

# Experience of work in low paid sectors: gender perspective

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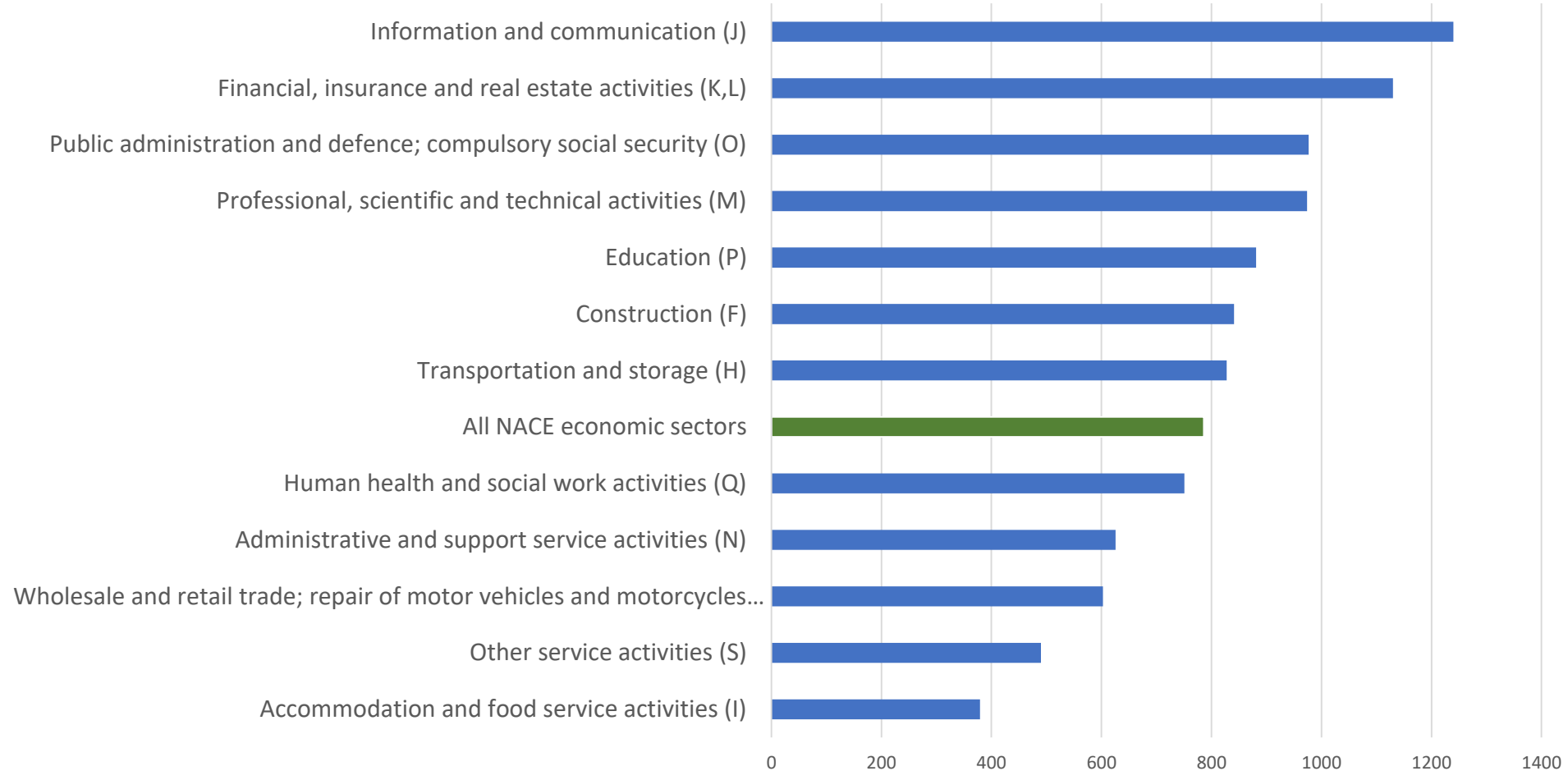
## Large picture:

- **Statistical data:** average earnings per sector, proportion of women working in low paid sectors, gender and low paid occupations
- **Source:** Eurostat, CSO (Census and Labour Force Survey)

