



“WOMEN, FAMILIES, CAREERS – EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC ON WORK/LIFE BALANCE IN THE VISEGRAD COUNTRIES” PROJECT (1 October 2021 to 30 April 2022)

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RESEARCH STUDY

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WOMEN, FAMILIES, CAREERS – EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC ON WORK/LIFE BALANCE IN THE VISEGRAD COUNTRIES

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Executive Summary

We have been examining the effects of the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic during the project period in the V4 countries (between November 2021 and January 2022). By that time, the world was beyond the first shock. Nevertheless, welfare outcomes are still moving points in terms of restraint, vaccination, illness, jobs, education. It is possible to generalize from the experiences and prepare for a possible similar event. More research has been done before our research on the effects of the pandemic on women, but these have analyzed mainly selected topics such as women and equal opportunities. The Association for Women's Career Development in Hungary (AWCDH) has set the goal to prepare a more complex study on the effect of the pandemic on women, family and careers - the impact of the pandemic on work-life balance. Our impact assessment is based on a questionnaire survey and a related focus group interviews. We have been looking at the effects of the pandemic and how to address them in our research.

Our partners on behalf of the V4 countries in the research are the Pedagogical University of Krakow, the Czech Business & Professional Women CR z.s. and the Slovak Association of Business Women.

It can be stated that the survey is representative, because the questionnaire survey and the focus group interviews were conducted in four remote locations (Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia). Within each country, respondents were from the countryside and several cities.

Based on the survey and the interviews, it was clear that the effects and experiences related to the COVID-19 pandemic varied greatly depending on age, marital status, geographical location, education, employment, income, skills, and competencies.

The data show that nearly half of respondents had financial problems due to job loss or declining earnings. It is noteworthy that the atypical forms of employment have begun to spread among employers. Teleworking has helped protect people and their jobs, especially for the more highly educated.

With regard to teleworking, it should be borne in mind that mental health problems have ensued, especially in the case of single people, because most of their social relationships have been severed.

Mandatory isolation in particular had a major impact on both singles and family ties. It changed the relationships, the atmosphere inside and outside the family.

There were places where it brought the family together as a result of the isolation. Many people had nice experiences during the home quarantine. Those who lived in the countryside felt more freedom.

COVID-19 has changed the daily schedule of families, affecting all ages, but mostly the 41–50-year-old ones. It also changed the financial situation because it was necessary to buy digital devices due to “home office” and learning at home, some people had to buy also new furniture.

The use of hygiene methods used by families is divided, almost half of the respondents strictly adhering to it, the others not addressing it.

According to the respondents, the idea of family planning did not change, only the date had been postponed.

The focus group interviews that joined the questionnaire survey revealed that helplessness, depression, and fear in the four target groups (mothers with children, women planning a family, women over 50, and rural women) disappeared after a short time. This was followed by a process of conscious action by women, learning when necessary and in a few cases, they have given up several things step by step.

The programs of the TV channels only partially helped the society to adapt to the pandemic situation. The presentation of good practices related to the organization of the family and the teaching of children in connection with the pandemic was minimal.

The government's measures under COVID 19 were considered important in the areas of health care, the moratorium on loan repayment, financial support, and atypical (part-time, home office, etc.) work.

Keywords: COVID 19, pandemic, family, childbearing, family and work-life balance, changed life, average weekday, home office, digital learning, Work-Life Balance, V4 family policy, situation of families, employers' expectations.

Abstract

The aim of our research is to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the balance between women's employment, family, and work.

The project examined the impact of the pandemic on the situation of women, with particular reference to the labor market in the V4 countries (Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia). The project was done with quantitative and qualitative research tools.

It has also been found that women bear a significant share of the burden at home, with regard to school closures, increased homework, caring and their formal work.

The statistical analysis based on data collection from the four V4 countries was complemented by a study based on semi-structured (focus group) in-depth interviews. The aim of the two types of data collection was to be able to detect the effect of COVID-19 from a micro- and macro-level point of view at the same time. In more detail, we can get to know the opinions and attitudes of the respondents and the participants in the in-depth focus group interviews.

The dual approach allows decision-makers to build on the results, with confidence, and see the importance of the human factors behind the numbers.

I. Introduction

The analysis, use and exploitation of labor market impacts and working methods during the COVID-19 pandemic is a worldwide priority.

Since the onset of the pandemic, the situation of countries, economies and individuals has changed.

International and domestic analyzes draw attention to the increased challenges facing women as a result of the pandemic and the resulting economic crisis (home office, care work, children's teaching, etc.), which can contribute to increasing gender inequalities (EUROFOUND analysis 2020-21).

In the project we examined the impact of the epidemic on women, with particular reference to their labor market situation. The European Parliament's analysis of the situation of women in the labor market in 2021 addressed this issue. (The situation of women in the labor market).

Women also took on a significant portion of the burden at home, due to school closures, homework, and their formal work, which increased as a result of the pandemic.

Employers, who had to respond to problems and to strengthen women, had to take into account the unique needs, responsibilities and perspectives of women. (Women at the core of the fight against the COVID-19 crisis in OECD 2020)

Therefore, we have designed our research to provide value-based examination of the expectations regarding employment for women, families, and work.

The Alert Mechanism Report 2021, published by the European Commission draws attention to the diversity of solutions. The number of income losses due to working time losses in the first quarter of 2021 in Europe averaged 8.7% (ILO).

Regarding V4 (Harmonized unemployment rate by sex - age group 25-74 Eurostat 2021 I.), the unemployment rate in the Czech Republic is 2.8%, for women 3.4%, in Hungary 3.4% for women 3.5%, 2.4% in Poland for women 2.4% and in Slovakia 6.6% for women 7.7%.

The EU-27 average is 6.4% for women and 6.9%. However, the fertility rate is increasing compared to 2011, as in the Czech Republic 1.70% (1.26%) in Hungary 1.55% (1.4%), in Poland 1.43% (1.3%), in Slovakia 1, 56% (1.37 was) EU-27 average is 1.52%.

In this situation, most of the employers solved the operational problems through teleworking, part-time work and home office, ensuring a flexible schedule. At the same time, risks such as isolation and loss of contact with co-workers were also recognized. (Teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, ILO 2020).

Research shows that V4 countries are the most family-centric nations (Research by the Maria Kopp Institute and the Századvég Alapítvány).

The heads of the families' portfolios/ ministries from the V4 countries incl. *Katalin Novák* (that time) Minister for Family from Hungary, Jana *Malacova* of the Czech Republic, Poland's *Marlena Malag*, and *Milan Krajniak* from Slovakia - issued a joint declaration of their commitment to family values at a videoconference on 18 May 2021.

The AWCDH has already examined the situation of families touching the labor market impact of the pandemic in its research in 2020 titled “Women, Families, Careers – A Civil Society Forum in the V4 Spirit”, on which we could build on the current project.

During the COVID-19 pandemic and the different country specific quarantines, stress and mental strain increased. By the third wave, the effects of the initially unknown pandemic have already begun to emerge. Overnight, the homes became offices, childcare centers, and temporary schools. Women had a greater role in fulfilling work, home and family tasks, and in ensuring hygienic conditions. It made it harder for them to work and to make a career when they had to help children with learning, had caring responsibilities, and increased housework. These are tasks mostly performed by women, as unpaid work at home. The double tasks meant a greater physical and mental burden on women.

Several research and questionnaire surveys have been conducted on the topic, but the four target groups, mothers with children, women planning a family, women over the age of 50, and rural women appear only in our focus group interviews.

However, there is a diversity of cultures and traditions in the V4 countries, common thinking is shown in the results.

The coronavirus pandemic put everyone in a new position, and an immediate reaction was needed.

The pandemic has fundamentally shaken the economy and the whole life. Overnight, it changed everyday life once thought was safe and unwavering. The fear of the pandemic, the uncertainty of future infiltrated everything.

II. Aims of the Research

With our almost 20-year experience / professional background in the AWCDH, we considered it our task to address the impact of the pandemic on women, especially on the labor market together with our V4 partners.

We have prepared this study of our research using quantitative and qualitative research methods based on a questionnaire survey conducted after the third wave of the pandemic and focus group interviews. The aim of the research was to explore the changes in women, family and careers as a result of the pandemic and their interrelationships.

We consider it important

- to examine on the basis of existing cooperation, whether we can develop a common view and, if necessary, take common action in the light of international findings,
- to strengthen our organizations and to provide a well-founded background for decision makers regarding the impact of the pandemic on special groups of women (mothers with children, women who plan a family, women over 50, rural women) based on our findings,

analyzes of professional data and materials, credible experts, and good practices in the context of V4 countries on the topic.

- to examine the expectations of women in terms of employment, family, and work balance as a result of the pandemic.

Through all this, professional recommendations have been formulated that offer a solution for creating a value-based balance.

With the research we also wanted to shed light on the impact of digital education on the four target groups of women during the pandemic.

During the survey we have also found out, based on the questions asked, how the options and different measures, have affected starting a family and the balance between women's employment, family and work.

Our aim is also to maintain and further develop our dialogue within the V4 partnership along common values and interests, in order to promote the employment of women, in line with the importance of family background.

III. Research method and tools

During the research we worked with a double data collection method (quantitative and qualitative).

The data collection of the research based on a questionnaire survey took place in November and December 2021 in all four countries in Czech, Polish, Hungarian and Slovak. The data were processed by our own software, which was followed by an evaluation.

The questionnaire survey was supplemented by a qualitative survey, a focus group interview method in all four countries. In this way, the human factors behind the data can be identified and the conclusions and suggestions are more accurate.

The compilation of questions is based on the information we are looking for. It was about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the organization of family life, daily work and co-operation with the employer, the organization of life after the pandemic, and future expectations and ideas.

Consideration was given to what the facts were, what the opinions were, and the attitudes that were related to the purpose of the survey.

The questionnaire survey consisted of closed questions.

The starting questions were personal questions. These were followed by general questions, then by more specific questions.

For closed-ended questions, we provided the answer options, and the respondent could mark one or more of these. This eased the situation for the respondents and allowed more people to complete the questionnaire.

The V4 countries form a separate cultural region. It affects men and women, family, careers and work, and the attitudes of citizens. The research well represents the four countries in terms of geographical

distribution, as the questionnaires were completed not only at the headquarters of the organizations involved in the project, but also from several areas of the countries.

The open-ended questions were used in the focus group interviews. This is where we need to find out what the respondent thinks based on the question, and we did not want to limit their thinking with the pre-given answers.

Four focus groups, with members in each of the four countries according to the four target groups:

- o Mothers with children
- o Women planning a family
- o Women over 50
- o Rural women

Focus group members: 5-8 people

The moderator received an outline of the interview from the research project manager, based on which she conducted an interview with the respondents. She tried to explore the opinions, thoughts and positions of the participants not only on the surface but also behind the primary answers. Therefore, this method is semi-structured.

Topics of the interview outline: Profile of the respondent (age, education, employee or entrepreneur or housewife, city, countryside)

1. The impact of the pandemic on the organization of the family, additional sub-points:
 - family unity
 - psychological effects of coronavirus on children and adults
 - alleviation of the psychological effects of coronavirus
2. The impact of the pandemic on the day-to-day work and cooperation with the employer further sub-points:
 - the pedagogical impact of online education
 - tasks of the employer, forms of work
3. Post-pandemic lifestyle transformation, future expectations and visions, additional sub-points
 - maintaining or changing lifestyle
 - changes in living together
 - social distancing
 - appearance of hidden reserves

In the informal atmosphere of the focus group discussion, the participants had the opportunity to comment on the research topic in a spontaneous way, while involuntarily exploring the driving forces, motivations, attitudes and emotional background of their behavior. In this way, thoughts, feedback, opinions, knowledge, and insights could be brought to the surface that would otherwise remain hidden. Thus, we were able to gain a deeper insight into the motivations and attitudes of the target group of the research.

IV. Results of the Research

a. Result of a quantitative survey (questionnaire survey)

For the survey, after the third wave of COVID-19, 913 people from the four countries completed the questionnaire, 94% of whom were women. All age groups participated in the survey, but in different proportions. 74% of respondents live in cities and 68% have completed higher education. 70% of respondents live in a marriage or relationship without a child. Only 3% planned families. The idea of family planning has not changed, the date has only postponed both in urban and rural areas (34%). In the countryside, the environment provided adequate security.

11% of the respondents lost their job as a result of the impact of COVID-19, the income of 36 % fell. This means that nearly half of the respondents had financial problems.

After the third wave, the employers were more thoughtful, and a good trend started towards atypical work. 63% of respondents worked in person at their workplace and 37% worked from home. The other trend to be highlighted is that only 12% of the employed worked full time. So atypical forms of employment have been starting to spread, which is presumably not triggered by the pandemic. This is confirmed by the fact that only 4% chose (Question 4) the statement that "The employer did not allow the atypical form of employment (part-time, home office, etc.) before COVID-19."

The employers have tried to address the situation after the third wave in several ways. 11% of respondents said that their work could be done in a home office with digital devices. At the same time, digital competence seemed to improve, because only 4% were indicating that preparation was needed to move to a home office. 35% of respondents were able to work safely in a home office, in teleworking, and in the usual way of working.

However, there is a need for more detailed description of atypical working methods and work organization. It has to be planned that in daily practice the proper ratio of works tasks to wages should prevail.

All age groups accepted all kinds of options, only 4 % of the age group of 60+ (6 %) has not taken up work from home.

In terms of qualifications, the more qualified (68%) were more likely to be able to do their work in a home office with digital tools and did not require training. For those with a secondary or lower education (32%), mainly the work in person predominated.

The single respondents felt that although the place and schedule of work for most of them had not changed, they were very alone, employee relations had decreased, and isolation had increased.

Interestingly, families without children found that family responsibilities, teaching children, hindered the working from home. This statement was not confirmed by families with children in marriage (27%), only touched the issue.

As a result of COVID-19, new working models have been developed.

The demand for digital knowledge has further strengthened (18%) based on the answers to hybrid discussions (26%), the organization of online events (15%), and the introduction of a cloud-based platform

(6%). This is 47%, but the importance of training is shown only by 5%. This is also dangerous because the work phases become impersonal (according to 10%) but only 3 % answered that “data-based decision making has been introduced”. It is advisable to develop a new motivation system for employees (11%) in order to be effective.

All age groups of respondents confirmed that the demand for digital knowledge is growing and a method of hybrid (e-mail, telephone, skype, facetime, etc.) discussion has developed. This can make work organization more efficient.

Respondents in all four countries and those living in the city saw a growing demand for digital knowledge and, in this context, the spread of the method of hybrid (e-mail, telephone, skype, facetime, etc.) discussion. In addition, it is interesting that training is considered important only by a few in all countries, cities and rural areas. Moreover, it can be seen that data-based decision-making was thought only by a few to be used by employers. At the same time, rural people have not seen the work phases become impersonal.

The COVID 19 pandemic has changed the atmosphere in families.

The pandemic, especially the compulsory isolation, had a major impact on singles and family ties. It has changed the relationships, the atmosphere inside and outside of marriages and close families. Being locked up together strengthened family relations (11%), many nice experiences took place in the home quarantine (8%), the environment was made nicer, and things backlogged were cleared (16%), new habits were developed (11%), they got to know each other better (6%). The rural environment allowed for more freedom (10%).

A very good sign is that panic (2%) and criticizing each other (3%) were minimal.

The generation issue was not addressed by many. Some considered closer intergenerational cooperation (5%), while others indicated neglect of generations (3%).

In all age groups, it can be stated that a higher proportion was looking for solutions for the pandemic situation. In almost every age group, only one or two respondents indicated that they had criticized each other and that developed new habits after the first despair.

All married people were positive, looking for solutions for the pandemic situation. Only a few panicked, but that occurred in all sorts of marital conditions. The same is true of the neglect of generations.

COVID 19 pandemic changed the daily routine of families

The agenda of families, and within it, of women, has changed. Time spent on domestic work and caring work increased (16%). The time spent caring for grandparents also increased (4%). In addition to the “home office”, women cared for the family, and they were teaching their children (16%). Mainly women were learning at home with children under the age of 14 (17%). It also occurred that grandparents helped with learning with the children (4%).

The pandemic changed the financial situation, not only the daily agenda. It was necessary to buy digital devices (15%) because of the “home office” and home learning, but it also occurred that furniture had to be bought.

The change in daily schedule affected all age groups, but mostly the 41-50 year old ones.

In families with children, the women were learning with the children in addition to the “home office.” But this is how couples without children thought it, too.

Hygienic methods used by families in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regarding hygienic methods used by families in response to the COVID-19 pandemic respondents said families considered it important to follow basic hygiene rules. It can be seen that respondents apply these rules differently.

In addition to the selection and continued use of disinfectants (23%), continuous provision of sterile masks is essential (20%).

However, only 10% indicated isolation of the Covid infected family member. This raises the question of whether it was not considered it important or the possibility for segregation was missing. At the same time, only very few (3%) considered it important to select the right hygiene shops. Many people (11%) considered important the disinfection of the grocery.

37% of respondents worked at the workplace but only a few (11%) indicated that they had stricter hygiene rules.

It is noteworthy that COVID-19 did not change the family's hygiene methods (8%).

It may mean that there was existing a high standard of hygiene in the family or that it was not proper and not thought to be important, either.

The rural environment has reduced the risk of the pandemic (8%), according to many.

The choice and continued use of disinfectants, sterile masks, and the disinfection of grocery were considered important by all ages and all marital conditions. This was the same for respondents with higher education. For those with a secondary education, due to the protection of the home, adherence of stronger hygiene rules was shown than in the case of attendance work.

COVID-19 pandemic and family planning.

Due to the pandemic, there was fear and anxiety about family planning among respondents (21%), the employment situation was difficult, the division of work within the family was precarious, the city did not provide a suitable environment either, therefore they did not dare to plan a child.

The idea of family planning did not change, only postponed (34%).

This was reinforced by a higher proportion of all age groups and those with different marital status. Further research on family planning would be worthwhile, as 31% indicated "other".

COVID-19 has changed the situation of women.

As a result of the pandemic, the daily routine of women has completely changed. The work, the housework, and teaching the children were done by women in parallel (33%).

In addition, women played a coordinating role (18%) in families. This was confirmed by the 31-40, 41-50 and 51-61 age groups and mainly by childless couples, to a lesser extent by singles and families with children. Women in remote work could save time (12%) what the 21-30 and 61+ age groups agreed with. In this situation, women also had to take time to learn about IT and hygiene (14%) in order to be able to do their daily tasks properly.

The same statements have been confirmed by the individual countries.

TV channels have helped society adapt to the pandemic.

According to respondents, apart from a few, TV channels have helped their viewers.

Hygiene rules were presented (17%) and the importance of this was confirmed by those who graduated from primary school, those who were single and married without a child. Children of different grades were educated (11%) and IT classes were also started (11%).

Respondents also considered it important: online interviews from TV studios about the pandemic (12%) and broadcast social advertisements about the pandemic (18%), the importance of which was confirmed by those with secondary education, higher education and family planners.

At the same time, the presentation of good practices related to organizing family and learning with children in the pandemic was minimal (3%). Value of the successful family (2%) was not the focus, nor was the fact that the future of societies during and after the pandemic is dependent on the family (5%). There was little change in the pre-scheduled programs (5%) and repetitions of the education programs for preparing for the pandemic was minimal (3%).

Government measures for families and jobs in connection of COVID 19.

The V4 countries have taken measures to alleviate the work and family difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondents considered the health measures introduced to prevent the spread of the pandemic to be important (22%). This measure was confirmed by a large number of respondents in all four countries. The introduction of a moratorium on loan repayments (16%) and measures to provide financial support to entrepreneurs (13%) were also confirmed by different proportions of respondents in each country.

Support for atypical (part-time, home office, etc.) work (11%) was chosen by almost all countries. The provision of continuous information (TV, internet, radio) (13%) was considered to be of paramount importance.

These measures mentioned have been confirmed important in large numbers by all ages, people with different qualifications and marital status.

b. Results of a qualitative study (focus group interviews)

Content analysis of focus group reports

The four focus groups covered three identical topics. Based on the focus group interviews, the characteristic findings of the interviews were grouped using the content analysis method. Based on the sorting and listing of the content analysis, the situation can be solved.

In the analysis of 29 interviews in the four focus groups (one per country), 105 text sequences were selected and grouped into 8 thematic groups. The thematic system helped to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of the pandemic on the operational characteristics of a woman, family, and career balance. These show the characteristic patterns of the participants' thinking, the good practices as well as the methods and attitudes behind them.

The three subject groups were identical in the four completely different locations. Interviewees living in different circumstances reported similar effects of the pandemic.

In the informal atmosphere of the focus group discussions, the participants had the opportunity to spontaneously explore the drivers, motivations, attitudes, and emotional background of their behavior as a result of the pandemic. At all four locations, the moderator directed the interviews in the focus group.

The four focus groups:

- 6 people of Czech nationality
- 8 people of Polish nationality
- 8 people of Hungarian nationality
- 7 people of Slovak nationality

a total of 29 people from V4 countries

Focus group members were selected according to four target groups:

- mothers with children
- women planning a family
- women over 50 years of age
- rural women

Opinions from the moderator-led focus group interviews in the three topic groups:

1. The impact of the pandemic on the family organization and the functioning of the family.

All four target groups from the four countries experienced similar situations and mental states within or outside the family. It was not possible to characteristically separate the interviews according to the target groups.

Signs of experiencing the pandemic situation in the family:

The pandemic, especially compulsory isolation, had a major impact on family ties and changed relationships within marriage and within the family.

The full lockdown included the closing of all shops, schools, kindergartens, only food stores could be open and deliveries were allowed.

Everyone started making big shopping.

The family remained at home completely isolated overnight. That way, there was more time left for the family.

The situation created an opportunity to spend more time with the family, children, spouses, to deepen family relationships, to appreciate the values of family life. The relationship between the people locked up was further strengthened, which was experienced positively by several people.

People were torn to two camps vaccinated and unvaccinated, which also changed human relationships. Many came closer to their parents living further away because of the worry. There were those who stated that “my husband had come closer to me”.

Turning to the family has become a major factor. Virtual contacts increased. Contact with the family members living separately took place on Skype, Messenger.

Some were prepared for a future life, building a relationship and thinking about the baby.

Interviewees paid more attention to themselves and the cleanliness of their environment.

There was a lot of worry about the elderly parents, but they couldn't help because of the distance. It was hard to bear the lack of meeting with the parents.

Balance between family and work:

The balance between family and work could not be maintained.

There was an interviewee who was unable to balance work and private life and became ill as a result.

Coordinating online learning with children and home-office activity was also a challenge.

It also happened that there was room in the house for everyone to work online.

The older children have already learned on their own.

There were conflicts caused by people living in a small space.

There were also financial problems.

There were also a couples who shared responsibilities with each other.

