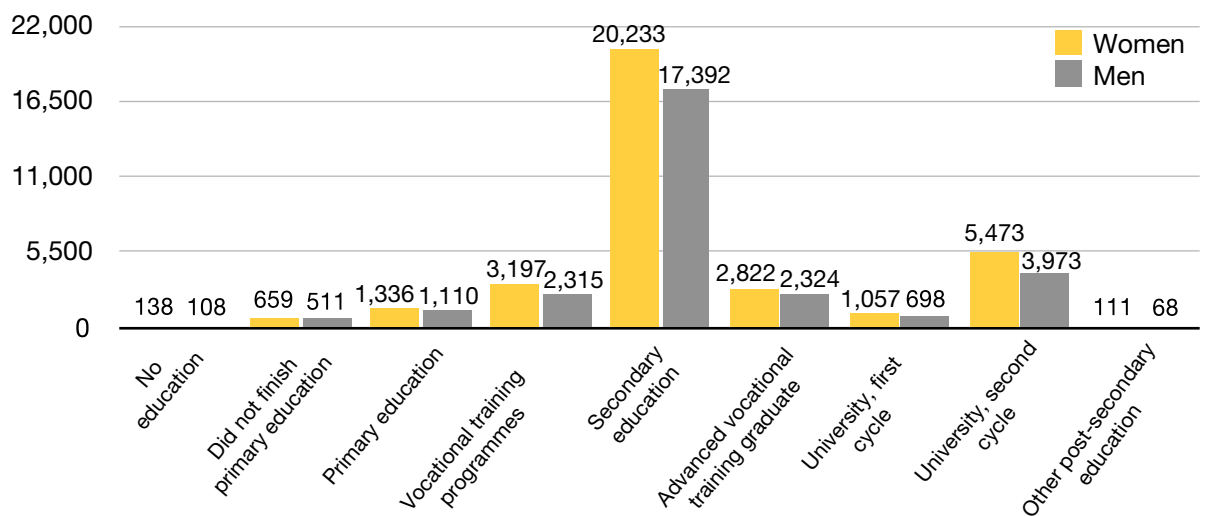
Source: Source: Original, using data from the IDESCAT-Government of Catalonia.

**Figure 38: number of job-seekers by gender and educational level. Barcelona 2024 (totals).**



Source: Barcelona City Council. Municipal Data Office (OMD).

**Figure 39: registered unemployment by educational level and gender. Barcelona 2023 (totals).**



Source: Original, using data from the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Families. Government of Catalonia.

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The latest data available from the Government of Catalonia on unemployment level by educational level and gender, from 2023, are shown in Figure 39 and confirm our impressions so far. Though women have higher educational levels, they also have higher unemployment levels in all education categories.

In the section below, we will see how all the demographic and job market characteristics analysed so far affect career paths and pay.

- 
- The job market in the city of Barcelona is heavily shaped by the service sector, in terms of both turnover and social security registrations.
  - While service-related activities continue to account for the largest number of social security registrations, it is interesting to note the increase in registrations in the hospitality, science and technology, and information and communication sectors, although most of these jobs are held by men.
  - There are strongly female-dominated sectors, such as domestic work, health services and social services and education, as well as heavily male-dominated sectors, such as construction, transportation and storage, energy, manufacturing and extraction, and information and communications.
  - The data show a high level of female job market participation in the city of Barcelona, the only geographic area where it comes close to that of men at certain points.
  - Women have higher rates of non-participation in the job market linked to housework and caregiving.
  - The female unemployment rate in the city of Barcelona is extremely good, nearly half the rate in Spain, and is improving in relation to the rate for men. Together with data on job market participation and employment, this confirms that women in Barcelona are participating in the job market in large numbers.
  - Unemployment trends are positive among women: though they outnumber unemployed men in the data on registered unemployed individuals, the numbers are falling. However, unemployment among foreign-born women seems to be starting an upswing and is overtaking men at unprecedented levels in terms of individuals who are registered as unemployed.
  - The highest female employment rates are found in the 45–54 age bracket for women in general, and 25–34 for foreign-born women.
  - Unsurprisingly, hiring by sector and gender patterns similarly to social security registration, with certain clearly female-dominated sectors. More interestingly, if we break down the data by origin, the domestic work sector is not only female-dominated but is also dominated by foreign-born women. This may be linked to the age groups in which foreign-born women are hired.
  - The data show that women have more temporary work and lower work intensity than men, mainly due to the impact of family and caregiving responsibilities.
  - At all educational levels except for higher education, men make up the majority of the employed population. It seems that women are penalised for low educational levels and that, in order to be chosen over men, they must have a higher educational level.

- 
- Data on non-participation in the job market, job seekers and unemployment levels by educational levels show that, regardless of educational level, women have higher rates of job seeking and non-participation in the job market. Women with elementary education particularly stand out, but it is interesting to note that women with higher education are also worse off.





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# 5 Descriptive analysis

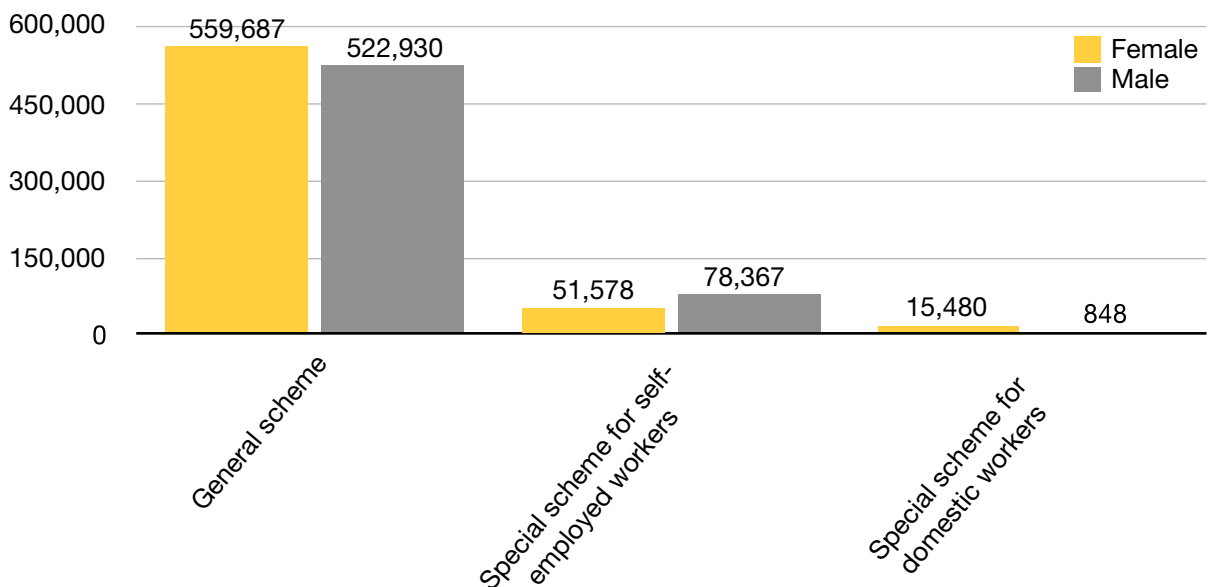
Career paths, pay and poverty from the gender perspective.

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Having defined the characteristics of the job market, we will now look at the effects of this market on women in terms of pay, income, career paths and access to services and pensions.

Barcelona City Council data for 2024 in Figure 40 show that women work more in the general social security scheme and less as self-employed workers. However, the largest difference is seen in the domestic workers category, where women outnumber men by nearly three to one.

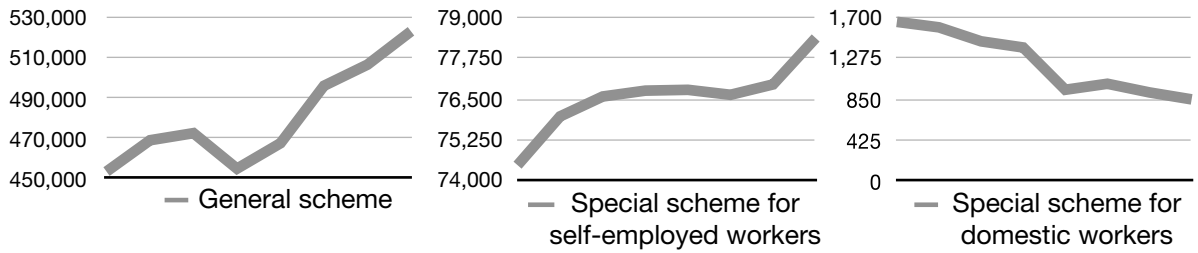
**Figure 40: distribution of registration with social security by gender and scheme. Barcelona 2024 (totals).**



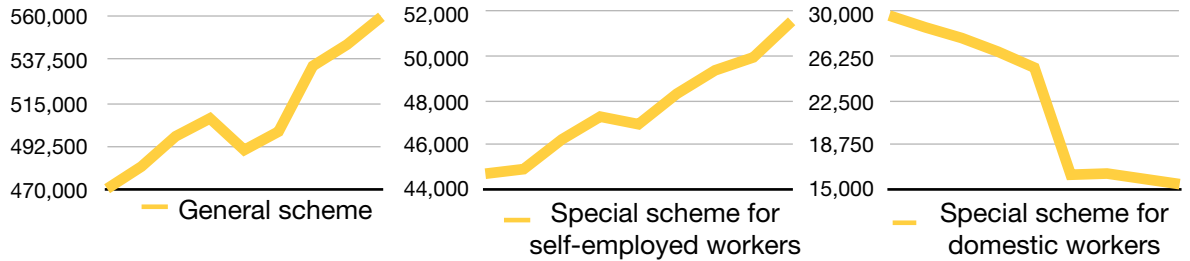
Source: Barcelona City Council. Municipal Data Office (OMD).

If we look at the trends, the same data on people registered show how the number of registrations under the general scheme and the self-employed scheme is on the rise both for women and for men. If we look at the self-employed, it seems that men were less affected by COVID in 2020, with a flat line at that time, while women did see a major decrease. We see the sharpest drop in the category of domestic workers, especially among women. As discussed above, they are over-represented in domestic work, and so the decrease in the number of jobs in this sector affected them much more than men.

**Figure 41: trends in the number of men registered with social security by gender and scheme. Barcelona 2017–2024 (totals).**



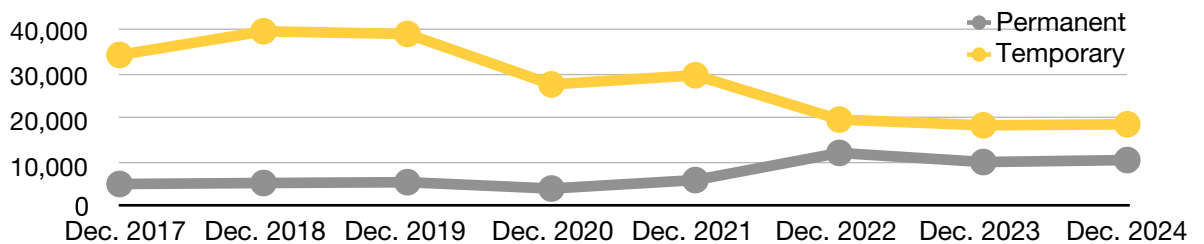
**Figure 42: trends in the number of women registered with social security by gender and scheme. Barcelona 2017–2024 (totals).**



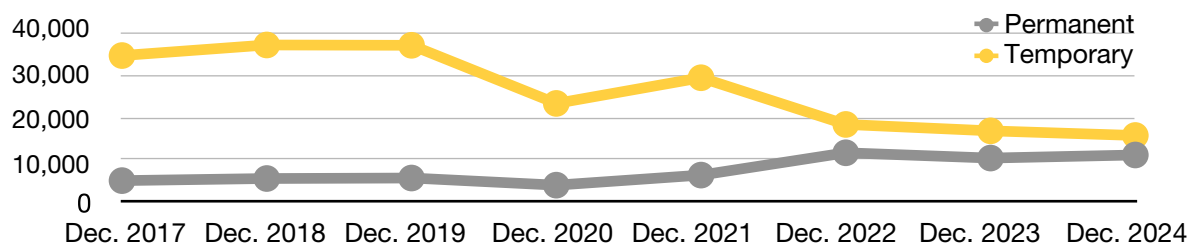
Source: Barcelona City Council. Municipal Data Office (OMD).

Having examined the types of social security registration, in order to understand the possibilities of having a successful career with appropriate pay, we have to look at data on contract type (temporary or permanent). Below are the data on the total number of temporary or permanent contracts for each gender for the city of Barcelona in the period 2017–2024.

**Figure 43: number of employment contracts for women by type. Barcelona 2017–2024 (totals).**



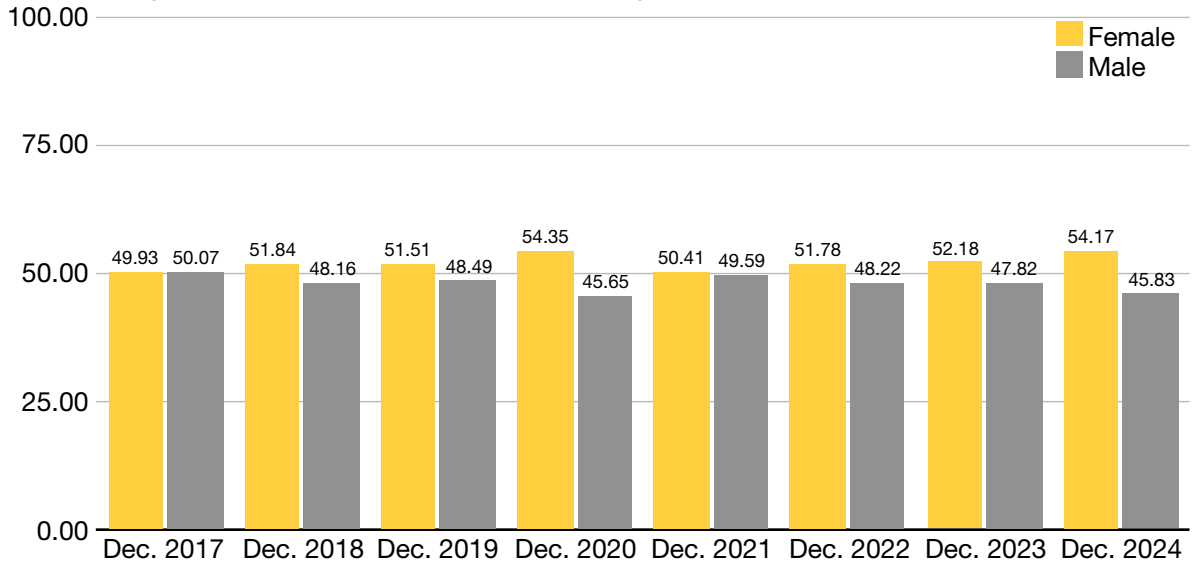
**Figure 44: number of employment contracts for men by type. Barcelona 2017–2024 (totals).**



Source: Barcelona City Council. Municipal Data Office (OMD).

As we see in the graphs, in both cases the gap between the number of temporary and permanent contracts has narrowed considerably as a result of labour reform policies aimed at reducing temporary employment. This reduction is more pronounced among men. However, comparing contract type by gender in the graph below, we see that despite this reduction in temporary employment, women have held the majority of temporary contracts since 2017, when the figures were nearly equal (as seen again in 2021).

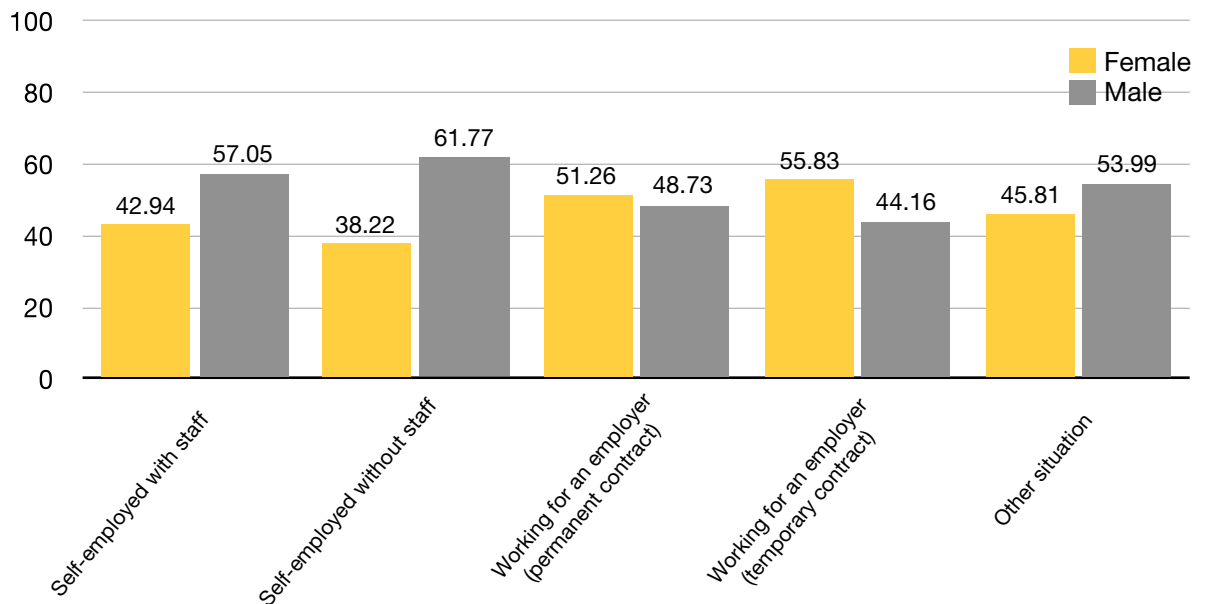
**Figure 45: temporary work contracts by gender. Barcelona 2017–2024 (%).**



Source: Barcelona City Council. Municipal Data Office (OMD).

We will now analyse types of employment by gender and professional status to further explore the impact on careers and pay. Using the most recent data available data, the 2021 census, we see that women work more under the general scheme as employees, both with permanent contracts (51.6%) and even more so with temporary contracts (55.83%), as discussed above. As we also saw in the previous data from 2024, the pattern is different in the self-employed/freelance scheme, which is dominated by men, especially in the category of self-employed workers without employees (61.77%). This situation may be because women have less time for individual entrepreneurship given its incompatibility with caregiving work at home.

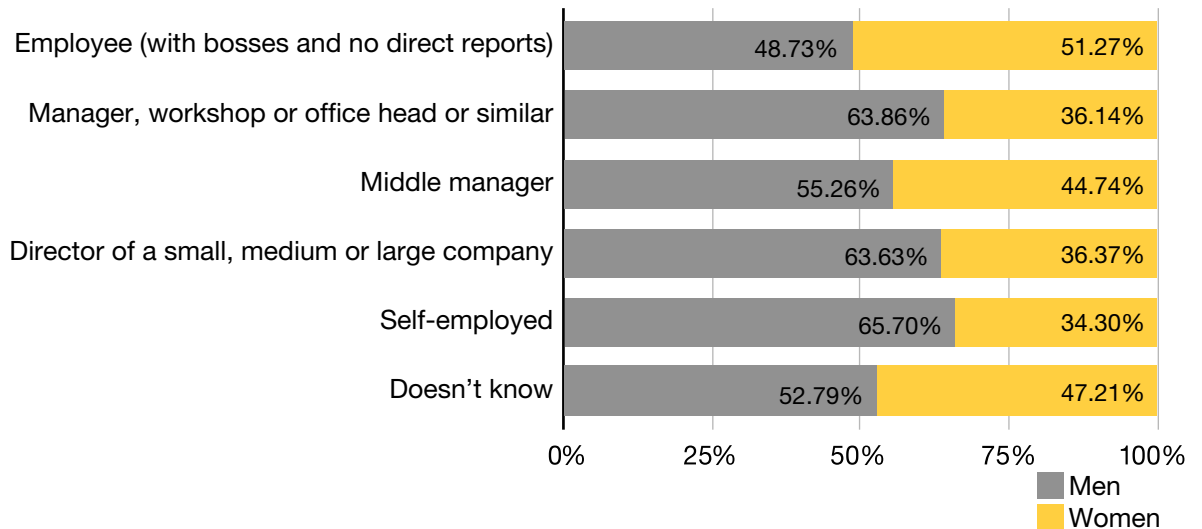
**Figure 46: type of employment by gender and professional status. Barcelona 2021 (%).**



Source: Original, using data from the 2021 INE Census.