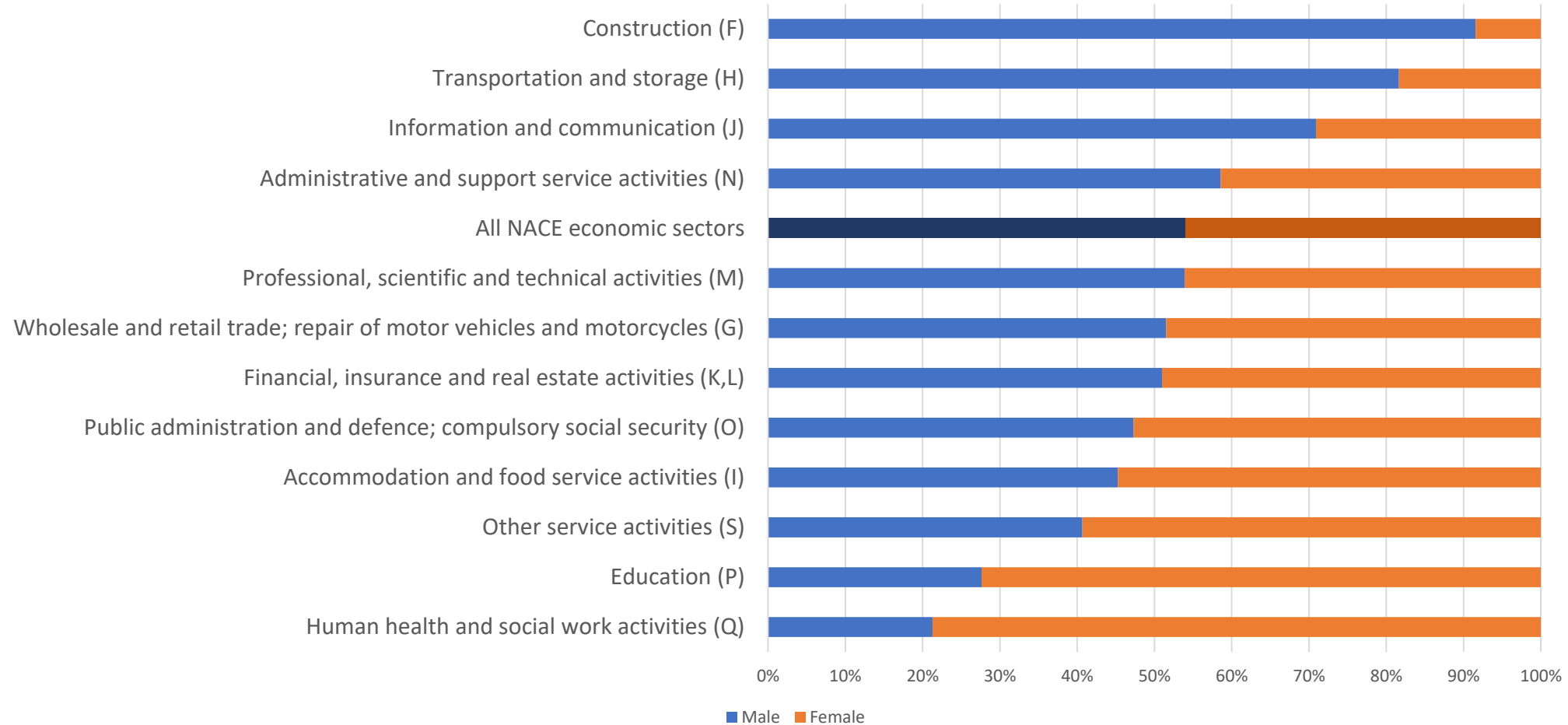
## Detailed picture:

- **Interviews with workers:** qualitative interviews with individuals employed across different sectors of the Irish economy, including low paid employment
- **Two projects:** Working Conditions in Ireland and Social Implications of Precarious Work