Several switched professions and took a new job or second job.

It also happened that the family business had to be restructured because of the loss of customers.

Methods used to relieve the stress:

Many walked a lot outdoors.

Communication helped to solve many things.

To look for and to find new activities was a daily task.

For solving the stress, it was good walking in the woods, biking, adopting a dog.

Talking with someone who knows about earlier crises and how to recover from them.

Escape to training.

Find and test new food recipes.

Some dissolved the effects of stress by walking, gardening, practicing a new hobby.

Some created their own zoom groups and talked on a weekly basis.

Too much information caused a hard time for some people, to counterbalance this they were looking for new activities, hobbies, they learnt and went out in the nature often.

One mentioned, that maintained her contacts with international organizations, attended many useful conferences from which she could learn a lot.

Signs of the psychological impact of the pandemic:

The psychological impact was great. There was an interview where death occurred in the family, the husband was in hospital, the wife was ill, her son had to be separated and online classes were running in the meantime.

She didn't want to meet people out of fear.

Two months before the epidemic, she started living alone, sold her house and rented an apartment, her son living 10 km away from her, and she had to take care of older parents, so the situation was difficult.

Some people decided not to let news of the pandemic flood into their lives.

Difficulties in health care have been hard to bear.

Many struggled with fear of what to do in this situation.

The husband moved away from the family.

The husband has got time but not helped the family.
Depression of children occurred.
The lockdown affected mental health.
Starting a family with the partner was postponed because health care level was considered uncertain.
Based on all this, they are redesigning their lives.

2. Impact of the epidemic on day-to-day work and cooperation with the employer

The role of the employer, form of work, work opportunities:

As a result of the coronavirus, my workday changed, my habits changed, I started working in my pajamas, and I worked like that for months.

It was hard, I was alone in everything. At my company, the loss of revenue was large, and state aid was limited.

I learned a lot in my workplace, due to epidemiological rules and news, I had to start holding webinars for the clients.

It was hard to find clients, there were no job opportunities, I didn't know what will happen, where should I focus on the market. My work mixed with my life, I was very tired at the end of the day.

It was difficult to maintain the farming business due to the limitations in certain areas. Opportunities have narrowed due to illness and low-income sales, long lockdowns. Those coming from the area stopped shopping and we lost customers. But we hope for the future and move on.

It was difficult to get the library materials needed for the work.

We had to rent and buy a computer to work.

The pandemic has resulted new forms of work (online) even in areas where this was previously impossible. Where clients had to be dealt with in person, the home office was not allowed full-time.

Her subordinates were able to stay home, and she had to work fourteen hours a day instead.

Work and household tasks have blurred.

There was a lack of daily contact with the colleagues.

The workplace forced to change.

In manufacturing firms, production declined, so they introduced part-time work for their workers or laid them off.

Impact of the epidemic on online work and education:

The need to reconcile housework, home office, and children's teaching has generated new problems such as lack of computers, furniture, and space.

Reconciling the "home office" and the children's education is a big challenge.

Employers could not always provide IT tools.

The importance of IT at work continued to grow, leading to the need for continuous learning and further training.

Reconciling work and children's teaching:

Reconciling “home office” and homework is very difficult.

Working in a “home office” as a form of work could be maintained in the long run.

Mothers with children were given the opportunity for all children up to the age of 11 to stay at home with the children, and the government paid the amount covered by the health system.

Women began to face the situation of teleworking, caring for children, learning with them, and domestic work. Later, when the situation improved, people could return to work. After the first few months, many employers changed their way of working. These are either just “home office” or partly “home office” and partly office work or full office work.

Many schools, companies, and government organizations were not technically prepared, did not have enough computers or other devices for their teleworkers.

In the first period, schools were neither technically nor methodically prepared.

Some families had problems with not having enough computers or a slow internet connection.

There was no fear on the part of the children, but great anger.

The children lacked personal connections and social activities.

The transition to distance education and telework has had a major impact on the school performance and social behavior of pupils and the young ones. The biggest challenge for respondents was the lack of direct contact between the learners and teachers and the lack of learning support.

There were also problems with internet connection and software operation, as well as a lack of interaction with their peers and physical activity.

Distance learning seemed like a nightmare, the pupils were exhausted and some of them panicked.

3. Post-pandemic lifestyle changes, future expectations and visions

During the pandemic, people realized that some expected and unexpected changes needed to be made. I have learned a lot about myself, I am able to handle crisis situations.

I love the rules and it bothers me that I can't rely on the common sense of those around me.

In the future, it is good to see that the countryside is better than the city, we are not so closed, but the media pressure is too big for us.

Successive waves of the pandemic have affected lifestyles, future processes, and life priorities.

Some people started new activities, they started to develop their talents, their passions, which had been neglected so far.

Some began to find learning important.

Some plan to spend as much time with the family as they did during the pandemic.

I continue decorating my house.

Hygiene is built into my daily life.

Some pay more attention to finding physical and mental balance.

A lot has been learned about hygiene, which will be always used.

People will place more emphasis on building valuable friendships.

Some are planning to move to a place close to nature.

The virus remains, we have to live with it. Greater attention should be paid to healthy eating and increased exercise.

Increase the number of personal experiences, gatherings with friends and family.
The younger generation is planning to change professions and change their place of residence.
All participants agreed that there are changes in their lives and it will never be the same, but the crucial point is that even the worst can have a good effect.
She became a piano teacher.
She wants to learn to be a mediator.
She plans to form a non-profit organization.
She plans to change job, feels the need for change.
She is satisfied with her work and plans to have a child in the future.

V. Summary and conclusions

The questionnaire survey was supplemented by in-depth focus group interviews.
The results also show that the V4 countries form a separate cultural region. It affects men, women, the family, career, work, dealing with the pandemic, and the attitudes of citizens.

The pandemic has adversely affected all men and women. They had to rethink and change their working methods, their way of thinking about their working methods, their approach to evaluating their work, their social network, almost their whole lives. The single people felt that although the location and schedule of work for some of them have not changed, they were very alone, employee relationships were declining, and isolation was increasing.

The situation of those living in the family has also changed greatly due to the changed work schedule and the digital education of children. As a result of the coronavirus, working days have changed, usual habits have disappeared. Many have started working in their pajamas at the computer and have been working like this for months. The remote work has blurred with private life and household tasks. There was a lot of fatigue at the end of the day. There was a lack of daily contact with the colleagues. There were manufacturing companies where production fell, therefore introduced part-time work for their workers or laid them off. There were also companies which had to change their entire business.

Mainly women were learning with children under 14 years of age. In some cases, also men and grandparents helped with learning. The older children could learn on their own.

Conflict escalated where the multi-member family was locked up in a small space.

Regarding children, the transition to distance education has had a major impact on the school performance and social behavior of children and young ones. They were not afraid they were rather angry. Namely, there were problems with the internet connection and the operation of the software. They missed interaction with their mates and the physical activities.

Women's attitudes toward the functioning of families have changed greatly. Not only did they learn with the children, but they also did their work and ran the household. They also played a coordinating role in

the family. The relationship between the locked-up people further strengthened, which they experienced positively.

At the same time, the vaccinated and the unvaccinated broke into two camps, which also changed human relationships.

Atypical working methods have helped to reconcile the presence of women in the labor market with family life. However, there is a need for more detailed description of atypical working methods and work organization (part-time, home office, etc.) It has to be planned that in daily practice the right ratio of works tasks to wages should prevail. The employer should demand as much work as it can be done during working hours and no more.

Circumstances transformed by COVID-19 required new knowledge and tools.

All age groups of respondents confirmed that the demand for digital knowledge is growing and there is increasing reliance on hybrid communication (e-mail, telephone, skype, facetime, etc.) has developed. These support remote work organization to some extent and make it more effective.

In addition, it is interesting that training is considered important only by a few in the survey in all countries, cities and rural areas. In the interviews, training seemed more important.

The women also had to take time to learn about IT and hygiene. At the same time, it was experienced that digital competence is improving. Attention needs to be paid to maintenance and improvement. The importance of IT has continued to grow in the workplace, which has necessitated continuous learning and further training.

Several switched professions in anticipation of a new opportunity. They took up new activities, they started to develop their talents and their passions, which had, so far, been neglected. Learning began to be considered important.

After the third wave of COVID-19, the fear faded away, but the stress remained, which people tried to resolve with different methods. Some walked a lot outdoors. Some initiated communication whenever they could. Others sought and found new activities and occupations, hiking in the woods, riding a bike, adopting a dog. Some were talking about the crises with someone who knew about old crises and how to recover from them. Escape to trainings and music learning also occurred.

The opinion about the media was controversial. Information on the pandemic was provided on an ongoing basis (in TV, internet, radio) which was considered a high priority by the respondent in all four countries. Many people said that after a while, they decided not to let news of the pandemic flood into their lives. The media pressure was too big. For mental health reasons, people could not constantly watch and listen. The media did not show good practices on how family organization should be changed, or what solutions can be recommended in the home-office, what methods to use in home teaching.

The TV / radio schedules were not much changed and the programs dealing with preparations and advice regarding the Covid were not often repeated. The media did not help the society to lessen the stress. Neither did it touch on the future of societies during and after the pandemic that is so dependent of the successful families. Recognizing the value of a successful family was not in focus either.

Hygiene, which is important for health, was not important for everyone. In addition to using the mask, hand sanitizers or disinfection of purchased food and items was used only where it was obligatory. Separation of the Covid infected family member was also not common either. This raises the question of whether it was not considered important or were there no proper circumstance for segregation.

The pandemic changed the financial situation, not only the daily agenda.

The need to reconcile housework, home office, and children's distance learning has generated new problems such as lack of computers, furniture, and space.

Because of the "home office" and learning at home, it was often necessary to buy digital devices, but some people had to buy also new furniture, or had to rent a computer to work.

This also raises labor law questions about why the employer does not provide the computer for the home office.

The views about the collaboration between the generations were quite different. Helping each other was only partially perceptible. The generation issue was not addressed by many. Some considered the intergenerational cooperation to be closer, while others cited the neglect of generations.

Respondents were prepared for a future life, building a relationship, learning, thinking about the baby, and trying to alleviate the stress.

Gathering, researching, analyzing, and using experience is essential to prepare for future challenges. However, there are elements, methods and processes that can be applied also without a pandemic, from a more modern social and economic point of view.

VI. Fulfillment of hypotheses

From the analysis of the questionnaire survey and the focus group interviews, it can be seen that the listed suggestions and hypotheses have been proven and fulfilled.

It should be noted that respondents indicated family unity as a basis for examining the impact of the pandemic on the relationship between woman, family, and career.

- **Hypothesis1:** COVID-19 has an impact on the slow population growth in the V4 countries. The family is the key to tackle demographic challenges on the one hand, and to the stability of economic growth on the other. (This hypothesis was similarly set in our research in 2020).
 - **Hypothesis11:** Under COVID-19, the four identified women's target groups (detailed in para 14) work on family unity, fulfilling their tasks, good hygiene.
 - **Hypothesis12:** Under COVID-19, the four identified target groups of women living in the family harmonize social support (e.g., deliver food to old people, phoning lonely relatives, etc.), family life, and work.

- **Hypothesis13:** Under COVID-19, employers did not take into account that women had to learn with their children in addition to working in home office.)
- **Hypothesis 2:** Under COVID-19, the structure of the family, and the atmosphere in the family, had an effect on the physical and mental state of the family members, the performance of tasks at the work, and the desire to have children. Government measures have an impact on employment-coordinated family policies.

The responses to the questionnaire survey and focus group interviews identified different experiences. The analysis takes this into account and feeds into our suggestions to decision makers.

VII. Recommendations for decision makers

In the project we examined the effects of the third wave of COVID-19 on women, families, careers - work-life balance in V4 countries through a questionnaire survey and focus group interviews.

Based on the results and conclusions of our analysis, we make the following suggestions for decision makers:

- The world can be subjected to a new pandemic at any time. So, it is better to prepare for it. The transition to distance learning had a major impact on the school performance and social behavior of children and young ones. They were not afraid, they were rather angry. Namely, there were problems with the internet connection and the operation of the software. Therefore, it is important to develop the digital background of education more vigorously, at all levels from the lower age groups to the secondary school.
- Atypical working methods have helped to reconcile the presence of women in the labor market with family life. However, there is a need for more detailed description of atypical working methods and work organization (part-time, home office, etc.). It has to be planned that in daily practice the right ratio of works tasks to wages should prevail. The employer should demand as much work as it can be done during working hours and no more.
- In addition, it is interesting that training is considered important only by a few in the survey in all countries, cities and rural areas. In the interviews, training seemed more important. The women also had to take time to learn about IT and hygiene. At the same time, it was experienced that digital competence is improving. Attention needs to be paid to maintenance and improvement. The importance of IT has continued to grow in the workplace, which has necessitated continuous learning and further training.

- Several switched professions in anticipation of a new opportunity. They took up new activities, they started to develop their talents and their passions, which had, so far, been neglected. The opportunities for adult learning need to be broadened and methods should be better adapted to everyday life.
- After the third wave of COVID-19, the fear vanished, but the stress remained, which many tried to resolve by various methods:
 - Some walked a lot outdoors.
 - Some initiated communication whenever they could
 - Others sought and found new activities and occupations, hiking in the woods, riding a bike, adopting a dog
 - Talking to someone about the crises who knew about old crises and how to recover from them
 - Escape to trainings
 - Learning music.

The media did not play a role in this area. There may be something that can be done with involvement of experts in order to provide advice to people who need how to cope with stress.

- The opinion about the media was controversial. Information on the pandemic was provided on an ongoing basis (in TV, internet, radio) which was considered a high priority by the respondent in all four Visegrad countries. Many people said that after a while, they decided not to let news of the pandemic flood into their lives. The media pressure was too big. For mental health reasons, people could not constantly watch and listen.

It would have been expected to present good practices such as:

- how the organization of the family changed as a result of the pandemic,
 - what solutions can be recommended in the home-office,
 - or what methods to use in home teaching.
- The TV / radio schedules were not much changed and the programs dealing with preparations and advice regarding the hygiene were not often repeated. The media did not help the society to lessen the stress. Neither did it touch on the future of societies during and after the pandemic that is so dependent of the successful families.

Recognizing the value of a successful family was not in focus either.

- Hygiene, which is important for health, was not important for everyone. In addition to using the mask, hand sanitizers or disinfection of purchased food and items was used only where it was obligatory. Separation of the Covid infected family member was also not common either. This raises the question of whether it was not considered important or were there no proper circumstance for isolation.

Useful advice could be effective (for hygiene).

- In the pandemic the “home office” and the learning with children at home generated new problems. In many cases, it was necessary to buy digital devices, but also occurred that people had to buy new furniture, or some people had to rent a computer for work. In this aspect also labor law questions are raised why the employer does not provide the computer for the home office. Regulation in this area would be needed.
- The views about the collaboration between the generations were different. Helping each other was only partially perceptible. The generation issue was not addressed by many. Some considered the intergenerational cooperation to be closer, while others cited the neglect of generations. Intergenerational cooperation needs support.

Proposal for further research and surveys:

Proposal for new research:

- Ideas for family planning should be further researched. More than 30% would have had a different idea than the questionnaire answers allowed.
- The impact of the media regarding the pandemic could be also researched.
- To investigate how to improve intergenerational cooperation would be required.
- How to solve loneliness? What can be done to ensure the safety (physical and economic security) of generations and to reduce the fear of danger? Solutions would be welcome.

During the "Women, Families, Careers - the effects of the pandemic on work / life balance in the Visegrad countries" Project a dialogue has been developed between the partner organizations, the Pedagogical University of Krakow, Business & Professional Women CR z.s. and the Slovak Association of Business Women, leading to good understanding and cooperation.

Based on this, we can further develop our research and analysis enabling us to make further appropriate recommendations and suggestions to decision-makers in the V4 countries on the key issue of “Women, Family and Careers”.

VIII. Evaluation of the Survey

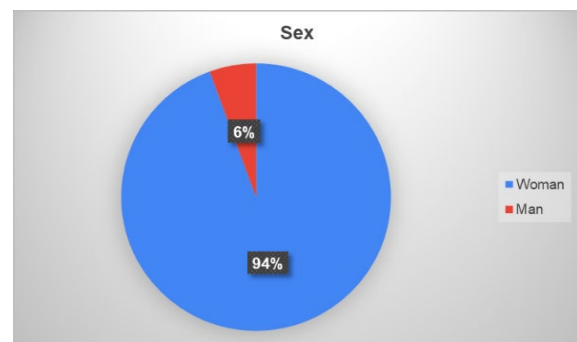
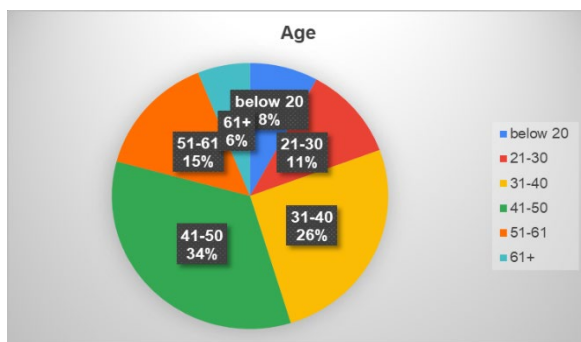
The content of the pie charts is also evaluated from other angles in the form of a bar chart based on the cross-sectional data. In this way, the % values of the response options can be further weighted based on different viewing angles. Thus, in addition to selective evaluation, there is also a combinatorial evaluation.

1. Question: Characteristics of the Responder

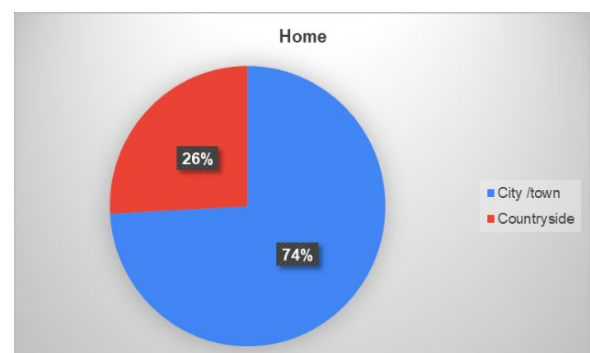
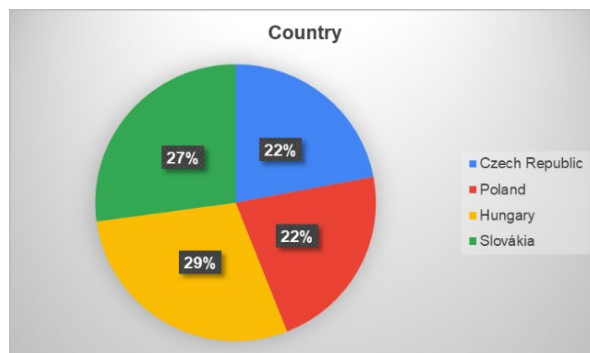
Gender, age, home, highest level of education, marital status

Evaluation:

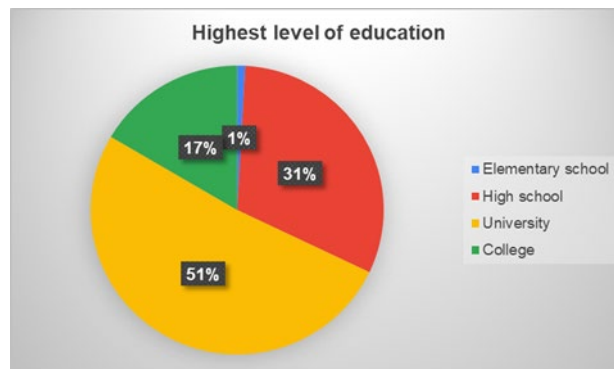
913 people completed the questionnaire at the four sites, of which 6% were men and 94% women. The highest 34% are in the 41-50 age group, the lowest in the 61+ age group is 6%. 8% are the young people under 20 years and 11% of 21-30 year old ones participated in the survey.



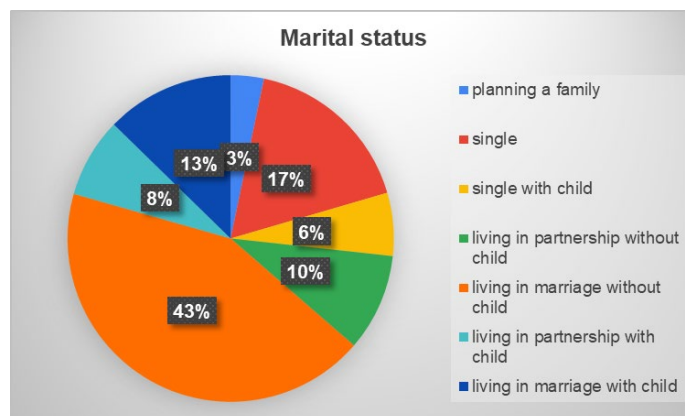
By country, 22% of respondents are from the Czech Republic, 22% from Poland, 29% from Hungary and 27% from Slovak Republic. 74% of the respondents live in cities and 26% in rural areas.



51% of respondents have a university degree, 17% have a college degree, 31% have a high school diploma and 1% have an elementary school education. Usually more educated people filled the questionnaire. For those with a lower education, a personal interview is more effective.



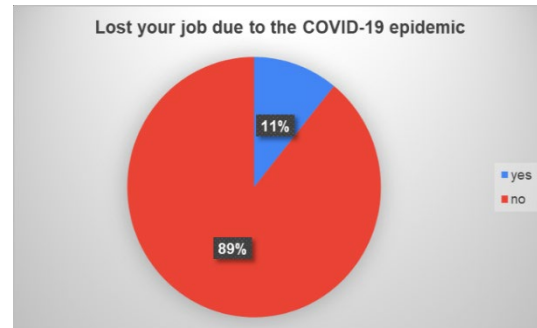
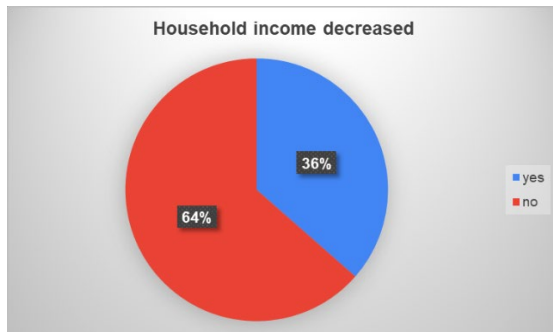
43% of respondents live in marriage without child, this is a very large number, 10% live in a partnership without child, 17% are single. The childless are 70%, which is extremely high demographically. At the same time, 13% live with child in marriage, 8% live with child in partnership and 6% singles live with child. Thus, the number of respondents with child is 27%. From those not having child a total 3 % plan a family.