If we look at the importance and responsibility levels of jobs held by women, we see that according to the most recent IDESCAT data, a slight majority of these jobs are low-responsibility positions, such as those with no direct reports (51.3%). In contrast, men hold positions of greater responsibility as managers, middle managers or executives.

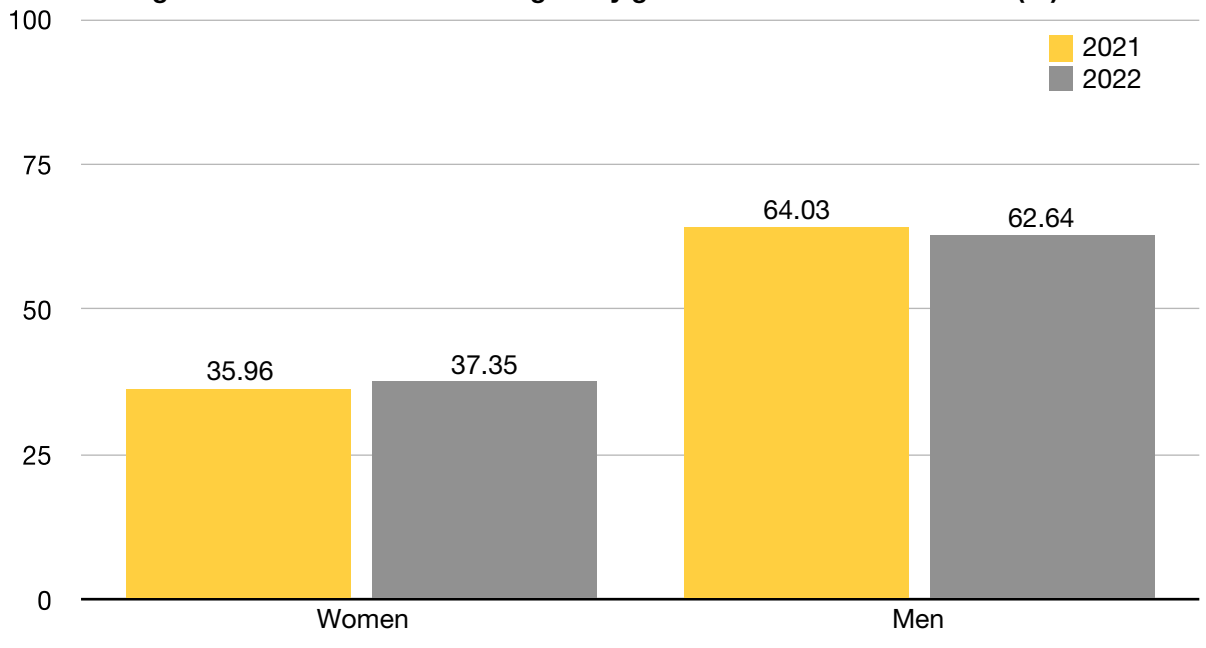
**Figure 47: working population by type of job and gender. Catalonia 2023 (%).**



Source: Source: Original, using data from the IDESCAT-Government of Catalonia.

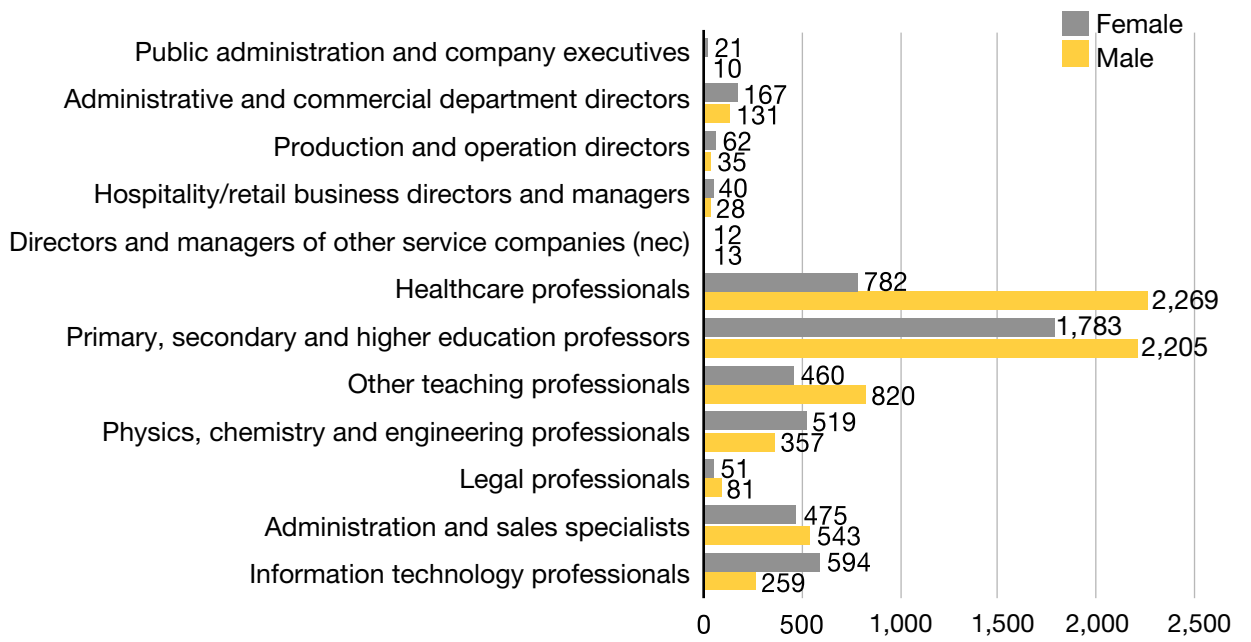
The latest data for Barcelona, from 2021 to 2022, show that the gap between female and male executives remains high, at 27.3 percentage points. We can round out this information with data in Figure 49 on hires of highly skilled staff in 2024, specifically for all executive positions, which are predominantly jobs for which men are hired.

**Figure 48: executives and managers by gender. Barcelona. 2021-2022 (%).**



Source: Source: Original, using data from the IDESCAT-Government of Catalonia.

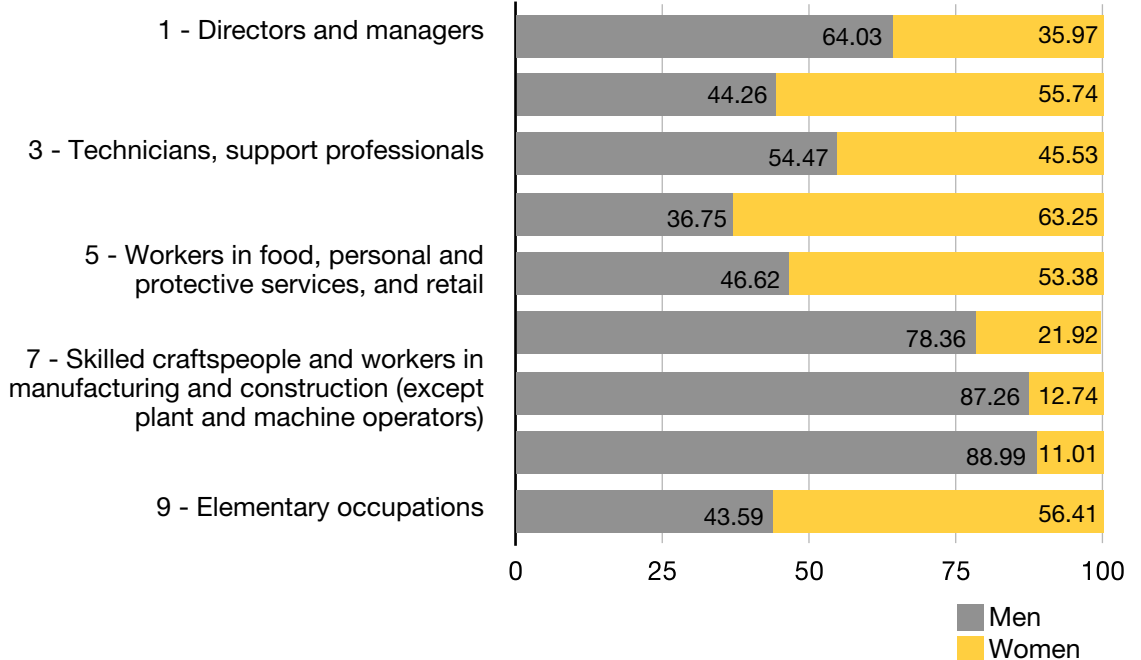
**Figure 49: employment contracts in the professionals, scientists and technicians sub-group by gender. Barcelona October 2024 (Totals).**



Source: original, using data from the Government of Catalonia's Employment and Production Model Observatory.

When we distribute occupations by gender using the data for the city of Barcelona from the 2021 census, we see that women are hired more in elementary and administrative occupations, followed by technical, scientific and intellectual work, food, personal and protective services, and retail. These data also show a pronounced gap with men in executive/managerial and highly skilled positions.

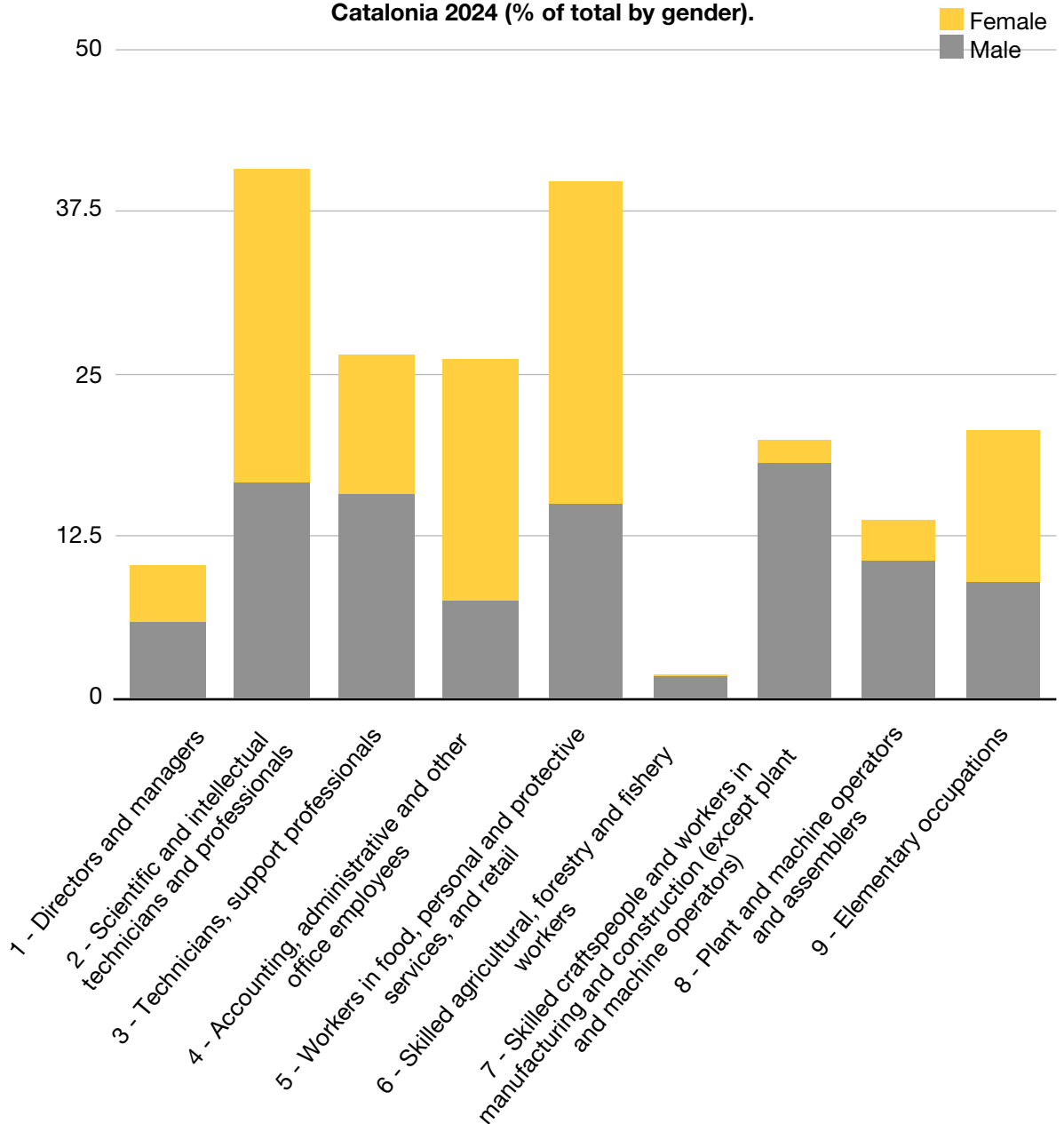
**Figure 50: distribution of occupations by gender using 1-digit National Classification of Occupations (CNO) codes. Barcelona 2021 (%).**



Source: Original, using data from the 2021 INE Census.

As these data have not been updated at the municipal level, we can supplement the analysis with more recent data for Catalonia as a whole. Specifically, the hiring data by occupation and gender from the fourth quarter of 2024 show a situation practically identical to the 2021 census in Barcelona: men are more likely to be hired in executive positions, women in elementary occupations, men in skilled technical occupations and women in personal services and office work. Once again, the picture that emerges from the data reveals the fundamental difficulty in forging a career path away from poorly paid jobs.

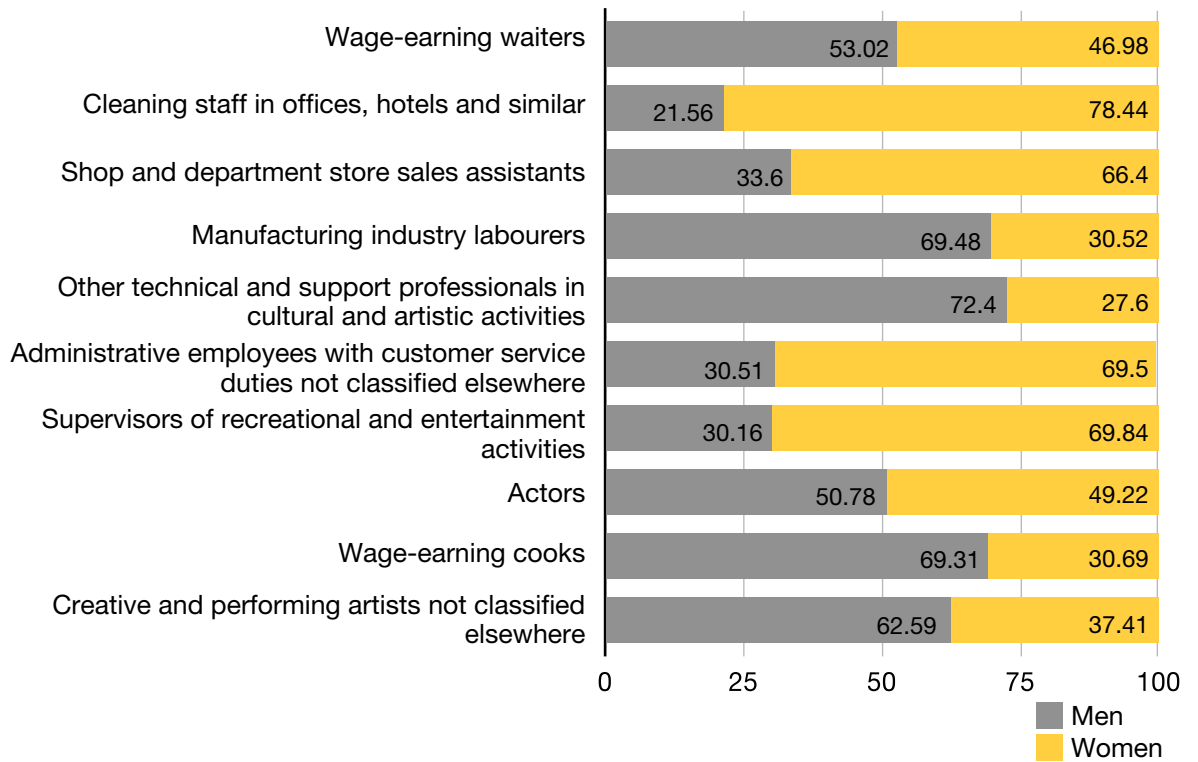
**Figure 51: employed people by occupation and gender.**  
Catalonia 2024 (% of total by gender).



Source: Labour Force Survey 2024. INE.

We find the same with the SEPE data on jobs by gender in Barcelona in 2023, which show that women are far more likely than men to be hired as cleaners, sales assistants, recreation supervisors and customer service staff. These jobs tend to have fewer promotion opportunities and lower pay.

**Figure 53: most common occupations by gender. Barcelona 2023 (%).**

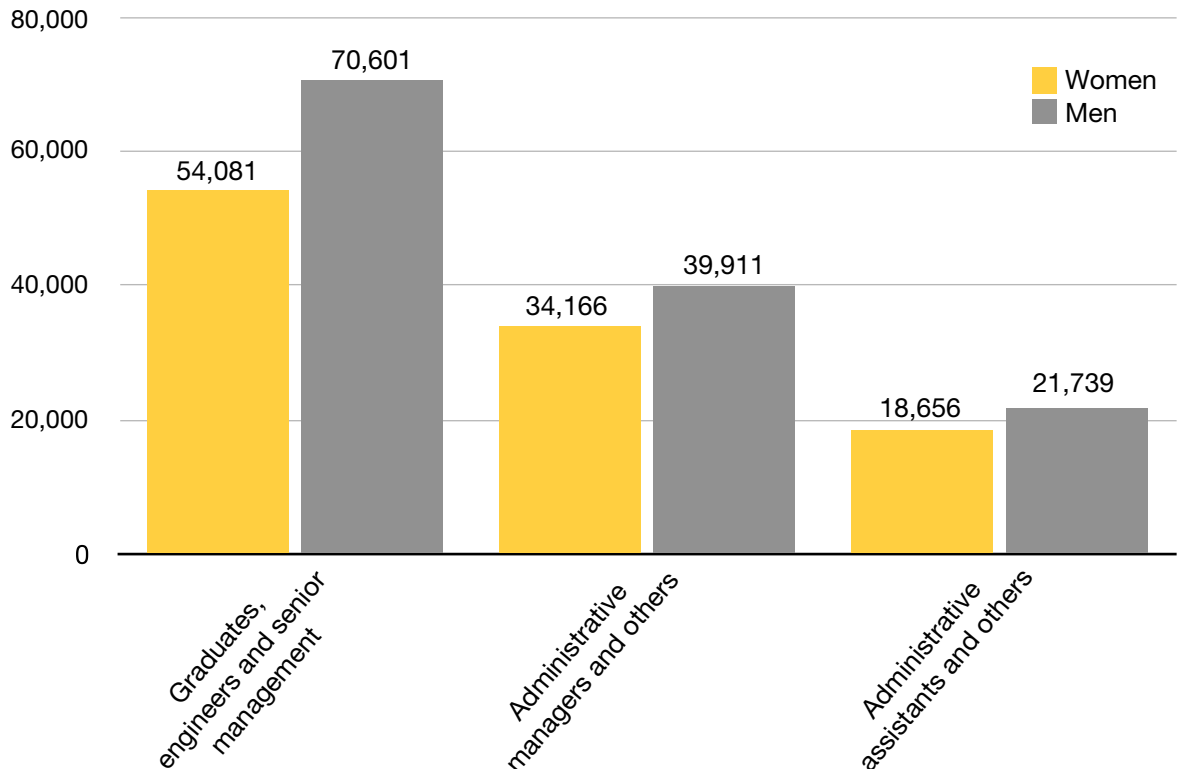


Source: original based on data from the Annual Bulletin of the Municipal job market. Spanish Public Employment Service (SEPE). Barcelona 2024.



