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Workforce in the LTC sector

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Figure 2.2: A large share of female workers in LTC is typical of all Member States, without exception

Share of female workers in employment in the LTC workforce and in the total economy in Member States, 2024



Figure 2.3: Workers aged 50 or above comprise more than 40 % of all LTC workers

Proportion of workers aged 50 or above in the LTC workforce and among all workers in the EU-27, 2013–2024

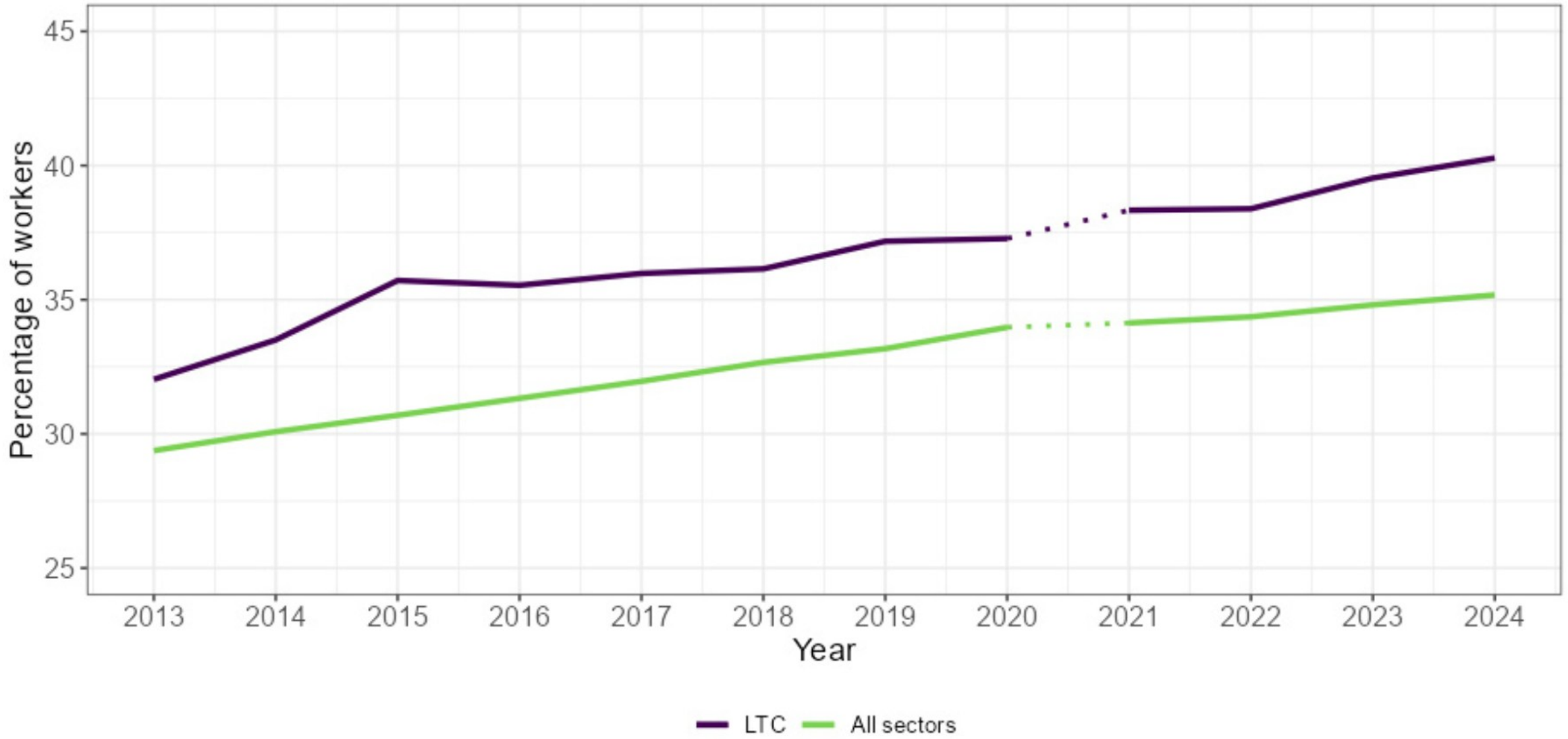


Figure 2.4: Older workers comprise a large share of LTC workers, especially in some eastern and southern European Member States

Share of workers aged 50 or more among all LTC workers in Member States, 2024

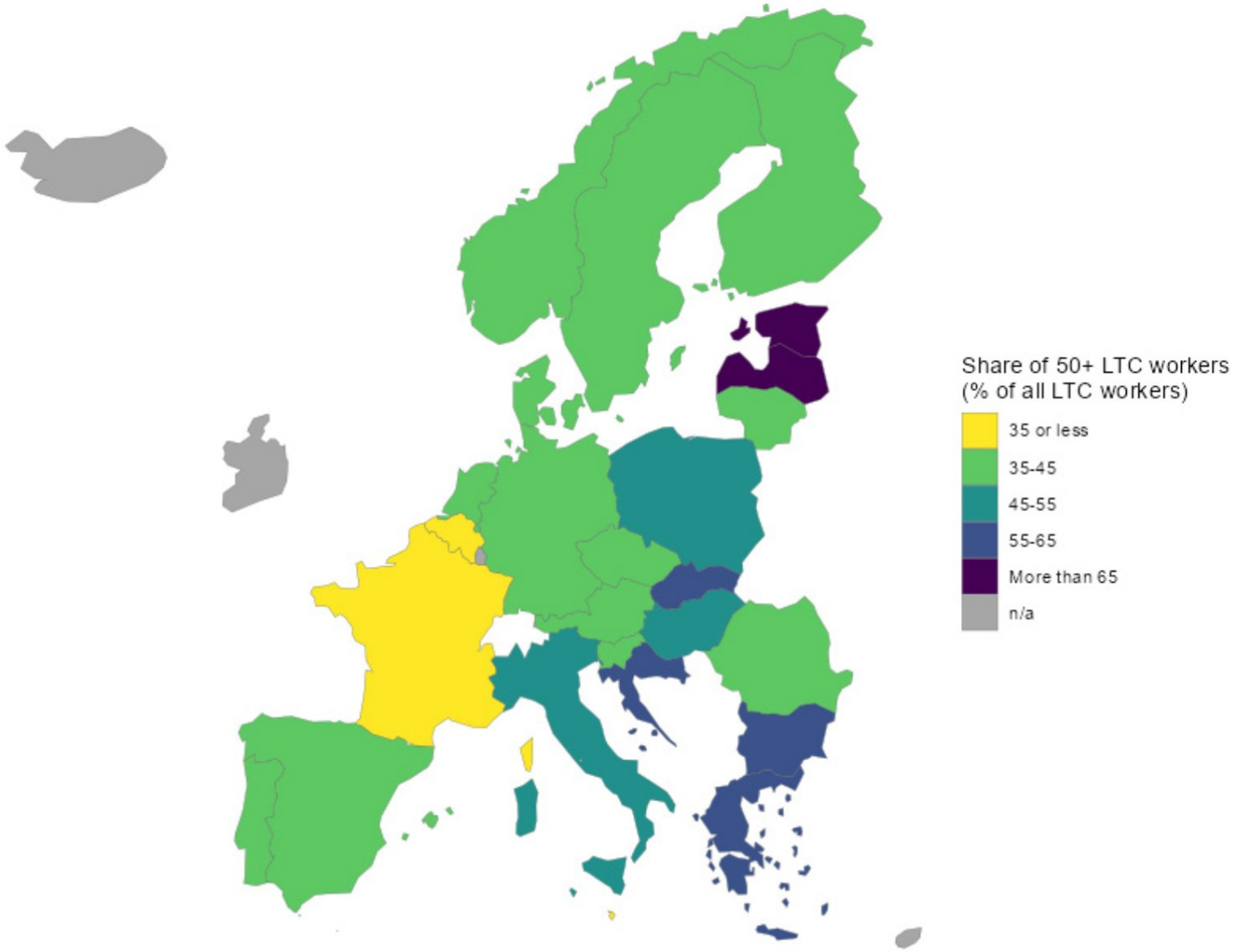


Figure 4.2: Hourly earnings of LTC workers are below average in almost all Member States