2. Question: Have you lost your job due to the COVID-19 epidemic? Has your household income decreased?

Evaluation:

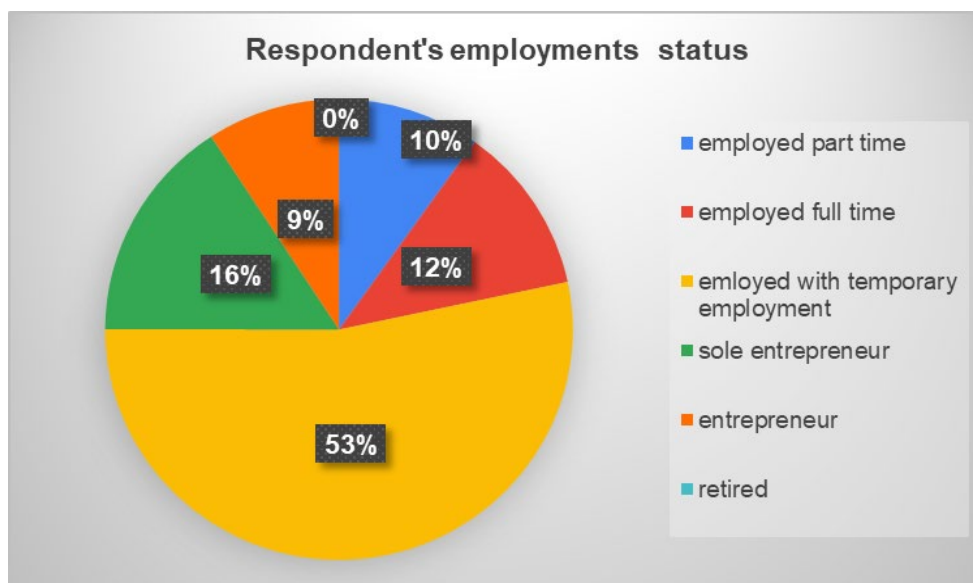
In the V4 countries, 11% of respondents lost their jobs, while 36% mentioned a decrease in household income.



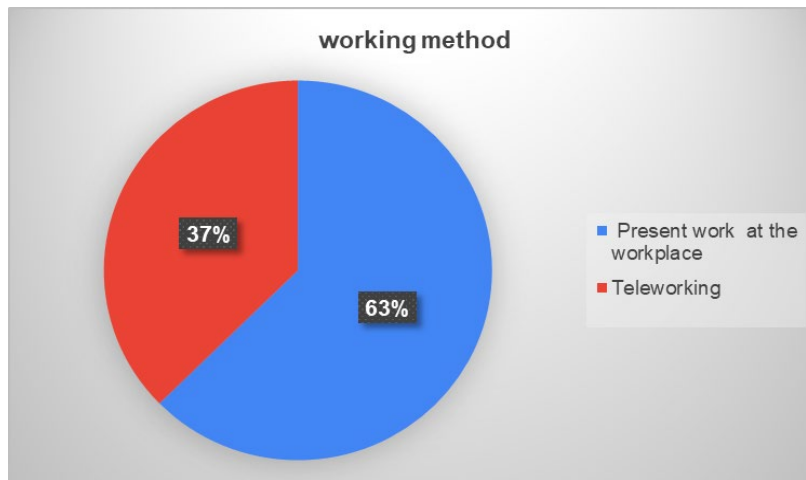
**3. Question: What is the effect of COVID-19 on the respondent's employment status /relation?
What is the working method?**

Evaluation:

In the V4 countries, after the third wave of COVID-19, 10% of respondents are employed part-time, 53% temporary, 12% full-time, 9% entrepreneur and 16% sole entrepreneur. Nobody said to be retired.



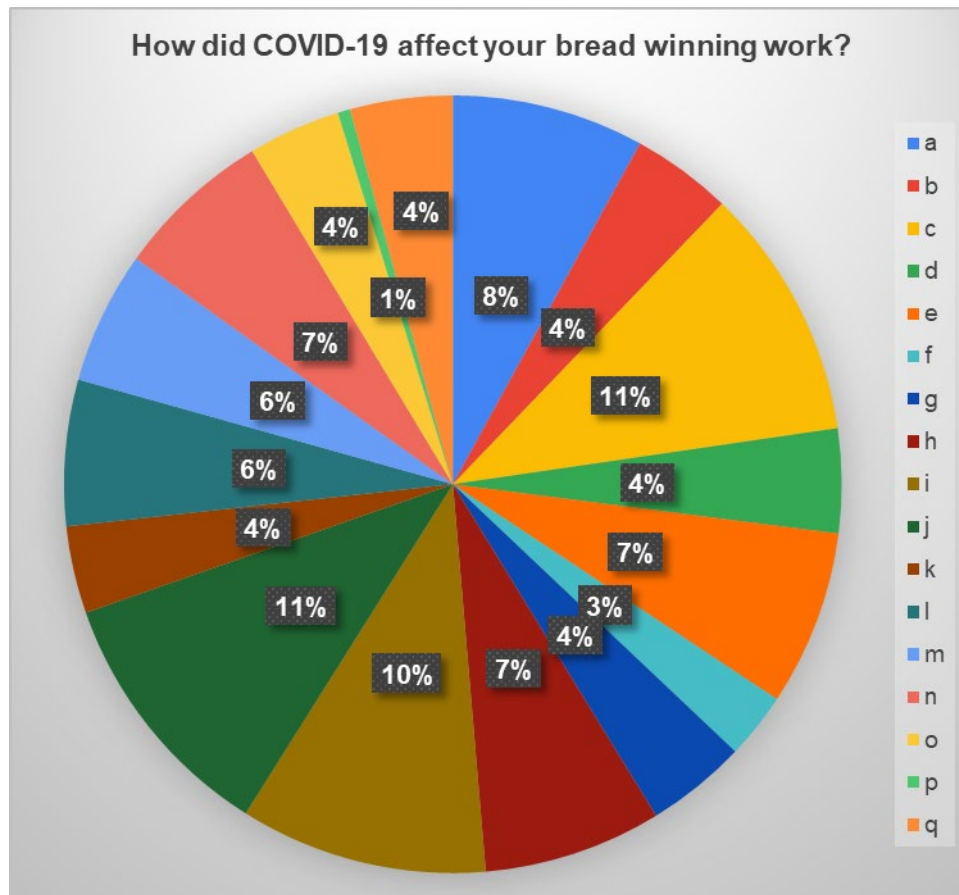
63% worked at the workplace in person and 37% worked in teleworking.



**4. Question: How did COVID-19 affect your bread winning work?
Choose the three answers which are the most important for you!**

- a. Private life has blurred with the breadwinning work.
- b. Prior to COVID-19, the employer did not allow the atypical form of employment (part time job, home office, etc.)
- c. Your work can be done in a home office with digital devices.
- d. It was necessary to prepare for the transition to the home office.
- e. No preparation was required to move to the home office.
- f. The employer completely switched to telework.
- g. In teleworking, working hours have increased and the employer 'expectations have risen.
- h. Your work cannot be done in home-office.
- i. The place of work has not changed.
- j. The work schedule has not changed.
- k. The allocation of tasks, the formulation of needs and expectations by the employer were clear.
- l. Virtual connection is not enough to do the job properly.
- m. Due to teleworking, employee relations have decreased, and isolation has increased.
- n. Family responsibilities, teaching children, hindered work from home.
- o. Family responsibilities can be well coordinated with working from home.
- p. The employer offered to work in home office, but was not accepted
- q. Other

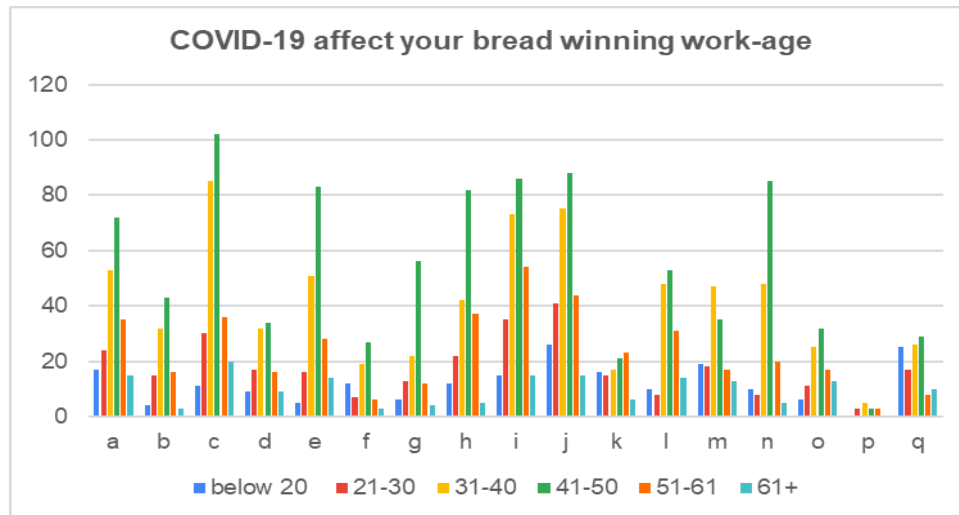
Evaluation:



Of the 17 statements, respondents selected almost all between 1 and 11%. This indicates that employers have tried to address the situation in several ways. Of course, the employers should also consider not to increase the work of the employees disproportionately (4%). More than 11% of respondents chose "The work schedule has not changed." and 10% said "The place of work has not changed", 11% said "Your job can be done in a home office with digital devices", 3% were transferred to teleworking by the employer. 7% say it is not possible to replace the work with by working from home. 8% felt that private life was blurred with the breadwinning work, which was also hampered by children's teaching (7%). Apparently, due to their family situation, 4% see it as "Family responsibilities can be well coordinated with working from home". 4% marked "other" because they have not found the option suitable for them among the statements listed.



Relation between the breadwinning work and age:



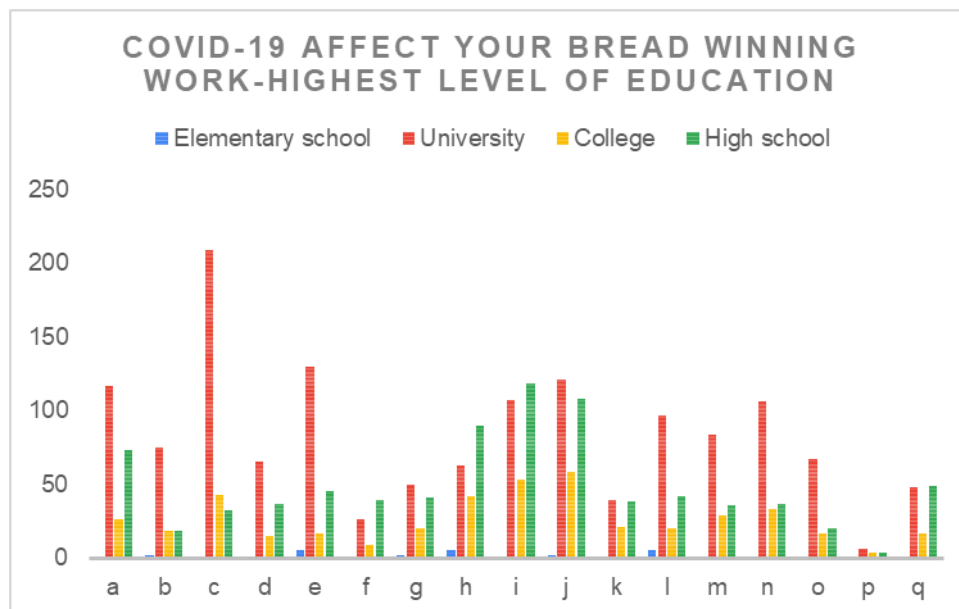
The opinion of the 41-50 age group is usually different from the others. Opinions in a higher number are the following: "Your work can be done in a home office with digital devices", "No preparation was required to move to the home office", "Your work cannot be done in a home-office.", "The place of work has not changed.", "The schedule of work has not changed.", "Family responsibilities, teaching children hindered work from home".

The 31-40 age group also partly confirms the opinion of the previous age group: "Family tasks, teaching children hindered work at home", "The place of work has not changed.", "The schedule of work has not changed." The 50+s confirm the same.

According to the 21-30 age group, the main options are, "The place of work has not changed.", "The schedule of work has not changed."

The main problem for those under the age of 20 is that "Due to teleworking, employee relations have decreased, isolation has increased."

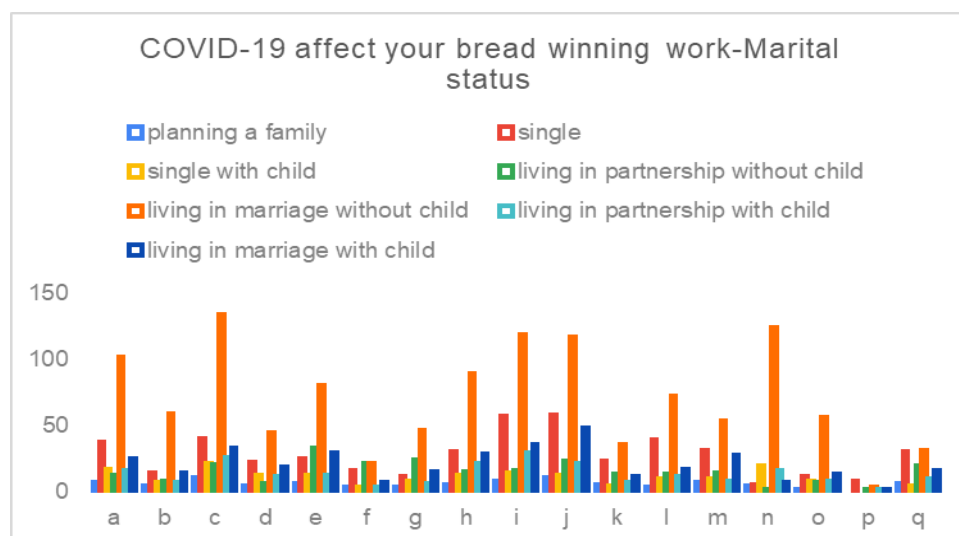
The relation between the breadwinning work and education:



A higher proportion of respondents who graduated from university or college chose the following statement: "Your work can be done in a home office with digital devices." "No preparation was needed to move to the home office.", "Private life blurred with the breadwinning work."

The most important answers of those with a secondary education are: "Your work cannot be done in a home-office.", "The place of work has not changed.", "The schedule of work has not changed."

The relation between the breadwinning work and marital status:



It is typical which statements were chosen by the married people without a child (43%): “Private life blurred with the work”, “No preparation was required to move to a home office.”, “Your job cannot be done at home., The place of work has not changed”, The schedule of work has not changed”.

It is interesting, that families without children say, "Family responsibilities, teaching children hindered work from home." This statement was not chosen by families with child in marriage (13%), families with child in partnership (8%), and singles with child (6%).

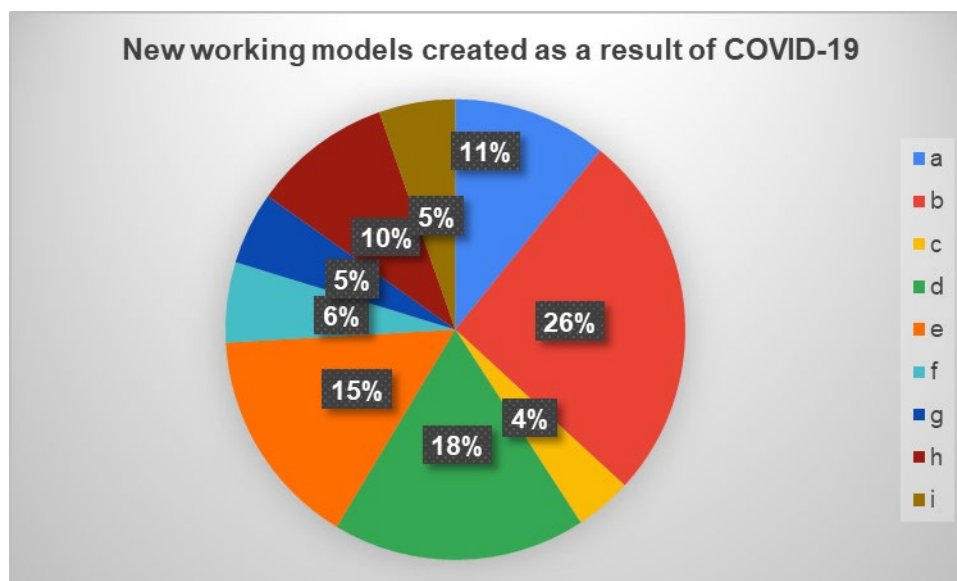
Singles (17%) chose “A virtual connection is not enough to do the job properly.”, "The place of work has not changed.", "The schedule of work has not changed."

5. Question: How do you see the new working models created as a result of COVID-19 in your country?

Please choose the two answers that are most important to you!

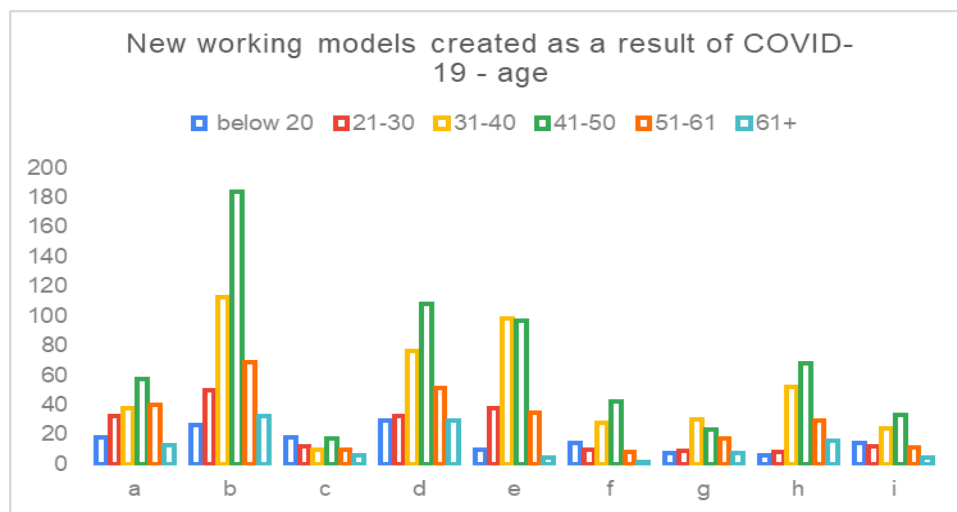
- a. Employee motivation has changed.
- b. The method of hybrid discussion has been developed. (Email, phone, skype, facetime, etc.)
- c. Data-based decision making has been introduced.
- d. The demand for digital knowledge has further strengthened.
- e. Online events are organized where employees present their ideas.
- f. The introduction of the cloud-based platform supports the work of all employees.
- g. The general application and implementation of training and development processes is faster.
- h. The work phases became impersonal.
- i. Other

Evaluation:



New working models were implemented as a result of COVID-19. 11% of respondents said, "Employee motivation has changed.". 26% said "A method of hybrid discussion (email, phone, skype, facetime, etc.) has developed". 18% marked that "The demand for digital knowledge has further strengthened". 10% said "Work phases become impersonal", even if employees can present their own ideas at online events. 5% thought they could not find what they were thinking about the subject among the options.

New working models created as a result of COVID-19 in the four countries:



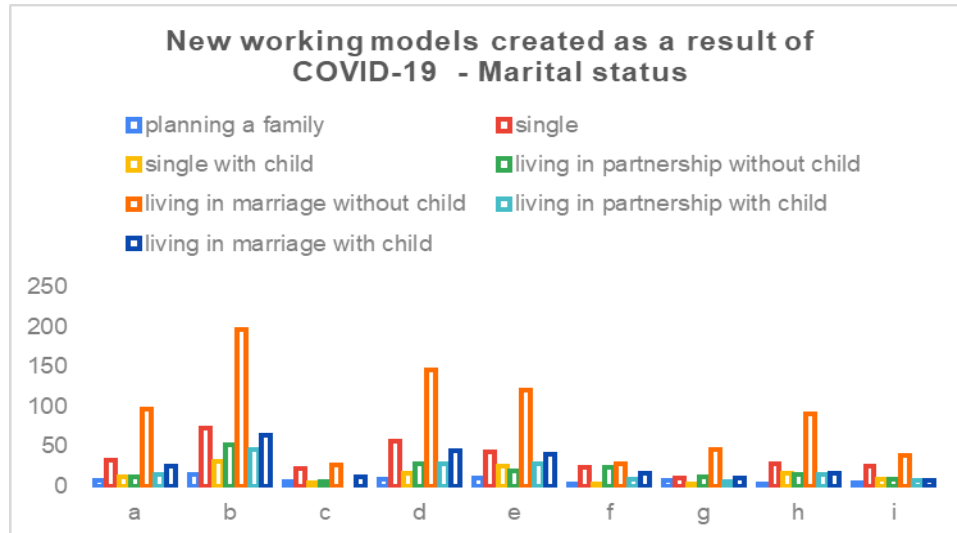
Czech respondents highlighted the "Method of hybrid discussions (e-mail, phone, skype, facetime, etc.) has developed" and "Online events are organized where employees present their ideas.".

Polish respondents chose typically "The demand for digital knowledge further strengthened" and the statement "A method of hybrid discussions (email, phone, skype, facetime, etc.) has been developed."

The Hungarian respondents prefer the "Method of hybrid discussion (e-mail, telephone, skype, facetime, etc.) have been developed" and the demand for digital knowledge has further strengthened. This differed only in proportion to that of the Poles.

For Slovak respondents the "Method of hybrid discussion (e-mail, telephone, skype, facetime, etc.) has been developed." and "Online events are organized where employees present their ideas." statements were considered more important.

New working models created as a result of COVID-19 and marital status:

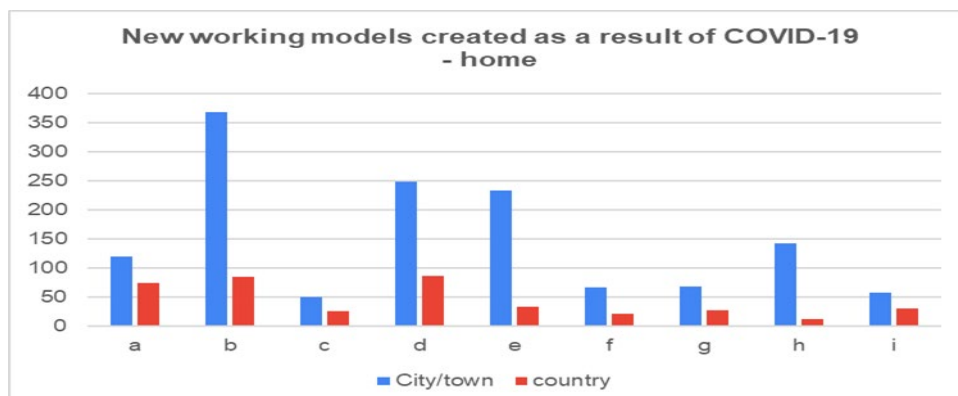


Childless couples typically chose “The method of hybrid discussions (email, phone, skype, facetime, etc.) has been developed” and “The demand for digital knowledge further strengthened” statements in large numbers. At the same time, they considered it important “Employee motivation has changed.” “Organizing online events where employees present their idea.” and “Work phases become impersonal” statements as well.