We have seen that men's jobs are more highly skilled, which has a clear impact on pay earned by men compared to women. Continuing this analysis, in the city of Barcelona in 2023 the wage gaps between the professional categories of graduates, engineers and senior managers; administrative managers; and administrative assistants, showed pronounced gender inequalities, as seen in Figure 54. Specifically, the average pay for graduates, engineers and senior managers was three times the pay of administrative assistants in 2023. These differences affect the pay earned by women, as they have less access to senior management positions, as discussed above. However, it is also relevant to note that within the same pay scale groups, women are always paid less.

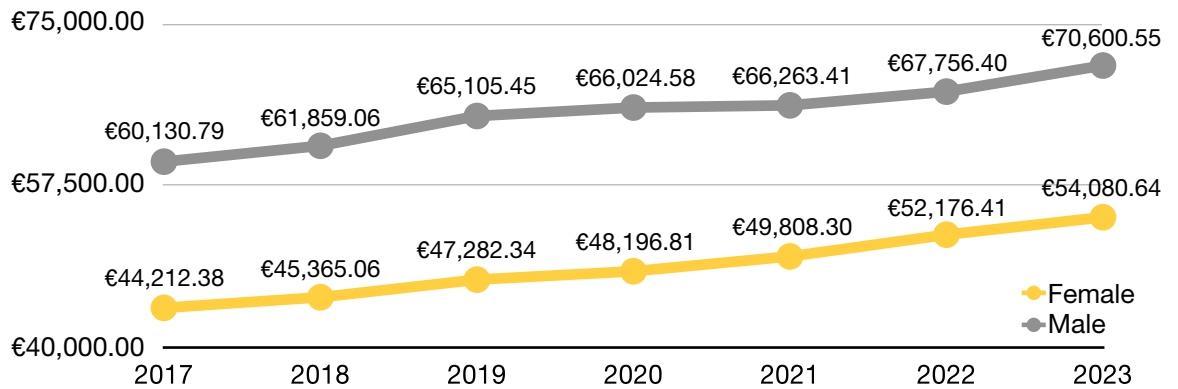
**Figure 54: average pay by professional category (€/year)**  
Barcelona. 2023



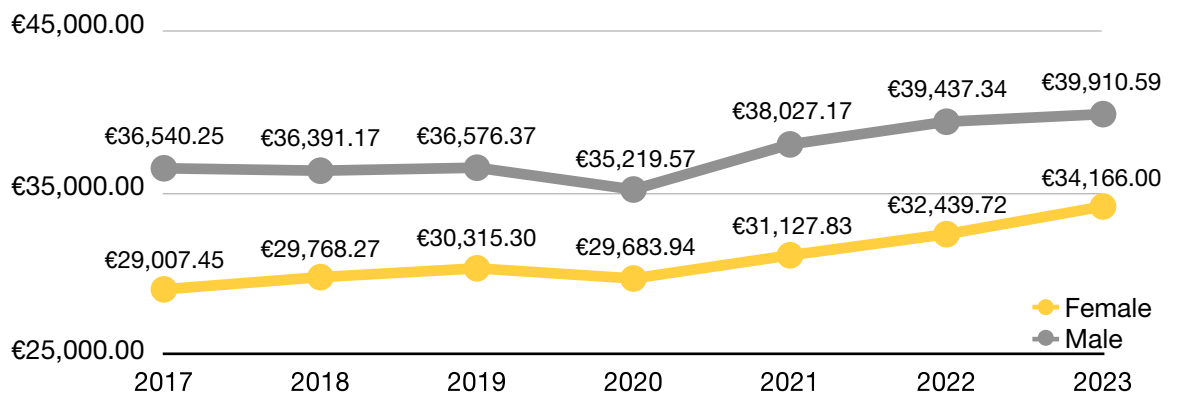
Source: original based on the 2023 Pay Report from the Municipal Data Office. Barcelona City Council, 2025.

The trends in pay by gender and professional category in recent years show us that the gap has not narrowed at any point; in fact, at some points, it has widened. Though men and women are earning more, the graphs clearly show that the growth is parallel and that the wage gap is greater in higher-skilled occupational categories, except for the categories of administrative managers and assistants, who saw their earnings fall during the COVID pandemic.

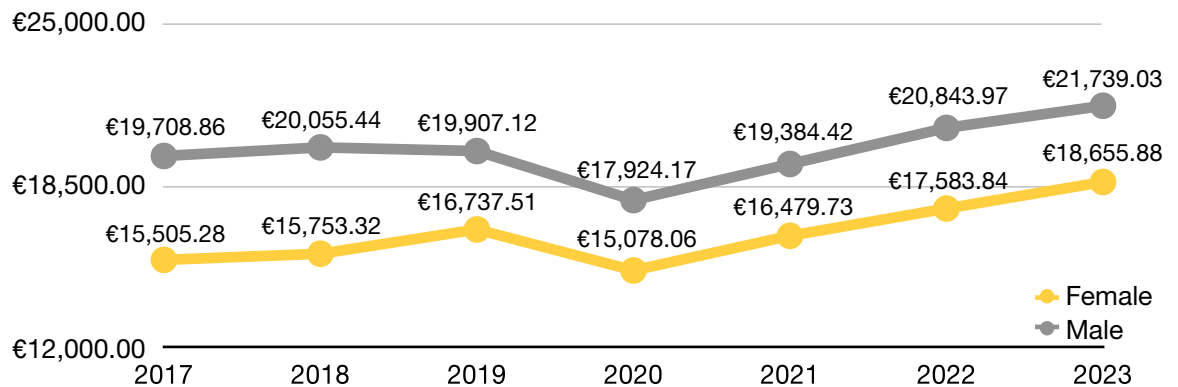
**Figure 55: average pay earned by Barcelona residents by gender. Professional category: graduates, engineers and senior management. Barcelona 2017–2023 (€).**



**Figure 56: average pay earned by Barcelona residents by gender. Professional category: administrative managers and others. Barcelona 2017–2023 (€).**



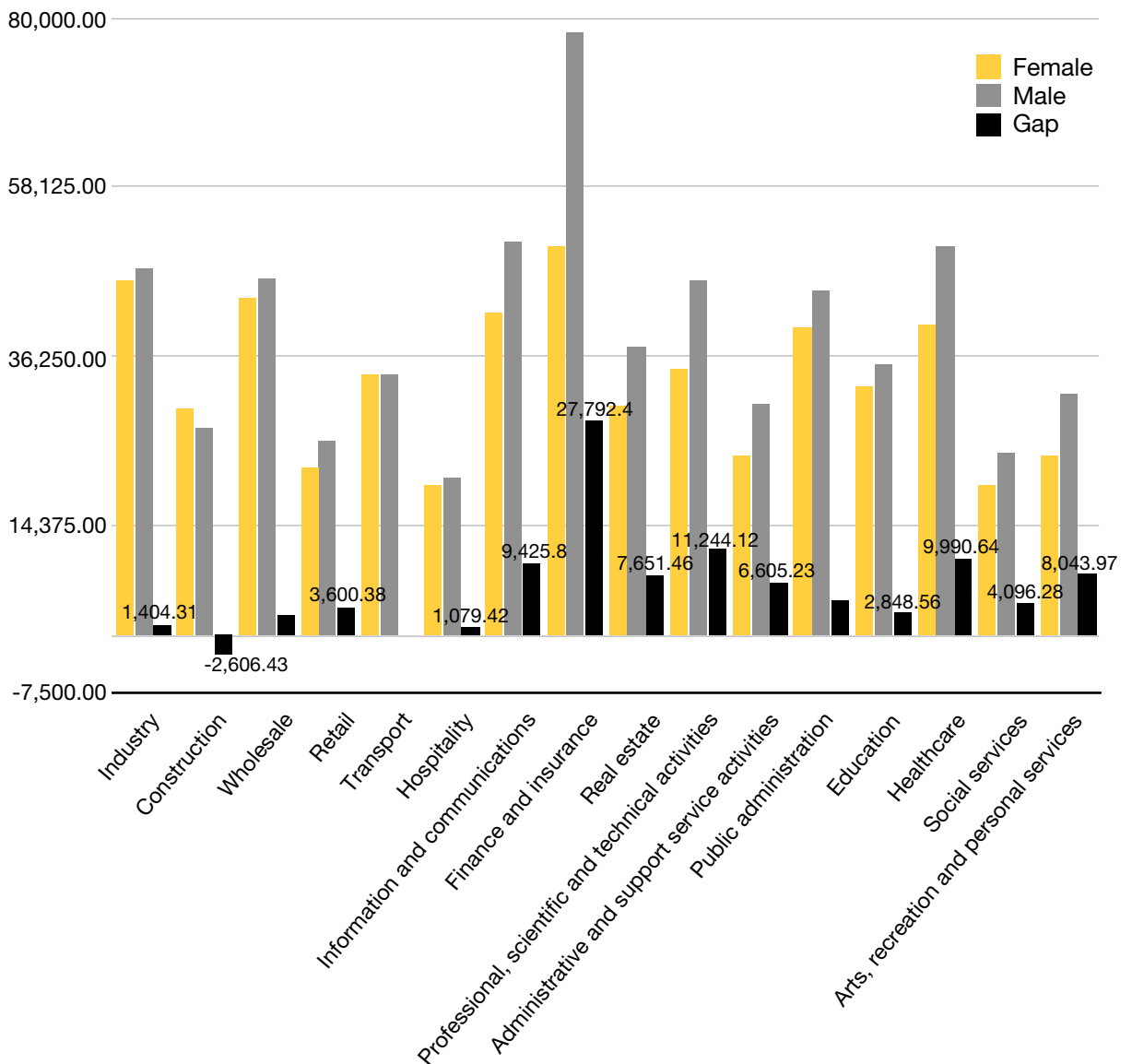
**Figure 57: average pay (€) earned by Barcelona residents by gender. Professional category: administrative assistants and others. Barcelona 2017–2023**



Source: original based on the 2023 Pay Report from the Municipal Data Office. Barcelona City Council, 2025.

In terms of the lowest-paying jobs, social services, a highly female-dominated sector, has the second lowest pay level, as well as a pronounced wage gap. In fact, men earn more in all sectors except two, which, curiously enough, are highly male-dominated: construction and transport. The reason for these differences has to do with the fact that women in these sectors are likely working in more skilled jobs and the fact that their presence in these sectors is negligible to begin with, as are men in social services.

**Figure 58: average pay of Barcelona residents and wage gap by gender and grouping of economic activity sectors. Barcelona 2023 (€).**

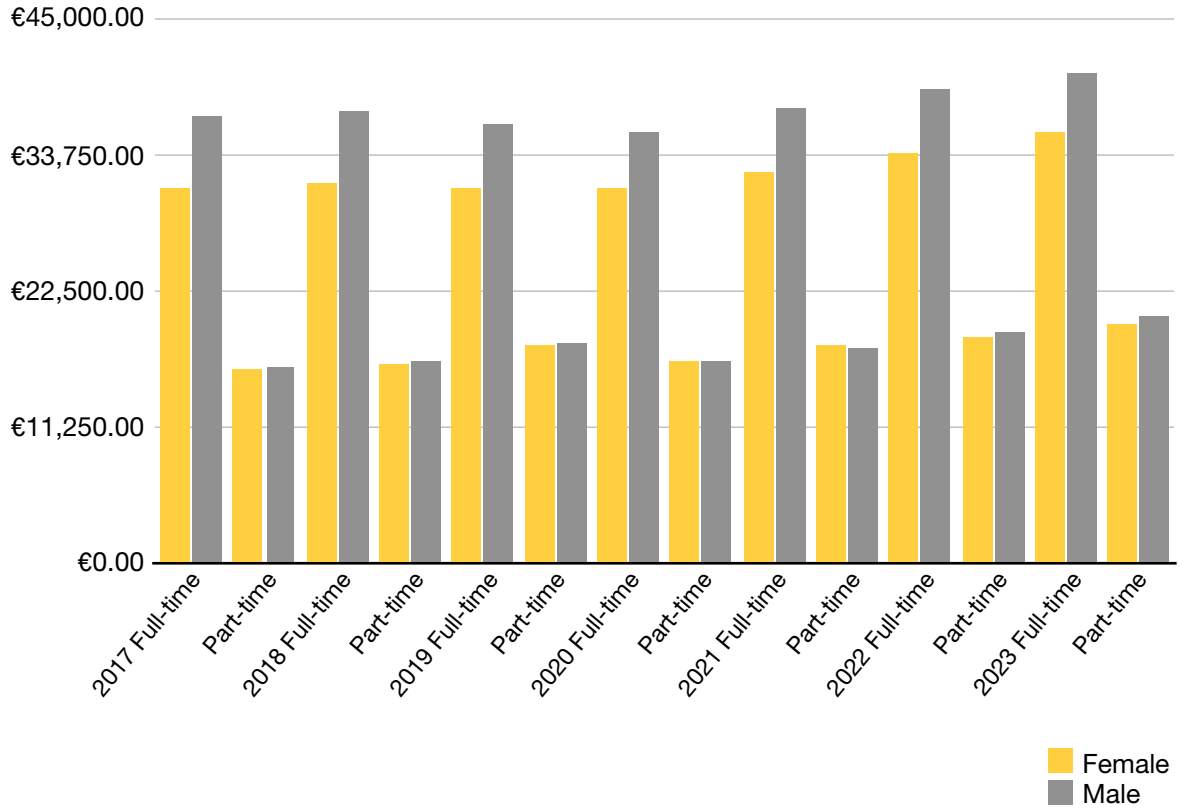


Source: original based on the 2023 Pay Report from the Municipal Data Office. Barcelona City Council, 2025.

We will now analyse the difference in the pay earned by men and women depending on contract type. As we have already seen, women have more temporary and part-time jobs, and so exploring these data will give us a clearer picture of a factor that affects women to a greater extent.

The data in the graph below show average pay earned by men and women for the 2017–2023 period by contract type (part-time or full-time).

**Figure 59: average pay by gender and working hours. Barcelona 2023 (€).**



		Female	Male	Gap
2017	Full-time	€30,992.71	€37,083.84	€6,091.13
	Part-time	€16,102.32	€16,199.66	€97.34
2018	Full-time	€31,413.82	€37,545.34	€6,131.52
	Part-time	€16,476.22	€16,678.41	€202.19
2019	Full-time	€30,998.34	€36,396.19	€5,397.85
	Part-time	€18,045.27	€18,268.29	€223.02
2020	Full-time	€30,974.83	€35,783.90	€4,809.07
	Part-time	€16,695.28	€16,665.29	€-29.99
2021	Full-time	€32,392.42	€37,598.56	€5,206.14
	Part-time	€18,020.42	€17,723.64	€-296.78
2022	Full-time	€34,024.88	€39,144.04	€5,119.16
	Part-time	€18,730.86	€19,122.76	€391.90
2023	Full-time	€35,758.98	€40,544.04	€4,785.06
	Part-time	€19,716.19	€20,515.59	€799.40

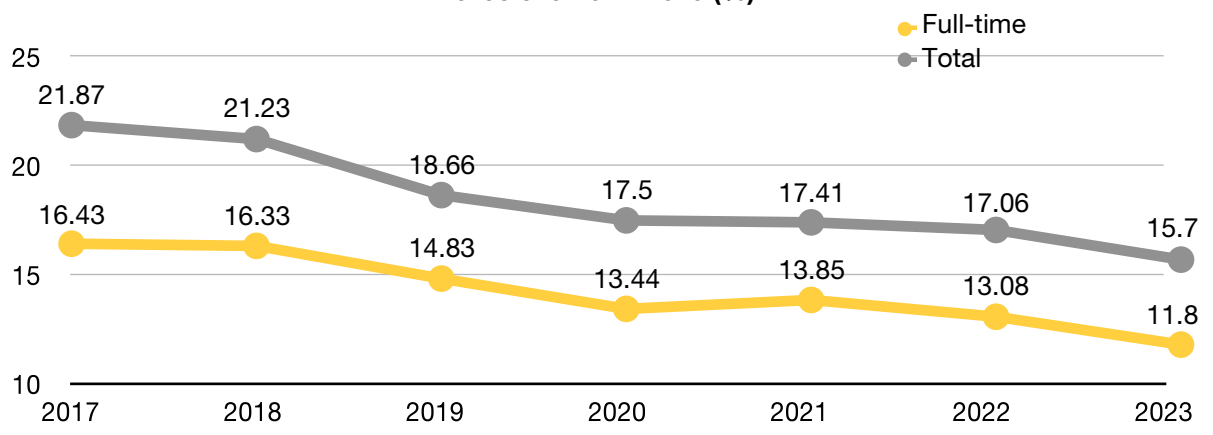
Source: original based on the 2023 Pay Report from the Municipal Data Office. Barcelona City Council, 2025.

The data clearly show that women are consistently paid less, except at two points in the records for part-time contracts, 2020 and 2021. The difference is much more pronounced for full-time contracts, where there have historically been gaps of over 6,000.00. That gap is now narrowing, but it remains significant. There is less of a gap for part-time contracts, but unlike full-time contracts, this gap has been widening since 2022.

If we compare pay for each year and type of workday with the average for men and women's pay that year, we see that for part-time contracts, the two amounts are close to the average, but for full-time contracts, women's pay is 2,000.00 below the average.

As we see, the specific wage gap by workday or economic activity sectors includes isolated cases in certain sectors or in part-time contracts, where women may earn more than men. This exceptional situation does not occur when we look at trends in the wage gap for workers as a whole and for full-time workers as a whole.

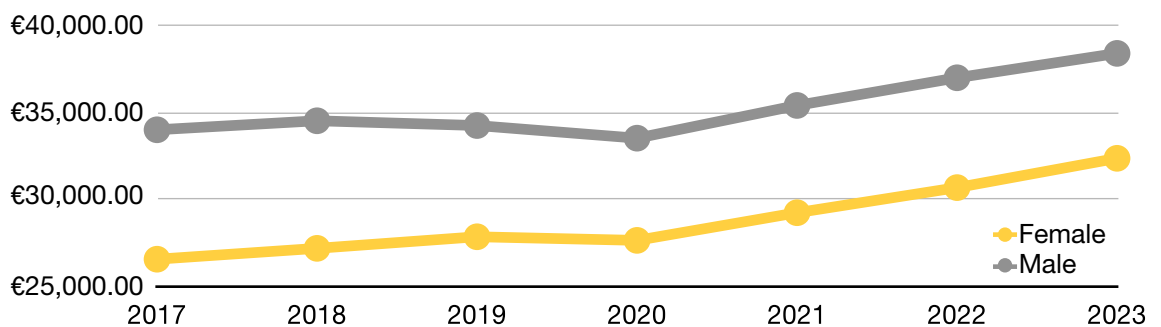
**Figure 60: wage gap, total and for full-time workers. Barcelona 2017–2023 (%).**



Source: original based on the 2023 Pay Report from the Municipal Data Office. Barcelona City Council, 2025.