Gross hourly earnings of LTC workers, comparison of the total economies of the EU-27 and individual Member States, 2022

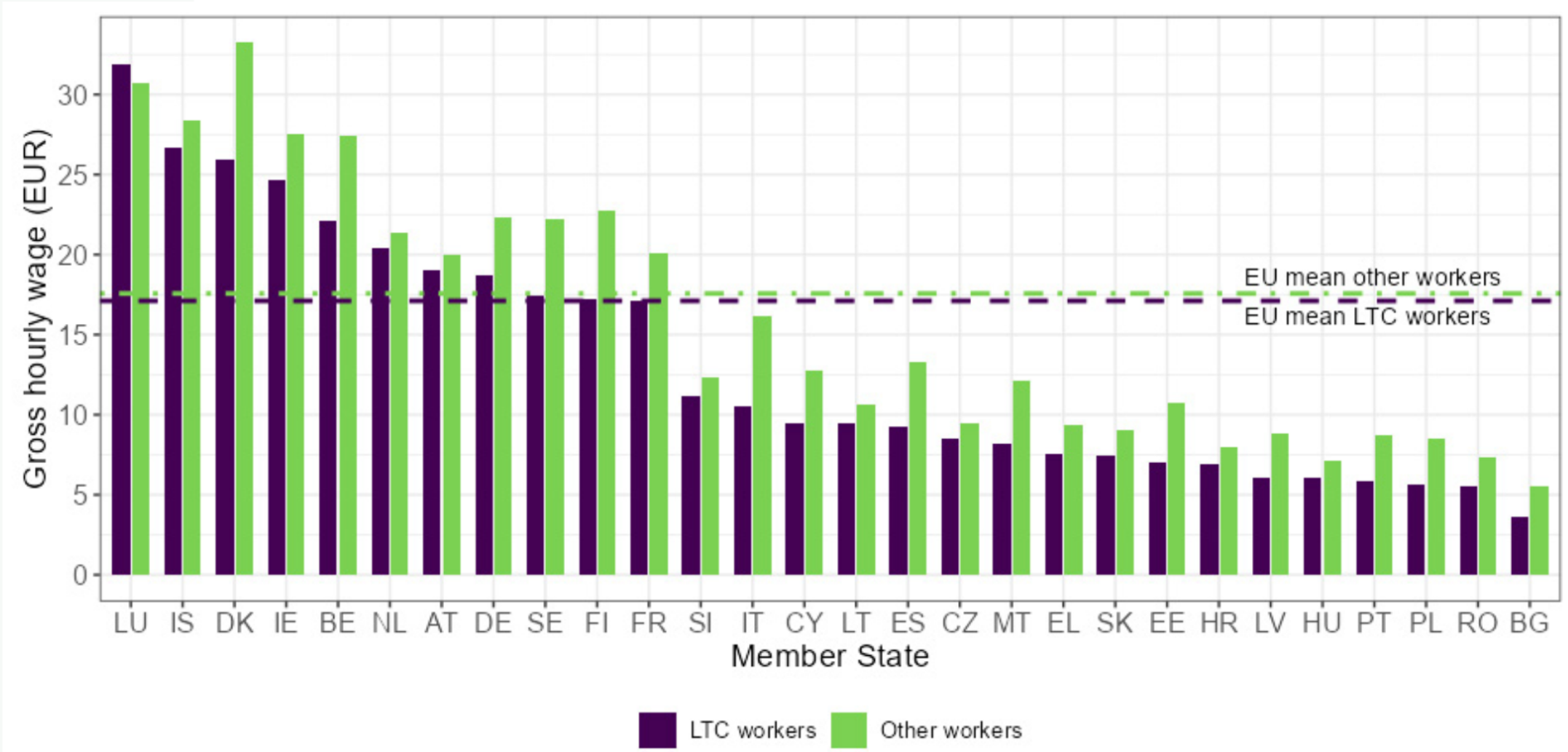
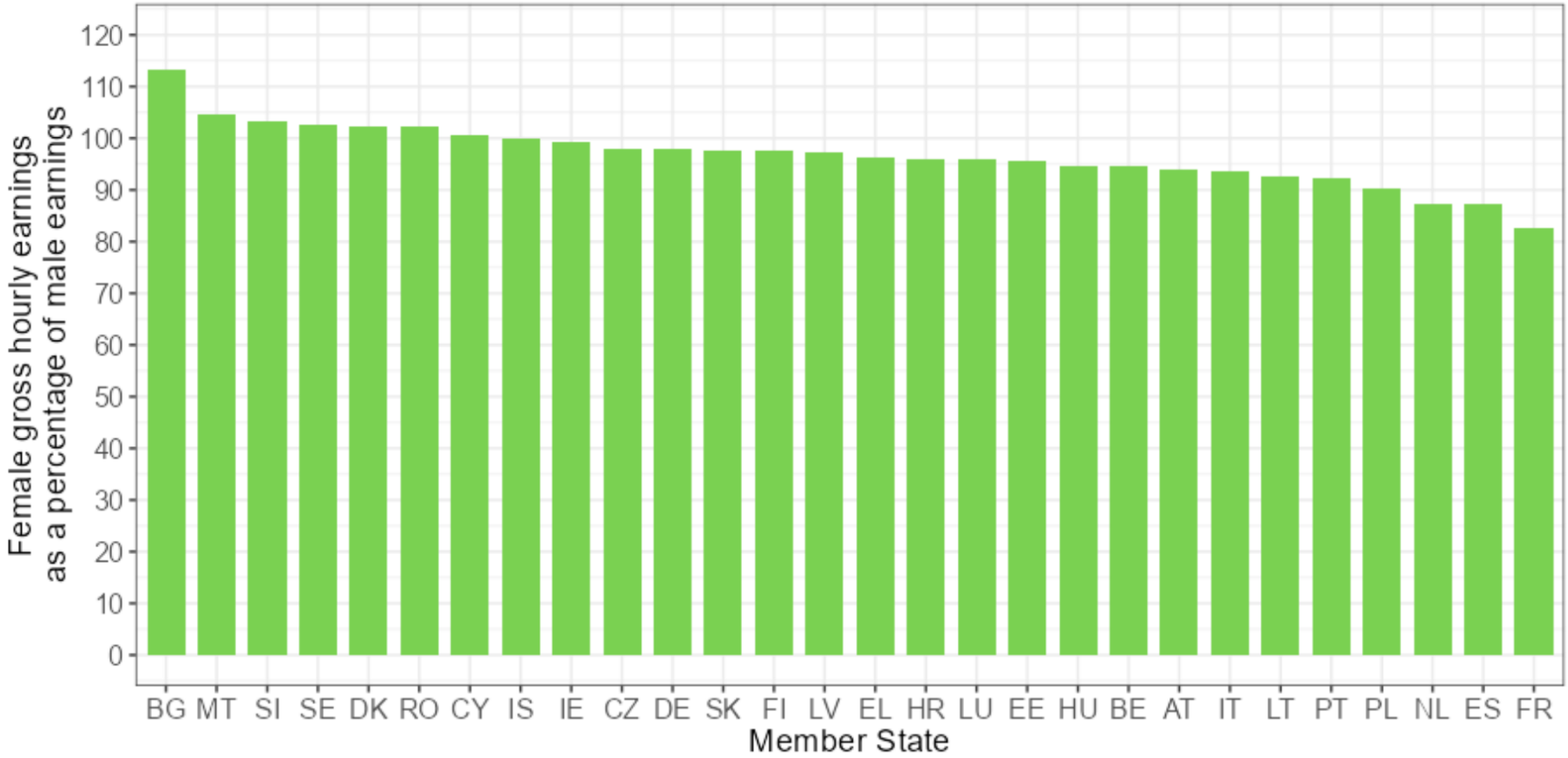