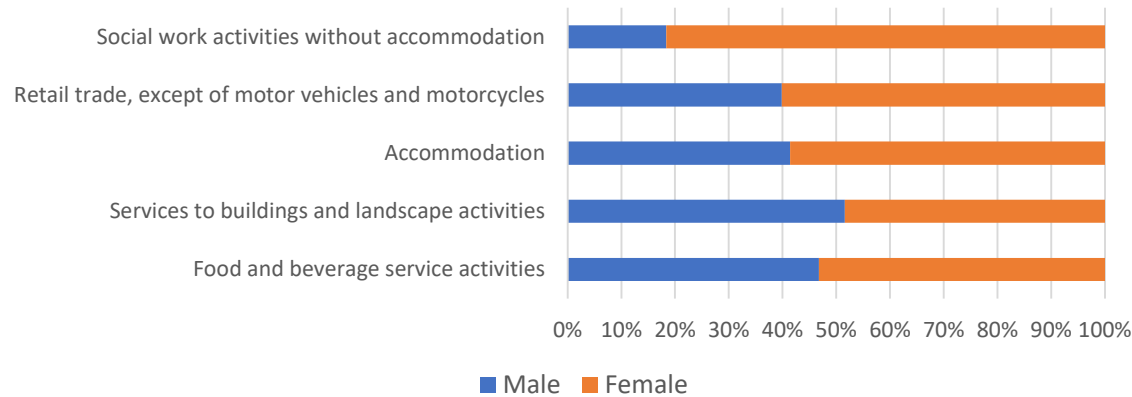
## Average Weekly Earnings (Euros) by Industrial Group (NACE2, Q4 2019)



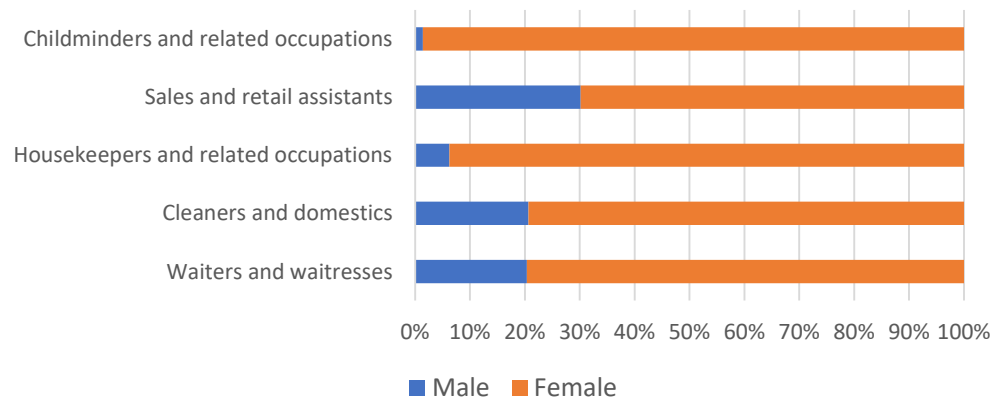
## Gender and Industrial Groups (NACE2, Q4 2019)



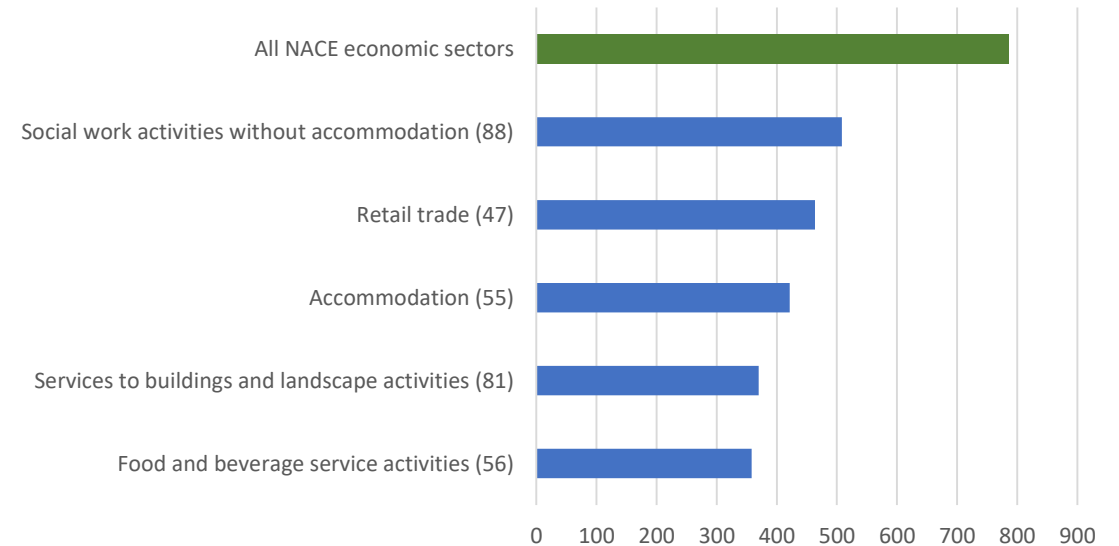
## Gender and employment by industrial group (2 digit NACE2, Q4 2019)