The graph shows how policies to narrow the wage gap have been successful, with a significant reduction by the end of the time series compared to the beginning. However, analysing all the data presented so far, it cannot be said that the problem is solved. This issue can be seen more clearly if we look at the average pay trends for men and women.

**Figure 61: average pay by gender. Barcelona 2017–2024 (€).**



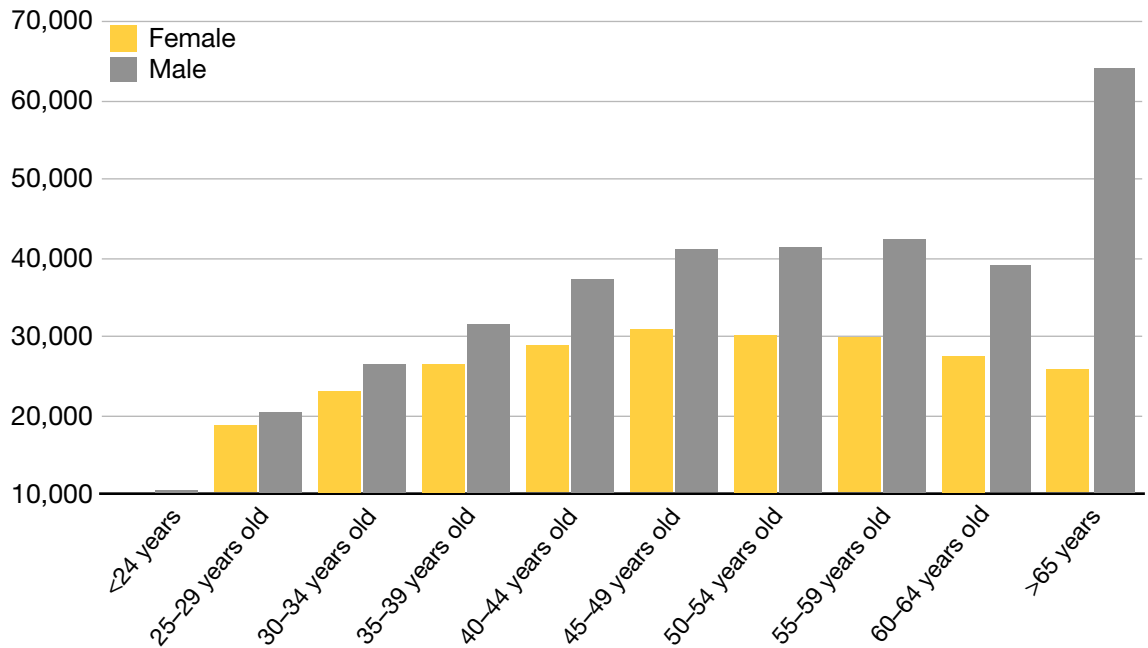
Source: original based on the 2023 Pay Report from the Municipal Data Office. Barcelona City Council, 2025.

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Difference	€7,437.99	€7,331.20	€6,392.33	€5,872.53	€6,164.29	€6,312.44	€6,030.35

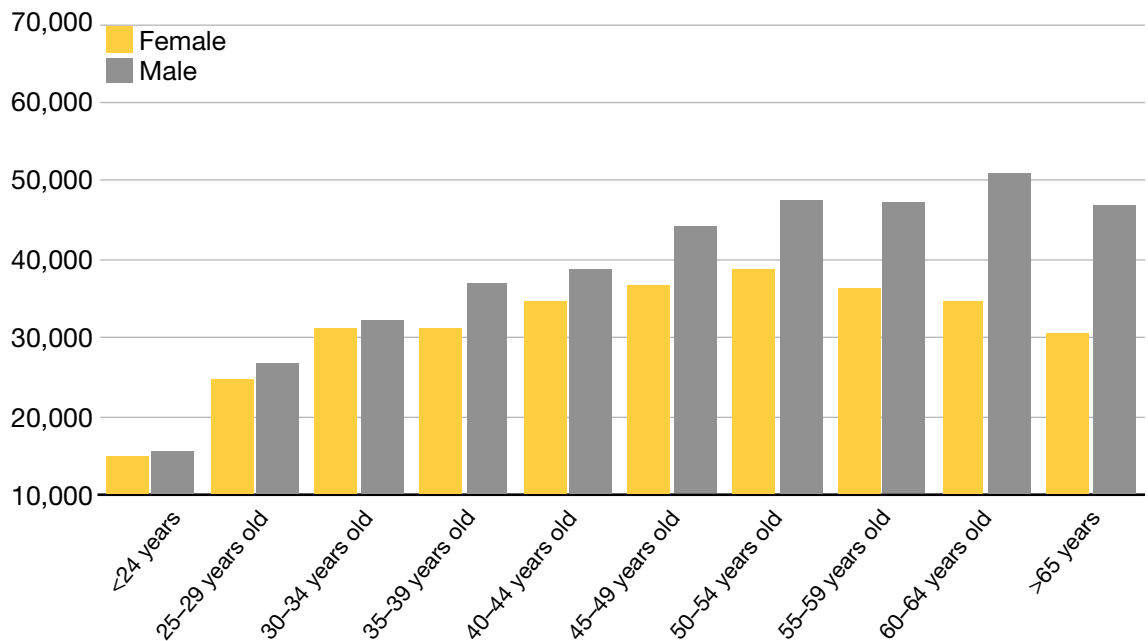
There has been an increase in pay for both men and women, but as we have seen with other indicators, this growth is steady but parallel. Though the gap has narrowed by over 1,000 in recent years, progress is slow.

We earlier saw how women account for a significant share of the population in young age groups and especially in elderly age groups. Therefore, we will now analyse pay by gender and age and show how the gap affects women by age.

**Figure 62: average pay by gender and age. Barcelona 2017 (€).**



**Figure 63: average pay by gender and age. Barcelona 2023 (€).**



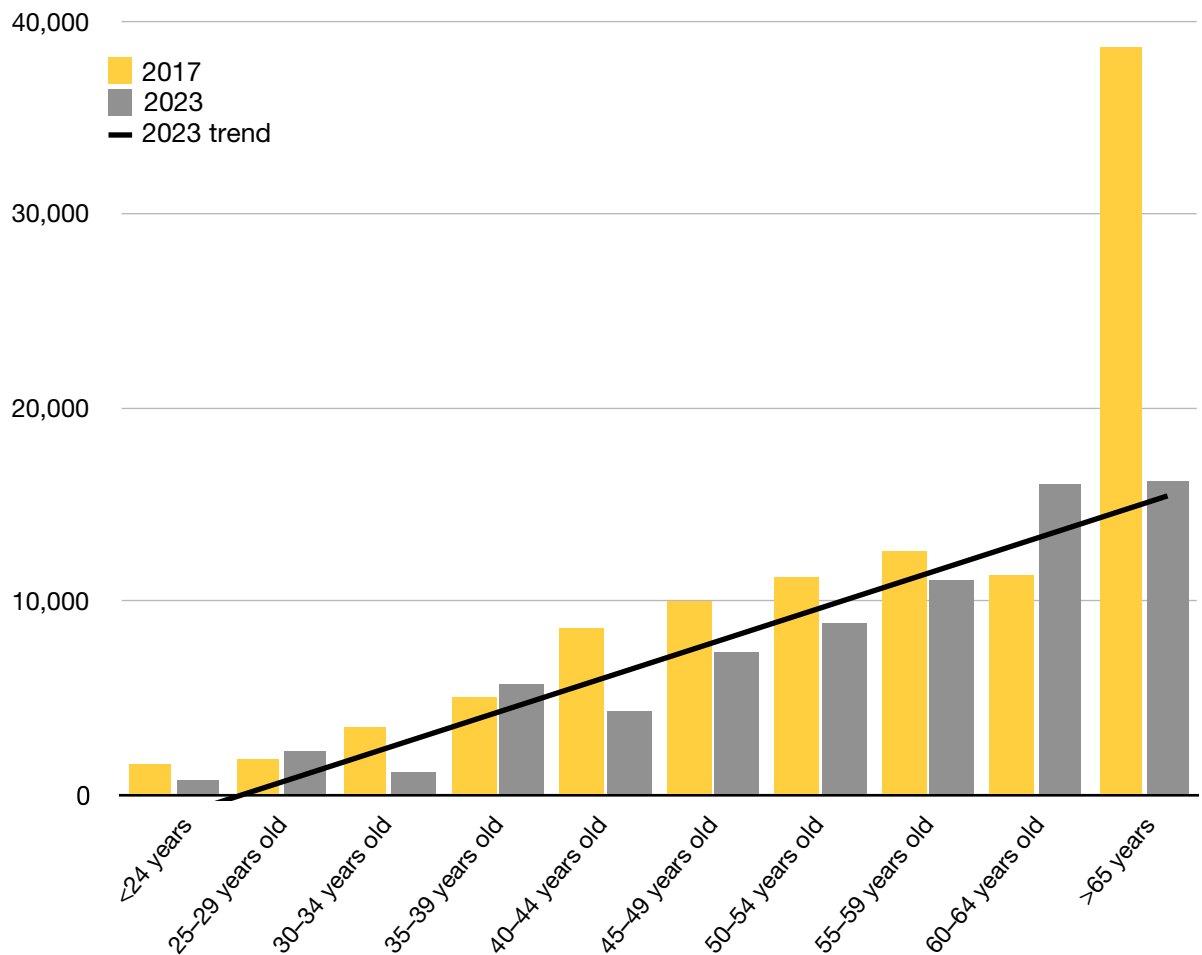
Source: original based on the 2023 Pay Report from the Municipal Data Office. Barcelona City Council, 2025.

The data for 2017 and 2023 are sharply different and show the following:

- Pay has risen over time, as we have seen throughout the analysis.
- Young people earn significantly lower pay than other age groups.

- In 2017, pay only increased with age for men; women’s earned income decreased after age 49. This situation shifted somewhat in 2023, where we see that women’s pay fell after age 54, a decline only seen among men after 65.
- Once again, it is clear that men’s pay is much higher than women’s in all age groups. The wage gap between men and women over the age of 65 was particularly unequal in 2017, when men earned nearly three times more. This gap narrowed significantly in 2023, but it widened in the 60–64 age group.
- The wage gap among young people also narrowed in the under-24 and 30–34 groups but widened in the 25–29 and 35–39 brackets.
- Though pay is increasing for both men and women, the growth rate is greater for men, and this perpetuates significant pay differences. These differences increase towards the end of people’s working lives, when their career path and position become more important.
- Taking only the 2023 data on the wage gap by age, we see that the wage gap tends to increase over the course of people’s working lives, even though there are certain age brackets where the gap is narrower than in the previous group.

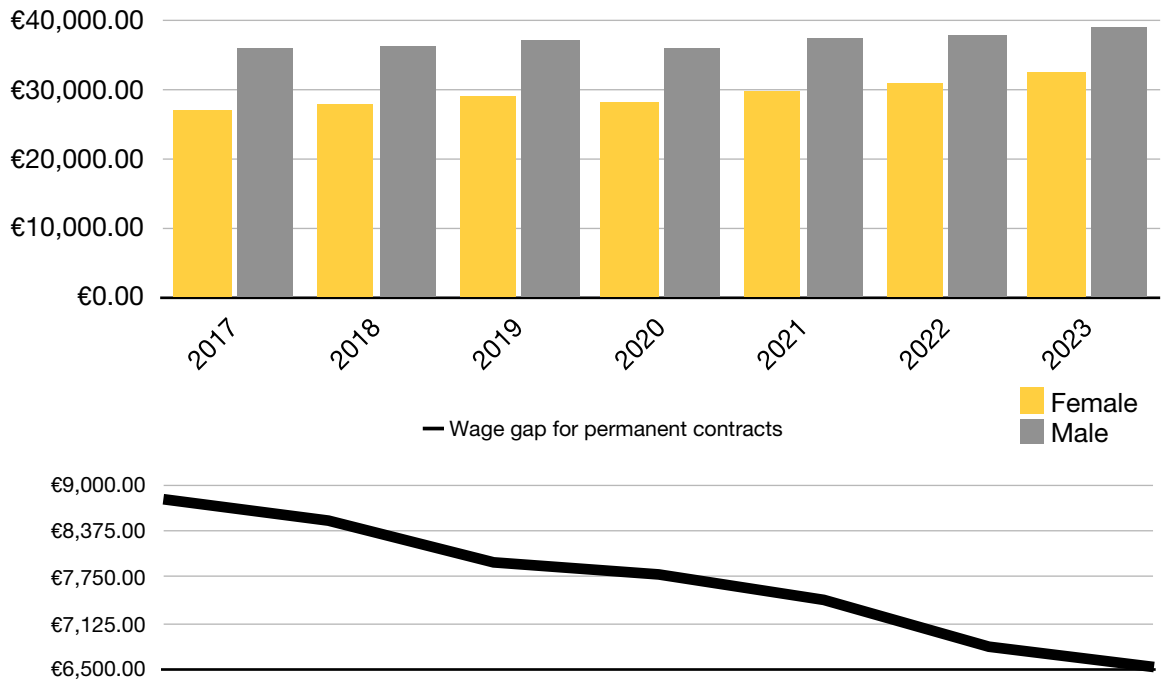
**Figure 64: difference in average pay by gender and age. Barcelona 2017 and 2023 (€).**



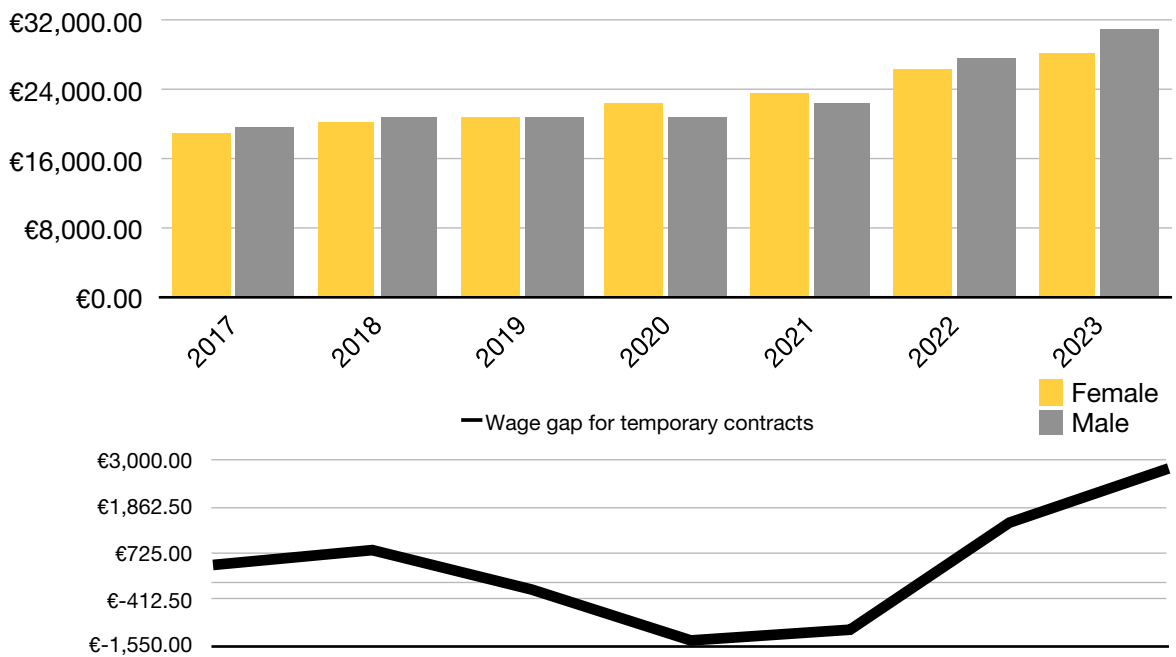
Source: original based on the 2023 Pay Report from the Municipal Data Office. Barcelona City Council, 2025.

Above we looked at the wage gap by working hours, with the understanding from the job market data that women are more affected by temporary work. We will now do the same with contract types to see if we find the same differences.

**Figure 65: average pay by gender and permanent contract. Barcelona 2017–2023 (€).**



**Figure 66: average pay by gender and temporary contract. Barcelona 2017–2023 (€).**



Source: original based on the 2023 Pay Report from the Municipal Data Office. Barcelona City Council, 2025.

The data on pay trends by contract from 2017 to 2023 again clearly show that men consistently earn more with permanent contracts. Only at two points, in 2020 and 2021, did women with temporary contracts earn more, and in 2019, the figures were practically equal. Relative annual differences for permanent contracts range from 6,000.00 to 9,000.00. As mentioned above, in 2020 and 2021 women with temporary contracts earned more than men, by nearly 1,500.00. In other years, men have earned more with temporary contracts, with the difference ranging from just under 450.00 in 2017 to over 2,800.00 today.

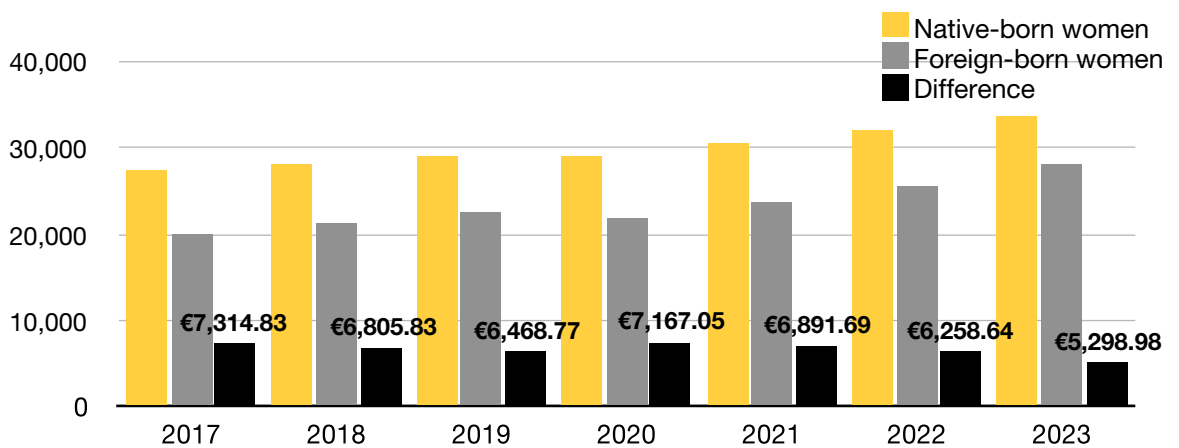


Again, we see that pay has increased for men and women. Though the gap is narrowing very slowly for permanent contracts, since 2021 it has been widening dramatically for temporary contracts, which are the majority among women. Specifically, the gap doubled between 2022 and 2023.

Another factor that proved relevant in previous analyses was the variable of origin, comparing native-born and foreign-born workers. If we look at the pay data from the 'Els salaris a Barcelona 2023' [Pay in Barcelona 2023] report published in 2025,<sup>22</sup> we find that foreign-born women earn consistently lower pay than foreign-born men, although curiously, native-born women earn consistently higher pay than foreign-born men. That being said, it is clear that native-born women earn higher pay than foreign-born women when we look at the totals, which are sometimes similar to the differences between native-born men and women. To elaborate further, though the wage gaps in the native-born population are currently stagnant, the gaps between foreign-born and native-born women show a slight downswing.

These data raise the question of whether origin carries more weight than gender in defining the wage gap, although it is understood that there are significant pay differences among foreign-born workers depending on country of origin and qualifications. Looking at average pay, it seems that this an issue to bear in mind.