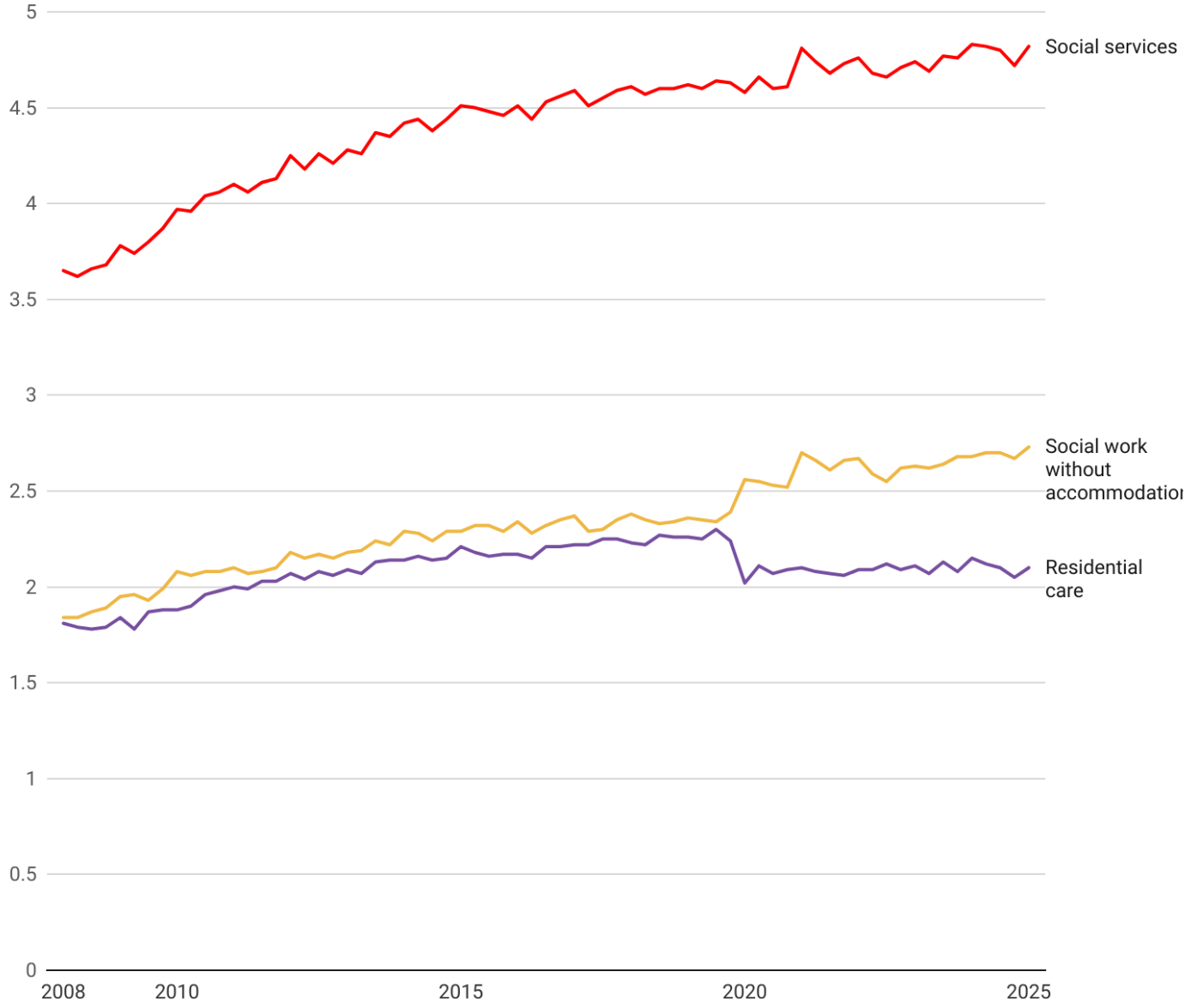
Figure 4.3: Differences in pay among female and male LTC workers are notable in some Member States

Gross hourly earnings of female LTC workers as a percentage of male LTC workers' earnings, 2022



