

Spanish families Work-Life-Balance under the Covid crisis

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Parental Leave under Covid-19: global perspectives

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Abstract: We discuss on the use of leave arrangements and homeworking measures in Spain under COVID19 confinement and quarantines. We use results from online surveys on the impacts of the COVID quarantine on the WLB of families with children.

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The Covid19 Spanish context:

- 3 months State of emergency (“Estado de Alarma”) from March 13th extended six times until June 21st 2020.
- Official coronavirus deaths in Spain exceed 30,000, with total infections at 603,167. Present second phase/wave with 122 per 100,00 Accumulated Incidence in last 7 days (57,314 new diagnosed cases), 12.5 AI with symptoms ([Official data](#), Sept 15th)
- ECEC services and schools have been practically closed for six months, just re-opening from second week of September all over Spain. Out-of-school services (including lunch services) also re-open with much difficulty. On-line teaching and family monitoring were provided, when possible, during the state of alarm and until the end of the academic year. On-line teaching and monitoring is organized in case of quarantines. Children above 6 years old have to wear mask and ratios are being lowered.
- Very high economic and labour impacts
- Social and gender inequalities are amplifying (surveys and research in progress) affecting particularly families with children

Why does Covid-19 appear more extended in Spain?

- High number of tests, together with methodological criteria
- Cultural pattern of high sociability with physical contact
- Attitudes towards public recommendations, norms and prohibitions
- Family/Household structures (young adults living with parents, grandparents)
- Health Policies decentralization (diversity of policy criteria)

Presently lower incidence of severe cases, but very high social impacts of the pandemic: particularly on parents of pre-school and school-age children from the perspective of work-family balance.

(Ref. UB ass prof. Gallo, expert on health and social policies)

Great deal of labour and social Measures, but not on the pack of parental leaves regulation

- Sickness leave and other individual not family-related leaves have been more generously used. In the public sector use of leave for unavoidable duties.
- Telework as been the main strategy (estimation around one third of employees, higher prevalence amongst women)
- Temporary Regulation of Employment (up to 3.7 million employees on ERTES at 70% payments, still 0.8 extension till January 21), telework expansion with higher.
- Social measures as the establishment of a minimum income (Ingreso Mínimo Vital)
- Parental leave arrangements and benefits that were recently reformed (basically extending father's leave) have not been altered during the crisis, except for the option of unpaid up to 100% temporary working time reduction (Plan Me Cuida)
- Parents have mostly used additional measures of flexisecurity (Plan Me Cuida, e.g. recoverable annual paid leave regulated during the hardest part of the confinement or employee's exceptional entitlement to be granted by employers working conditions adaptations), annual working time flexibility, adapting working conditions and home teleworking to adjust having children at home.

Debate on leaves for working parents with sick or confined children

As Spain does not have a proper leave to take care of children when they are sick (for ordinary illnesses) and grandparents have to be protected, there is presently a hot debate on leaves for working parents with diagnosed children and children in nursery/school quarantines, as an alternative to maintain the extension of the unpaid working time reductions established during the state of alarm.

Discussed alternatives:

- Unpaid working time reductions (extending Plan Me Cuida) for children in school quarantines
- Fully paid leave for parents whose children are positive in Covid19 tests (PCR) (instrumented as a parent's Medical leave?)
- Addressing the regulation gap of leaves for parents when children have ordinary illnesses (e.g. as it exists in Sweden or Portugal)?