**Figure 67: average pay among women by origin.  
Barcelona 2017–2023 (€)**



	2017		2018		2019	
	Spain	Foreign-born	Spain	Foreign-born	Spain	Foreign-born
<b>Female</b>	27,475	20,160.17	28,151.33	21,345.50	28,983.83	22,515.06
<b>Male</b>	35,993.56	23,816.67	36,686.52	24,120.46	37,006.23	24,502.47
	2020		2021		2022	
	Spain	Foreign-born	Spain	Foreign-born	Spain	Foreign-born
<b>Female</b>	28,908.60	21,741.55	30,485.06	23,593.37	31,940.70	25,682.06
<b>Male</b>	36,373.76	23,404.68	37,847.26	26,935.38	39,514.66	29,252.59

Source: original based on the 2023 Pay Report from the Municipal Data Office. Barcelona City Council, 2025.

As seen previously, having a strong career is key to achieving an income level that makes it possible to lead a personally fulfilling life. The unique challenges faced by women in forging these careers and reaching positions of responsibility or being promoted, together with the wage gap, mean that it is harder for them to reach this income level, placing them at greater risk of poverty.

First, we will analyse data on the risk of poverty, defined from a multidimensional perspective as a series of hardships that stand in the way of having a normal standard of living because the household in question (whether families or individuals) is below the poverty line. Data by gender are shown in the following table.

**Table 8: relative poverty risk rate by gender. Barcelona 2017–2023 (%).**

	18 March 2017	12 Jan. 2021	05 Jan. 2023
Female	25.02	22.10	24.63
Male	22.56	21.33	21.10

Source: 'Pobresa salarial a Barcelona 2022' report. Municipal Data Office. Barcelona City Council, 2024.

With the data currently available from Barcelona City Council's Municipal Data Office, we can see that women's poverty risk is consistently higher and that it rose between 2021 and 2023, nearly reaching 2017 levels. Meanwhile, the rate has decreased for men, albeit to a lesser extent in 2023.

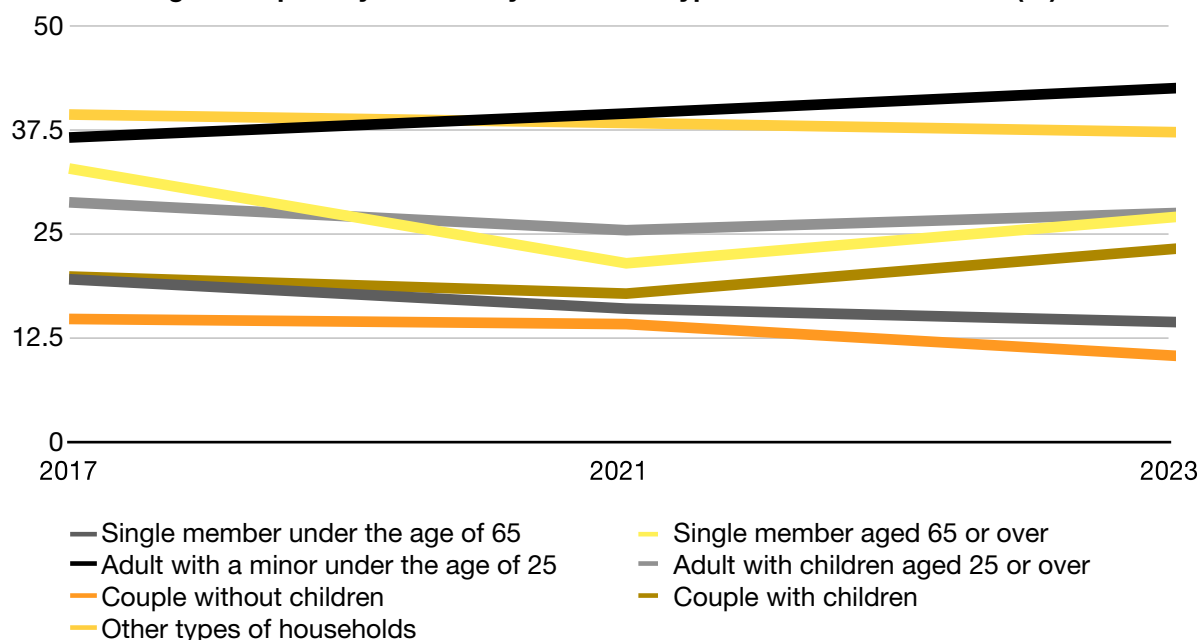
Before exploring the data on household types, a few clarifications are warranted:

- Firstly, we do not have household data broken down by gender, but as we have seen in the section on demographics, women are the majority in the elderly population. As such, it is plausible that data on households with a single member over the age of 65 will reflect women more, as they make up a larger proportion of this population.
- Secondly, we should re-state a caveat about households made up of adults with dependent minors. Though not all of them can be counted as single-mother households, given the demographic data presented, we can assume that this situation will affect more women

than men. It is true that these do not account for a large percentage of all households, but households headed by single women are twice as common as those headed by single men, as discussed above.

Having noted these caveats, we can now look at the graph on the poverty rate by household type, focusing on the households that are of salient interest. Once again, we are using the most recent data from Barcelona City Council.

**Figure 68: poverty risk rate by household type. Barcelona 2017–2023 (%).**



Source: 'Pobresa salarial a Barcelona 2022' report. Municipal Data Office. Barcelona City Council, 2024.

We can see how households with a single member under the age of 65 and couples without children are the types at the least risk, and that furthermore, this risk is decreasing over time. The risk of couples with children is rising again after it dropped in 2021, and households made up of adults with minors under the age of 25 show a fairly flat line.

If we look at households made up of elderly people living alone, we see that their situation has improved since 2017, but in 2021 their risk started to rise again, making this the third most at-risk household type. However, we find the most serious situation among households made up of adults with dependent children. Their risk rate is the highest since the start of the data series, and it shows an upward trend that places them nearly 25 points above households made up of couples without children.

Another relevant factor when it comes to poverty risk and household type is adults' individual income by gender when the household is shared with another independent adult or with a financially dependent minor. In Table 6, we see that when households made up of an adult and a minor without income are headed by women, the poverty risk based on individual income is 54.9%, compared to 38.9% in households headed by men. Meanwhile, in households with two income-earning adults, the risk for women is 31.1% and 19.6% for men. This shows that women face greater poverty in both scenarios, especially in single-mother families.

Once again, taking all caveats into account, we can assume that household types with a higher proportion of women are at the highest risk of poverty.

**Table 9: poverty risk based on individual income in various scenarios for the non-student population over the age of 16, by gender. Barcelona 2020–2021 (%).**

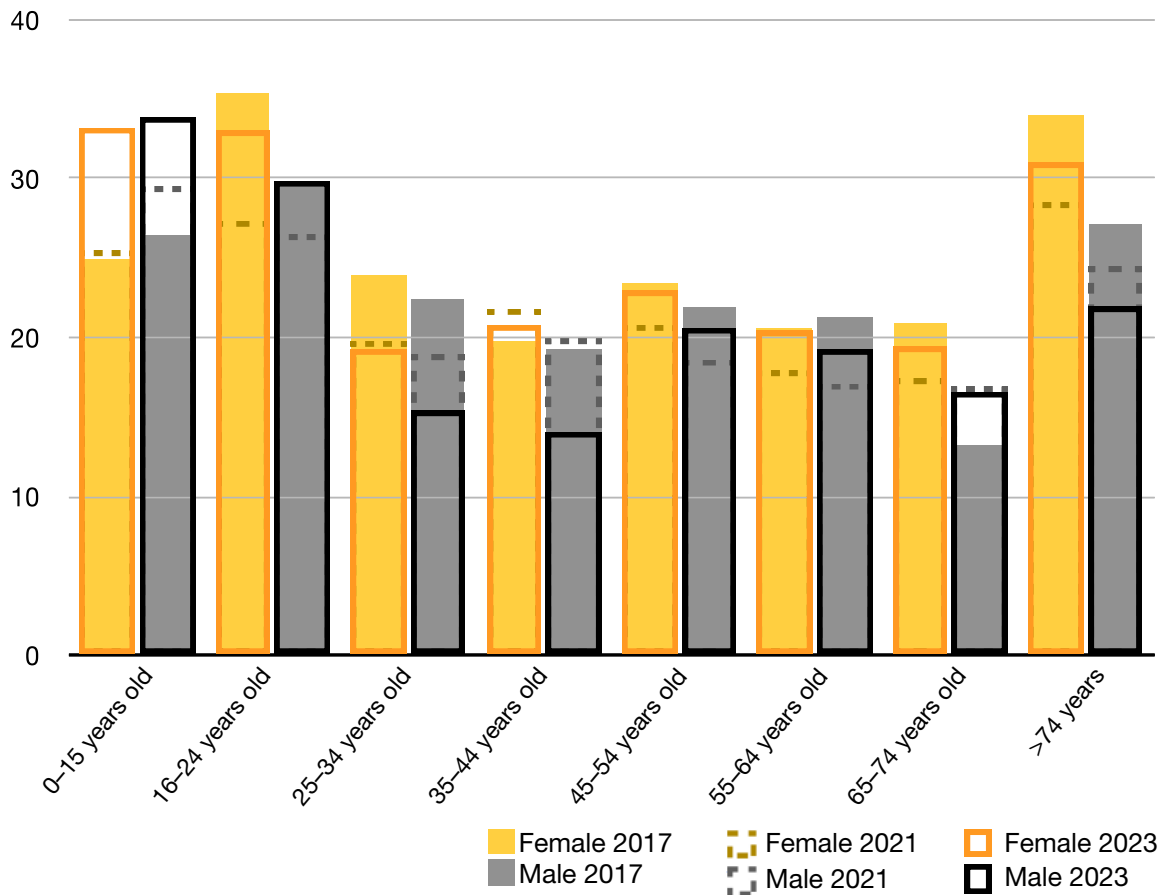
	men	women
Scenario 1. Adult and another adult (with the same income)	19.6	31.1
Scenario 2. Adult and a minor (without income)	38.9	54.9

Source: original, based on the 'El gènere en xifres' study. Barcelona City Council (2024).

Another factor that has been used extensively to define the impact of the current job market on women throughout this study is the breakdown by age. Once again, demographic data combined with pay proves enlightening, as we see how women are paid less starting in the 50–60 age range.

To understand the impact of this drop in income, we will now look at the poverty risk data by age bracket and gender.

**Figure 69: trends in the poverty risk rate by age and gender. Barcelona 2017–2023 (%)**



Source: 'Pobresa salarial a Barcelona 2022' report. Municipal Data Office. Barcelona City Council, 2024.

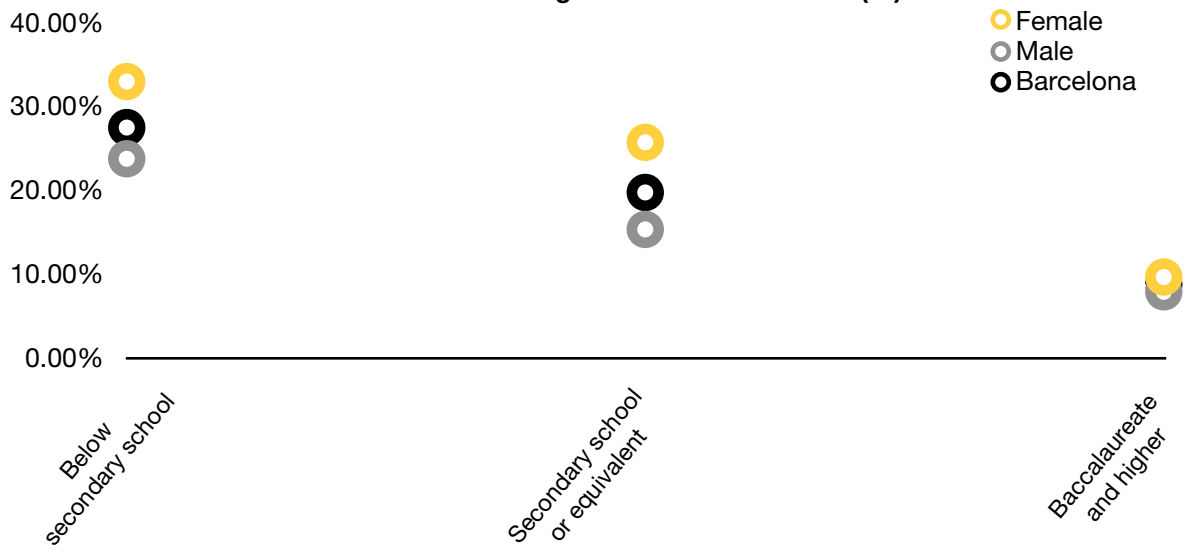
Looking at the graph, we can draw some general conclusions about the patterns in the poverty rate by age in the 2017–2023 period. First, the data show that for the most part, the female rate is higher in all ages and periods. Furthermore, we also see that when the rate falls, it falls more for men in most cases, and when it rises, it rises more for women.

There are several specific cases worth discussing. The 0–15 group is the only one where the male rate is consistently higher, though the figures were practically equal in 2023. In 2017, the male rate for the 55–64 range was above the female rate, but in 2023, the female rate surpassed it, rising considerably following the drop in 2021. The two most markedly unequal groups are the 16–24 and 74+ age brackets, where women are much more at risk. This may be partly related to the lower pay for women at the beginning and end of their working lives. This issue also comes up in the qualitative part of the study and will be discussed in the interpretation chapter.

Turning now to educational levels, we see how this variable affects working poverty, looking at the rate of employees experiencing working poverty by educational level and gender. The latest data are again from 2022 and come from the 2024 reports on working poverty published by Barcelona City Council’s Municipal Data Office.

The graph below shows the rate for men and women, as well as the general rate for the city of Barcelona.

**Figure 70: percentage of employees experiencing working poverty by educational level and gender. Barcelona 2022 (%).**



Source: ‘Pobresa salarial a Barcelona 2022’ report. Municipal Data Office. Barcelona City Council, 2024.

The data are very clear. The risk of working poverty is inversely proportional to educational level in all cases. These data can again be interpreted from a gender perspective. We see that in all cases, the percentage of women experiencing working poverty is consistently higher than that of men and also above the overall figure for the city of Barcelona.

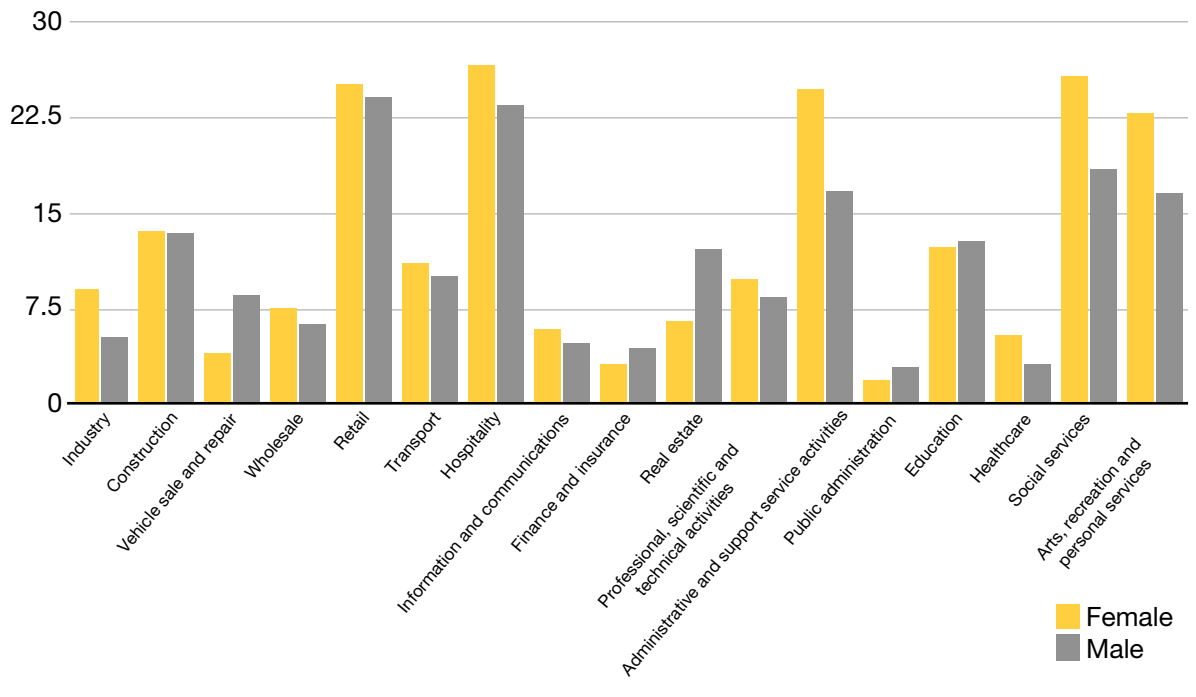
Having found a link between poverty and education, we will now explore whether or not there is also a connection with economic activity sectors, paying particular attention to female-dominated sectors and whether they have an impact on working poverty among women. The available data are from Barcelona City Council’s Municipal Data Office for 2022.

The data from Figure 71 show that women generally have consistently higher percentages of working poverty in all sectors except for real estate, finance and insurance, and education. Women are the vast majority in this last sector, but they are paid less. Even so, there is not a major difference in working poverty rates in favour of women here. This shows that a higher female presence in a given sector does not necessarily mean the sector is egalitarian. The clearest example is in social services, where women are the overwhelming majority but have much lower salaries on average and an extremely high proportion of working poor. If we look at hospitality, a fairly equal sector in terms of men and women and pay (although there is a difference of over 1,000.00 in average salary), we see that the working poor indicator is still higher for women.

If we look at the data for the most highly skilled sectors with similar pay levels, two examples would be the industrial sector and the sector of scientific and technical work. We should first reiterate that women have far fewer opportunities to be promoted to high-responsibility positions, as seen above. This means that they may not have the best paying jobs in these sectors either. In fact, in the industrial sector, women account for nearly half of the workforce and the wage gap is relatively narrow, but the percentage of women experiencing working poverty is much greater. Conversely, in the sector of scientific and technical work, women are a slight majority in social security registrations, but the salary difference is very high, leading to more working poverty among women. These data show that the presence of women in a given sector does not necessarily mean that their working poverty levels will be lower or that salary levels and the gap between them are not predictive.

The most important variable in working poverty may be the worker's career path. This is another issue covered in the qualitative interviews, and it will also be explored in the interpretation.

**Figure 71: percentage of employees experiencing working poverty by sector and gender. Barcelona 2022 (%).**



Source: 'Pobresa salarial a Barcelona 2022' report. Municipal Data Office. Barcelona City Council, 2024.

To determine the importance of career paths, we can look at working poverty by professional category. The following table shows the data for the three categories examined in order to identify pay differences and hiring patterns.

**Table 10: working poor by professional category and gender. Barcelona 2022 (%).**

	Working poor	Women	Men
<b>Graduates, engineers and senior management.</b>	1.8	1.7	2
<b>Administrative managers and others.</b>	6.8	7.3	6.1
<b>Administrative assistants and others.</b>	23.6	27.8	20

Source: Municipal Data Office. Barcelona City Council, 2024.

These data, which are the latest available for this analysis, clearly show that women with solid career paths are the only ones with lower working poverty rates than men. We even find figures below the overall working poverty rate in their professional categories, although the wage gap with men in this category may be high. The issue is that it is more difficult for women to reach these positions. In lower categories, the differences are greater in favour of men, especially in the category of administrative assistants, with a gap of over seven points.

We will now turn to the analysis of working poverty in relation to contract type and working hours. We have already seen that women are more affected by temporary work and part-time work. We will now see how these variables affect women's working poverty.