The social services sector is steadily and rapidly growing

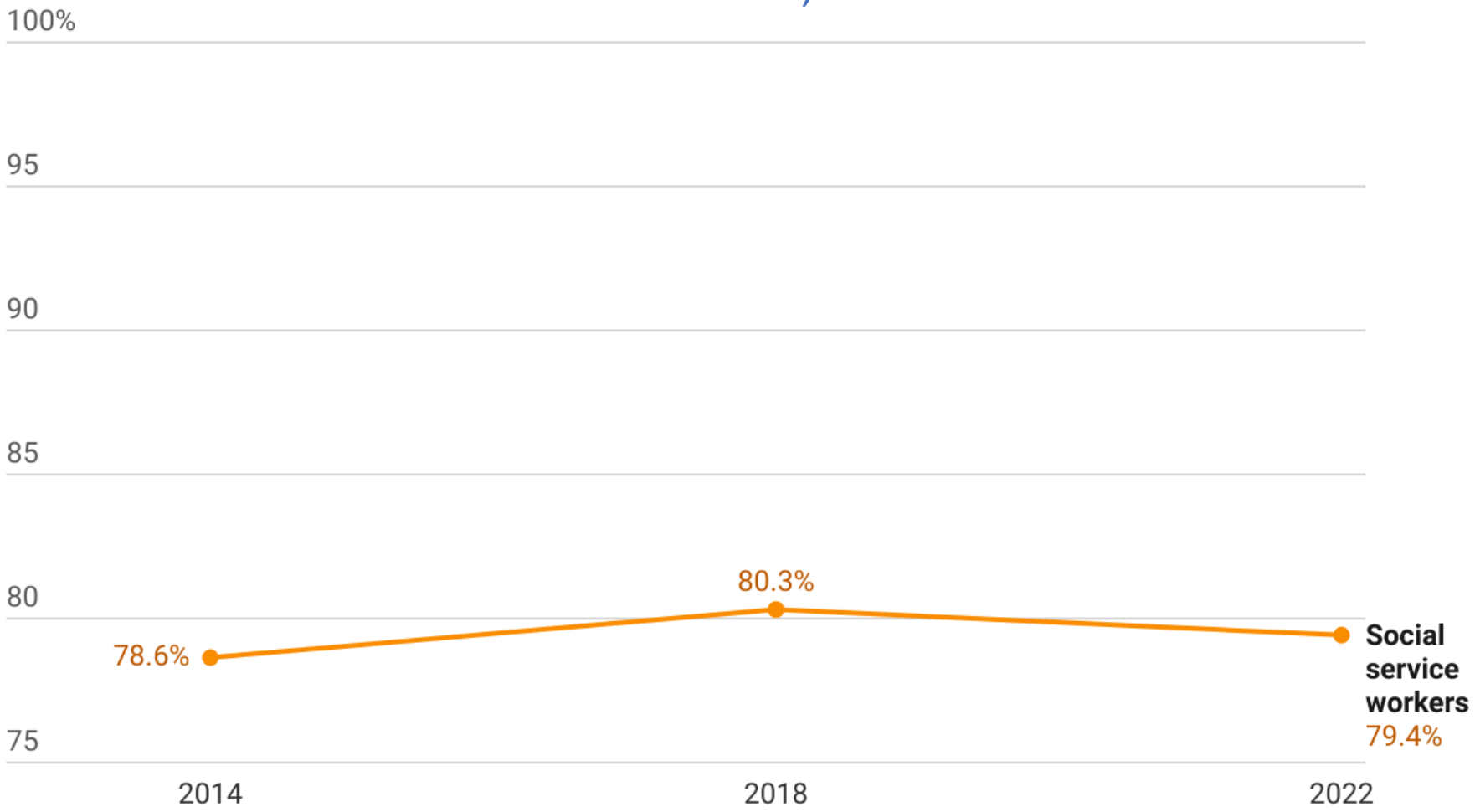
Social service workers as % of total workforce, 2008-2025, EU



Source: Eurofound's analysis of quarterly LFS data.

Pay remains low

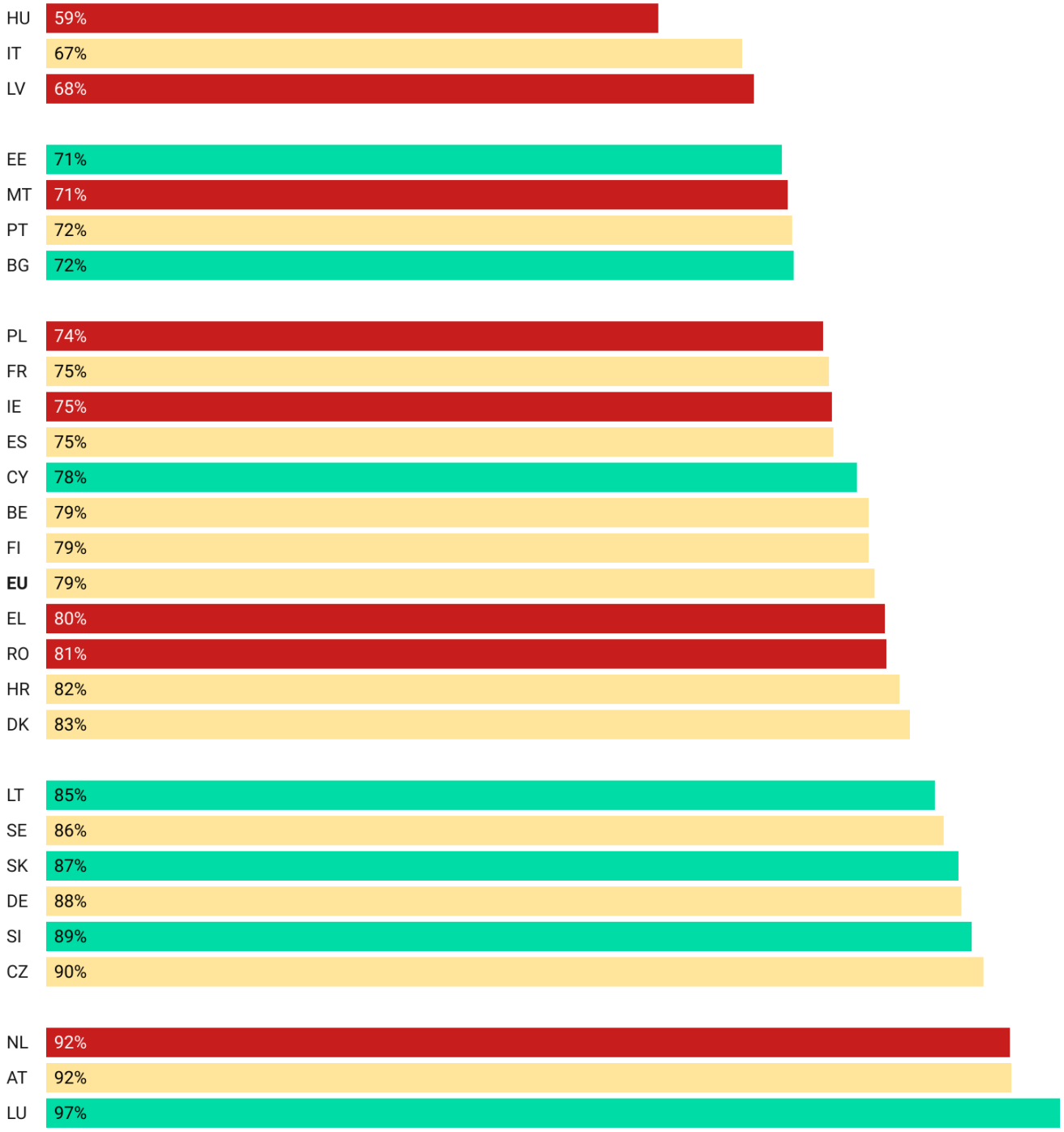
Hourly pay social services workers, % of average pay, 2014, 2018 & 2022, EU



Notes: Mean hourly pay; average of MS proportions; NACE 87&88 as a proportion of all sectors (excluding public administration, defence, compulsory social security); Data/way of calculating slightly differs from Eurofound's previous approach, so re-done for all 3 years consistently.
Source: Eurofound's analysis of Eurostat's Structure of Earnings Survey (SES) data, extracted June 2025. An update will be published on Eurofound's website over the summer, also drawing on new EWCS 2024 data.

Social service pay as proportion of national average pay, by MS, 2022, and change since 2018 (red: decrease ≥2%-points, green: increase ≥2%-points)

- In all MSs, social service workers earn below average
- Member States where 100% is covered by collective agreements include those where rates are >90%



Notes: bar is green if relative change ≥2%-points, and red if ≤-2%-points; only in EL and MT mean hourly wages, as measured in SES, decreased in absolute terms.
Source: Eurofound's analysis of Eurostat's Structure of Earnings Survey (SES) data, extracted June 2025.