## Gender and employment: detailed occupational group (at work, 2016)



## Average weekly earnings (Euros) by industrial group (2 digit NACE2; Q4 2019)



## Qualitative interviews:

- **Stories behind the numbers**
- **Lived experiences** of low-paid workers
- **Examples from hospitality sector** (restaurants and bars, accommodation services) and **childcare** (Early Years Education professionals)

## Important themes:

- **Nature of work** and **working conditions**
- **Question of 'wages'**: paid working time and unpaid working time
- **The reality of low-paid work**: not being able to afford...
- **Value of work** versus **cost of services**

## **EXAMPLE: HOTELS' ACCOMMODATION DEPARTMENTS**

**[for cleaning the rooms], it should be always the same, but unfortunately it is different... depends also on how dirty [the room is] [...]** I get into the room and I have to wash the bath, the sink and the toilet and let it dry. Then I go to the room and change the bed linen; I put the clean one on and I dust; I actually Hoover under the bed also, clean the boards and then I go back to the bathroom to dry and put the towels on [...]

**After you finish cleaning all the rooms you have to put towels on the trolleys to fill up the trolleys and to Hoover and to clean all the corridors in which you worked. So it is around 30 minutes more work, but they don't give you that time to do it -** normally we have 30 minutes per room per departure and 15 minutes for stayover so if you have 10 departures, that is 5 hours and if you have 8 stayovers that's 2 more hours so 10 departures and 9 stayovers, that's 5 hours of work, so if I have this amount of rooms, and I also have the corridor, and the trolley [and I have] 5 hours to do that job.

**Normal day was considered 7 departures and 10 stay overs - more stay overs because it is easier to clean a stay over; hard day was 10-12 departures, We had also 14/15 departures a day...this was awful... And it is just for one person.**

(Accommodation Assistant, 4 star hotel)

## **EXAMPLE: FORMAL CHILDCARE SECTOR**

**Other times I feel like as a pre-school teacher you're treated as some kind of an idiot and that primary teachers are much more intelligent beings than us. [But] You have to have at least a FETAC level 5, [and] that's to be not on your own [in the room], so somebody is an assistant. And you have to have a FETAC level 6 if you want to be on your own [in the room]. And if you want to get the higher [pay] cap, which is what they're encouraging, (they want people to be better educated), you have to be Level 7 at least to get it. [this] is what my manager gets because we all have a degree, or above. They want you to do that, they want you to go and get all this stuff, and they're offering all this money to my manager if we have those, but we don't get anything extra.**

**[Being highly educated] in childcare, it doesn't mean anything, it really doesn't. It might mean an extra euro an hour, that's about it. It's not that great - an extra euro an hour, so what? And then, even in childcare that's very little because that's 11 euros an hour.**

(Early Years Education professional)



## **EXAMPLE: FORMAL CHILDCARE SECTOR**

When I first started, I was only on €10 an hour – I only had FETAC level five in Montessori and childcare. [...] It seems very unfair because I come home and I do my planning; we have to put things together every day. **You have to have this ‘non-contact’ time but it’s next to impossible for my boss to give us [paid] noncontact time. [...]**

And at the end of the year we have to make these books, and I remember one year, my manager told us to write down all the hours that we spent on these books. **So, at the end of it I had over 100 hours spent on these books. And she said, ‘I can’t pay for all of that.’ So, she gave me 40 of those over 100 hours...**

**We are the same as the primary school with the same holidays, so whenever they close, we close too but we don’t get paid. We have to go on the dole, and you often don’t get the dole because if the school just closes for a day [...] and you just don’t get paid. Now, we get paid for bank holidays, but that’s it. And then your contract ends in June basically and you might get re-employed come September.**