**Table 11: working poor by type of contract, working hours and gender. Barcelona 2022 (%).**

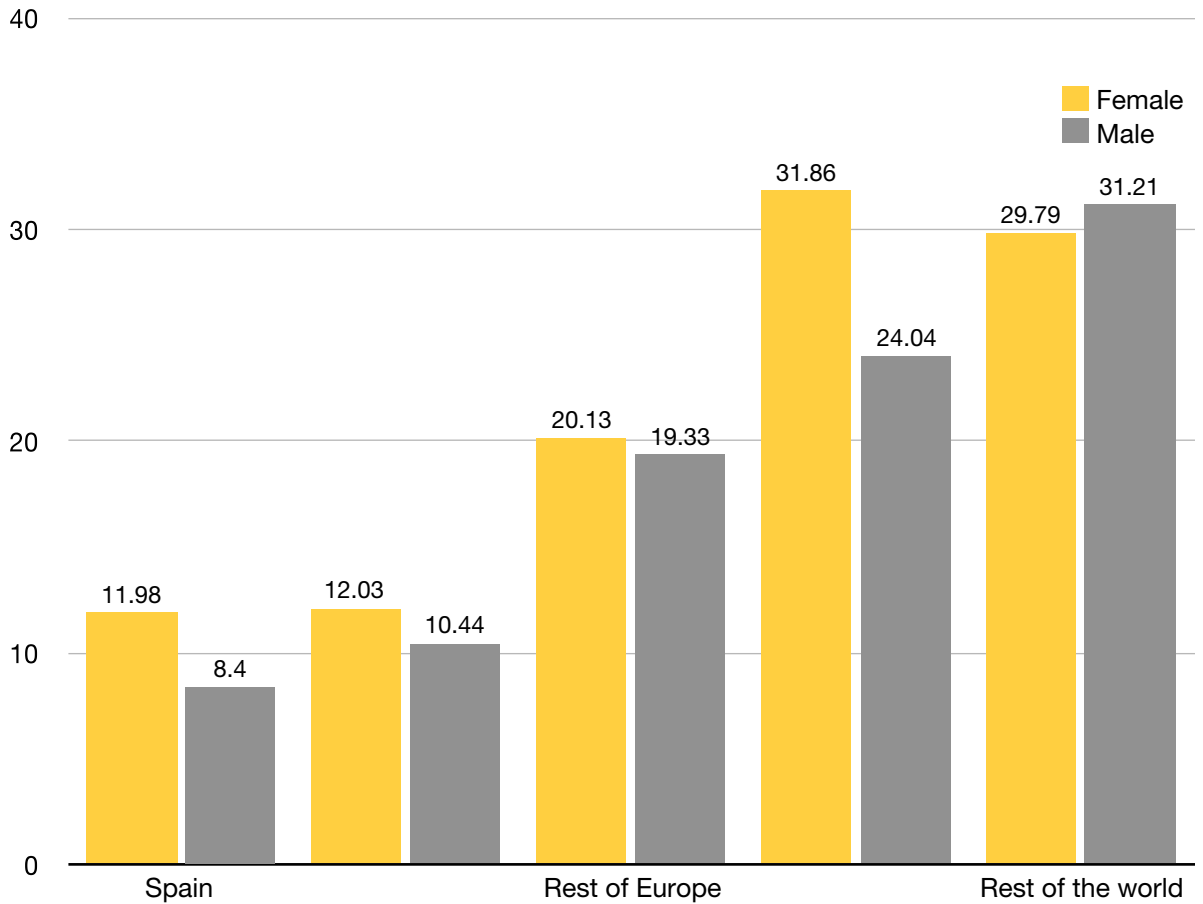
	Working poor	Women	Men
<b>Permanent contract</b>	11.3	13.1	9.7
<b>Temporary contract</b>	18.6	17.7	19.9
<b>Full-time</b>	8	7.6	8.3
<b>Part-time</b>	36.4	36.1	37.1

Source: Municipal Data Office. Barcelona City Council, 2024.

With the exception of permanent contracts, in all other categories working poverty by contract and workday is higher for men. However, we have already seen that women are under-represented in the category of permanent contracts compared to men. In any case, the difference between the poverty of women with permanent and temporary contracts is not particularly high, especially if we compare it to the rate for women with full-time or part-time jobs, which stands at 28.5 points. It seems that working hours are a key factor in defining the risk of working poverty, and as discussed above, women hold the majority of part-time contracts.

A final factor in working poverty is found in the differences by gender and origin. We have already mentioned the different situations found within the foreign-born population in terms of pay. In this case, we have 2022 data from Barcelona City Council’s Municipal Data Office published in 2024 that show working poverty by different groups of origin.

**Figure 72: employees experiencing working poverty by sector and nationality. Barcelona 2022 (%).**



Source: Municipal Data Office. Barcelona City Council, 2024.

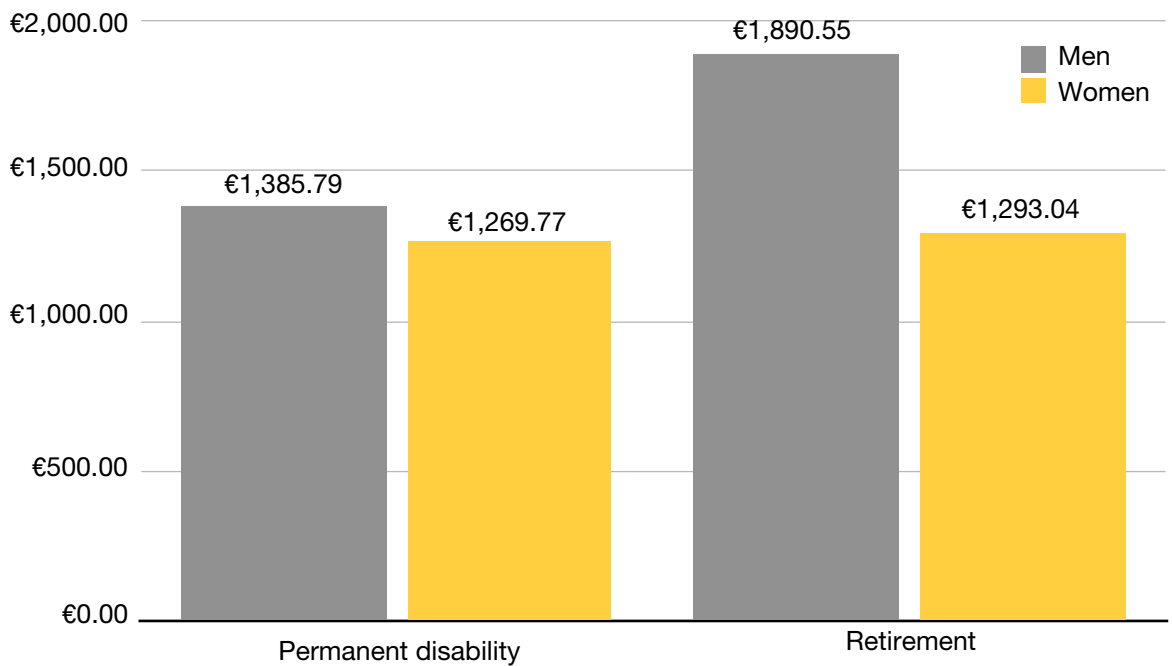
We can see that, with the exception of the ‘rest of the world’ category, the figures are always higher for women. The case of Latin America is particularly telling: we see that the working poverty rate of women from Latin America is nearly three times higher than the rate for native-born women, which is at the same level as the rest of the European Union. The reason it is particularly telling is that, as we have seen, women from Latin America make up a large proportion of female immigrants.

Finally, we will discuss poverty in relation to elderly age groups and retirement income. Though we do not have recent data on these patterns, this is a key issue given the aforementioned feminisation of ageing. As such, it was discussed at length in the group interviews and will be explored further in the interpretation section of the study.

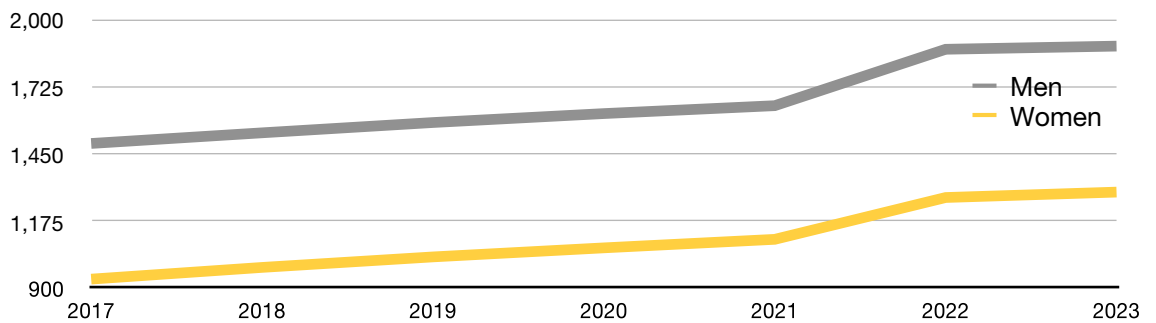
It should be noted that the 2023 IDESCAT data, the latest available data broken down at the municipal level, show that women account for 59.6% of all pension recipients, specifically 74,865 more than men.



**Figure 73: average amount earned from permanent disability and retirement pensions by gender. Barcelona 2023 (€).**



**Trends in pensions 2017–2023**

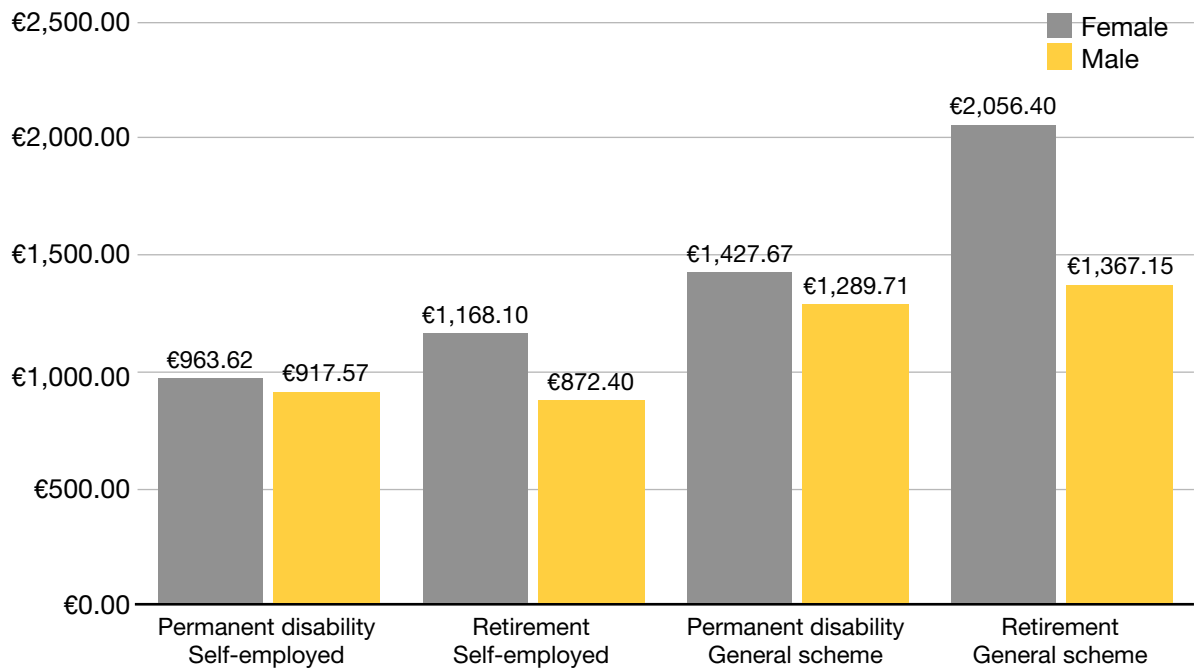


Source: Source: Original, using data from the IDESCAT-Government of Catalonia.

Looking at the average amounts earned from work-related pensions (permanent disability and retirement) in Barcelona in 2023, the data show that men earn higher pensions in both cases. The gap is much greater for retirement pensions, which reflect the stability of the pensioner’s professional career. Regarding trends in pensions, there is steady growth for men and women, as with other income indicators seen previously, but the gap is not narrowing.

Distinguishing between the system paid into during the worker’s life, we again see an existing gap between men and women’s pensions, which is even greater in the case of retirement pensions, especially if we compare those who reached retirement age under the general scheme to those who were self-employed. As discussed above women are more likely to be registered under the general scheme as employees, and here we find the greatest difference between men’s and women’s pensions. There is hardly any difference between retirement pensions and a disability pensions in the case of women, but this is not the case for men. It should also be noted that women’s self-employed pensions are lower for retirement than disability, which speaks to the insecure nature of self-employed women’s work.

**Figure 74: average amount of pensions by scheme and gender. Barcelona 2023 (€).**



Source: Source: Original, using data from the IDESCAT-Government of Catalonia.

Turning to non-contributory pensions, according to 2023 IDESCAT data for Barcelona, 59% of all non-contributory pensions were earned by women. Non-contributory disability pensions accounted for 48% of them, but non-contributory retirement pensions reached 66%; that is, two out of every three non-contributory pensions in Barcelona were earned by women. We also see in the table below that the amounts earned from non-contributory retirement pensions are the lowest.

**Table 12: average amount earned from non-contributory pensions by type and gender. Barcelona 2023 (%).**

	Disability	Retirement
Men	€502.00	€466.00
Women	€499.00	€456.00

Source: Source: Original, using data from the IDESCAT-Government of Catalonia.

With the data we have seen in relation to pay, poverty risk and career opportunities, it is no surprise that women face more challenges supporting themselves in their post-working lives.

- Most women are employees under the general scheme or as domestic workers. They are clearly in the minority among self-employed workers.
- The domestic worker category is nearly monopolised by women, who have been greatly impacted by the drop in registration in this system since 2020 due to COVID.
- In terms of contract types, both men and women have more temporary contracts, a type that was also affected by COVID in 2020. The gap with permanent contracts is narrowing for both genders, but much more slowly for women. Women still have the majority of temporary contracts (54.17% in 2024).
- As stated previously, women are the clear minority among the self-employed, especially in the category of self-employed individuals with subcontracted workers. This could be interpreted as reflecting lower levels of entrepreneurship among women.
- Women hold low-responsibility jobs and are a minority in management positions.
- Women are paid less in all professional categories. Though average wages are increasing annually, they are doing so nearly in parallel with men's wages, so there is no significant narrowing of the gap.
- We find that in sectors where women are the majority, their salaries are also significantly lower than men's (for example, in education and social services). This raises the question of whether even in sectors where they are the majority, women work in the lowest paid occupations.
- As for working hours, the gender wage gap is highly pronounced in full-time contracts, even though women's salaries also lower in temporary contracts, which are the majority for women, but to a lesser extent.
- The overall wage gap has narrowed by 6 points since 2017, but it still stands at approximately 16%. Wages have been growing since 2020, but they are growing at the same rate for men and women, so the gap is closing very slowly.
- If we look at average wages among women by age, we see a contrast with the trends for men. While men gradually earn more over the course of their lives, women begin to earn less starting in the 50–54 age range.
- Wage data by contract type pattern similarly to data by working hours. Wages are more balanced in temporary contracts, which are the majority among women, but have been rising in recent years. The gender wage gap is much more pronounced in permanent contracts, although it is gradually narrowing.

- Some interesting conclusions can be drawn from the data on wages by origin. The wages of native-born women are significantly higher than those of foreign-born women, but also higher than those of foreign-born men. Although it is understood that foreign nationals have a wide range of employment situations, the data suggest that there are high levels of vulnerability among the foreign-born population. This is confirmed when we see that the poverty risk rates of immigrants from outside Europe are almost three times higher than those of the native-born population. The data also raise the question of whether origin plays a greater role than gender in determining pay.
- If we compare the wages of foreign-born men and women, women's wages are consistently lower.
- All the situations described mean that women are at a greater risk of poverty.
- In the poverty risk data by type of household, we see that there is high risk in households where women are the demographic majority. Specifically, households made up of adults with dependent children are at the highest risk, and this trend is on the rise. It is also worth mentioning the household category of over-65s living alone, which is currently increasing steeply.
- Women's risk of poverty is concentrated among young women and the elderly, specifically in the 16–24 and over-74 age groups, which are also the age groups with the lowest wages. The risk of poverty among women is consistently higher in all age brackets except for those aged 0–15.
- Understanding the career path as a key factor in avoiding working poverty, the data confirm that the higher the educational level, the lower the risk of poverty. Even so, the risk of poverty is higher for women at all educational levels.
- The figures on working poverty by professional category confirm the importance of a solid career path. The only case where women are less at risk than men is in the category of university graduates, engineers and senior managers. In the support service categories, women's risk of poverty is 7.8 points higher.
- By economic sector, just as with wages, the data show that working poverty is much higher among women in female-dominated sectors, such as social services. This is also the case with administrative and support service activities, as well as more skilled professions, such as those in science and technology.
- By type of contract and working hours, the data show that working poverty is lower among women only in temporary contracts and part-time jobs. In this case, it makes more sense to compare by working hours among women, as it goes from 7.6% in full-time jobs to 36.1% in part-time jobs. This dynamic is also seen among the men, but it is worth noting again that women have the majority of part-time contracts.
- Turning to income from pensions, once again, the pensions earned by women are consistently lower, nearly 700.00 less than men's pensions in the general retirement pension scheme, where it pays to have had a stable work history.
- Finally, data on non-contributory pensions also give us insight into the situation of older women, confirming our previous observations about this group. These non-contributory pensions, which reflect a more fragmented work history, are the majority among women. Specifically, two out of every three non-contributory pensions in Barcelona are earned by women. It should also be noted that the amount of these pensions is the lowest in the entire system.

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# 6 Data analysis

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As we have established, this study focuses on exploring the situation of women in the job market, but there is another key factor to take into account: how we interpret this situation and define the situations that are not easily visible in the data. That is what we will do in this chapter by cross-referencing the information from the data and the comments from the group interviews.

## 6.1 The job market: unresolved imbalances and inequalities

<sup>23</sup> See Table 1, p. 17.

<sup>24</sup> Moreno Colom, S., Sánchez Mira, N., Borràs Català, V. (2016). *Dones i treballs. Una aproximació al mercat de treball de Barcelona des de la perspectiva de gènere*. Barcelona City Council.

Available at [https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dones/sites/default/files/documentacio/dones\\_i\\_treballs.pdf](https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dones/sites/default/files/documentacio/dones_i_treballs.pdf)

The first main takeaway from the data and the opinions shared in the group interviews is that the situation of women in the job market is conditioned by a series of different phenomena. Women are affected by different factors that define their opportunities in the job market.

We have seen that women are the majority in the city of Barcelona, representing 52.27% of the total population and more than 60% of the population over the age of 70, but they are not the majority in all the age brackets that make up the bulk of the workforce. The female population is under 50% in the 20–24 and 30–49 age groups.<sup>23</sup> We should not assume that only women who live in Barcelona work in Barcelona, of course, but the fact that some of these brackets are under-represented in the city has social implications that ultimately affect the job market. The fact that women aged 20 to 34 are a majority may reflect the city's appeal as a place to start or complete a degree and have a better chance of finding a first job. Obviously, Barcelona's cultural and leisure opportunities are also attractive, but they are at odds with the barriers to living independently, in one's own home and with a long-term life plan after a certain age, as noted in the 2016 'Dones i treballs' study.<sup>24</sup>

These interpretations are, first and foremost, backed up by the data, which shows that the majority of households in the city (19%) are made up of adults living together, and they are also reflected in the interviews. The importance of housing prices in avoiding poverty was discussed at length in the interviews. These aspects of the city may be the reason that when starting a family or another personal undertaking, many people end up looking for housing outside of Barcelona. The demographic data showing that Barcelona is becoming a city without children or adolescents suggests that family units are leaving the city.