IR Share

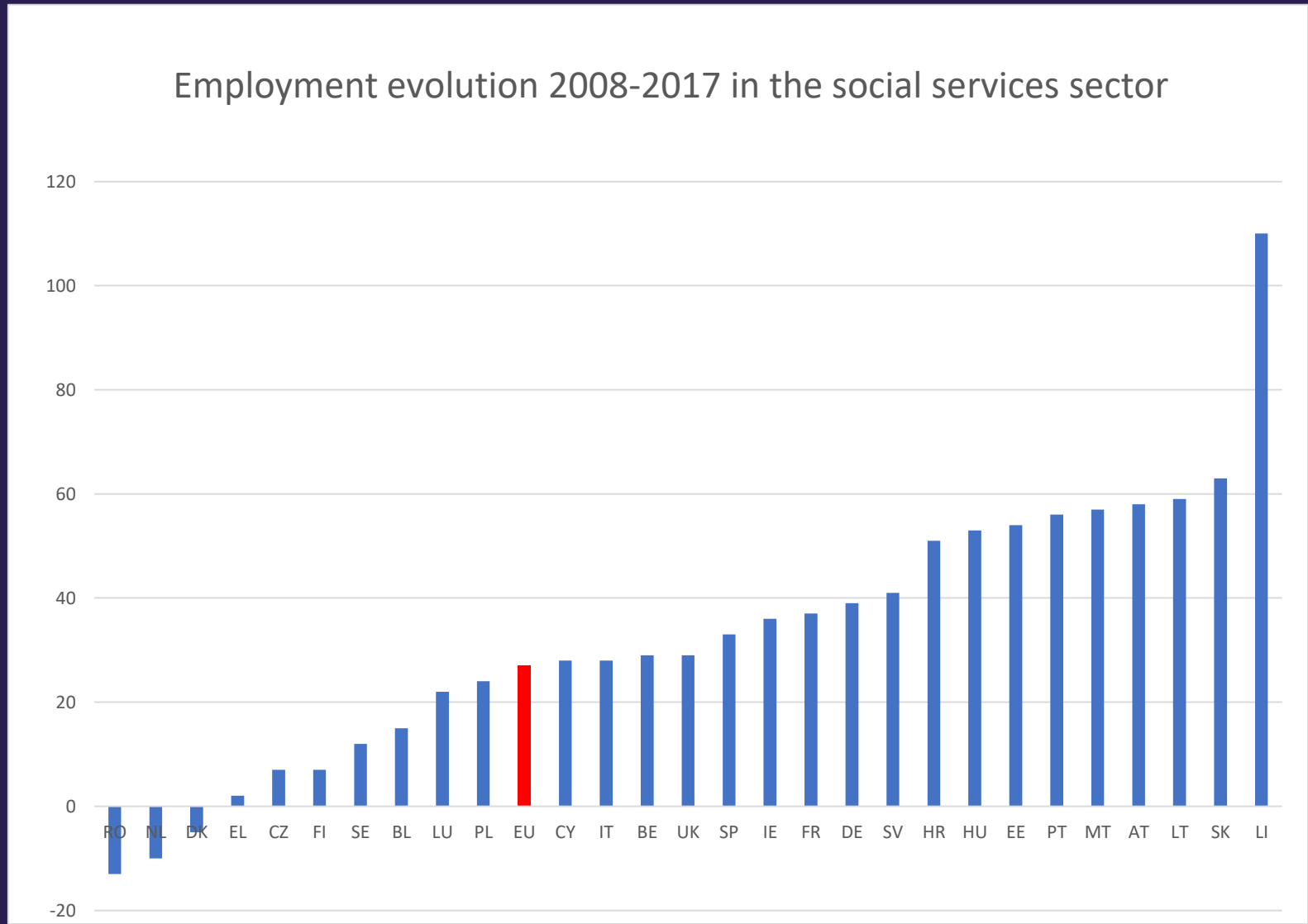
Industrial relations Share

Social services workforce in Europe: state of play and challenges

- Answers provided by Employers' organisations affiliated to Social employers and representing 10 Member States, to a questionnaire sent in May 2019.
- A set of data kindly extracted by Eurofound from its sixth European Working Conditions Survey, related to the NACE code 87 and 88, used in this study (sample of workers that has been interviewed face to face / Nearly 44,000 workers in 35 countries).
- A set of statistics kindly extracted by Eurostat from its Labour Force Survey 2017. Eurostat has extracted data for Residential care activities (NACE 87) + Social work activities (NACE 88).

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- The social services sector employs 10,9 million persons in the EU, for a total labour force of 230,433 million persons in employment. The sector represents close to 4.8% of the total EU labour force.
- Furthermore, the sector has a strong employment dynamic with an increase in the number of people employed of 15 years and more of 27% between 2008 and 2017, while the whole EU workforce increases of about 1.21% on the same period.