(Early Years Education professional)

... And that makes the value of this kind of work even lower

## EXAMPLE: RESTAURANTS AND BARS SECTOR:

And after a while of being in [name of a fast food chain] **they started making us clock-out before we finish cleaning, because we were taking too long to clean. So you needed about 2 hours to get that place cleaned properly,** and that was with a lot of prep done towards the end of night, when you start shutting down the kitchen. **After a while they said that they wanted it to be done in an hour.** But we couldn't leave after an hour, we had to properly finish. **And we had to clock-out after an hour and then clean the rest.**

(fast food restaurant worker)

... And that makes the value of this kind of work even lower

## **EXAMPLE: HOTELS ACCOMMODATION DEPARTMENT**

Actually I can tell you that **nobody from cleaning department, housekeeping department, nobody is going to lunch, just to finish their work in time...** Well we have 30 minutes for lunch....we go for lunch at 11.30 and then at 12 o'clock we have to go back. **So if we are going to lunch, we go just for 10-15 minutes.** We don't have chance [to eat] **And also if we're late, for example I have to finish at 3pm and if I finish at 3.30 [I don't get paid for that]**

(accommodation assistant, 4 star hotel)

While the pay is too low to make a decent living...

Well...I am still alive, yes, but you know, **if you don't have enough of money you just make the living**, you don't go to theatre or you don't go to cinema just because you don't have that money...**that's all you do, you go to work and you come back home, get something to eat and that's all (...)** and if you have **family like child...you know it is worse...**  
(accommodation assistant, 4 star hotel)

And the same **with bills like electricity, gas, the whole lot. There was a point where things were really, really bad; myself and my boyfriend at the time took our bed, put it in our sitting room so we could have the gas on, and we just turned the other radiators off, [...] I also got [a medical condition], and I did not realise once they took away the medical card and gave me the GP card that you then had to pay full price. I wasn't able to afford the medication I required for it. And then everything to do with contraception went out the window as well because I was like, no not spending money on any of this, just have to work it out, it'll be fine! [...] And if things go wrong, you're not going to get the morning after pill for free either.**

(fast-food restaurant worker)

# The work is low paid, but how about the services...?

## **CHILDCALRE: HIGH FEES (PARENTS), LOW WAGES (WORKERS):**

**But no one seems to care about our working conditions.** I remember I was on childcare forums on the internet and **some parents were talking about some childcare fees and how it was a complete rip off, and how the girls in the job didn't do enough.** And I said, wait a minute here, as a childcare worker myself, **I can understand how these girls feel because you can be guaranteed these girls are on minimum wage.** I said, how would you feel coming into a job every day and getting [really bad] wages and being treated [horribly] as well, **because I very, very rarely worked in a crèche where I was treated well**

(Early Years Education professional)

# The work is low paid, but how about the services...?

## **HOSPITALITY SECTOR: PRICE OF RESTAURANT FOOD AND HOTEL ACCOMMODATION...**

**At the end of the day – it's figures.** You know, it's whatever money needs to be made...  
**When I started in the hotel., they were called 'hoteliers' in a sense that everything was for the guest. You had plenty of staff...** And now it's money. **It's all money now, and what the hotel can make.**

(guest relations assistant, large hotel chain)

**And, you know, [in that burger place], you would have people telling you that they have spent more money than you are earning in an hour on food that you are giving them**

(fast-food restaurant worker)

## Working in low paid jobs:

- It can be **demanding and hard work**, but this is **not reflected in good wages**
- It **doesn't have to be 'low skilled' work** as **qualifications now required for more jobs**
- It is **not always fully paid** as employees are often required to do **'free' work**

## Being a low paid worker

- They feel **undervalued, underpaid and exploited**
- **They can't afford 'decent' living**, especially for those who have children
- They **don't have many opportunities to 'go up the ladder'** as promotion brings **more duties but not more money**



## Employment and gender:

- Not all low-paid work is done by women, but **the majority of workers in these occupations are women!**
- Jobs **traditionally regarded as ‘women’s work’** and therefore **undervalued**
- BUT these are **real jobs => should have good working conditions and decent wages**

# THANK YOU!

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