Families with child, in a smaller proportion but typically chose “The method of hybrid discussions (email, phone, skype, facetime, etc.) been developed” statement.

Singles, family-planners and singles with child in a smaller proportion, but typically marked the same opinion for the working models.

New working models created as a result of COVID-19 in urban and rural areas:

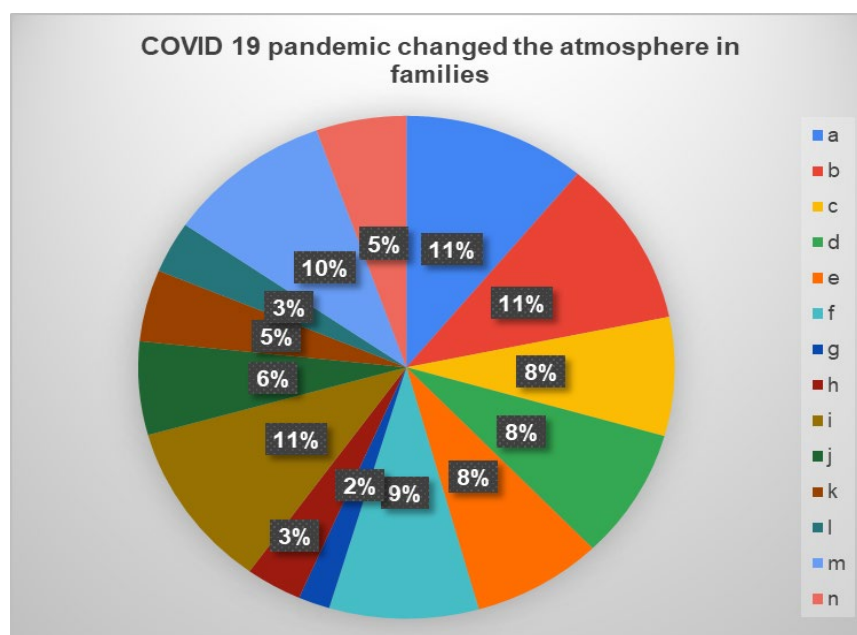


People living in the city indicated mainly "The method of hybrid discussion (e-mail, telephone, skype, facetime, etc.) has developed.", "The demand for digital knowledge further strengthened." and "Online events are organized where employees present their idea." as well as "Work phases become impersonal.". Those living in the countryside mainly confirmed the first two statements of the people living in the city.

6. Question: How do you see whether the COVID 19 pandemic changed the atmosphere in families? Please choose the three answers that are most important to you!

- a. Being locked up together made everyone more stressed.
- b. Being locked up together strengthened family relations.
- c. Many nice experiences took place in the home quarantine.
- d. We cleared the things backlogged at home.
- e. We made our environment nicer.
- f. We adapted quickly, we were ready to redesign.
- g. We panicked and were almost paralyzed.
- h. Everyone criticized each other.
- i. After the first despair, we developed new habits.
- j. We got to know each other and ourselves better.
- k. The cooperation between the generations has become closer.
- l. Generations have neglected each other.
- m. The rural environment allowed for more freedom.
- n. Other

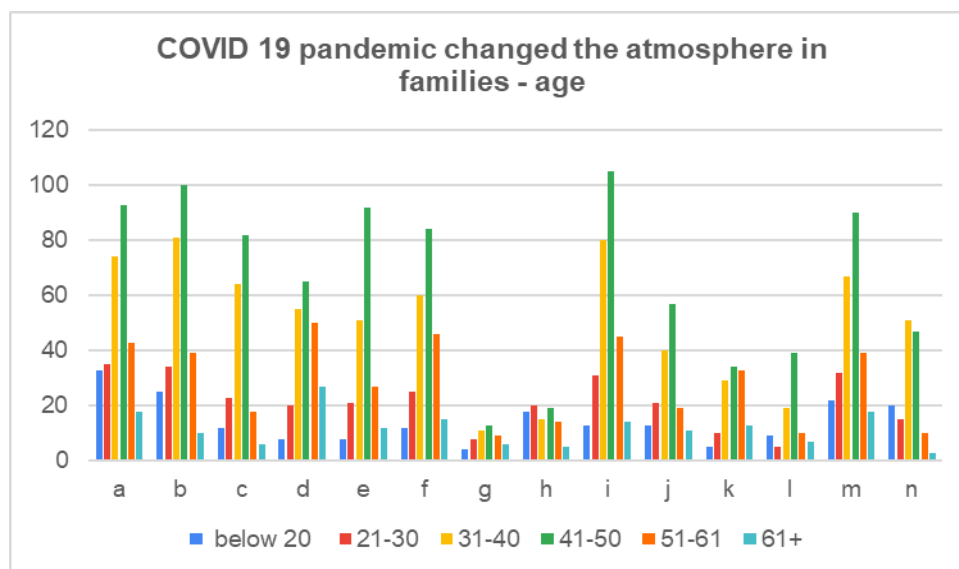
Evaluation:



Regarding “The COVID 19 pandemic changed the atmosphere in families.” almost all options were marked with small percentage differences. Those who thought differently or have chosen “other” were 5 %. Maybe interesting to mention that “Being locked up together made everyone more stressed.” were indicated by 11%. “Being locked up together strengthen family relations.” also 11% indicated, “After the first despair, we developed new habits.” was indicated by 11%, and “The rural environment allowed for more freedom.” was checked by 10%.

A very good sign is that 2% of respondents panicked and only 3% marked “Everyone criticized the other.” “Cooperation between generations has become closer.” - only 5% marked it, while “Generations have neglected each other.” - 3% agreed. There is much to be done in this area.

Impact of COVID 19 on family atmosphere and age groups:



Under-20s: “Being locked up together made everyone more stressed.”, “Being locked up together strengthen family relations.”, “The rural environment allowed for more freedom.”

The 21-30 age group: “Being locked up together made everyone more stressed.”, “Being locked up together strengthen family relations.”, “After the first despair, we developed new habits.”

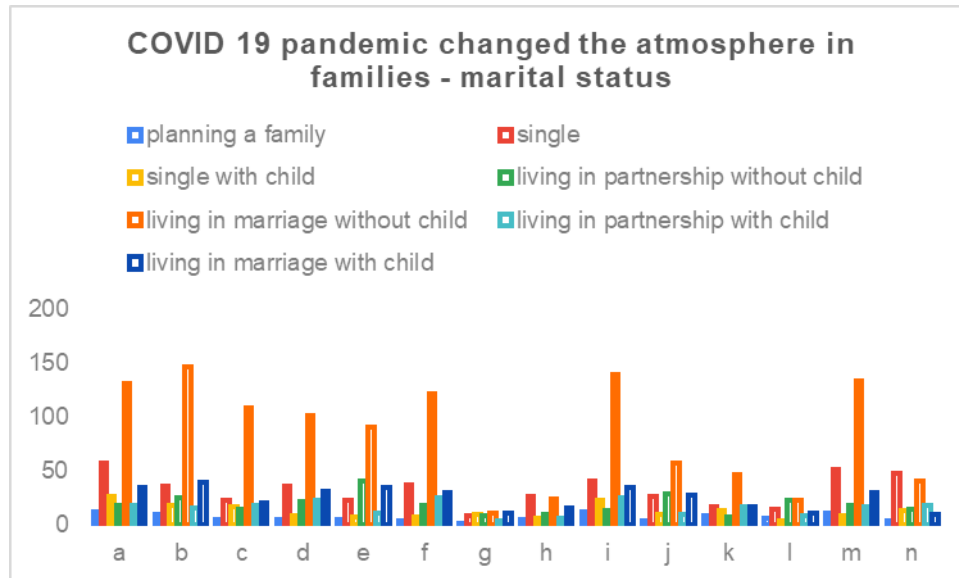
The 31-40 age group: “We cleared the things backlogged at home.”, “We adapted quickly, we were ready to redesign.” “After the first despair, we developed new habits.”

The 41-50 age group: “After the first despair, we develop nicer ed new habits.” “Being locked up together strengthen family relations.”, “We made our environment nicer.”

The 51-61 age group: “Many nice experiences took place in the home quarantine.” “We adopted quickly, we were ready to redesign.”, “After the first despair, we developed new habits.”

60 +: “Being locked up together made everyone more stressed.”, “We cleared the things backlogged at home.” “The rural environment allowed for more freedom.”

Impact of COVID 19 on family atmosphere and marital status:



The weighting of the large number of opinions which are typical for the marital status:

Planning a family: "Being locked up together made everyone more stressed.", "We got to know each other and ourselves better."

Single: "Being locked up together made everyone more stressed.", "After the first despair, we developed new habits."

Single with child: "Being locked up together made everyone more stressed.", "Many nice experiences took place in the home quarantine.", "After the first despair, we developed new habits."

Living in partnership without child: "Being locked up together strengthen family relations.", "We cleared the things backlogged at home.", "We made our environment nicer."

Living in partnership with child: "We cleared the things backlogged at home.", "After the first despair, we developed new habits." "The rural environment allowed for more freedom."

Married, with child: "We have made up for the backlog at home." "We adopted quickly, we were ready to redesign." "After the first despair, we developed new habits."

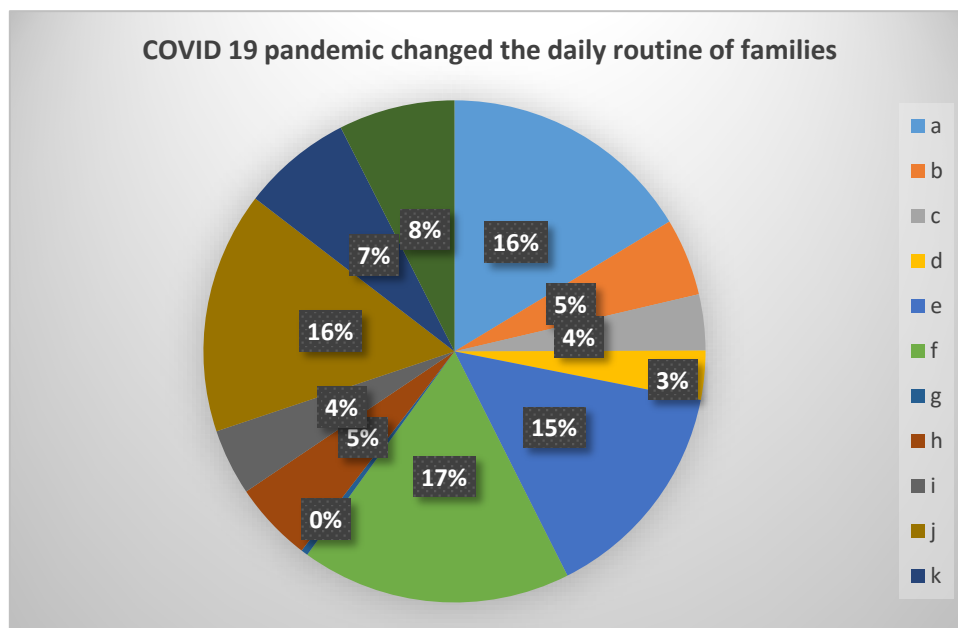
Married, with child: "Being locked up together strengthen family relations.", "We made nicer our environment." "After the first despair, we developed new habits."

7. Question: How do you see, has the COVID 19 pandemic changed the daily routine of families in your country? Please choose the two that are most important to you!

- Expenditure on domestic and caring work has increased.
- The time spent caring for elderly grandparents has increased.
- Grandparents' engagement with children's learning helped a lot.
- Whether it would have helped if your partner would have participated more in taking care

- of the children.
- e. It was necessary to buy a digital device because of the home office and home learning.
 - f. Mostly women bore the burden learning at home with children under 14 years of age.
 - g. Mostly men bore the burden learning at home with children under 14 years of age.
 - h. Men and women equally bore the burden learning at home with children under 14 years of age.
 - i. Some mothers left their jobs during the pandemic period to care for the family and to teach their children. (Voluntarily).
 - j. During the pandemic period they cared for the family and taught their children in addition to the “home office”
 - k. The rural environment helped self-sufficiency.
 - l. Other

Evaluation:



COVID-19 changed the daily routine of families, respondents have chosen four areas over ten percent. 16% said "Expenditure on domestic and caring work increased." 15% said "Home office and home learning made it necessary to buy a digital device."

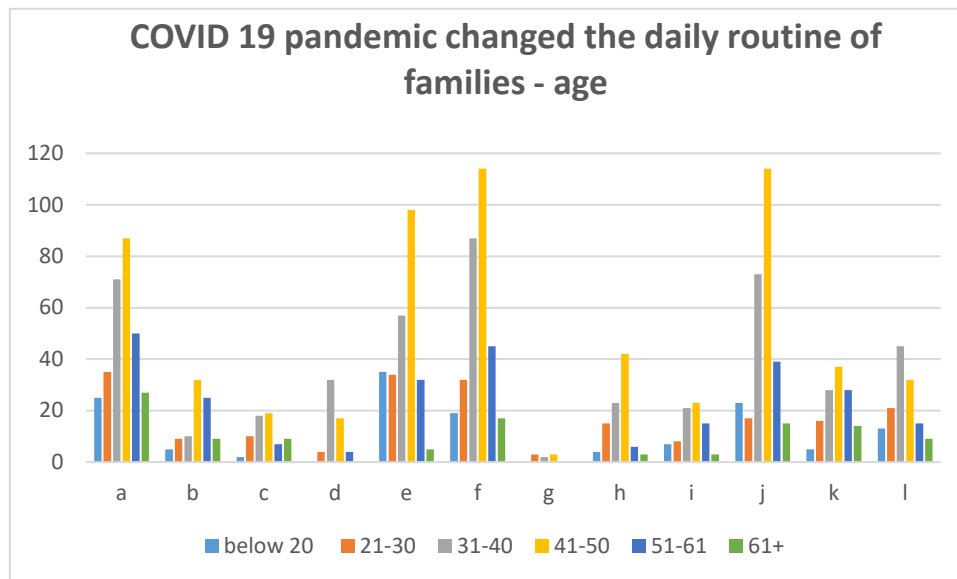
17% said "Women bore the burden learning at home with children under the age of 14."

8% marked "other" who would have had other ideas.

5% indicated that "Time spent caring for grandparents has increased." While 4% said "Grandparents' engagement with children's learning helped a lot."

4% said "Some mothers left their job during the pandemic period to care for the family and to teach their children." No one chose the statement that "Men bore the burden learning at home with children under the age of 14."

Impact of COVID 19 on daily routine of families and age :



Weighting of the large number of opinions which are typical for the age group:

Under 20 "Expenditure on domestic and caring work has increased." "It was necessary to buy a digital device because of the home office and learning at home."

21-30 "Expenditure on domestic and caring work has increased." "It was necessary to buy a digital device because of the home office and learning at home."

31-40 "Expenditure on domestic and caring work has increased." "During the pandemic, they cared for the family and taught their children in addition to the 'home office.'"

41-50 "Women bore the burden learning at home with children under the age of 14."

"During the pandemic, they cared for the family and taught their children in addition to the 'home office.'"

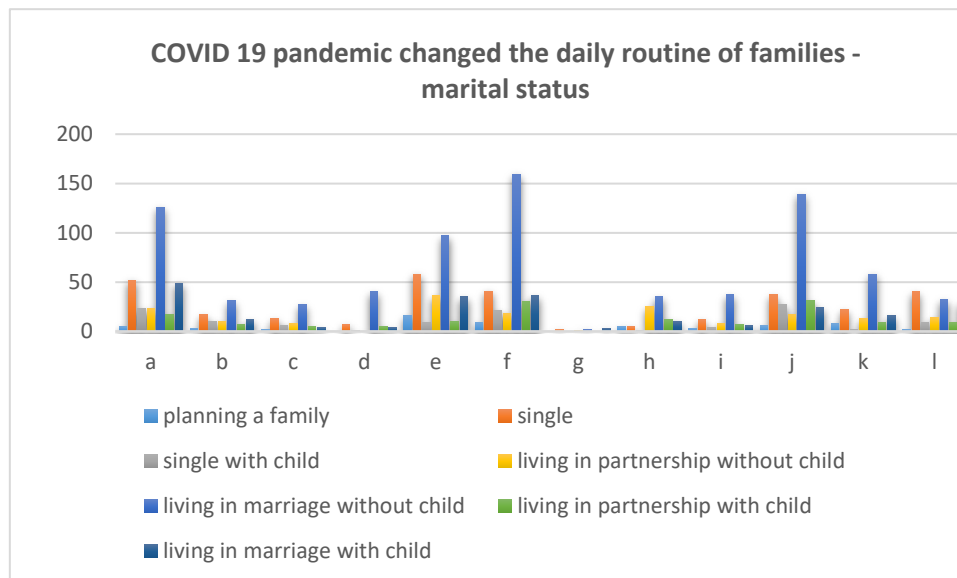
51-61 "Expenditure on domestic and care work increased." "Women bore the burden learning at home with children under the age of 14."

61+ "Expenditure on household and caring work has increased." "Women bore the burden learning at home with children under the age of 14."

In small number, by each age group was indicated "Some mothers left their job during the pandemic period to care for the family and to teach their children."

The rural environment was chosen by a small number by the age groups, but because of self-sufficiency and free environment it was positively valued.

Impact of COVID 19 on daily routine of families and marital status:



Weighting of the large number of opinions which are typical for the marital status:

Planning a family: "It was necessary to buy a digital device because of the home office and learning at home."

Single: "Expenditure on domestic and caring work has increased."

Single with child: "Expenditure on housework and caring work has increased." "During the pandemic period, they cared for the family and taught their children in addition to the home office."

Living in partnership without child: "Because of the home office and learning at home, it was necessary to buy a digital device." "Women bore the burden learning at home with children under the age of 14."

Married without child: "Women bore the burden learning at home with children under the age of 14."

Living in partnership with child: "Women bore the burden learning at home with children under the age of 14." "During the pandemic period, they cared of the family and taught their children in addition to the "home office".

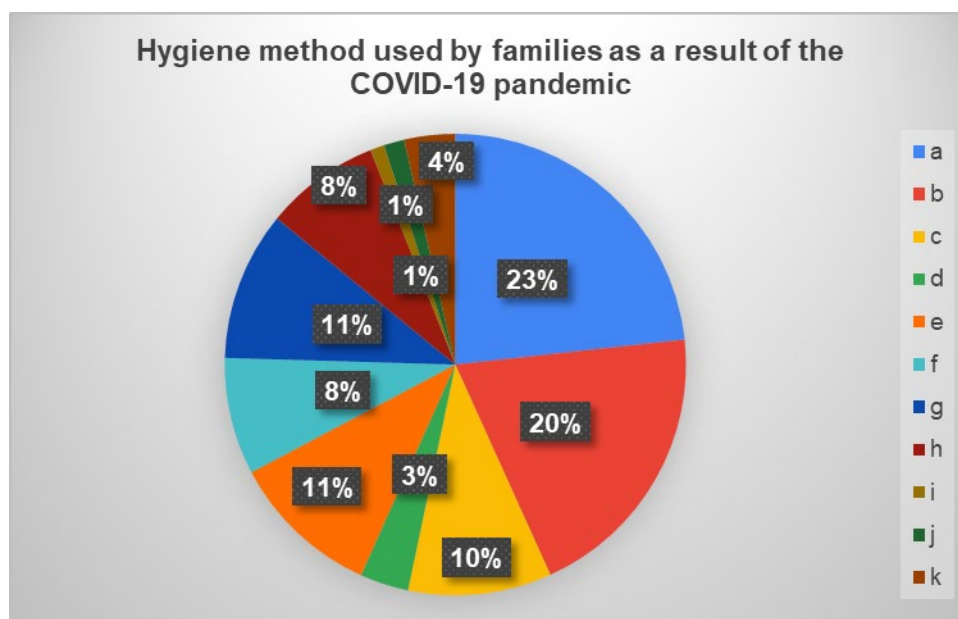
Married with child: "Expenditure on domestic and caring work has increased."

8. Question: How do you see the hygiene method used by families in your country as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic? Please choose the two that is most important to you!

- Selection and continuous use of disinfectants.
- Continuous provision of sterile masks.
- Isolation of a covid infected family member.
- Selecting the right hygiene shops.
- Disinfection of purchased food.

- f. COVID-19 did not change the family's hygiene methods
- g. In case of attendance (present) work hygiene rules that were stronger because of protection the home.
- h. The rural environment has reduced the risks of the epidemic.
- i. The rural environment increased the risks of the pandemic.
- j. The rural environment did not provide safety in accessing medical assistance.
- k. Other

Evaluation:



What hygiene methods the families used as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?

23% of respondents considered "Selection and continuous use of disinfectants" important.

In addition, 20% highlighted "Continuous provision of sterile masks." statement.

Only 10% marked "Isolation of the Covid infected family member." statement.

11% said that "Disinfection of purchased food." important, however, only 3% considered it important to "Selecting the right hygiene shops." statement.

However, 37% of respondents worked in attendance work, only 11% marked the following statement: "In case of attendance work hygiene rules were stronger because of protection of the home."

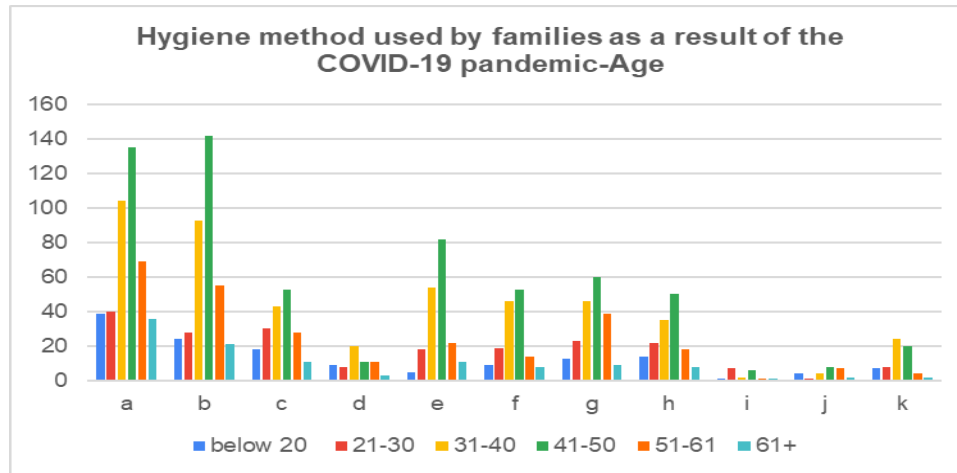
8% of the respondents said that "COVID-19 did not change the family's hygiene method." can be assessed as negative.