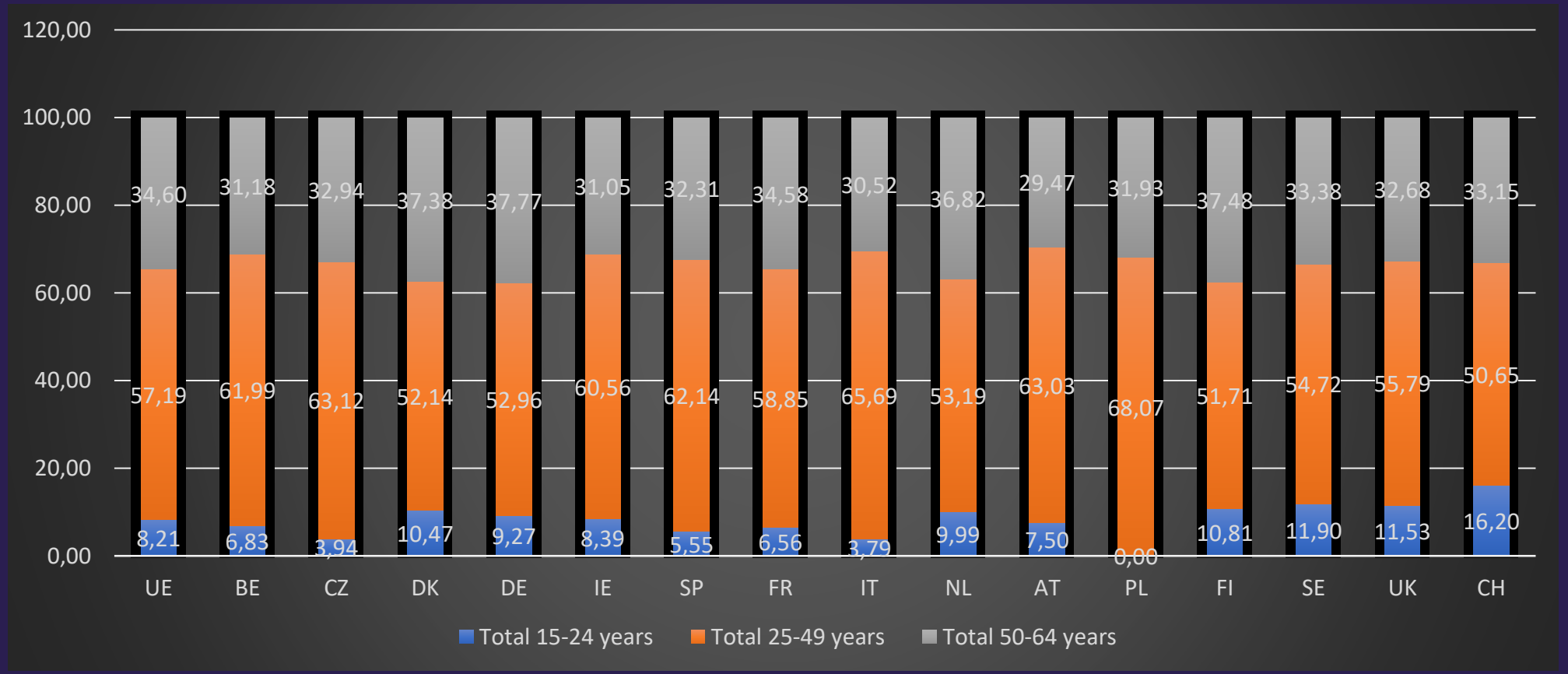


IR Share

Industrial relations Share

Employment characteristics

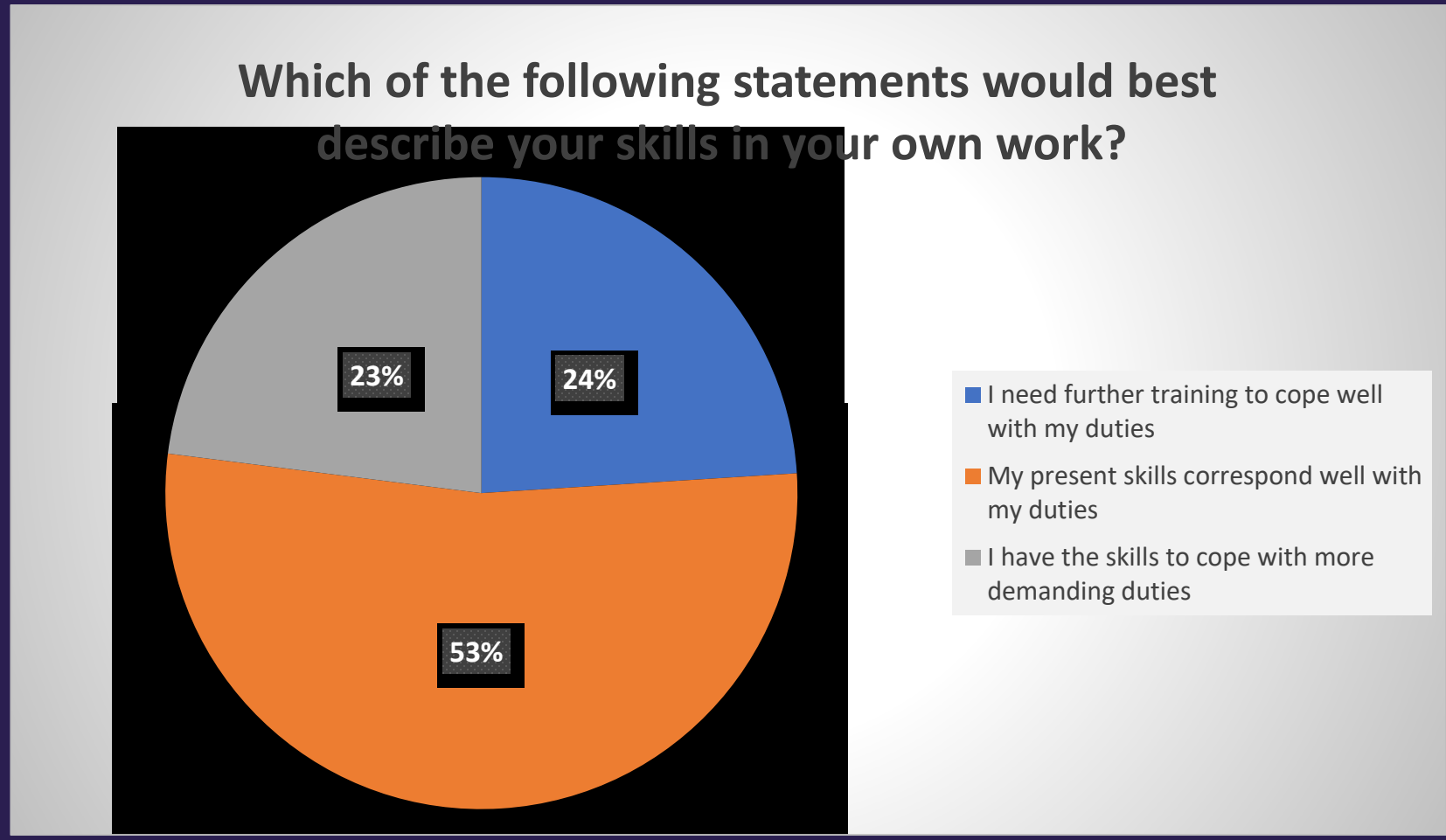
> The 50-64 age group represents more than a third of total employment in the social services sector (34.6%), compared to 29.6% for the whole economy.



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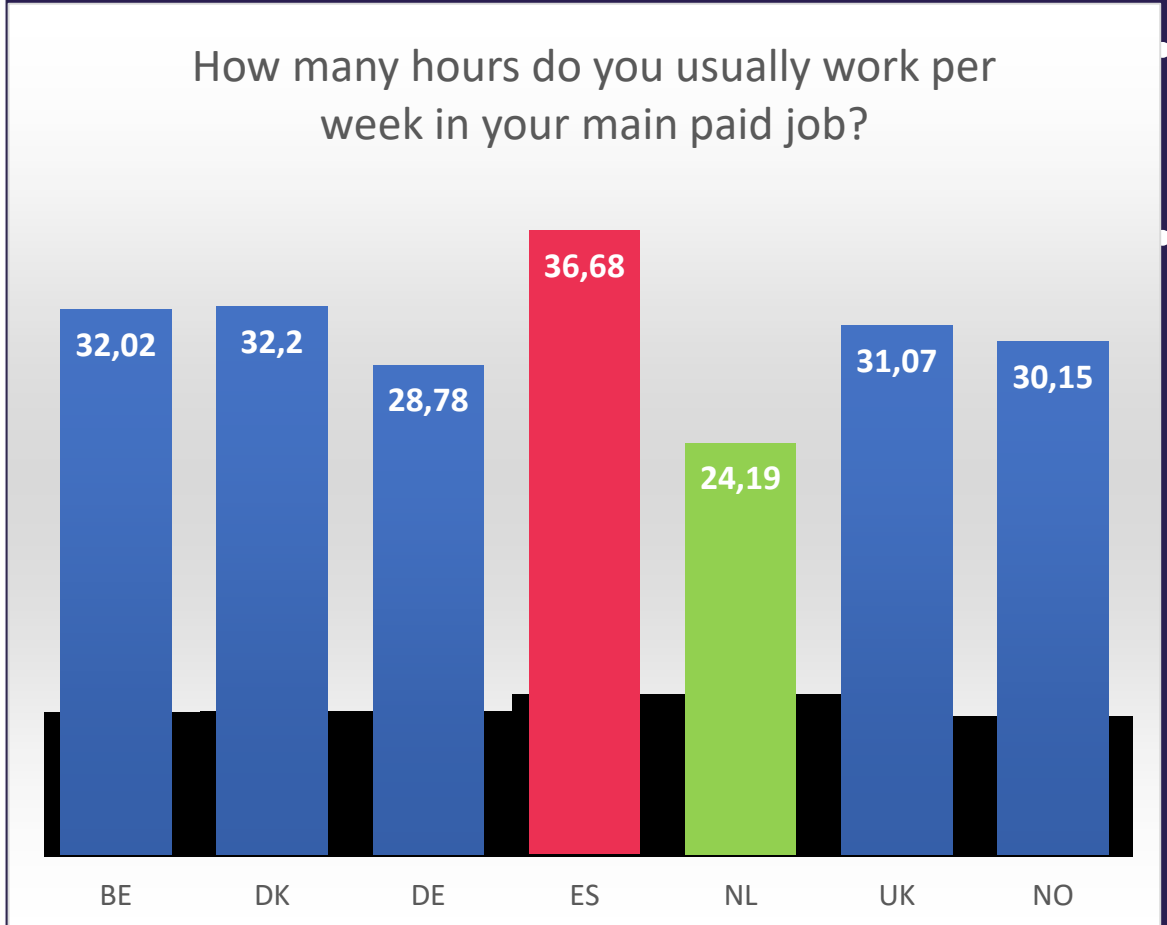
Qualification and training