The fact that the age bracket with most employed women is the 30–54 group also means that a percentage of these women commute from outside Barcelona for work (according to 2020 data, 52% of jobs in Barcelona were held by people from outside the city, and 25.2% of total travel in the city in 2021 was for work reasons). Given that commuting is an expense, public transport services must be affordable to ensure that they do not contribute to poverty. A 2023 Metròpoli Institute report explains that: 'It is common knowledge that low-income populations, women, young people and people with disabilities have lower

<sup>25</sup> Metròpoli Institute (2023). *La gestió de la mobilitat a la feina a Barcelona. Diagnosi i full de ruta per al Pacte per la Mobilitat laboral de Barcelona.*

Available at <https://www.institutmetropoli.cat/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/informe-la-gestio-de-la-mobilitat-a-la-feina-a-barcelona.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> See Figure 31, p. 44 and Figure 34, p. 46.

<sup>27</sup> Pérez-Orozco, A. and López, S. (2011). *Desigualdades a flor de piel: cadenas globales de cuidados. Concreciones en el empleo de hogar y políticas públicas.* UN Women

Available at <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/instraw-library/2012-R-MIG-ESP-DES.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> See Figure 67, p. 68.

access to private vehicles. As such, the lack of suitable public transport services may limit access to certain jobs, thus contributing to exclusion and even creating dysfunction in the job market. To guarantee inclusive access to work, we must have quality public transport and active mobility support networks.<sup>25</sup>

It seems clear from both the data and the interviews that this demographic structure conditions and is conditioned by the job market and the prominence of the service sector, which accounts for over 90% of Gross Value Added and comes with particular challenges in terms of caregiving and work-life balance. Data on temporary and part-time work among women, almost 60% of whom have part-time contracts, may confirm this.<sup>26</sup>

Another crucial factor when exploring the relationship between demographics and the job market is the larger proportion of women in older age groups. Women make up the majority of the population over the age of 50 and the majority of employees after 55, when the data show that their income decreases. These three interrelated phenomena, together with the fact that elderly women are the main recipients of non-contributory pensions and that women's retirement pensions are significantly lower than men's, encourage us to reflect on the ageing and impoverishment of elderly women in Barcelona. The interviews offer a clear viewpoint on this issue:

**'...a working poor woman will end up being a poor pensioner, and with an increasingly aged population and women's pensions below men's, this whole precarious working life [...] results in pensions that don't allow for a decent post-retirement life. Elderly retirement-age women are complementing their pensions with housework: "I can iron or look after the children..."'**

The data show another defining feature of the job market in relation to demographics. It could be said that the evolution of the city and its production sectors is inextricably linked to the role of foreign nationals and their jobs. The foreign-born population has grown since 2017, and especially since 2022. Although men still make up the majority of this population, this runs parallel to the growth in the number of women. In looking at the data by age bracket, we have already found that women are the majority in the 25–29 and over-60 age groups. The data also show that women make up the majority of foreign nationals from countries that have relatively close social, economic or cultural ties, specifically countries in the Americas. The significance of these data in relation to the job market becomes clear when we see that foreign-born women are employed in domestic work much more than native-born women (53.1%). They make up over one-fifth of the women hired in the hospitality industry and nearly one-third of those hired in other services. The demand for female workers in the increasingly important service sector is clearly being met, in many cases by foreign-born women.<sup>27</sup> We also find that their wages are comparatively lower than those of both foreign-born men and native-born women, suggesting that female foreign-born workers experience high levels of job insecurity.<sup>28</sup>

Educational level is another factor that clearly conditions participation in the job market and the quality of jobs accessed. We have seen that women, including foreign nationals, have higher educational levels. Of the total number of people with a university education in Barcelona, 15% are foreign-born women (44% native-born women), who also account for 16% of those with doctorates (33% native-born women), but this does not directly translate into higher employability or pay. A common problem with foreign-born women's education, and a topic that was frequently mentioned in group interviews, is the difficulty getting

<sup>29</sup> See Figure 36, p. 47.

<sup>30</sup> For a more in-depth examination of these concepts, see Torns, Teresa; Recio, Carolina (2012). *Las desigualdades de género en el mercado de trabajo: entre la continuidad y la transformación*. *Revista de Economía Crítica*, and Maruani, M.; Rogerat, C. and Torns, T. (eds.) (2008), *Las nuevas fronteras de la desigualdad: hombres y mujeres en el mercado de trabajo*. Icaria.

<sup>31</sup> Carrasquer Oto, P., Zawadsky Martínez-Portillo, J. E. (2023). *El suelo pegajoso y la movilidad ocupacional de las mujeres y los hombres en España*. *Revista Internacional de Sociología*, 81(4), e237.

<https://doi.org/10.3989/ris.2023.81.4.M22b-4>

their qualifications officially recognised. This means that even though they come with high educational levels, they do not earn adequate pay. It also means that this is an area where the data do not necessarily reflect reality. As one of the respondents very aptly put it:

**‘...when we talk about education or low skill levels, people often do have qualifications from their home country. The issue is that it’s not officially recognised here, and those people are counted as unskilled, but they should be counted as people with unrecognised qualifications, because they are recognised in the home country, and that’s one of the problems we face.’**

If we remove the origin variable, we see that across the board, higher educational levels among women do not translate into higher levels of female employment. As we have seen, women are the group with the lowest employment rate by educational level, except those with higher education.<sup>29</sup> When we look at hiring statistics and the sectors that hire women, we find that many are filling jobs for which they are overqualified. It seems that employers require a high educational level from women, which they don’t require for men, meaning that women with university degrees are likely doing jobs for which a secondary school education would be sufficient.

We have now discussed key factors in the job market imbalances due to age, origin and educational level. These imbalances lead to inequalities that define the job market’s relationship with women. One of the key factors in this inequality, if not the most important, is caregiving, which is mostly done by women, which in turn has a clear impact on their availability for work. Caregiving responsibilities mean that women work double time, as they are engaged in both productive and reproductive work.<sup>30</sup> This clearly limits their availability and flexibility for the paid job market and in many cases forces them to take temporary, part-time and/or dead-end jobs.<sup>31</sup> We see this in the available data on reasons for working part-time. Family obligations are the main reason cited by women, nearly six times more than men. We also see this in contract data, where women hold 53% of temporary contracts and 59% of part-time contracts. Beyond the data, the enlightening comments made during the interviews about women’s double presence, double identity and double workload confirm that caregiving and housework are challenges to building a solid career.

This low intensity of paid work among women, caused by their lower availability due to caregiving responsibilities, results in low salaries and a situation known as ‘working-poor women’, who cannot rise above the poverty line despite having jobs. The data clearly show that in most cases, women are paid less regardless of their educational level, economic activity sector, contract type or working hours. This relationship between women’s working poverty and the nature of the job market came across clearly in the interviews:

**‘...there aren’t many quality jobs available to people who are struggling and don’t have an education; broadly speaking, they only have access to a more precarious job market. They get jobs that are very temporary, involving manual labour and cleaning services for conferences and trade fairs that are closely linked to the tourism sector.’**

This applies to women without an education, as well as to foreign-born women whose education is not officially recognised.



Here we see one of the clear imbalances in the job market that is a major source of inequality for women. Women are hired in heavily female-dominated sectors (hospitality, social services, cleaning services, caregiving, etc.) which are highly demanding in terms of availability and labour-intensiveness, even if the workday is shorter in theory (not taking into account informal work), all in exchange for low wages and little or no possibility of promotion. This phenomenon is known as horizontal segregation: the high concentration of women in certain occupations of the same rank. These occupations are more secondary or marginal within the job market, and despite women's qualifications in some of these fields, they are undervalued, which limits their work conditions and opportunities for professional development. On the other hand, there are high-intensity occupations that require a high degree of availability and flexibility and are often inaccessible to women due to their double workload involving housework and family caregiving responsibilities. As a result, women in the job market are finding themselves in occupations with poor career prospects. We see this in the phenomenon known as the glass ceiling or vertical segregation, defined as women's difficulty accessing management positions and decision-making roles. However, even when they can access these jobs, the data show that they are paid less and have fewer promotion opportunities, meaning that they are at a disadvantage simply because they are women. These job-segregation dynamics linked to non-mainstream jobs with few opportunities for career advancement are known as the 'sticky floor' phenomenon, as female workers almost automatically find themselves in occupations where it is difficult to forge a career path like men, who enjoy greater stability and upward mobility, which translates into better job quality. We see this inequality, for example, when companies manage working time in a way that fails to take into account household gender dynamics.

The data show a job market where women are concentrated in jobs with temporary contracts and part-time workdays, and the interviews round out this picture with the interplay of gender roles. As one of the respondents said:

**'The priority is the man having work, and male-dominated unskilled jobs are better paid than female-dominated sectors or jobs, which only perpetuates this inequality'.**

Here we see how breadwinner and caregiver roles have a perverse effect insofar as they create a vicious circle in the job market: the priority is for the man to work because men's salaries are better, even in the most precarious jobs and sectors; therefore, women must concede a secondary presence in the job market (part-time, temporary work) and focus on caregiving and housework. We see how women's relationship with paid work is closely linked to the 'work-family' relationship,<sup>32</sup> defined as a set of factors that impact women's and men's relationship with housework and caregiving differently, placing women in a subordinate position that increases their vulnerability and financial insecurity.

We have seen that caregiving is a key factor in women's low work intensity, but it also impacts their temporary or permanent absence from the paid job market.

The data show that women are seven times more likely than men to cite their responsibilities at home as a reason for non-participation in the job market. After leaving the market, those who are interested in re-entering face the challenge of justifying the time not worked, the effort needed to update skills, a lack of years of experience and more. This can make the

<sup>33</sup> See Figure 26, p. 42.

process of returning to work intimidating for reasons that do not typically affect men. We see this in some of the comments from the interviews:

**'...the stigma of not having always been in the job market... many companies penalise you for having stepped away to care for others'.**

And regarding female immigrants from North Africa:

**'... there is a masculinisation of productivity, the role of breadwinner [...] it's more normalised for we women who work. There's not that sense of "I haven't worked in five years"; it's seen as natural for women and not for men, but of course, that leads to greater financial insecurity, which they don't identify. We have to work on building that perspective with them if it's not really a choice.'**

It is undeniable that there are positive trends in the data for job market participation, employment, unemployment and the reduction of the wage gap. The employment and job market participation figures reached an all-time high in 2023, though they fell in 2024.<sup>33</sup> The female unemployment rate is the lowest on record, lower than the male unemployment rate and, unlike this rate, continuing to fall. However, the data are less rosy when we look at issues related to promotions, segregation and pay. It is true that pay is rising, but this is not significantly reducing the wage gap, and it is clear that men and women have highly unequal career paths due to the vertical segregation, horizontal segregation and sticky floor phenomena affecting women.

All these factors ultimately paint a picture of a job market with clearly male-dominated sectors and jobs, wildly different career paths and pay by gender, and sharply defined roles, whether due to flexibility and availability requirements, work intensity, double standards regarding educational levels or simply social prejudice. In the group interviews, we saw an example of how deeply these situations have been internalised in the job market. In an attempt to open up male-dominated sectors to women, there have been initiatives to provide specific training for women, in this case in the energy sector, which the data show to be a male-dominated sector. The conclusion reached in the interview is as follows:

**'This is a highly male-dominated sector, but they couldn't do the practical training because they have to be done in towns that are very far away and they weren't able to travel there and work long hours, so they were unable to do the practical training. Sometimes you want to boost a highly male-dominated sector and you can't, and we fall into the same problems with caregiving and work-life balance...'**

We also find that given women's need for this training and time to adapt to male-dominated sectors, when they end up entering the field in question (in this example, the information and communication sector), the jobs available are low-responsibility jobs without promotion opportunities:

**'In the end, women are also late to innovation sectors'.**

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These issues also lead us to question the lack of guidance for girls who may be interested in these fields or training opportunities:

**'...the guidance young women receive when they're choosing what they want to do doesn't include these possibilities, this diversity. There are several tech companies that hire people from abroad because they can't find enough talent among the men here. Tech companies often tell us: "*there just aren't any [girls], they're not applying for the jobs*".'**

As mentioned above, the quantitative job market data show positive trends, with some numbers starting to fall. There seems to be a link between labour reforms and positive quantitative data, but the poverty rates and hidden realities tell a very different story. In general, all the interviewees agreed that the situation of women in the job market has not been positive in recent years, giving the impression that many of the issues addressed are deeply entrenched and that some situations have become even more dire. The reality may be somewhere in between. The numbers are positive, but they have not been able to significantly reduce inequalities or imbalances, or prevent certain situations from becoming even worse for the women who are struggling the most.

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## 6.1 The job market: unresolved imbalances and inequalities

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All the situations presented above give us an idea of the causes behind inequality in the job market and its effects on vulnerability and poverty from the gender perspective. In this section, we will delve deeper into our interpretation of into these issues and the profiles that are at the highest risk of vulnerability due to working hours, career paths, age, origin, disability and other factors, drawing mainly on the group interviews, whose methodology was described in Chapter 2 of this document.

### **This inequality intersects with several factors.**

We have already said that women's situation in the job market is affected by various factors throughout their lives. The data reinforce this intersectional approach, which is why the comments taken from the interviews do not refer to women generically; rather they reflect specific factors affecting women, with the understanding that each situation may be driven by one, two or more of these factors. These interviews do show two clear opinions on this issue, which are backed up by the data: the first is the certainty that the main factor, common to almost all women, is their association with caregiving, and the second is that the cumulative effect of a number of aggravating factors leads to an exponential increase in the difficulties women face when pursuing a professional career, which in turn increases their risk of vulnerability. As mentioned in the interviews:

**'We have to gain a broader perspective on the wide range of circumstances that make women's access to the job market in Barcelona different. There's no one-size-fits-all profile; there are women with multiple challenges who are really constrained by these difficulties...'**

### **Caregiving as a central element of other inequalities.**

If we delve deeper into the issue of caregiving, we find a series of associated factors that exacerbate vulnerable cases. Many of these factors are not sufficiently visible, as mentioned in the interviews, and they are mainly concentrated in four areas:

<sup>34</sup> Moreno Colom, S., Sánchez Mira, N., Borràs Català, V. (2016). Op. cit., p. 18 and p. 114.

<sup>35</sup> Barcelona City Council (2023) *Memòria Àrea de Drets Socials, Justícia Global, Feminismes i LGBTI*. p. 262.

Available at <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dretssocials/sites/default/files/arxius-documents/memoria-area-drets-socials-2022.pdf>

- Single-mother households.
- Access to and management of social benefits.
- The outsourcing of caregiving.
- Caregiving involving illness or disability, in relation to either dependants or oneself.

We have seen how a failure to share household caregiving responsibilities, that extra workday of reproductive work, has a clear impact on women's position in the job market and is a key factor affecting the other factors. As such, we will consider the first conditioning factor to be the lack of someone with whom to share these tasks in the case of single-mother households. Both the 2016 'Dones i treballs' report<sup>34</sup> and this study confirm that though single-parent households are not a large percentage of the total and remain fairly stable over time in the city of Barcelona, the majority are headed by women: there were two times as many single-mother households (2% of all households) as single-father households in 2024. This situation increases vulnerability, as it makes it even more difficult to work enough to avoid falling into poverty. We have already established the caveat that some of these households may involve divorced parents sharing custody, but given what we have seen so far, it seems clear that even if this is the case, work-life balance and childcare in these situations is much more complex.

Another key factor is accessing and managing social benefits. This work is part of caregiving, and according to the interviews, it is mainly done by women. Women are the main group to use social services, integration services, benefits and similar. According to the Area for Social Rights, Global Justice, Feminism and the LGBTI Community's 2022 report, the most recent one available, women make up 63.95% of the people assisted by Social Service Centres, 62,580 out of a total of 97,852.<sup>35</sup> However, the work involved in securing the benefit is done by women even when the applicants are male, given that women are the ones who end up managing it. According to the interviews, this sometimes leads to a change in recipient.

The issue of benefits comes with added complexity clearly expressed in the interviews. As we have seen, managing these benefits as part of caregiving work reduces women's availability to participate in the job market. Yet the interviews reveal another, more troubling issue, linked to the compatibility between work and the benefits in a system that forces people to decide between one or the other. Specific situations that illustrate this disadvantage for women include having part-time work with a low salary that nonetheless is not low enough to qualify for assistance (women being the ones who apply the most, whether for family reasons or education), meaning that they consider leaving their jobs in order to be eligible. In this particularly complex situation, women take precarious jobs out of necessity and are then penalised when it comes to receiving benefits. This situation also affects women who want to re-enter the job market, as explained in the interviews:

**'... there are cases of women who have been working reduced hours or have taken on several jobs and are not eligible for benefits [...] the system penalises them. It's very hard to return to work, and it's not worth it for them to take jobs that require a probationary period in case they're not hired and then may not be able to receive the benefit either.'**

Another example of women's situation in relation to caregiving and work availability is the case of women who increase their work intensity and have to pay someone else, usually another woman, to take on their caregiving work, thus **outsourcing caregiving work**. In many cases, this situation is not financially viable and women are forced to once again reduce their work intensity to take on caregiving responsibilities. It is clear that social roles also come into play when taking these decisions. The interviews reflect the widespread

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view that **‘no one will care for their children like they do’**, but the fact that there are no effective mechanisms in the job market or public policies to offset these situations give us an idea of the extent of the inequality women face, which ultimately pushes caregiving into the private sphere.

One of the particularly challenging caregiving situations mentioned in the interviews was **caring for someone with a disability**. This is a lifelong caregiving situation if the recipient of care is a son or daughter, and in many cases it leads these mothers to leave the job market, making it difficult for them to receive training and go back to work (if they had started a career before becoming mothers). But the situation is even more complicated when it involves caring for oneself, that is, a woman who has a chronic illness or a disability. In these cases, the associated difficulties grow exponentially. Certain illnesses and disabilities come with fatigue and the need for breaks, flexible working hours, adapted workplaces and other adjustments that make it harder to be included in the job market, even if the condition was caused by work. These difficulties also affect the stages and types of training: spaces that are not adapted, schedules, absenteeism, etc., creating a vicious circle: challenges with training equal challenges getting a job. According to the interviewees, these challenges once again mean that women with illnesses or disabilities can only get unskilled, precarious, low-paying jobs, making it hard to break into a career or be promoted. As one interviewee put it:

**‘...I see my female co-workers getting promoted while I’m passed over. That’s the stigma of disability.’**

In specific cases such as sudden illness or disability, there are also additional challenges, such as continuing to be responsible for caregiving in the home, in addition to one’s personal situation, and for those with a good education and a good job, finding themselves vulnerable and having to make a career change, as mentioned in the interviews:

**‘...these people have to be reoriented and often end up in very basic jobs, despite having high qualifications... prioritising keeping a job over doing the job they prepared for.’**

A final factor linked to illness and disability and their impact on women in the job market, as clearly reflected in the interviews, is widespread prejudice. This prejudice applies to all people with illnesses or disabilities, but women are in a more vulnerable position because the challenges of being a woman are compounded by this additional condition. These stereotypes include the idea that these people are not productive or that they will create conflict by having to take leaves or be absent. This makes it very difficult for them to enter the job market, often leads to the termination of existing contracts and, as expressed in the interviews, perpetuates the idea that **‘they should be grateful to have a job’**, denying them the right to personal development and a professional career. The interviewees discuss the case of people with mental illness as follows:

**‘...our community is highly stigmatised. If the employer knows that the person has a mental health disorder, their contract is quickly terminated...’**

As a result, we often find older women who have had to retrain for a new job for which they have no experience, where the combination of ageism and ableism creates a perfect storm of vulnerability. Once again, women are forced to choose between a precarious job or access to benefits. The example from the interviews is clear:

<sup>36</sup> See Figure 30, p. 44 and Figure 67, p. 68.