8% feel that "the rural environment has reduced the risks of pandemic."

Very few thinks (1%) that "The rural environment has increased the risk of pandemic." and in this connection "The rural environment did not provide safety in accessing medical assistance. ".



Hygiene methods used by families as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and age:



Weighting of the large number of opinions which are typical for the age group:

Under 20: "Selection and continuous use of disinfectants.", "Continuous provision of sterile masks."

21-30: "Selection and continuous use of disinfectants.", "Isolation of a Covid infected family member."

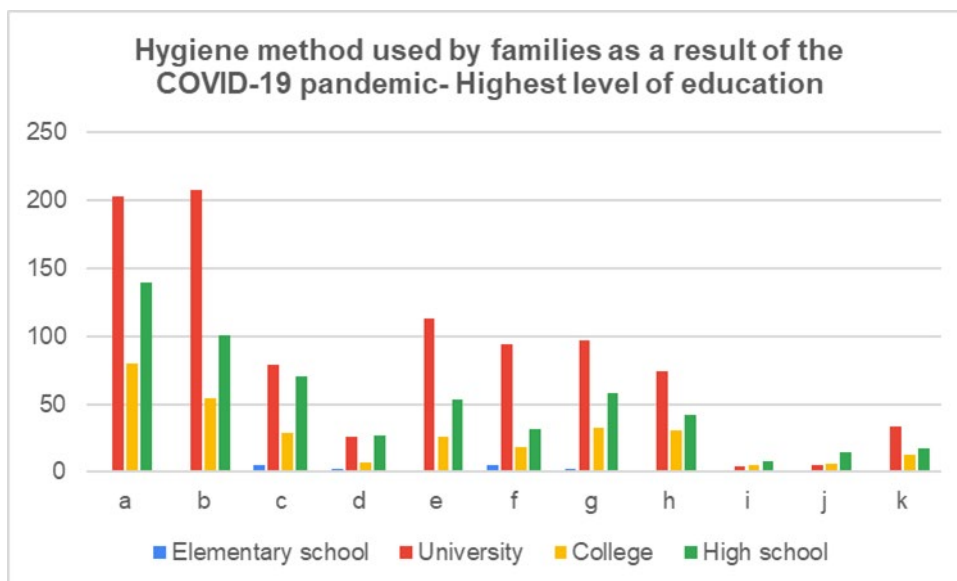
31-40: "Selection and continuous use of disinfectants.", "Continuous provision of sterile masks."

41-50: "Selection and continuous use of disinfectants.", "Continuous provision of sterile masks."

51-61: "Selection and continuous use of disinfectants.", "Continuous provision of sterile masks."

61+: "Selection and continuous use of disinfectants.", "Continuous provision of sterile masks."

Hygiene methods used by families as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and education:



Weighting of the large number of opinions which are typical for the education:

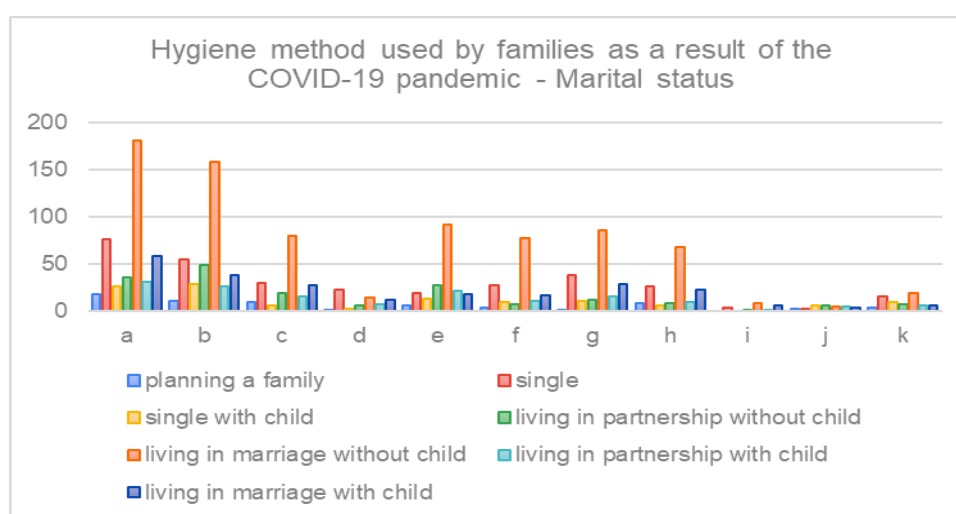
Elementary school: "Separation of the Covid infected family member.", "COVID-19 did not change the family hygiene method."

University: "Selection and continuous use of disinfectants.", "Continuous provision of sterile masks."

College: "Selection and continuous use of disinfectants.", "Continuous provision of sterile masks."

High School: "Selection and continuous use of disinfectants.", "Continuous provision of sterile masks.", "In case of attendance work hygiene rules were stronger because of protection of the home."

Hygiene methods used by families as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and marital status:



Weighting of the large number of opinions which are typical for marital status:

Planning family: "Selection and continuous use of disinfectants.", "Isolation of the Covid infected family member."

Single: "Selection and continuous use of disinfectants.", "Continuous provision of sterile masks."

Single with child: "Selection and continuous use of disinfectants.", "Continuous provision of sterile masks."

Living in partnership without a child: "Selection and continuing to use disinfectants.", "Continuously providing sterile masks.", "Disinfecting purchased food."

Married, without child: "Selection and continuous use of disinfectants.", "Continuous provision of sterile masks.", "Isolation of a Covid infected family member.", "Disinfection of purchased food."

In partnership, with child: "Selection and continuous use of disinfectants.", "Isolation of a Covid infected family member.", "Continuous provision of sterile masks."

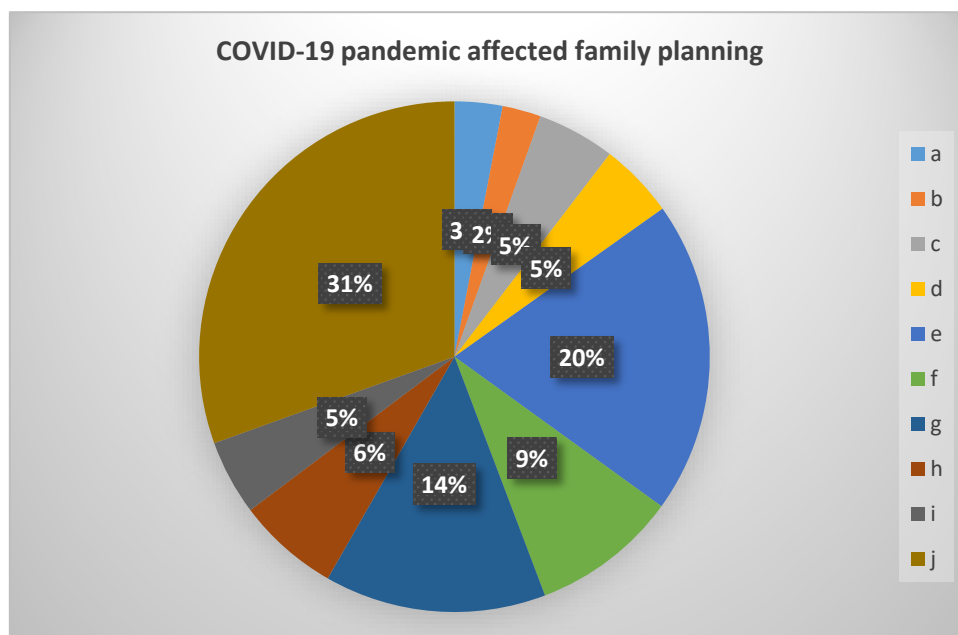
Married, with child: "Selection and continuous use of disinfectants.", "Continuous provision of sterile masks."

9. Question: How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected family planning in your country?

Please chose the two most important to you!

- a. I was afraid throughout my pregnancy.
- b. We wanted a child, but we did not dare to undertake it because of the epidemic.
- c. The rural environment, the fresh air provided security to dare to undertake a child.
- d. The urban environment, being locked up, have increased insecurity so that people would not consider childbearing.
- e. The idea of family planning has not changed.
- f. Family planning has been postponed.
- g. Home office and family tasks hindered each other.
- h. The employment situation does not allow for family planning.
- i. The uncertainty of the division of work within the family does not allow for family planning.
- j. Other

Evaluation:



The COVID-19 pandemic affected family planning:

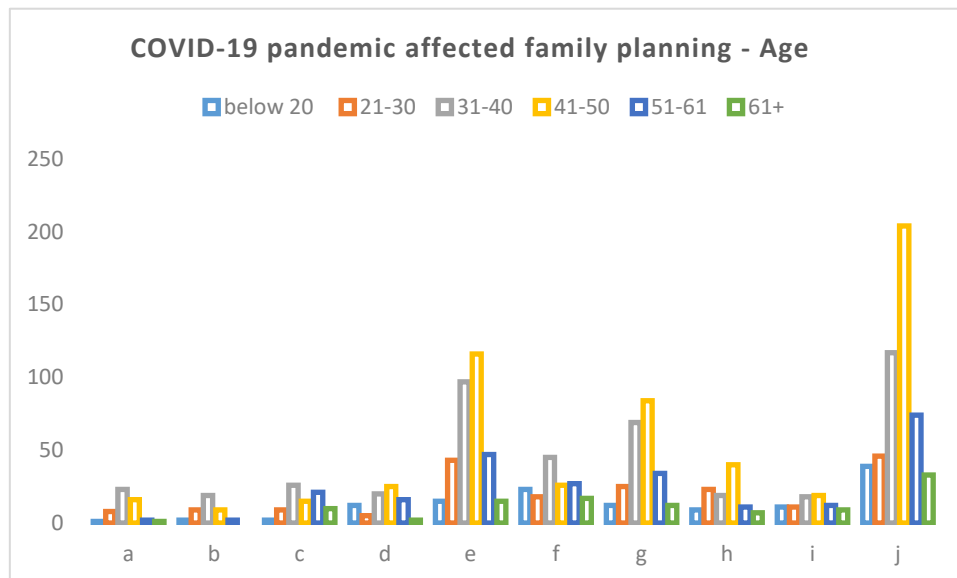
Only 3% of respondents felt they had fear and anxiety throughout their pregnancy. 2% chose the statement, "We wanted a child, but we didn't dare to undertake it because of the pandemic."

5% of respondents thought, "The rural environment, the fresh air provided security to dare to undertake a child".

While also 5% say, "The urban environment, being locked up, have increased insecurity so that people would not consider childbearing".

20% say "The idea of family planning has not changed." 9% thought, "The date of starting a family has been postponed."
 14% chose the statement, "Home office and family tasks hindered each other."

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on family planning and age:



Weighting of the large number of opinions which are characteristic for the age group
 Under 20: "Family planning has been postponed" and "other".

21-30: "The idea of family planning has not changed." and "other".

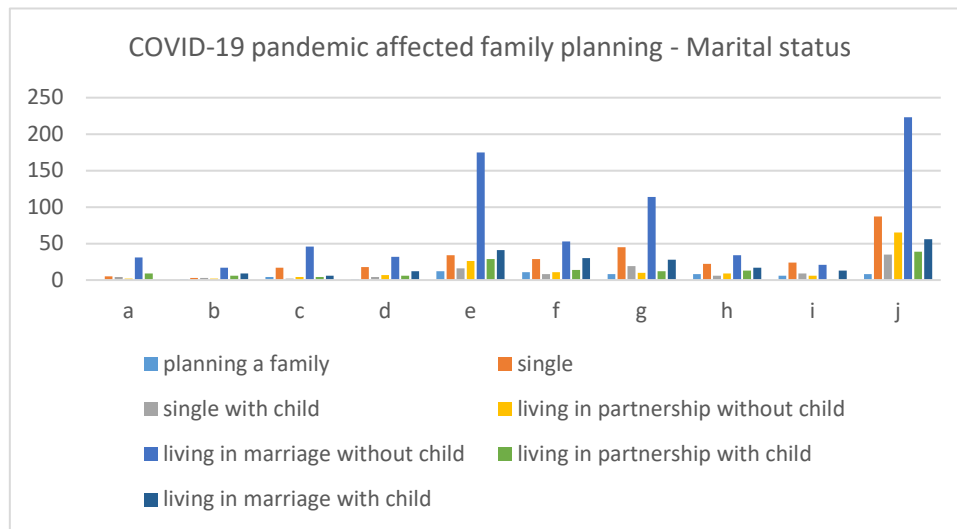
31-40: "The idea of family planning has not changed." and "other".

41-50: "The idea of family planning has not changed." and "other".

51-61: "The idea of family planning has not changed." and "other".

61+: "The idea of family planning has not changed." and "other".

Weighting of the large number of opinions which are characteristic for the marital status:



Planning family: "The idea of family planning has not changed." and "Other".

Single: "Home office and family tasks hindered each other." and "Other".

Single with child: "Home office and family tasks hindered each other." and "Other".

Living in partnership without child (10%): "The idea of family planning has not changed." and "Other".

Married, without child (43%): "The idea of family planning has not changed." and "Other".

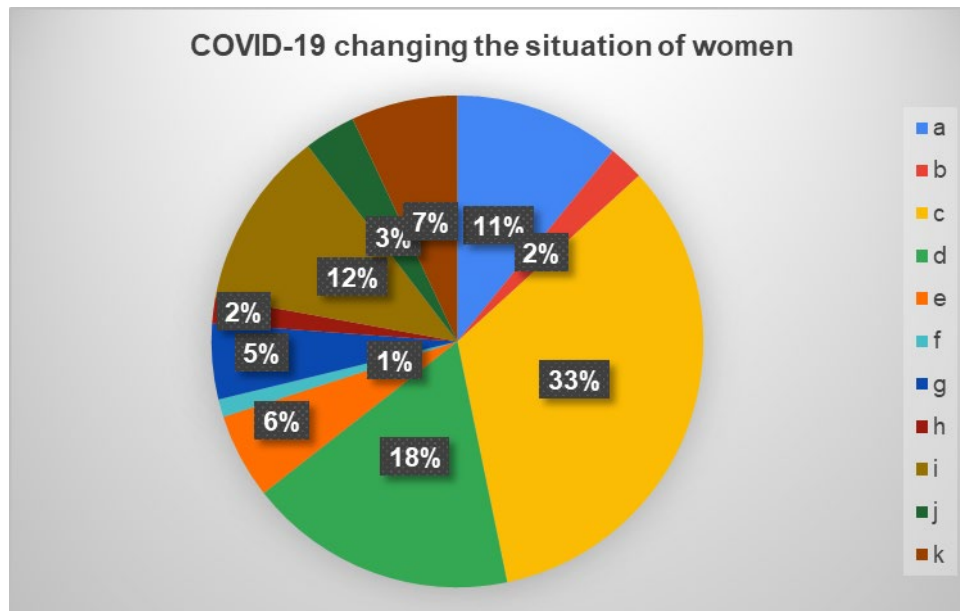
Living in partnership with child: "The idea of family planning has not changed." and "Other".

Married, with child: "The idea of family planning has not changed." and "Other".

10. Question: How do you see COVID-19 changing the situation of women in your country! Please choose the two that is most important to you!

- Women had to catch up in the online world.
- Women had to learn hygienic methods.
- Work, housekeeping, and child education were done by women in parallel.
- Women played a coordinating role in families.
- It was a balance in the division of tasks at home between man and women.
- The men were proficient in IT.
- Returning to work was hampered by new working conditions after COVID.
- Women had a problem with the use of digital devices.
- Woman could save time thanks to remote work.
- The remote working system helped the increase of qualifications and the possibility of getting a new profession.
- Other

Evaluation:



COVID-19 has changed the situation of women:

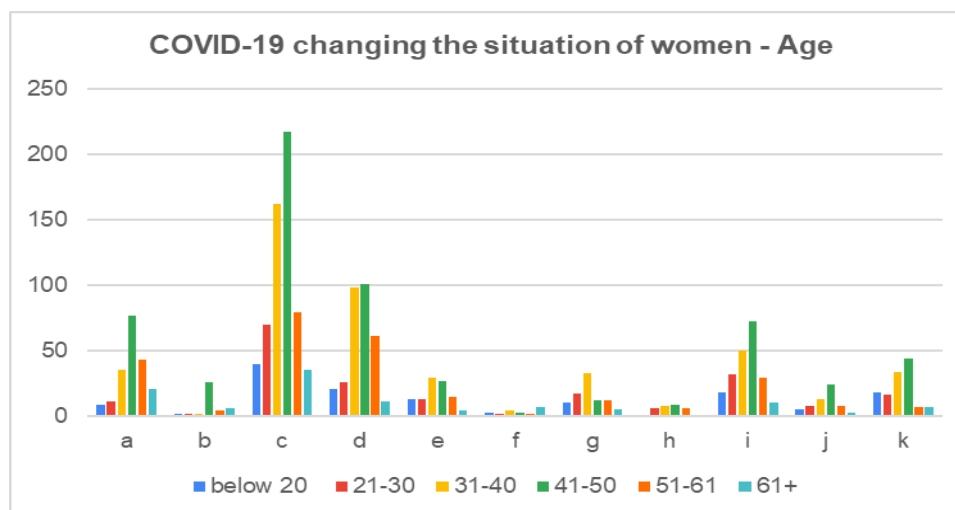
11% of respondents said, "Women have had to catch up in the online world."

33% thought, "Women did the work, the household, and the teaching of the children in parallel."

18% said "Women played a coordinating role in families."

12% believed that "Women could save time thanks to remote work."

The impact of COVID-19 on the situation of women and age:



Weighting of the large number of opinions which are characteristic for the age group:

Under 20: "Women did the work, the household, and the teaching of the children in parallel.",
 "Women played a coordinating role in families."

21-30: "Women did the work, the household, and the teaching of the children in parallel.",
 "Women could save time thanks to remote work."

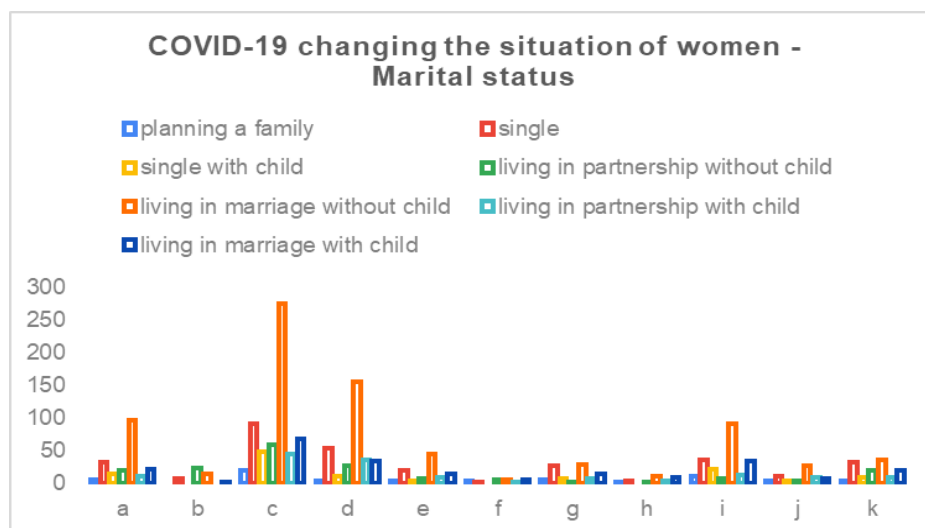
31-40: "Women did the work, the household, and the teaching of the children in parallel.",
 "Women played a coordinating role in families."

41-50: "Women did the work, the household, and the teaching of the children in parallel.",
 "Women played a coordinating role in families."

51-61: "Women did the work, the household, and the teaching of the children in parallel.",
 "Women played a coordinating role in families."

61+: "Women had to catch up in the online world.", "Women did the work, the household and the teaching of the children in parallel."

The impact of COVID-19 on the situation of women and age – Marital status:



Weighting of the large number of opinions which are characteristic for the marital status:

Planning a family: "Women did the work, the household, and the teaching of the children in parallel.",
 "Women played a coordinating role in the families."

Single: "Women did the work, the household and the teaching of the children in parallel."
 "Women have played a coordinating role in families."

Single with child: "Women did the work, the household, and the teaching of the child in parallel.", "Women played a coordinating role in the families."

Living in partnership without child: "Women did the work, the household, and the teaching of the child in parallel.", "Women played a coordinating role in the families."

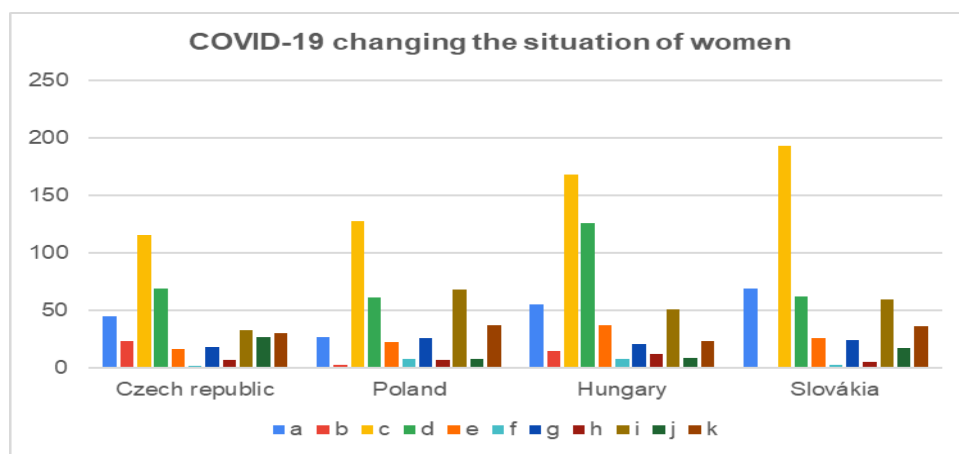
Married, without child: “Women did the work, the household, and the teaching of the child in parallel.”
 “Women played a coordinating role in the families.”

Living in partnership with child: “Women did the work, the household and the teaching of the child in parallel.”
 “Women played a coordinating role in the families.”

Married, with child: “Women did the work, the household and the teaching of the child in parallel.” “Woman could save time thanks to remote work”.

The impact of COVID-19 on the situation of women and individual countries:

Weighting of the large number of opinions which are characteristic for the country



Most respondents from the Czech Republic chose:

- “Work, housekeeping, and child education were done by women in parallel.”
- “Women played a coordinating role in families.”
- „Women had to catch up in the online world.”