> A large majority of employees in the social services sector estimate that their present skills correspondent well with their duties (53%). However, almost a quarter of the workforce declare needing further training to cope well with their duty (tasks are changing).



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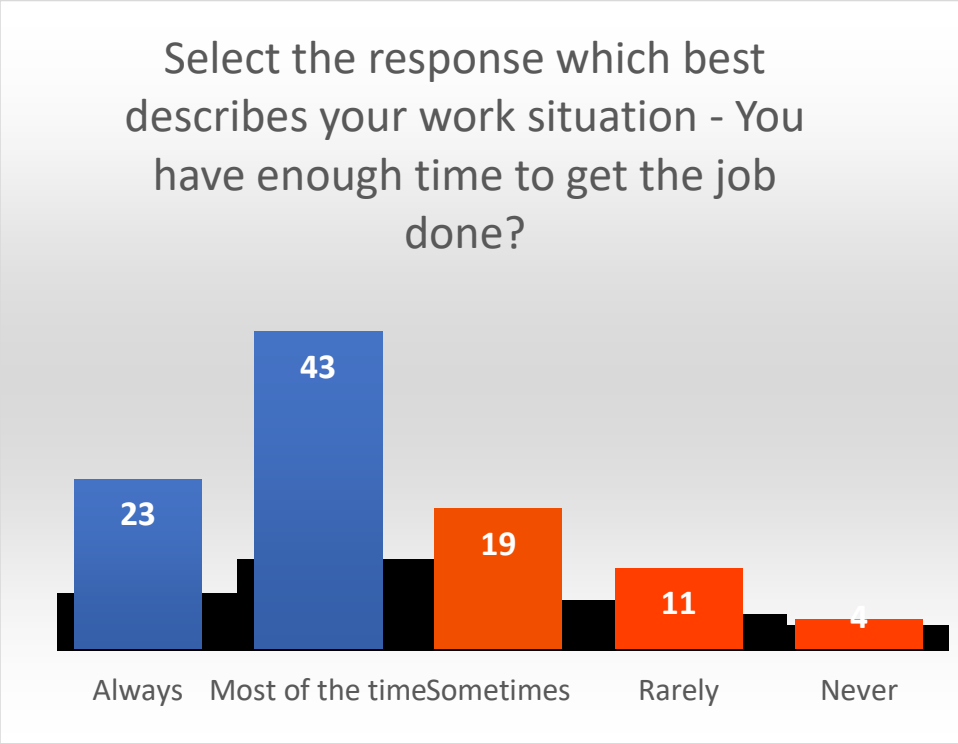
Working time

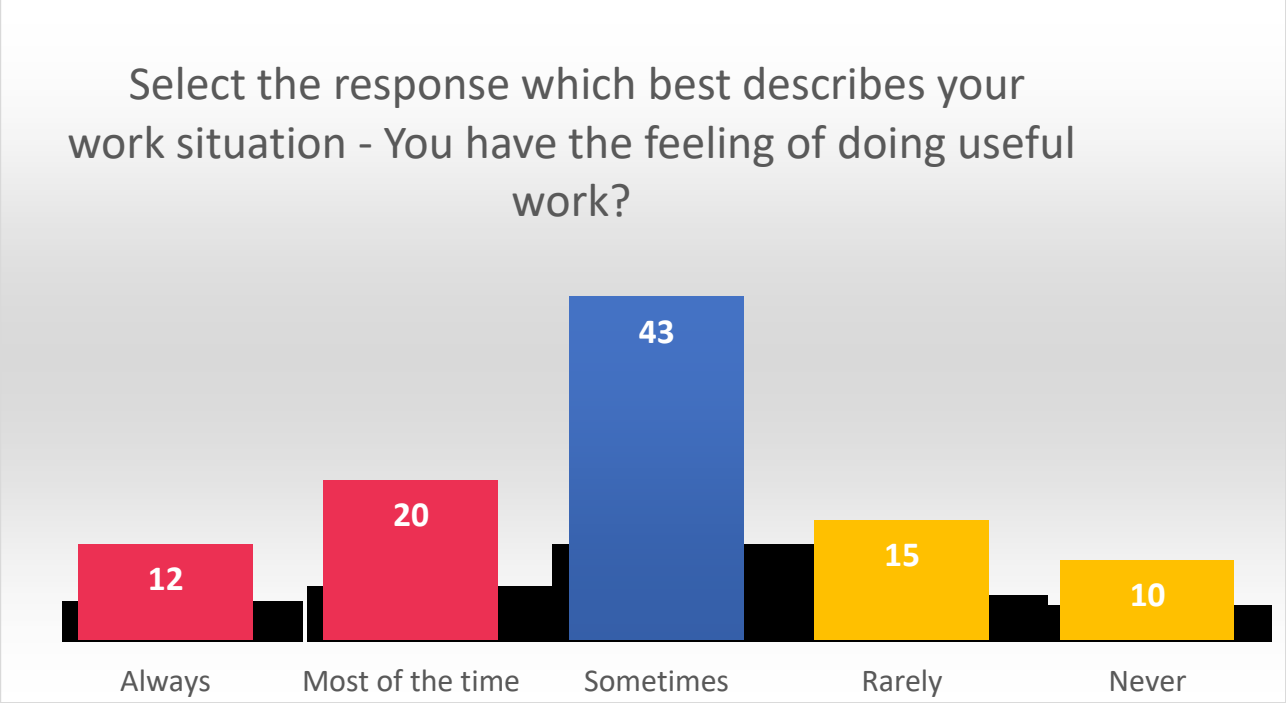


- > Workers in the social services sector work an average of 31,37 hours per week in their main paid job. The main reason of the low average working time is the importance of part-time work in the sector.
- > The workforce works 1.49 time a month at night, for at least 2 hours between 10.00 pm and 05.00 am.
- > The practice of stand by time and of on-call work are important but not in all countries.
- > The workforce works in average 1.09 Sunday and 1.24 Saturday per month.