<sup>37</sup> Mahía Casado, R., Medina Moral, E. (2023). *Informe sobre la Integración de la Población Extranjera en el Mercado Laboral Español*. Observatorio Español del Racismo y la Xenofobia, p. 56

**‘...you’ve had a precarious job that caused a disability that you’ve had to complement with other precarious jobs [...] The financial situations of people who turn to our services are highly complicated...’**

### **Diversity of origin: difficulties compounding inequality.**

Another core factor in this intersectionality affecting women in the job market is diversity of origin, nationality or ethnicity. The data clearly show that among women, the subgroup of foreign-born women have higher levels of vulnerability in relation to economic sectors and pay.<sup>36</sup> In our description of pay and poverty, we have already made the caveat that there can be a wide range of situations among foreign-born women, and that specific origin or ethnicity is a key factor in understanding the associated vulnerability. Beyond this important distinction, what we see in the data is that foreign-born women have highly precarious jobs and the lowest pay compared both to native-born men and women and to foreign-born men. It is worth noting that they have these levels of vulnerability even if they also have higher educational levels, as discussed above.

One of the recurring themes with foreign-born women is that they exemplify the concept of ‘hidden realities’, with a series of challenges that many face. The group interviews clearly reflected these situations. The three common challenges are the following:

- Difficulties accessing housing.
- Informal work.
- Cultural differences: digital skills, customs, language, religion.

The first one is **the problem of access to housing**. This is a major issue, as people cannot access benefits without an address, and it is challenging to get a job in the formal economy. Delving further into this issue, the interviews mention the *city register for people without a fixed address* which, far from being a solution for these women, makes their life in the city even more complicated, as people who rent rooms or flats that are not in proper conditions in order to avoid visits from the authorities end up kicking out these women. This is a highly complex, insecure vicious circle that is hard to break without public policies.

Turning to the second factor, we have also mentioned a lack of papers among foreign-born women. The difficulty of getting a formal job without a fixed address is compounded for women who lack papers, creating a situation that forces them into **informal work**. Furthermore, informal work is widespread in the sectors that employ these foreign-born women, especially domestic work, where foreign-born women are clearly over-represented. The existence of ‘verbal’ contracts or agreements, clearly bordering on informal work, make up 12% of contracts of foreign-born women in Spain,<sup>37</sup> suggesting a large sector of informal work linked to diversity of origin. It is true that foreign-born women from South America, Africa and Asia have a different relationship with formal employment than the ideal in Europe. In their countries of origin, they often have experience in the informal economy, and when they arrive in Barcelona, they are the last to enter the job market, which also leads to a lack of integration.<sup>38</sup> As mentioned in the interviews:

**‘...if we’re talking about women from Morocco or women who don’t speak Spanish, women are usually the last ones to enter the job market. Men are usually the ones to enter, learn the language faster and become familiar with the system and how it works. Women are**

**not only less qualified but often have hardly any experience in their countries of origin, and the language is an added barrier. [...] The women we help are mainly from Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan [...] the work culture and the perspective on who works and who doesn't is completely different. The job markets in developing countries have large informal economies. One person only launders clothing, someone else does something else; it's very segmented, but it's shared.'**

As such, the insecurity linked to informal work is exacerbated by the fact that immigrants have left behind their social networks and find themselves in the city without any support system. This different experience of informal work, in addition to the urgent need for work and support in many cases, means that many foreign-born women see this option as entirely valid and recommendable. In fact, as one interviewee put it:

**'We often find that women from other countries are told by friends or daughters to come here because they'll find work in the informal economy and make money [...] and then apply for family reunification.'**

To conclude our discussion of added cultural difficulties for immigrant women, some of the challenges mentioned in the interviews are particularly common among women from non-Spanish-speaking communities or very different cultures. The first of these difficulties is the language, which is essential for integrating well, including in the workplace. The second is the digital gap for many of these women, especially those who come under particularly vulnerable conditions. A third difficulty is religion, such as for Muslim women. Existing prejudices make it difficult for them to get a job, which is aggravated by the fact that in immigrant families, the preference is for men to start a professional path. As mentioned in the interviews:

**'...we assist many immigrant women without papers who are facing huge gaps in terms of language and digital skills, making it harder for them to get jobs that are not precarious'.**

These cultural differences also affect the very understanding of what it means to have a formal job, as we see in comments from the interviews:

**'...women who have a very hard time understanding the economy from a global perspective, that is, from a collective point of view, the idea of working with others to perform a paid job. In Catalonia, the whole concept of associations and assembly-based organisation is seen as straightforward, but there are women from different places and cultures for whom this is whole new world and they have to learn from scratch.'**

### **Gender violence as a factor increasing vulnerability and poverty.**

Continuing with the hidden realities that condition women in the job market, as discussed in the interviews, one of the situations involving a high level of vulnerability is the case of victims of **gender violence**. In these cases, a traumatic experience is compounded by the uncertainty of starting a new life and entering the job market with little preparation for this type of situation due to insecurity, limitations on movement and often a dramatic loss of privacy involved in the decision of whether or not to disclose the abuse, given how it may



<sup>39</sup> See Figure 6, p. 20.

<sup>40</sup> DESC Observatory (2023). *El problema de l'habitatge té rostre de dona: gairebé la meitat de famílies en risc de desnonament a Barcelona són monomarentals*.

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<sup>41</sup> See Figure 73, p. 76; Figure 74 and Table 12, p. 77.

impact their employment situation. These women face a difficult choice given that leaving the situation of violence may end up making them more vulnerable, so they have to choose whether to leave the situation of violence to likely become poorer and even more vulnerable. As mentioned in the interviews:

**'...how much autonomy do they really have to decide to get out of the situation or not, when there's a structural factor impacting everything and a stigma around victims of gender violence? Many women don't want their bosses to be told that they're experiencing gender violence...'**

### **Insecure access to housing and ageing as risk factors.**

We have already discussed the issues associated with applying for and managing assistance and benefits. Women also face challenges in relation to an issue already discussed in relation to foreign-born women, namely access to housing. We have looked at the specific problems foreign-born women face, but this is a recurring theme in the interviews: barriers to housing, or insecure housing, are linked to poverty and vulnerability. As mentioned above, shared housing has become the most common household type in the city, and people leave Barcelona when they want to settle down, a decision based on the need for better and more affordable housing.<sup>39</sup> We have also mentioned how this means that women who are responsible for caregiving and household chores must also spend time commuting, which not only puts a strain on their schedule but also entails expenses that not everyone can afford, highlighting the need for access to quality public transport services. The interviews clearly show how commuting and the associated cost in time and money adds to this double workload. However, the problem causing the highest level of vulnerability is the direct correlation between evictions and gender and household type. A DESC Observatory publication with data from 2022 shows that '29.4% of assisted households due to a risk of losing their homes are single-mother families, and single-mother households make up half (47.6%) of at-risk households with children'.<sup>40</sup> This was also mentioned in the interviews:

**'Most of the households evicted in the city of Barcelona are single-mother families or elderly women living alone.'**

These data clearly link the household types that are the most common among women to the vulnerabilities associated with housing: prices that force people to live far from their workplace, the cost of commuting and the loss of housing.

As with evictions, these vulnerabilities may end up affecting elderly women more. The ability to have sufficient income in old age is a crucial issue that shapes post-working life and is directly linked to pensions. We explained in the previous section that women are over-represented in non-contributory pensions, and we saw the data that these pensions are the lowest in the whole system.<sup>41</sup> We have also seen a similar situation with contributory pensions, and given that Barcelona's population is ageing and that women are the ones ageing the most, this paints a challenging picture for the coming years. Elderly women living alone may end up losing their homes, as their poverty risk is the second highest, only after women aged 16–24, and the third highest by household type. Looking to the future, and seeing how the data show us that women's professional careers are often more precarious and unstable, the situation of future elderly women may be even more difficult.

<sup>42</sup> Fresnillo, I. (2017). *Feminització de la pobresa i mercat de treball*. Barcelona City Council.

Available at [https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dretssocials/sites/default/files/revista/02-feminitzacio\\_de\\_la\\_pobresa\\_i\\_mercat\\_de\\_treball.pdf](https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dretssocials/sites/default/files/revista/02-feminitzacio_de_la_pobresa_i_mercat_de_treball.pdf)

## Poverty from the gender perspective: a portrait of complexity.

All the interpretations so far clearly show an increase in **women's vulnerability in the job market and the specific ways they are affected by poverty**. All the conditioning factors explained so far eloquently illustrate the reasons for the data on part-time and temporary work and reflect how women have less time to establish a professional career and face obstacles due to different kinds of discrimination. These factors give a clear idea of the causes behind the wage gap and the need to supplement income with benefits.

The specific situation we are seeing describes women who have to make caregiving and housework compatible with paid work, limiting the time they can spend on work outside the home. This leads them to take temporary or part-time jobs with major pay differences compared to men and fewer promotion opportunities, even in female-dominated and/or precarious sectors. Over the course of these women's lives, they will have to share housing, commute to other towns or cities if they want to start a family and face higher levels of vulnerability if they end up living alone with dependent minors. In any case, they will most likely find themselves living alone in old age, and this will once again increase their vulnerability, as their income will begin to fall after the age of 50 and their pensions will be lower given the limitations of their professional careers. This increased vulnerability will lead them to apply for benefits, which come with a series of associated challenges in terms of eligibility and management of the benefits and services. If their lives are also impacted by factors having to do with disability, immigration and gender violence, they clearly face added challenges in the job market and increased levels of vulnerability and poverty.

This description, based on data and the comments analysed in this chapter, provides a foundation for understanding the multidimensional complexity of what we call **poverty**, a phenomenon that goes beyond being paid less than men. From the gender perspective presented, this poverty requires 'more holistic approaches, which together with the material deprivation leading from a certain level of income or earnings, explore the difficulty of accessing intangible factors, from one's own subjective perception of poverty to power relations and vulnerability'.<sup>42</sup>

- The situation of women in the job market and the associated challenges, risks and vulnerability are shaped by the intersectionality of the different aggravating factors.
- The main factors that increase women's risk of poverty are caregiving, diversity of origin and age (the youngest and oldest are most at risk).
- The city of Barcelona attracts young women because of the education and early career opportunities it offers, but some of these women are forced to leave the city when they want to settle down or start a family. If their job remains in Barcelona, it then involves commuting, difficulties achieving a work-life balance and expenses.
- As a result, we find that Barcelona has a low proportion of children and adolescents, and there are more households of adults living together than families with children. This situation may have a long-term impact on how the city addresses caregiving and the associated facilities and services.
- The service sector, where female workers are concentrated, is known to require a great deal of flexibility, making a work-life balance difficult and leading to more part-time and temporary work for women. Women usually choose this type of work out of necessity, because of need, urgency and survival.
- The large number of elderly women in the city of Barcelona, together with the fact that they make up the majority of workers over the age of 55, is reflected in the poverty risk statistics, as their income (whether from wages or pensions) decreases at these ages. These risks can also lead to loss of housing for women who live alone.
- The foreign-born population in the city has also been growing constantly since 2017, with the 25–29 and 60+ age groups clearly dominated by women. In many cases, foreign-born women have the most precarious jobs with the lowest wages in the service sector (for example, housework). Foreign-born women are also facing the common problem of ageing.
- Foreign-born women from developing or low-income countries also have specific issues: difficulties accessing housing, the informal nature of many jobs and cultural differences in terms of customs, skills, language and religion.
- Women have high educational levels even though, as mentioned in the interviews, caregiving can also stand in the way of educational opportunities due to time constraints. Foreign-born women have high educational levels, too, but they face the problem of getting their qualifications officially recognised when they come from countries outside the EU. Women are often overqualified for their jobs.
- Women's double workload, which focuses on caregiving at home, clearly affects their availability and leads to dead-end jobs.

- Women exemplify the ‘working poor’ phenomenon because even though they have jobs, their contracts, working hours and wages are more precarious, increasing their risk of poverty. In many cases, their careers and salaries are not upwardly mobile, and they are affected by vertical and horizontal segregation and the ‘sticky floor’ phenomenon.
- These situations, the result of segregation, mean that when priorities have to be set, men’s work is prioritised because men have better working conditions, even in more precarious jobs or sectors. This perpetuates the gender roles of women as carers and men as breadwinners and conveys unequal dynamics to the domestic/household setting.
- In addition to caregiving, there are other factors that make certain situations more complicated: work-life balance for single-mother families or those who are caring for someone with a disability. Women may also have to care for themselves due to a sudden illness or disability, with serious consequences (loss of employment, career change, maintaining the role of carer for the rest of the family, etc.).
- Caregiving work also involves applying for and managing social benefits, which are often needed in order to sustain the family economy in vulnerable situations. The problem is that the eligibility criteria can be restrictive, and having several precarious jobs can penalise applicants. Women often have to choose between keeping a precarious benefit or a precarious job.
- One of the ways to balance work with caregiving is outsourcing the latter. In these cases, another woman is often entrusted with these responsibilities. For families with sufficient income, this is simply a decision to leave domestic caregiving up to the market, but it is not a financially viable option for families without enough income. The data raise questions about whether this outsourcing may be another factor contributing to the insecurity of caregiving work, a sector that is already rife with informal, precarious jobs, which makes these situations harder to see.
- Gender violence is a factor that significantly increases vulnerability and poverty risk among women. Women who are victims of gender violence are seriously constrained in their work lives due to their situation. For example, they may have to choose between disclosing their situation, which involves sacrificing privacy and facing prejudice, or keeping it secret and running the risk of losing their job, justifying absences, etc.
- The housing risks we have seen in relation to foreign-born women also exist for all women. Single-mother families and elderly women living alone are the groups most at risk of being evicted.
- While quantitative data on job market participation, employment, unemployment and the wage gap show positive trends, we also see that at a qualitative level, men and women still have two clearly distinct positions in the job market, where women have greater challenges building a stable career that can keep poverty at bay.
- Our approach to poverty from the gender perspective must be holistic and go beyond income levels to include issues linked to intangible factors.

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# 7 Possible courses of action

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Our interpretation of the data and the comments in the interviews shows that we must take action and develop policies to address several critical issues, namely the following:

- Caregiving: distribution of responsibilities, work-life balance.
- Health and physical and mental well-being throughout life, and how they are affected by vulnerability.
- Career advancement for women.
- Equal pay and the fight against segregation.
- Promotion of women outside the service sector.
- Education: specific programmes, overqualification.
- Female ageing and poverty risk.
- Entering and re-entering the workforce.
- Foreign-born women: improving socio-occupational inclusion, cracking down on informal work and recognising foreign qualifications.
- Access to quality housing and public services.
- Raising awareness of poverty from the gender perspective.
- Temporary work, part-time work and financial insecurity.

The following is a list of possible courses of action that emerged in the interviews and were adjusted in the process of drafting the study in order to create a potential roadmap for addressing critical issues. Obviously, we are not presenting a strategic plan, as this is not the goal of the research, but we are providing a list that can help define future strategies. We understand that a single initiative cannot cover everything discussed in the report and that specific initiatives will be needed for certain issues, but looking to the future, the idea is for the plans to be based on a holistic perspective rather than isolated initiatives.

1. Promote community work with women and by women. Community work brings about improvements at several levels, including self-esteem, safety, health and skills. This initiative can take many forms, such as supporting activities run by women, which may not be paid work per se but do involve teamwork, cooperation and management skills and prepare women for the workplace. Another specific initiative could be facilitating female entrepreneurship together with other women to help build the kind of professional relationships that take their needs into account (flexible work intensity, caregiving and work-life balance, adaptation of workplaces, schedules, etc.). It is more effective to create or facilitate the resource than to give direct financial assistance. Unlike such assistance, resources create enduring networks of trust that can lead to other collective synergies.
2. Establish procedures to officially recognise or validate the educational qualifications of foreign nationals, given that these individuals have a high level of untapped knowledge. This is particularly necessary for vulnerable foreign-born women, as recognising their education may help reduce their risk.
3. Create community training pathways to build networks among organisations, women and companies that facilitate guidance and support.
4. Establish measures to count time spent on caregiving as time worked, so that women who have devoted themselves to this type of work are not stuck with non-contributory pensions. Indeed, the very label of 'non-contributory' is offensive, as these women have obviously contributed to socioeconomic development.
5. Bring about changes in corporate culture: make it obligatory to provide caregiving facilities in companies, provide an allowance for nursery schools and enact laws mandating that part of the amount deducted from salaries be used to cover the social cost of caregiving.
6. Conduct studies to quantify the actual cost of caregiving and how this work influences GDP.
7. Adjust promotion systems in companies to include blind assessment, personalised promotion and continuing education pathways for women, and publicise these or other systems with an official certification.
8. Devise 'post-caregiving' re-entry programmes that include workplace adaptations and flexible working hours.
9. Raise awareness of men's privilege in the working world and the impact of social roles and the unfair distribution of caregiving responsibilities.
10. Have public institutions monitor the implementation of equality plans to assess their application and effectiveness. Such plans cannot be drawn up simply to tick a box.
11. Incorporate figures similar to job coaches with a proven track record when defining workplace integration plans for people with disabilities. This professional will mediate between companies and individuals, helping to adapt workplaces to facilitate integration through a skills-based employability model, which identifies the skills needed for a given job and the skill map of applicants to achieve the best possible fit.
12. Re-assess retirement conditions and ages for certain jobs predominantly held by women, such as cleaning or housework and caregiving, due to the health problems they cause. The health factor is important because if retirement ages are not re-assessed, these women end their working lives by taking sick leave, terminating their contracts, decreasing their income and increasing their vulnerability and financial insecurity.

13. Establish specific sets of indicators to evaluate the quality of women's jobs and how these jobs impact their mental and physical health, poverty risk and vulnerability.
14. Incorporate gender indicators into data on the job market and employment relations, linking working time to caregiving time and incorporating time use, work-life balance and local tasks into data mining.
15. Develop indicators on the impact of gender policies implemented in the city of Barcelona, taking into account these policies' impact on gender inequalities in social relations and the gender division of labour.
16. Create an observatory to draft and monitor a joint strategy to improve women's position in the job market and reduce the associated vulnerability. It must take a comprehensive view of intersectionality.
17. Monitor the wage gap specifically, looking not only at average earnings but also earnings within the same categories, in order to expose horizontal segregation, with a special focus on female-dominated sectors and jobs. This monitoring should assess companies' results, for example, with a certification for participating companies that includes the current state of the wage gap in the company and how it has changed over time.
18. Include aspects linked to caregiving, work-life balance and the reduction of the wage gap as specific criteria in public procurement considerations, beyond the criterion of having an equality plan.
19. Incorporate the gender perspective into the promotion of employment within municipal services, establishing training, advice, communication and support resources to dispel gender stereotypes in the working world.
20. Promote technical, technological and scientific training from a gender perspective as a way to combat the gender roles and segregation already present in educational settings. Furthermore, incorporate the gender perspective in professional qualification programmes for technological fields.
21. Have the Barcelona Socio-Demographic Survey incorporate variables that analyse how women enter and participate in the job market and the relationship with the caregiving system.





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# 8 Bibliography

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Below are the reference documents used as data sources to draft this report and as a bibliography for the theoretical context and methodological content.

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**Coordinator:  
Barcelona Economic and  
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