Most respondents from Poland chose:

- “Work, housekeeping, and child education were done by women in parallel.”
- “Woman could save time thanks to remote work”
- “Women played a coordinating role in families.”

Most respondents from Hungary chose:

- “Work, housekeeping, and child education were done by women in parallel.”
- “Women played a coordinating role in families.”
- “Women had to catch up in the online world.”

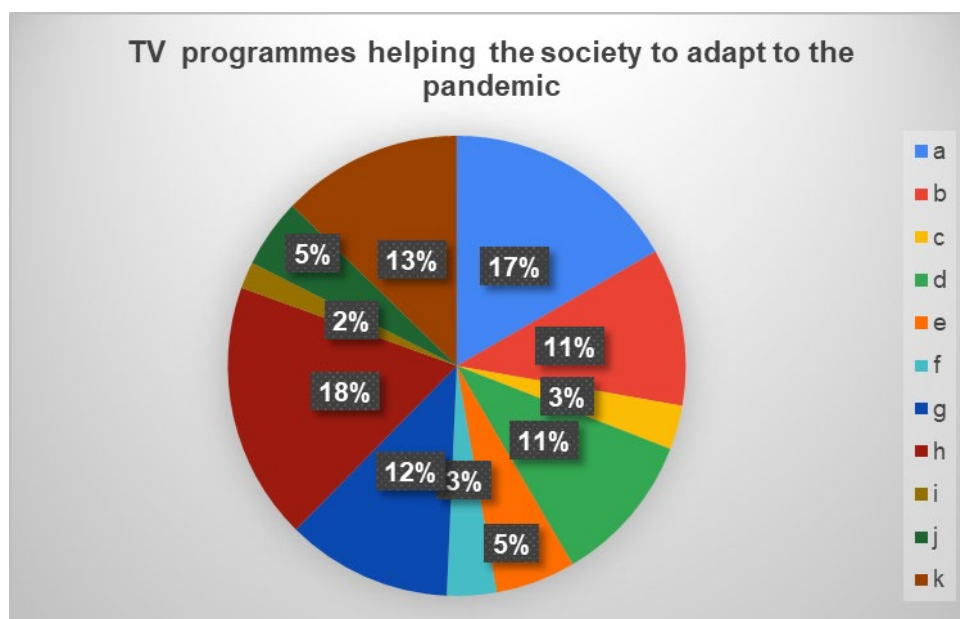
Most respondents from Slovak Republic chose:

- “Work, housekeeping, and child education were done by women in parallel.”
- “Women had to catch up in the online world.”
- “Women played a coordinating role in families.”

11. Question: How do you see TV programs helping the society to adapt to the pandemic in your country? Please choose the two most important to you!

- a. Hygiene rules were presented.
- b. They started IT education.
- c. They presented good examples of work, teaching children, organizing families.
- d. Education programs for children of different grades were presented.
- e. The programs originally planned were broadcast, not changed.
- f. The educations programs were repeated several times.
- g. Online interviews were broadcast about the pandemic from the TV studio.
- h. Social advertisements related to the pandemic were broadcast.
- i. They presented the value of successful family as a benefit on society.
- j. The future of societies during and after the pandemic is dependent of the successful families.
- k. Other

Evaluation:



TV programs helped the society to adapt to the pandemic:

According to 17% of respondents, "Hygiene rules were presented"

11% said "They started IT education".

Also 11% said "Education programs for children of different grades were presented."

12% said that "Online interviews were broadcast about the pandemic from the TV studio".

18% thought it was important that "Social advertisements related to the pandemic were broadcast."

13% "Other" means that other activities were carried out which were not listed.

Some options selected by only a few respondents. Some options were selected by only a few respondents. This can be considered negative and that the TVs could do better.

According to 3% of respondents, "They presented good examples of work, teaching children and organizing families."

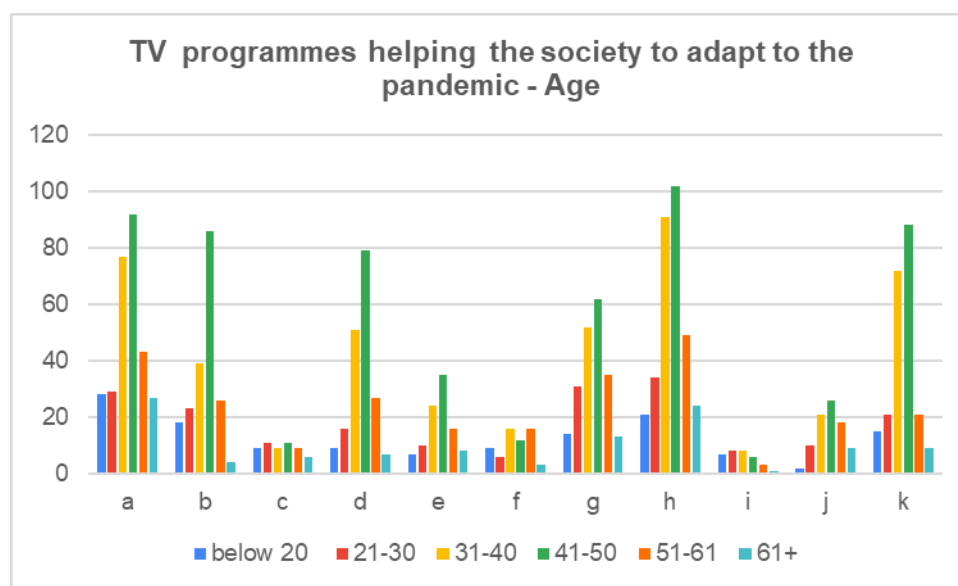
5% said "The programs originally planned were broadcast, not changed."

3% said "The education programs were repeated several times."

2% thought "They presented the value of successful family as a benefit on society"

5% said "The future of societies during and after the epidemic is dependent on successful families".

TV programs helping the society to adapt to the pandemic and age:



Weighting of the large number of opinions which are characteristic for the age group:

Under 20: "Hygiene rules were presented" "Social advertisements related to the pandemic were broadcast."

21-30: "Social advertisements related to the pandemic were broadcast."

"Online interviews were broadcast about the pandemic from the TV studio".

31-40: "Social advertisements related to the pandemic were broadcast", "Hygiene rules were presented".

41-50: "Social advertisements related to the pandemic were broadcast",

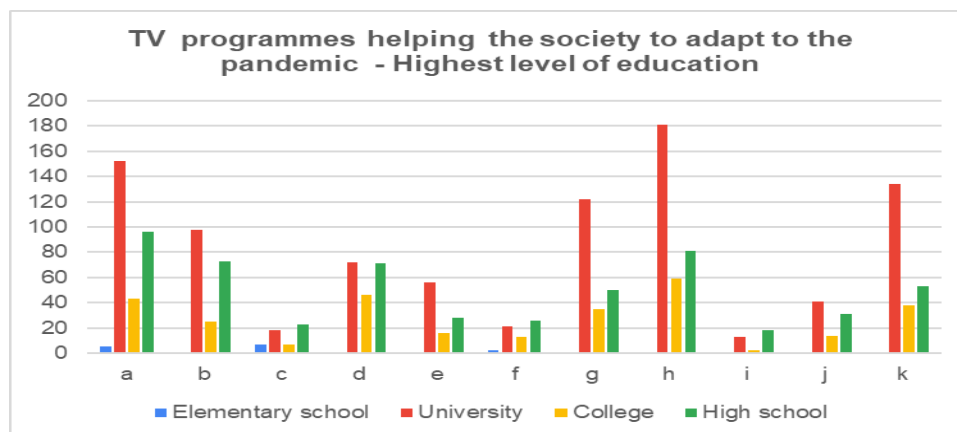
"Hygiene rules were presented".

51-61: "Social advertisements related to the pandemic were broadcast.", "Hygiene rules were presented".

61+: "Hygiene rules were presented",

"Hygiene rules have been introduced.", "Social advertisements related to the pandemic were broadcast".

TV programs helping the society to adapt to the pandemic and education:



Weighting of the large number of opinions which are characteristic for the education.

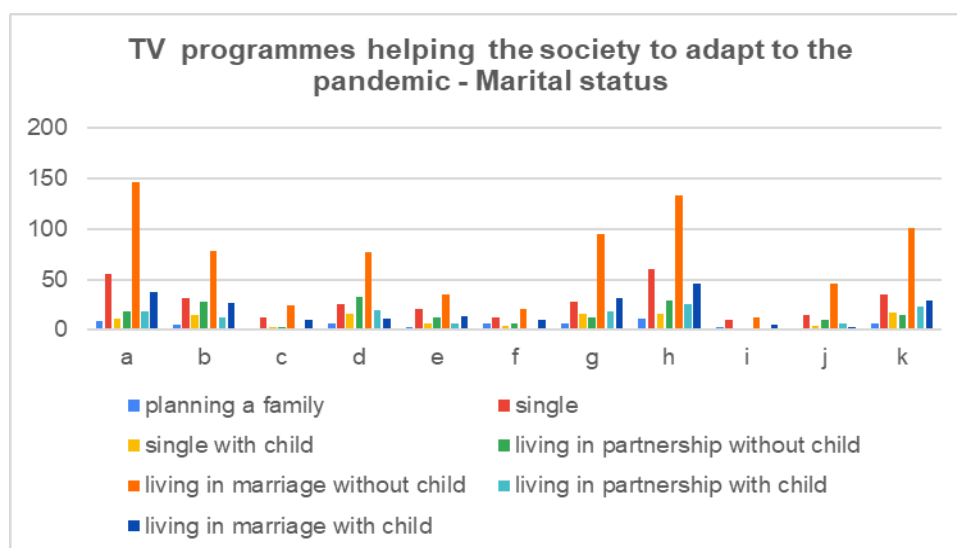
Elementary school: "Good examples of work, teaching children, family organization were presented."
 "Hygiene rules were presented."

University: "Social advertisements related to the pandemic were broadcast", "Hygiene rules were presented."

College: "Social advertisements related to the pandemic were broadcast", "Children of different grades were educated."

High school: "Hygiene rules were presented", "Social advertisements related to the pandemic were broadcast".

TV programs helping the society to adapt to the pandemic and marital status:



Planning a family: "Social advertisements related to the pandemic were broadcast",
 "Hygiene rules were presented."

Single: "Hygiene rules were presented.", "Social advertisements related to the pandemic were broadcast",

Single with child: "Children of different grades have been educated."

"Online interviews were broadcast about the pandemic from the TV studio".

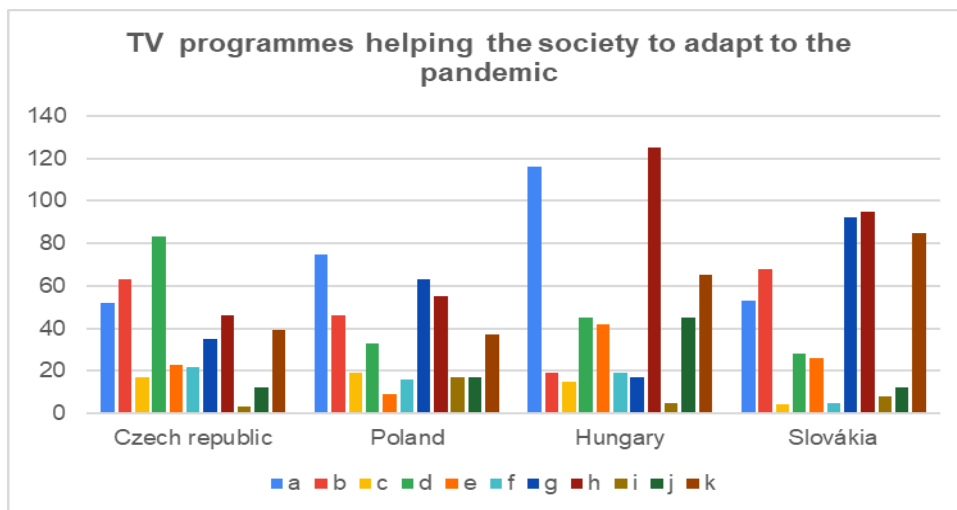
Living in partnership without a child: "Children of different grades have been educated.", "They started IT education."

Married, without child: "Hygiene rules were presented", "Social advertisements related to the pandemic were broadcast",

Living in partnership with child: "Social advertisements related to the pandemic were broadcast", "Children of different grades were educated."

Married, with child: "Social advertisements related to the pandemic were broadcast", "Hygiene rules were presented".

TV programs helping the society to adapt to the pandemic – Opinions from countries:



Most respondents from the Czech Republic chose:

- "Education programs for children of different grades were presented."
- "They started IT education."

Most respondents from Poland chose:

- "Hygiene rules were presented."
- "Online interviews were broadcast about the pandemic from the TV studio."

Most respondents from Hungary chose:

- "Social advertisements related to the pandemic were broadcast."
- "Hygiene rules were presented."

Most respondents from Slovak Republic chose:

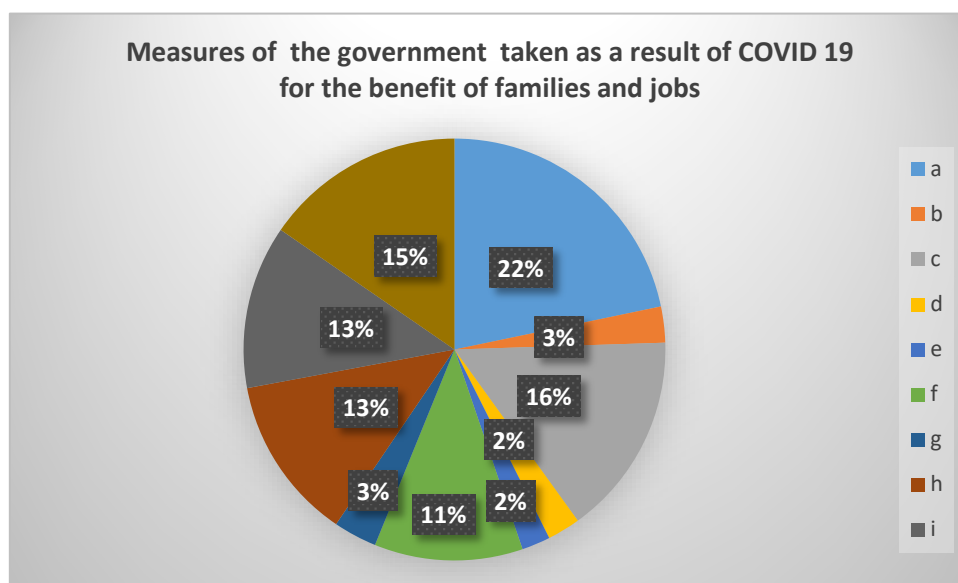
- "Online interviews were broadcast about the pandemic from the TV studio."

- “Social advertisements related to the pandemic were broadcast.”

12. Question: What measures has the government taken as a result of COVID 19 for the benefit of families and jobs? Please chose the two that is most important to you!

- a. Health measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic.
- b. Measures helping home-building to help start a family.
- c. Introduction of a moratorium on loan repayment.
- d. Tax incentives for young people helping to start a family.
- e. Strengthening the “baby waiting support”.
- f. Support for atypical work. (Part time job, home office, etc.)
- g. Ensuring the sustainability of family support policy.
- h. Providing continuous information (TV, internet, radio).
- i. Financial support for entrepreneurs.
- j. Other

Evaluation:



Measures of the government taken as a result of COVID 19 for the benefit of families and jobs:

22% of respondents chose the statement, "Health measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic."

16% say "Introduce a moratorium on loan repayments."

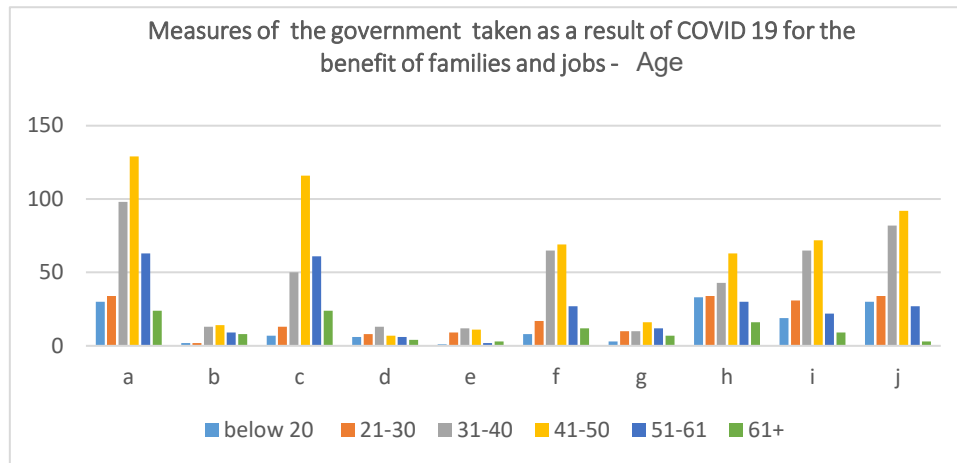
11% say "Support for atypical (part-time, home office, etc.) work."

13% say "Providing continuous information (TV, internet, radio)."

13% say "Financial support for entrepreneurs."

15% say "Other."

Measures of the government taken as a result of COVID 19 for the benefit of families and jobs and Age:



Weighting of the large number of opinions which are characteristic for the age group.

Under 20: "Providing continuous information (TV, Internet, radio)", "Health measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic".

21-30: "Health measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic", "Providing continuous information (TV, internet, radio)".

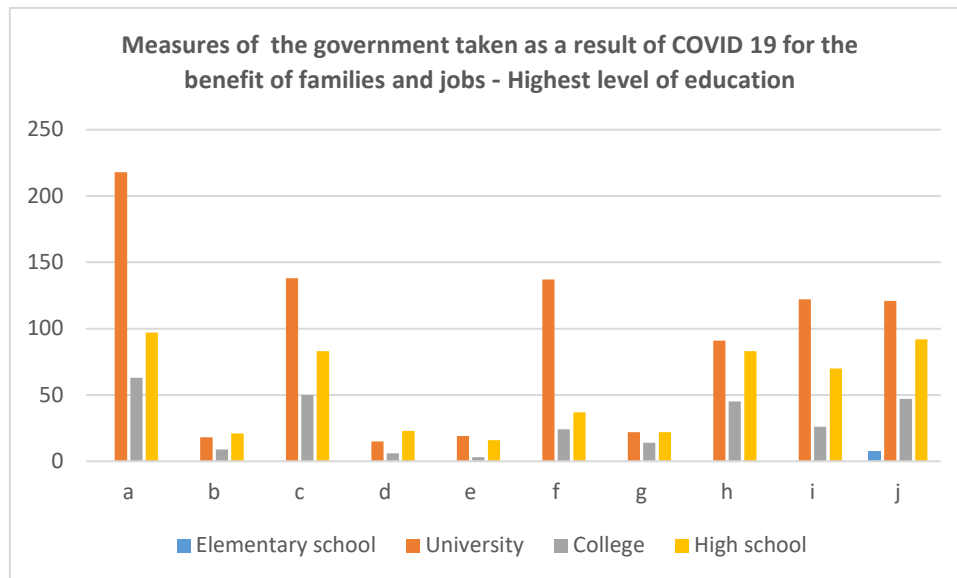
31-40: "Health measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic" "Support for atypical (part-time, home office, etc.) work.", "Financial support for entrepreneurs".

41-50: "Health measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic", "Introduction of a moratorium on loan repayment".

51-61: "Health measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic", "Introduction of a moratorium on loan repayment".

61+: "Health measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic", "Introduction of a moratorium on loan repayment".

Measures of the government taken as a result of COVID 19 for the benefit of families and jobs and education:



Weighting of the large number of opinions which are characteristic for the education.

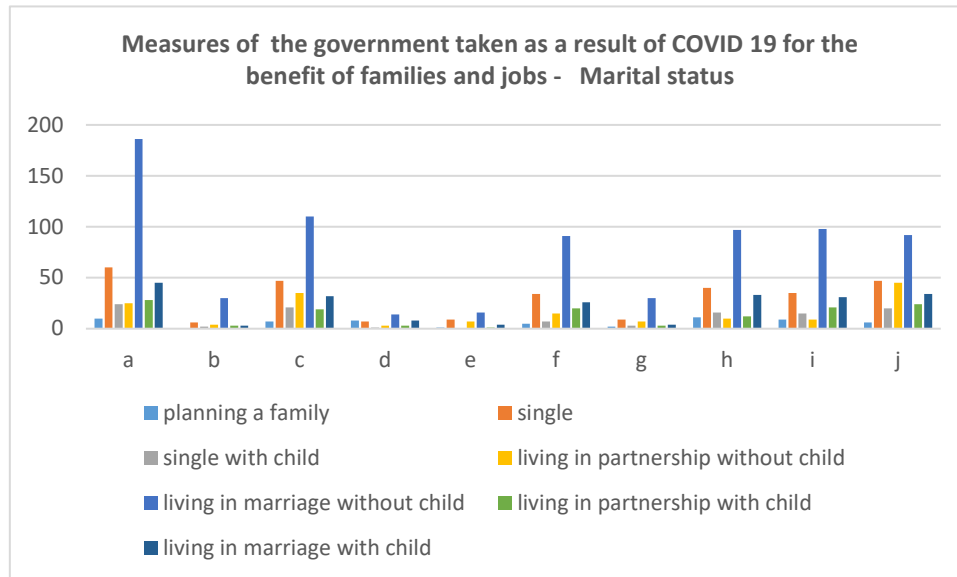
Elementary School: "Other"

University: "Health measures to prevent the spread of the epidemic", "Introduction of a moratorium on loan repayment."

College: "Health measures to prevent the spread of the epidemic", "Introduction of a moratorium on loan repayment."

High school: "Health measures to prevent the spread of the epidemic" "Introduction of a moratorium on loan repayment.", "Providing continuous information (TV, internet, radio)."

Measures of the government taken as a result of COVID 19 for the benefit of families and jobs and marital status:



Weighting of the large number of opinions which are characteristic for marital status.

Planning a family: "Health measures to prevent the spread of the epidemic", "Providing continuous information (TV, Internet, radio)".

Single: "Health measures to prevent the spread of the epidemic", "Introduction of a moratorium on loan repayment".

Single with child: "Health measures to prevent the spread of the epidemic", "Introduction of a moratorium on loan repayment".