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- > 34% of the workforce considers that they have not enough time to get their job done (compared to 15% in the whole economy);
- > Only 32% of the workforce considers that they have always or most of the time the feeling of doing a useful work. About a quarter have rarely (15%) or never (10%) this feeling.
- > 51% of the workforce are involved in situations that are emotionally disturbing for them between ¼ and ¾ of their working time (25%).

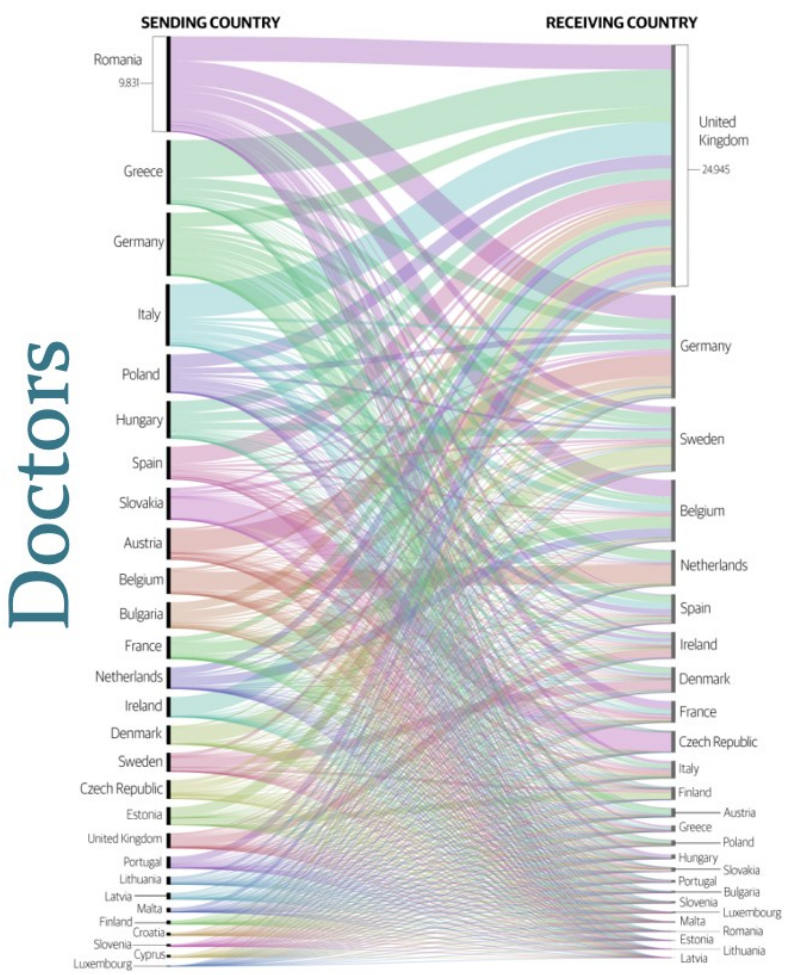


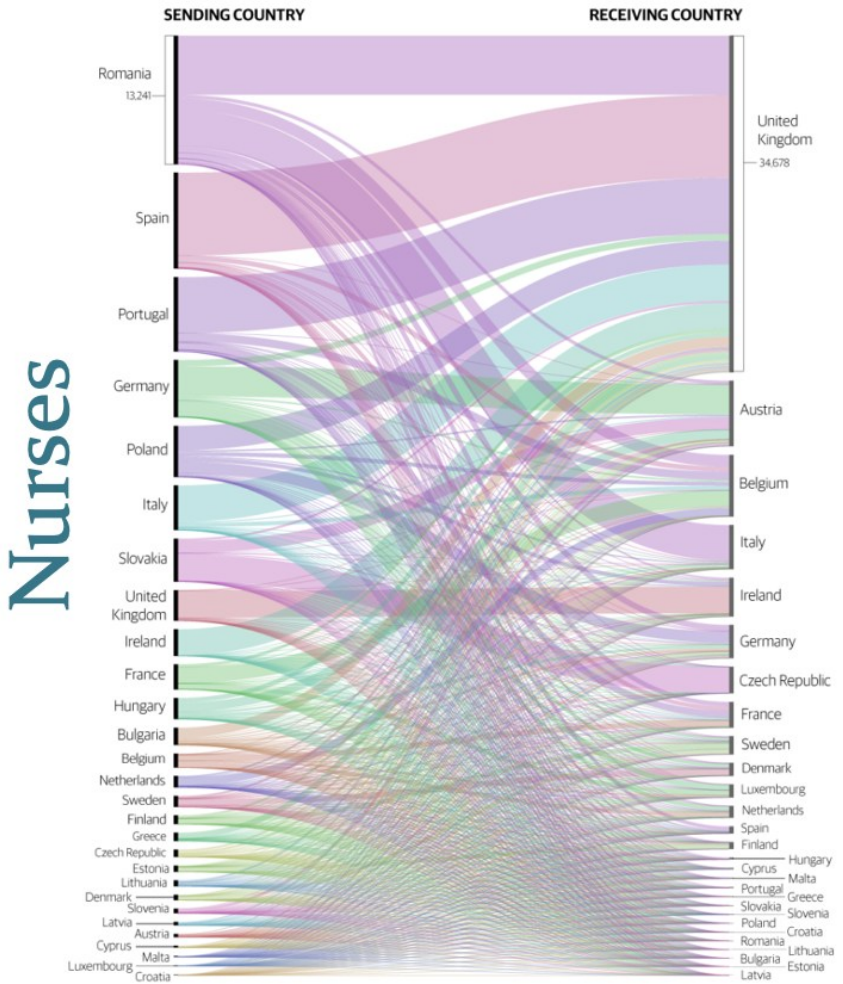


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Setting the scene – movement across the EU

HOSPEEM





[4] Hervey G. The EU exodus: When doctors and nurses follow the money, POLITICO. 2017

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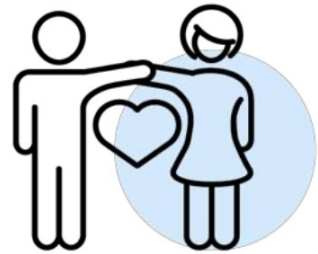
- **The care sector has a high potential to create more jobs, driven in particular by population ageing.** More than 1.6 million long-term care workers would have to be added by 2050 to keep long-term care coverage at the same level. To respond to the increasing demand for care, the sector needs not only to retain staff but also to attract more workers with the right skills.
- **Better working conditions and wages, supported by strong social dialogue, education and training, will make care jobs more attractive.**



In 2021, **nursing professionals,** nursing associate professionals and home-based personal care workers were among the 19 occupations with **high magnitude shortages** in a number of EU Member States[11].

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- **Domestic workers, many of whom are women and often with a migrant background, are subject to some of the poorest working conditions in the long-term care workforce**. They often work undeclared or as bogus self-employed, earn extremely low wages, and are sometimes denied basic labour rights, such as adequate rest periods and pay.
- **Legal migration can be a key driver to remedy labour shortages.** Already today, many people from non-EU countries work in the care sector. But migrant care workers often work undeclared or in precarious conditions.
- **Investing in the care sector would help ensure that informal care is a choice rather than a necessity.**



On average across the EU, some **52 million people** are estimated to provide **informal long-term care** to family members or friends on a weekly basis, representing close to **80% of long-term care providers.**



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