Living in a relationship without a child:

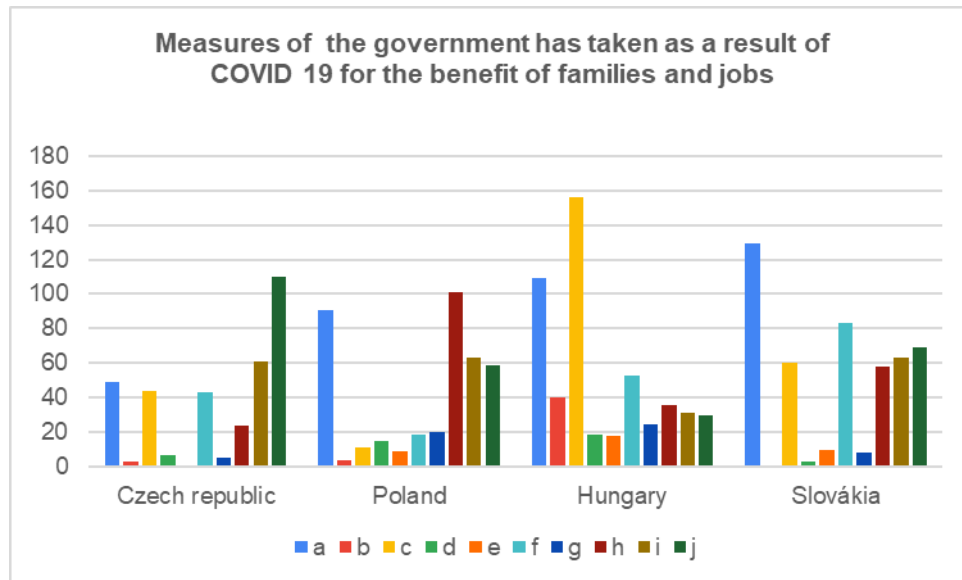
"Introduction of a moratorium on loan repayment.", "Health measures to prevent the spread of the epidemic".

Married, without child: "Health measures to prevent the spread of the epidemic", "Introduction of a moratorium on loan repayment."

Living in partnership with a child: "Health measures to prevent the spread of the epidemic", "Introduction of a moratorium on loan repayment."

Married, with child: "Health measures to prevent the spread of the epidemic" "Introduction of a moratorium on loan repayment."

Measures of the government taken as a result of COVID 19 for the benefit of families and jobs – Opinions by countries:



Weighting of the larger number of opinions which are characteristic for the country.

Most respondents from the Czech Republic chose:

- “Other”
- “Financial support for entrepreneurs.”
- “Health measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic.”

Most respondents from Poland chose:

- “Providing continuous information (TV, internet, radio).”
- “Health measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic.”
- “Financial support for entrepreneurs.”

Most respondents from Hungary chose:

- “Introduction of a moratorium on loan repayment. „
- “Health measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic.”
- “Support for atypical work. (Part time job, home office, etc.)”

Most respondents from Slovak Republic chose:

- “Health measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic.”
- “Support for atypical work. (Part time job, home office, etc.)”
- “Financial support for entrepreneurs.”

IX. Focus group interviews

a. CZECH REPUBLIC

Leader expert of the Focus Group research in the Czech Republic: Ingrid Surova

Discussion

Date: 25. January 2022

Time: 18-20 h

Online: Zoom

Facilitated session

Organized by BPWCR

The discussion group consisted of 6 women and included 4 target groups as follows:

- group A: Mothers with children - 2 women, both age around 40, university education, live in the city, self-employed, A1- 1 children, A2-2 children
- group B: Women planning a family - 1 woman, age around 30, university education, business owner
- group C: Women 50+ - 1 woman, age 50 +, university education, self-employed, lives in the city
- group D: Women living in the countryside - 2 women, age around 40, university education, live in the countryside, have an own business, a farm, 3 children

Questions and answers:

1. Impact of the pandemic on family organization

- impact on the family, family functioning
- psychological effect of the pandemic on children and adults
- mention of the psychological impact of coronavirus

A1 family is used to work and live together, sharing work and being at home, complications were in lack of opportunities to leave the space and challenging mentally, the apartment doesn't allow to escape from each other, but does not perceive this period completely negatively, but began to fear that she would die, created a vacuum around her to protect herself.

A2 family very affected by the pandemic, the mother-in-law died in the Home for the Elderly, they could not say goodbye to her, the restrictions at the funeral were very sad. Daughter studying in Canada, she could not return home immediately. The wife and her husband got covid, they had a hard time, the husband had to go to the hospital, the wife felt she was alone, sometimes someone brought her a purchase, the son stayed separately in the apartment, online lessons, no friends, husband was in a difficult state for a long time, she was sick too and after her recovery she could not go anywhere, the psychological impact of that period still remained in her.

B both partners spent time at home, and it helped them set up for future life, relationship building and family, they both worked a lot, they started thinking about the baby, there were fears that the partner might not be at the birth due to covid restriction.

C woman 2 months before the pandemic started living alone, sold the house and started living in an apartment, her son lives 10 km from her and she had to take care of older parents, she went outside the district on a permit, she had a bad feeling how to get there, in the family organization, she was not affected.

D in the village there was not so much a change in family organization, the problem was with shopping and worried about older parents who were dependent on our help to get them shopping, the problem with commuting children to school as long as possible, children later went online, did not have to commute, but they lost the opportunity to see friends who are 30 km from them and could not visit them due to closed districts. The problem began when people could not travel abroad and began to travel to the countryside, thus violating their privacy, disrespecting fences and normal rules.

2. The impact of the pandemic on normal working life and the relationship with the employer

- the role of the employer, form of work, job opportunities
- Impact on online work and education
- reconciling work with children's education

A1 form of work, nothing has changed there, working from home, the work was enough because it is dedicated to communication, but it was very monothematic... how the coronavirus affected..., it still appears everywhere. My working day at the coronavirus changed, my habits disappeared, I started working in my pajamas and I still worked for months and I didn't have a moment to shut down, I was still locked up at home, then when I could go out, it reappeared the point where you could go off work and be a mom, I stopped reading because I felt I had to work, the information overload was big

A2 I lost all prepared business events and opportunities, the whole year was lost, the merging of work and personal life, I was still on everything alone, children online and I worked online myself and I had to prepare food for the family and clean up, husband after illness he couldn't help. It was hard, I was alone in everything, when it went possible, I started going outside, I stopped reading, it was impossible to concentrate. The loss of income was large, aid from the state was limited.

B restrictions on working at home in pajamas all day, a lot of study in my job due to pandemic rules and news, I had to start doing webinars for clients, working online was not a problem, but I just kept working

C it was difficult to recruit clients for work, there were no job opportunities, I did not know what would be, where to concentrate in the market, my work with my life merged, great fatigue at the end of the day, the working day was unstable, everything changed under my hands, just being online is not enough

D it was difficult to run a farm with limited traffic, due to sick people and lower sales, the long closure of everything limited opportunities, people from the area stopped shopping as usual and we lost customers, but we keep going.

3. Post-pandemic lifestyle transformation, new expectations and visions

- maintaining or changing the lifestyle
- changes in shared housing
- social distance
- hidden reserves

A1 I've learned a lot about myself that I can handle crisis situations, but do I have to handle it? I like the rules and it bothers me that I can't rely on the common sense of the people around me, to change the thinking of my social group, I'm more tolerant of people, but not to spread nonsense, I dulled a little, I lost the kindergarten meetings where I was really looking forward to it, I lost the regular activities of the children. On the other hand, I started to invent more fun at home for my son and I found new friends in the area, a new group online that I have left, we are still going online, but we are already meeting live. I'm still stressed about what will happen, the hysteria of the surroundings changes natural development, every cold means staying home from kindergarten. It's hard to look forward to anything, but I'm still looking forward to starting school and vacation

A2 lifestyle - we put more emphasis on prevention and health, I'm worried about my business, I'm thinking about getting a job, my resilience is at the end of my strength, I'm worried about children, they lost the opportunity to associate with peers and experience ordinary children's groups, events, camps, the family suddenly started to help, they realized what was lying to me, the daughter experienced her fears abroad, she is still sleeping with the light on, her husband got closer to us, the price was high, the pandemic taught us to respond from day to day and we stopped looking forward to a lot of things

B I realized that I have to work more at home, I don't want home office life and we started to build bigger housing separately from the company, we plan a lot of weekends together, I don't want to lose experiences with children when I have a family.

C during the lockdown, I was locked up at home and lost my normal joys and contacts, I have exhausted mental reserves and I look forward to every meeting, I lacked personal freedom, work restrictions came, the pandemic took away the joy of starting to fulfill wishes and dreams due to age, I lost my travels, survival took a sense of freedom, I learned to enjoy small things and be grateful for every day.

D we started looking for where to put children in high school, how to work mostly from home, not only because of limited accessibility in the countryside, we have more responsibilities at work, we appreciate more that we get somewhere, we plan more independently with operational changes, one child has a serious mental disorder due to media pressure out of concern for life and health. The countryside is better than the city, we are not so closed, but the media pressure is too big for us.

b. POLAND

Leader expert of the Focus Group research in Poland: Ewa Śliwa PhD, sociologist

Qualitative research report – Polish Partner (Pedagogical University of Krakow)

The report presents an analysis of data obtained through a focus group interview (FGI).

The study was conducted on 16 December 2021. It was aimed at investigating professional and family experience of women during the pandemic.

The moderator was Ewa Śliwa, PhD., an experienced sociologist who specializes in focus group interviews. The group consisted of two representatives of each target group – the total of 8 women.

During the qualitative study, the individual stories of women who shared their experiences from the last months were analyzed. Their statements quoted in this report are coded and presented in italics. The sample (interviewees) characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Focus group interview respondent profile

Code	First name*	Age	Family status	Education/profession	Place of residence
W1	Irena	35	Married, daughter (6)	University degree / journalist	City
W2	Ewa	41	Married, 2 daughters (7, 14)	College / teacher	Village
W3	Teresa	42	Married, 2 sons (8, 12), daughter (6)	PhD / academic teacher	City
W4	Maria	51	Divorced, 3 daughters (12, 17, 21)	University degree / translator	City
W5	Zofia	21	Single, plans family	Secondary / university student	City
W6	Monika	28	Married, plans family (during in vitro)	Secondary / beautician	Village
W7	Krystyna	40	In partnership relation, son (21)	Vocational / cleaner	City
W8	Anna	56	Married, 2 daughters (17, 23) and son (30)	Secondary / accountant	Village

*Names have been changed to ensure the respondents' anonymity.

Analysis of results

The following areas in the respondents' life were analyzed: 1) organization of the family life; 2) daily work and cooperation with the employer and 3) transformation of the lifestyle due to the pandemic, expectations and visions for the future.

1. Impact of the pandemic on the organization of the family

The pandemic, especially mandatory isolation, had a great impact on the family bonds and changed the relationships both within marriages and families. It provided an opportunity to spend time with the family – children and spouses, and to deepen the family connections and appreciate the family life values. Teresa, a mother of three school-aged children said:

I began to appreciate it because I had more time for my family as I did not have to commute 45 minutes to work. And sometimes, I managed to do some extra work during the on-line classes: cook a meal or help my kids (W3)

Irena, 35 years old, emphasized good cooperation in taking care of their 9-year-old daughter:

I had some problems with my daughter who could not understand why she suddenly couldn't go to school. Sometimes, we had to plan – when I needed to go and do my work, my husband stayed home and worked remotely (W1)

Ewa, a 41-year-old teacher and a mother of two girls, shared about using the professional potential of their family:

We worked out some mechanisms: I prepared the girls first so that they did not disturb me during my on-line classes. I told them that when I was done, I would have time to help them. We have a house so there was no problem with the space. We did not have problems with the equipment either because my husband works in IT (W2)

Besides the positive aspects, forced isolation, being locked in a small space and no conditions to work remotely also generated tensions and conflicts.

Monika, 28 years old, who was planning a family, mentioned problems in her marital relationship.

There were many tensions when my husband worked from home, his papers and documents were everywhere. I am a perfectionist and I need an ordered space to think... My husband doesn't care. I was frustrated when I saw his things all over the place, dirty mugs in the sink. Another source of conflict was the postponed in vitro procedure. He did not understand that I was so afraid to get Covid that I did not want to meet with people (W6)

Zofia, a student, describes her struggles with remote learning as her large family was sharing a small living space.

There were 6 people in the apartment, me and my brother having on-line classes, all locked within the four walls. It seemed that soon we would jump at each other's throats. I had my classes, my brother had his and we had to share one room. I disturbed him, he disturbed me... There were 2 TV sets on at the same time because our parents watched one and grandpa, who has hearing problems, watched the other with volume high up. And I need peace and quiet to learn (W5)

Forced isolation increased the already existing problems and tensions. Maria, 51 years old, shared that her husband left her during that time.

Our family broke apart. I mean, there had been tensions for a long time. To say it bluntly, my husband couldn't cope with all this and just moved out. It may seem strange but both me and our daughters, we felt relief, it had cleared the atmosphere (W4)

Krystyna described other type of problems with her partner and her son. She recalled weakening the bonds despite the time spent together.

Me and my man, we normally pass by each other. During the pandemic, he had some downtimes at work. So he stayed home but he wasn't helpful. He watched TV or read newspapers. I worked normally, cleaning at my regular clients. I came home and all the housework waited for me. Our son was sitting all day in front of his computer, first on-line classes, then games so I couldn't count in him. Stress and fatigue did their job, we often argued why the dog was not out, the cat's tray was not cleaned, shopping not done (W7)

Another issue was maintaining contacts with the family members who lived separately. The respondents' statements revealed their concern about the health of the close and more distant family and friends. All women emphasized the importance of remote communication through phone and messaging applications like Skype or Messenger.

When they locked us in March, I tried to call my mother and my sister every day. I was afraid for their lives. Covid scared us all. My son had contact with his friends on Facebook (W7)

As usual, we had occasional calls with more distant family, uncles and cousins. Sometimes they called to check on us, sometimes we did. With cousins, we talked more through the messenger. We talked daily with the grandparents (W5)

We skype with my brother who lives abroad. He could not come for Christmas, so we sat the laptop on a highchair by the table. We ate, each at their own place, we talked and laughed. It's not the same but we managed to overcome both the virus and the distance (W1)

The psychological impact of the pandemic on adults and children has been the subject of many research. In our study too, all the respondents emphasized the negative consequences on emotions and behaviours in their families.

After about a month, I noticed that our son who needs more activity began to have depressive states. We had to motivate him to participate in classes... (W3)

The worst were the fights between my daughters. They did not cope well with the lockdown. When I tried to step in, my husband thought I was overreacting and then we began to argue (W8)

During the lockdown and when my in vitro procedure was postponed, I began to feel anxiety. I thought about all the worst-case scenarios, and I couldn't sleep. My husband thought I overreacted. I felt not understood and the depression increased (W6)

The lockdown affected my mental health, I had a breakdown. I began to have problems with breathing, a dyspnea. Later, I found out that it was my response to the lack of fresh air. But when I wanted to go out to the balcony, it didn't work because my grandpa was upset that I let the cold inside. But I just wanted to breath some air(W5)

The respondents developed some mechanisms to cope with the difficult situations. They released the tensions by engaging in new activities and hobbies, direct contact with nature, catching up with the housework and conversations with the loved ones.

We did not sit at home. Neither my husband, nor me would not stand it. We spent lots of time cycling (W1)

Sometimes we went to the forest to relax and walk mask-free (W6)

We have a small garden so one could always go out and relax (W8)

I adopted a dog and I think it was a great idea. I felt better, I could go out and walk, and I began to notice the beautiful world around, the changing seasons (W4)

Phone calls with family and friends also helped to reduce the anxiety.

Conversations with my mom helped me a lot. She had a calming effect on me. She explained it will end one day, that people lived through many crises... She repeated that health is the priority and the rest (work, bank credit) will sort itself out (W6)

I was so eager simply to talk to someone that I opened up before some people. I could call them and I felt peace that I was not alone, that if I only called them, they would listen (W4)

Engaging in new activities also helped the women to survive the pandemic.

I thought I might improve my qualifications so me and my husband began some trainings which gave us the feeling we were developing and learning despite many limitations. It was an escape from the reality (W3)

I'm a translator but English had been always my weakness, so I decided to finally take the challenge. I began an online, very intensive English course and I made it, I'm very satisfied I did it (W4)

I began to browse for new recipes and test them. I did not expect it would be so much fun (W8)

2. Impact of the pandemic on the day-to-day work and cooperation with the employer

The shift to remote learning and working had a great impact on the school achievements and the social behaviors of children and youth. Both students and their parents experienced various difficulties connected with the on-line education. For the respondents, the most challenging were the lack of direct contacts between students and teachers and the lack of support in learning. There were also problems with Internet connection and software operation, as well as lack of interactions with peers and physical activities.

I studied the history of art and we had to write an assignment I had to visit libraries and search for a very specific publications which are unavailable on-line, so I had to book visits in the libraries... The books I needed were available only for on-site reading, so it was a great hindrance (W5)

I think that for pre-schoolers, like my daughter, it was hard to understand both the necessity of keeping the distance and the sanitary restrictions. She asked why there were no carpets, why she could not take her teddy bear... (W2)

I thought: "If I give the students one or two assignments, they can easily do it." Everyone focused on their field and gave assignments. Somewhere half-way the term we got the information that students are overloaded... And the tasks we had given them were done and sent on-line. So, the students were really tired and overworked (W3)

At first, closing schools and the shift to remote learning was a nightmare. Teachers sent assignments through Librus¹. There were tons of messages... My daughter panicked and I thought I'd go crazy. Then, there were classes on Teams, and it turned out our old notebook had problems with the sound. I had to borrow a computer from the family (W8)

Parents had to spend more time helping their children with learning and school assignments. In some cases, they neglected their own work.

When my daughter began the first grade, it was more complicated because the on-line classes began. She panicked and it affected my professional work. I had to help her and do my work as an

¹ Librus and Teams are applications used for remote learning.

editor at the same time. It is a challenge to combine work and child's education. A first grader who is still learning how to use the computer, cannot work on her own so I was actually sitting with her all the time. Such a small kid needs help with everything so my work was neglected, I could not do both (W1)

Two more respondents mentioned that they had to help their children with school at the expense of their professional responsibilities.

My job, too, depended on my younger daughter. Using computer to learn was new to her. She struggled with on-line communication with her teachers. I was lucky because my profession allowed me to modify my schedule and do my job late in the evening or very early in the morning. And the problem was that we had one PC and one notebook. Suddenly, it turned out that we need twice as much (W4)

The teachers were only sending assignments through Librus. We had to open, print, complete, submit them and check if they were received. We were also obliged to monitor the progress. It surely affected my work, especially when it comes to publishing papers. At the end of the day I was so tired that I was not able to do any creative work. I realized that my career has slipped down the agenda (W3)

From the perspective of the primary school teacher, the difficulties were amplified by the parents and their additional expectations.

I definitely felt the pressure. The parents told me what they expected – the main objections were that children learned much less on-line than at school. During on-line classes, you have no actual control over a child... so the parents said that kids who used to have had very high grades, suddenly got much lower because they did not understand anything (W2)

The pandemic resulted in new forms of work (on-line) even in the areas where it had previously been impossible. It meant organizing the workplace (home office) within the private space. The interviewed women said their employers did their best to help them adjust to remote working.

I work close with my director, and it is this good cooperation that allowed me to work from home... There were no problems with setting the rules, I had to create a detailed schedule to document my work... Write down every hour. I worked from home, and it was a perfect situation because my little daughter is constantly sick and could work and look after her at the same time (W2)

The classes with the students were recorded in Teams and monitored by the IT team: the duration and who was present. One had to control oneself. I got the feeling that the classes were so detailed that students could have felt overloaded with the content and all the assignments (W3)

The necessity to combine housework, home office and remote learning of the children generated new problems like the lack of equipment, furniture and space.

When my husband began to work from home, it turned out that we did not have a desk and a proper chair. We had to buy them (W8)

Due to on-line learning of my daughters and my home office we had to buy another computer. And we used more Internet. I had to increase our limit and, consequently, the spending(W4)

3. Post-pandemic lifestyle transformation, future expectations and visions

The successive waves of the pandemic had some impact on lifestyles and life priorities. The respondents engaged in new activities, began to develop their talents and passions which they had had so far neglected.

I finally decided to get a driving license. I began the course, and I will soon take the exam. I also decided to learn a foreign language (W4)

I think my greatest achievement was that I began to actually live in my house. I finally saw that this is my space I stopped treating it like a place where you only sleep and eat. We made some changes, for example we decorated windows. Recently, I have added some more plant because they create warm and cozy atmosphere. I began to take care of this space, we have bought a three-tiered bunk bed for the kids so they too had their own space and could be on their own, each one on their own tier (W3)

While sitting at home, I realized that all our windows look out on the walls. I decided to do something with it. I could not move the walls, but I bought lots of plants and hanged green curtains(W6)

I decided to catch up with the movies because before I'd always thought it was better to work some more or sleep. I decided to watch that what I felt like in the moment or to remind myself the hits from my youth. These movies are now available on-line. So now I have these evenings for myself (W1)

Surely, the successive pandemic waves disturbed the work-family-private life balance of the respondents. Similar results can be found in the European Commission Report (EC 2021, Report on gender equality in EU) which shows that the pandemic had a greater effect on women both regarding their professional and family life. According to the Report, even if both partners worked from home, women did the majority of housework and were more inclined to reduce their professional responsibilities or even give up their work to help the children. These results are confirmed by our qualitative study. In their narratives, the respondents did not even use the terms like “children’s education” but rather “our education”, “me and Librus”, “me and Teams”, “we have kids and responsibilities”. It shows that women fully identify with their children’s remote learning during the pandemic, often at the expense of their careers.

Summary

The conducted focus group interviews (FGI) indicate that despite the crisis, anxiety and excessive responsibilities, women develop coping mechanisms and strategies. They take initiative to solve the conflicts and keep their families together. They also find new strength and motivation to take up new challenges, engage in new forms of learning and development both for themselves and their loved ones. Some deep reflections over self-care – their mental, physical, emotional and health condition are particularly valuable. Moreover, these conclusions are then implemented.

I began to think more often what I want, not what the world and my employer want from me. There were more reflections that time flies, I'm getting older and I still have some unfulfilled dreams (W1)

I think that we, as women, have adopted to these conditions, each of us worked out some way to deal with these difficulties...We look into the future because the roles we play require us to look ahead and focus on that what is still to be done (W3)

I realized that life is so unpredictable, so fragile that hardly anything depends on us... I decided that I will not waste my time on dreaming, but I will act instead, I will do that what I had been thinking of (W4)

c. HUNGARY

Leader expert of the Focus Group research in Hungary: Mrs. Ildikó Modláné Görgényi

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW IN HUNGARY - ONLINE

Date: 17 January 2022, 5:00 PM - 7:30 PM

Project leader (Coordinator): the Association for Women's Career Development in Hungary
the Partners: the Pedagogical University of Krakow from Poland, the Business & Professional Women CR z.s. from the Czech Republic, the Association of Business Women from the Slovak Republic

The members of the focus group received numbers according to the target group enabling them anonymity:

- mothers with children 2 people (No1, No2)
- women planning a family 2 people (No3, No4)
- women over the age of 50 2 people (No5, No6)
- 2 women in rural areas (No7, No8)

All participants had degrees:

- (No1) lawyer, mother of 2 children
- (No2) event organizer, mother of 1 child
- (No3) marketing specialist, 27 years old

Coordinator: Association for Women's Career Development in Hungary

- (No4) teacher, 43 years old
- (No5) engineer, 60, mother of 4 children
- (No6) entrepreneur, 68, mother of 1 child
- (No7) teacher, 50, mother of 4 children
- (No8) entrepreneur, 68, mother of 2 children

The Interviewer greeted the members of the focus group.

She briefly presented the elements and methods of the survey conducted in the Visegrad countries.

She explained the rules of the interview.

She informed participants about the anonymity of the research.

After a brief introduction of the members, the interviewing started with the given questions.

She asked the minutes secretary to note carefully, who what, why, and how responded at the individual and group level. The group level come into focus when the content of the answers of the interviewees is almost the same, there is a difference only in the wording.

Questions according to the topics of the focus group interview:

1. What was the impact of the pandemic on family organization?

Further questions about:

transformation of family unity: relationships with family members and internal family members (telephone facetime, e-mail skype, messenger), collaborations, closeness, close friends

psychological effects of coronavirus on children and adults: TV, Facebook, friends, authentic and unreliable information

mitigation of the psychological effects of the coronavirus: what did you find out to relieve the tension, whether it was a conversation and common decision about how to continue, why and how changed her role, whether the symptoms of depression were noticed on the other person?

Answers - Who said what, why and how?

- **Mothers with children**

(No1): The isolation between the families and their friends started because of the pandemic - the personal encounters of the family members who had been in daily contact ended.

This is a big burden on the whole family. At first, it was difficult to organize the online education of children technically. In addition, there was difficult to coordinate the online education and the home-office activities. Despite of the difficulties it was easy to change my job with a lawyer degree.

(No2): The home-office was previously known and practiced in certain jobs, so it was not unexpected for these employees to have to work more time from home.

The relationship between people who had to live closer together was further strengthened, which they experienced positively.

After a while they have tried to exclude the news from the media about the pandemic from their lives. They compensated with other activities - they solved the effect of stress by walking, gardening, practicing a new hobby.

- **Women planning a family**

(No3): She used to travel a lot, now it is very much missing. She had to change her job, which she succeeded. She continued to work in the home office. Since she came from a large family, she missed her family, especially that caused a dilemma for her how to help her older parents.

With her partner decided to postpone starting a family and to have children because the level of health care looked not safe enough. They redesigned their lives. They spent more time with virtual contacts.

(No4): They tried to block bad news from the media. They tried to solve the tension and fear by yoga and online meditation.

- **Women over 50**

(No.5): In the family business, they mostly worked in home office and traveled a lot.

It was positive thing that many useful international conferences were available online from which she learned a lot. As a result, she developed her skills through online course.

The emphasis was on building relationships. She experienced that what she could arrange earlier only in person could solve to achieve on the phone and internet. So, her communication skills have also improved.

(No6): Spiritually prepared for the limitations caused by the pandemic. The family helped a lot. Turning to the family became a priority. Virtual contact keeping has increased. Children worried a lot about the older parents, but they couldn't help. A lot of information was a burden. To compensate this, they looked for new occupation, hobbies, learned a lot and stayed in the nature a lot.

- **Rural women**

(No.7): Those who lost their jobs started a new business, in which relatives and the friends helped a lot. Several online connections have been established and nurtured.

In addition, they created new zoom groups and talked about on a weekly basis.

Several switched professions for safety reason.

However, being "news addict" they did not panic. They organized volunteer activities to compensate the negative things.

They also worked in their home office when they had a positive (Covid) test.

They spent more time in the nature which was a positive experience.

They found a new task: to produce their own food.

(No.8): It was hard that meeting with the parents was not possible.

Fear of the virus has intensified as a result of information coming from the media.

They had less confidence in health care.

Those working in production worked part-time or continued to work in person. Compliance with the rules was a problem.

Some people who worked online have experienced this situation as a restriction on their freedom.

Parents who also worked online had to play a significant role in online education of their children.

The individual responsibility of the people was not felt!

At first, they watched the news, but they didn't want to be afraid of the virus, so they paid more attention to themselves and the cleanliness of their surroundings.

Question: What was the impact of the pandemic at the group level?

Group level response: In addition to many negatives, assistance and internal relationships have been strengthened. They started new activities There were also financial problems.

Question: What was the focus, what is in the focus of the group regarding the pandemic?

Group level response: There were very much missing the personal contact with the family.

Retaining a job or starting a new form of work.

The difficulties in health care were hard to bear.

Question: What is the sub-topic that was often mentioned?

Group level response: Lack of personal contact was emphasized by all participants.

Half of the participants had difficulty switching to a home-office work format.

Searching for and finding new activities is typical for 80% of them.

The change of profession was mentioned in the opinions of 40% of the participants.

After a while they have not listened to the news about the virus, so the pandemic did not cause permanent damage.

The problem has been discussed from several sides

2. What was the impact of the pandemic on day-to-day work?

• **Mothers with children**

(No1): In workplaces where the clients have to be served in person, the home office was not allowed to work full time.

(No2): The disadvantage of working from home was that they could not keep the work and the household tasks separated.

At the same time, they missed the daily contact with the colleagues.

They think that the importance of IT continues to increase, and in cases if it is possible will be applied permanently in the future.

However, they also feel the need for personal contacts.

• **Women planning a family**

(No3): Where the home office was allowed the technical support was not provided, the employers have not even trusted the workers and pressurized them.

A mother with small children was forced to change her job and needed the help of a psychologist to overcome.

(No4): In the new workplace several choices were provided, and the workers were helped to do the task as efficiently as possible. IT is getting stronger; automation will affect more and more processes.

- **Women over 50**

(No5): Her work has not changed; she has done it this way so far. The employers organized several conferences and discussions, to the timing of which she had to better adapt.

(No6): IT is becoming more and more important; without it many things cannot be done. It is difficult to follow the rapid change in IT tools both financially and in terms of learning.

- **Rural women**

(No7): It had less influence on their work, they were given the right tools to perform the tasks. At work, employees who were not given the opportunity to work from home were given a new task.

(No8): Employers – where the tasks could be fully solved in a home office - have switched to this and will continue to do so after the pandemic in the future.

IT must be clearly taken into account.

But this should be seen as a tool!

She stressed how a balance between personal life and IT should be found!

What was the impact of the pandemic on day-to-day work at the group level?

In production companies, this could only be solved through personal work.

The decline in production led to part-time work or layoffs.

IT will become more prevalent in the work processes. Learning to use new technical tools is essential. If the workers cannot follow, they may become more vulnerable.

What was the focus, what is in the focus regarding the impact of the pandemic on the day-to-day work at group level?

Harmonizing the home office and the housework.

The home office as a form of work will remain for a long time.

How often is one thing mentioned or characterized relating the impact of the pandemic to day-to-day work?

For the 50% of the group who had previously worked in a home office, this form of work was not a problem. The other half of the group had to solve a larger or smaller problem.

All members of the group emphasized the further expansion of IT at work and the need for continuous learning and training at almost every level.

The problem has been discussed from several sides.

3. How people envision the post-pandemic lifestyle transformation, future expectations and visions?

- **Mothers with children**

(No1): IT helped, which continues to define the lifestyle. They have learned a lot about hygiene. They will pay more attention to a healthy environment in the future.

(No2): During the pandemic, fears increased, presumably due to the virus staying with us. Thus, they tried to compensate by retaining the activities mentioned earlier.

They plan to spend as much time with the family as they did during the pandemic.

- **Women planning a family**

(No3) (No4): Strong disinfection caused serious skin disease, so they were forced to reduce it. As a community person, she now works as a lonely worker, lacking a “coffee break” socializing during the work. They will place more emphasis on building valuable friendships, planning to move closer to the nature.

- **Women over 50**

(No5): It became characteristic of the human relationship that the vaccinated and the unvaccinated were divided into two camps, which also changed the human relations. After the initial fear of the virus, she travels a lot, still wanting to take every opportunity.

She has always been a cleanliness maniac, and this will remain.

(No6): Hygiene has been built into everyday life. Culture is hard to recover, many quality events will be missed. They are planning summer and winter vacations abroad.

In addition, there is also a growing interest towards domestic programs (e.g. “Budapest walks”). The virus remains, we have to live with it. Greater attention should be paid to healthy eating and increased exercise.

- **Rural woman**

(No7): More attention is paid to finding physical and mental balance. In addition to following the rules, they plan to organize personal contacts, common programs with friends, and travels.

(No8): Personal experiences received special attention. The diversity of people must be accepted. They are redesigning their lives, learning a new profession that also gives them the opportunity to work from home.

What was the impact of the epidemic regarding future expectations and visions on the group level?

Living in a mosaic family has become more difficult. Cultural programs and travel opportunities were missing. Part of the fear over the virus remained. They plan trips, camping, study. Maintaining cleanliness will continue to play an important role.

What is the focus, what is in the focus regarding the impact of the pandemic to future expectations and visions at group level?

To keep the cleanness. Redesigning life. Increase the number of personal experiences, gatherings with friends and family.

How often do they mention one particular thing as a result of a pandemic in terms of future expectations and visions?

The importance of hygiene was mentioned by 100% of the focus group. To live together with the virus, learning, performing new activities, and IT as a work tool were accepted by all participants. The younger generation, about 30% of the group, is planning to change professions and change their place of residence. Trips and family programs as well programs with friends are planned by all members of the group.

Group level impression:

- People have shown remarkable discipline in adapting to restrictions.
- Many have experienced mental problems on themselves.
- Vaccination is important in fighting a pandemic or reducing the disease.
- Those present were for the vaccination.
- Wearing the mask was not a problem.
- Maintaining hygiene in stores is considered essential.

The participants talked in detail on the topic.

The interviews were conducted in a honest atmosphere which allowed honest answers.

The leader of the focus group thanks for the participation in the interviews and for the honest answers.

d. SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Leader expert of the Focus Group research in the Slovak Republic: Ivana Kondasova

Qualitative research report – Slovak Partner (Association of Business women and managers)

The study was conducted on 29th January 2022, from 16:00 – 18:00, via zoom. It was aimed at experience and impacts of pandemic on women, personal life, family, children.

The moderator was Ivana Kondasova. In the focus group took part 7 women in total, one woman due the technical problems had left.

Women were very open, willing to share their own stories, experience, problems, views experienced during the last months of the pandemic but mostly based on experience from 2019, from the first year of pandemic. First three months from March till June 2016, total lockdown of Slovakia included lockdown of all shops, schools, Kindergartens, markets. Only functioning were Grocery stores and delivery services, and basic

infrastructure and owner of companies could work. All other people were forced to stay at home with children.

Focus group interview respondent profile

First name*	Age	Family status	Education/profession	Place of residence
Zoja	50	Married, two boys	University degree / director	City
Ivka	55	Single, without children	College / sole trader	City
Mily	40	Single, with boyfriend, without children, expecting baby	University degree/project manager	City
Mia	39	Married, two children	University degree / own company	Village
Dada	34	Married, two children	University degree/sole trader	City
Mishka	34	Married, one child, expecting one more child	University degree/manager	City
Jela	33	Married, two children	University degree/manager	Village

*Names have been changed to ensure the respondents' anonymity.

Analysis of results

Interview was focused on the following topics:

- 1) organization of the family life,
- 2) daily work, form of work, cooperation with the employer
- 3) transformation of the lifestyle due to the pandemic, expectations and visions for the future.

1. Impact of the pandemic on the organization of the family

All asked women summaries the long period of pandemic. From expected few weeks it is over two years. All participants experienced the pandemic mostly from March 2019 when firstly met with the total lockdown of country. Total lockdown included lockdown of all shops, schools, kindergartens, functioning only Groceries and deliveries. Family stayed home from one day to other day in a total isolation, without permission to go for a long walk. Lot of them struggled with a fear what to do. Everybody started to do a biggest shopping while getting information of total 3 months of all shops closed.

Experience from the participants:

Experience from Mia: She could work during the whole time of pandemic. She with her husband had a own company but due the lockdown they had struggled with big loses of contracts and customers. From her experience situation in her family was very tense while the negative impact of pandemic of his husband who felt very frustrated while he lost his job due the decrease of contracts. She decided to transform their business from Ltd. to be self-employed. She had to work to get money for the whole family, she supported him husband to be positive and also she had to support his children while kindergartens and schools were closed. She survived it while was always positive and she was looking for ways how to do her business and how to manage her family.

Another experience was in Jela in her family. Situation of closed schools and kindergartens affected their family life very much while she starts working from home office even two years ago. She was afraid of all this situation, she had a fear about the family and she had fear about work-life balance in her family. She did not get any psychical support from her husband, and she felt very desperate. After another two years of working only from home office (from 2019 till now 2021) , she decided to quit a job while she needed to have also social contacts. Home office had a big negative impact on work-life balance in her family. After longer time she was not able to work from home and carrying about children when she was alone with them. Her marriage life was under the pressure, but they survived. She mentioned that lockdown(s) affected her mental health and physical problems. Dissatisfaction with longer year of home office, carrying about children and household she started to have physical problems. Due the health care problems she got one month stay in the spas which helped her to recover. This stay saved her.

Another view of pandemic is from Zoja who has been working in a high position. She mentioned that the pandemic after all, had and has a positive impact on their personal life and marriage while get had to find ways to cope with. She used the pandemic as a time for communication with her husband and children in teenage age. As a result of their communication, she and her husband decided to start their volunteer activity aimed on a mental health. She claimed that she and her husband were not isolated at all, could work (both are working in infrastructure) partly from HO or partly from offices and their both children are young enough without any need of help with studying. She has a big garden and a dog, and she went often for a long walk during the pandemic.

Other experience is from Dada, mother, who is carrying about two in the school educated children. Her family and work life were very affected. Although that she was working from home before, due the fact that all schools were closed she had to stop her working life while for he it was very hard to carry about two children, household and being a teacher for them.

Mia's view on pandemic is positive. She is single, without child, planning a family. She was very flexible. She is and she was working from home office also sometimes with possibilities to go to work for some hours. While they are only two, they had no problems with children and closed schools. They often went outside. On the other hand, she found the pandemic as an opportunity to get closer to her parents with them she had a very complicated relation. During this long time, they slowly found a way of better

communication. Mia had and has no fear from pandemic. She is very talkative and person loving meetings. She mentioned the lack of possibility to meet, to do shopping. Because she is positive, she had not had any depressive mood.

Misha said that she had not fear from pandemic, but she was very angry from the whole situation and health care systems which was not given many people. She is married with one child. They are still planning a family. Her family life was not affected, they were not feeling isolated because they frequently went outside for a long walk. Due the fact that her child is 3 years old, she could stay with him at home and not working for a short time. She said they can afford it that she could stay home without working and her husband was working. She finds very negative when all shops and coffees, restaurants were closed, also meeting within the family were prohibited. Only possibility of walking helped her to be positive without any kind of depressive mood.

2. Impact of the pandemic on the day-to-day work and cooperation with the employer

Impact on pandemic varied in Slovakia depending on the period and position in the work. Impact of the pandemic had started in March 2019 with the total lockdown of country. All employments were given an order to order their employees to work from home office (remote). Only people working for infrastructure could physically went to work (doctors, nurses, sales women in groceries, pharmaceuticals, post-office people, people working for ministries for concrete departments. It was given a possibility for all mothers with children up to 11 years could stay at home with children and was being paid by the government with some payment covered by the health care system.

From one day to another day, for three months all schools and kindergartens stayed closed, and children stayed at home with at least mum. Women started to face situation of remote work, caring about children, learning with them and doing household jobs. Later when situation went better, people could return to work. After first months, lot of employers changed their working method offering either only home office, or partly Home office partly working from office or returning to office.

Experience from the participants:

Zoja mentioned also point of the employer, as a director. In the time of a big lock-down, which was announced from one day to another, it was without any preparation. Lot of schools, companies and state organizations were not technically prepared and had not enough computers or any other devices for remote work for their employees. Due this situation lot of employees could stay at home without any work while it was not technically managed by the employer. Her subordinated could stay at home and she had to work eleven hours a day also instead of them.

Zoja also mentioned a big negative impact on sons and education, where schools, all courses were closed. Methods of education had changed from offline to online. But musical courses or hand-made courses could not be taught online, and many young people gave up this courses and schools as her sons. She

found sorry due to lost of talents. There was not fear from her side but big anger from her sons to closed schools, to lack of contacts between them, loss of courses.

Iva is a sole trader working for a sector, which was dramatically affected by the pandemic. She lost all contracts for a year and had to live from her savings. She is happy that she had not family while as a single mum with a child she will have big difficulties.

Dada, mother of two children, she was carrying about two children. Her family and work life were very affected while she was working from home. In the period where all schools were closed, she had to stop her working life while for her it was very hard to carry about two children, household and being a teacher for them. Dada work life – she was firstly frustrated and sad while loses her contracts and money. After time she had to start thinking in other way, while she saw that this situation will take longer maybe very long. She had to find other way and she start writing books and providing consultation online which are not very ideally because her business is based on health care services which could not be provided online.

Dasa's personal life did not change due the pandemic. She mentioned some uncertainty and more stress while staying at home with children and working. She found out very early that she will not be able to work as before, but her husband supported her and their family. This situation helps them to cope with the problems together.

Another experience was in Jela. Situation of closed schools and Kindergartens affected their family life very much while she was working from home office. She was afraid, sad, frustrated. She was alone with children while her husband had a job where he could go to the office. She felt isolated with children. After two years of working only from home office, she felt disappointed, losing any social contact, she started to hate her job. She decided to quit her job and start looking for other job.

Mishka was similar as to Jela. Although that she has only one child, she prefers going to work personally while she finds it very difficult to work from home remote and carrying about a child and household. She mentioned that it was very hard for her and still her child was not attending a school only kindergarten and she was lucky that there is not online school.

Mia did not recognize any negatives related to the job. She is partly working from home, partly working from office. Last period working only from home (home – office did not affect her neither her partner while they were focusing on planning family).

Shifting to remote learning (online learning) o remote learning had a big impact on schools which had not been prepared. During the first lockdown (March – June 2019) most of schools were not prepared. Teachers instead of teaching students had sent lot of studying materials for children. Lot of studying materials and project increased the tense for parents while they had difficulty to work online and to study with children. Later, situation changed. Parents found out themselves frustrated and after short time burn-out while finding simultaneously working from home online and learning with children online is enormous

difficult. In some families tackled with problems of not having enough computers or a slow internet connection. This is experience from Jela.

Later, parents argued on enormous homework and projects given from teachers to children.

Parents met with situation when older children sometimes misused online education. Although that they were connected they were not sitting by the computer or learning. Students missed personal contacts and social activities, courses, what also mentioned Zoja by her experience with her children.

We all agreed one other impact of pandemic and closed schools on children as general. Some of them lost social contact with others. Some of them started to be more introvert. On the other hand, some children started to be more aggressive.

3. Post-pandemic lifestyle transformation, future expectations and visions

During the pandemic participants recognized the necessity to do some expected and unexpected changes. Finding and reorganizing of own and families' priorities. All participants agreed that all their lives have changes and will never be the same but claiming that all the worst might be also a good for some reasons and finding a challenges and news visions is the crucial point.

Mishka: During this time I was thinking on things which I like, what I really want. I found out that Indonesian culture is very closed to me, and it was longer years I started to learn Indonesian language. I decided to start again and to dedicate my free time to study more about their culture.

Zojka mentioned that she was sometimes jealous to her subordinated. While they cannot work from home due the missing computers, she as their boss had to work also instead of them. She was working longer hours a day and she was close to burn-out. She was sometimes jealous to them while they dedicated their time to studying, cooking and relaxing and she was working also instead of them.

Mia found her old/new hobby, playing on piano, which she started to teach.

Zorka used later pandemic time (2021) on studying, she did a mediator course. Furthermore, during the pandemic she and her husband established a nonprofit organization where are offering some soft-skills webinar. She claimed that she is happy in her position.

Jela's vision is to leave a job. She felt on her selves that she changed, she is more happy, more relaxed, that she needs this change. She feels that this is the right way. She will be looking for a new job.

Mia is happy in her job. She focused on planning a child. If it comes, she will be happy. If not, she and her partner will be also happy.

All women confirmed that these last two years went so fast. The whole life is so fast. Although on this pandemic situation brought us a lot of hard situations, people still should find a good and positive situation.

Summary

Based on the interview we can summarize that the impact of the pandemic varies depending on the family situation of women.

The worst impact of the pandemic was recognized by the women, single mothers, with children. Similar situation faced single women working as a sole trader or having their own company. They often met with loss of job or loss of contracts. People met with isolation, loss of contacts.

Families with older children, which could work remote or in the form of home office were not so much affected.

Most families with children educated in schools (till 11 years) which could work from home office and also simultaneously their children were having online education, met with frustrations, tensions and burn-out.

X. Closing Thoughts and Thanks

With our nearly 20-years of experience and professional background we, the Association for Women's Career Development in Hungary, consider it our duty to address the impact of the pandemic on women, especially its impact on the labor market.

We would like to extend our special thanks to the Visegrad Fund for supporting our "Women, Families, Careers – Effects of the Pandemic on Work/Life Balance in the Visegrad Countries" project in partnership with our professional partners from the V4 countries, the Pedagogical University of Krakow from Poland, the Business & Professional Women CR z.s. from the Czech Republic, and the Association of Business Women from the Slovak Republic.

The research on Women, Family, Career - The Impact of Pandemic on Work-Life Balance in V4 Countries is new in its approach. The project, which has been implemented simultaneously in 4 countries, mainly with online tools, enabled us to simultaneously involve large audiences from all 4 Visegrad countries.

Furthermore, the participants in the questionnaire survey carried out within the framework of the project were composed of different genders, mainly women, and were also of different ages, qualifications, and life situations from all four countries.

The present research study was conducted in two languages, English and Hungarian.

It will be presented to the Visegrad Fund, who supported the realization of the project, and will be published on the project website: www.visegradwomen.net. Through the professional network ensured by the V4 partnership on local and international levels, we will make our experiences and findings widely available for decision makers and anyone else who are interested and can thus use our findings freely, thus gaining further information and insight into the work/life balance conditions and challenges for women brought about by the pandemic.

All this would not have been possible without our experts, partners, and all those individuals who completed our questionnaire. We hereby thank them for their cooperation.

We would also like to extend our gratitude to the Visegrad Fund and our partners, the V4 countries, the Pedagogical University of Krakow, the Czech Business & Professional Women CR z.s., the Slovak Association of Business Women, as well as our strategic partners in Hungary, the Hungarian Red Cross, the Győr-Moson-Sopron County Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Women's Entrepreneurs' Club, and the Association of Large Families.

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