Overburdened doctors in primary care are afraid of having to face now more bureaucratic work

How does is this working in other EU countries? (we suggest to focus on that point in the debate)

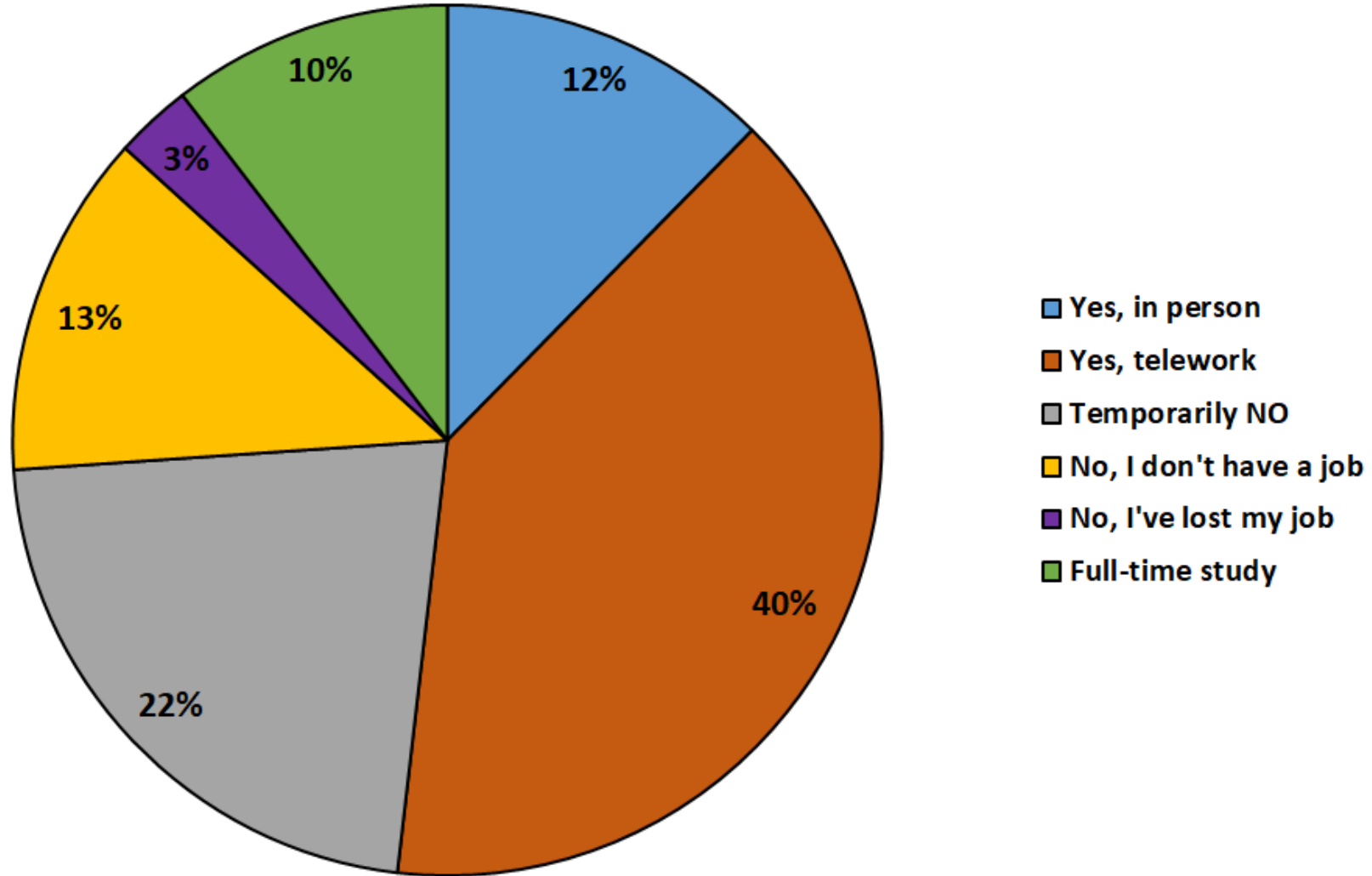
Results from online snowball survey “Social relations and daily life during the COVID-19 crisis”

- sample of 1.918 adults in Spanish households, with high levels of connectivity, education and telework (beginning April 11th until May 10th, 2020, during confinement) with clear bias as 77% of respondents report higher education. Two thirds of the respondents are women (68%), one third men (32%), and one third of respondents are in each of the following age groups: 18-29 (34%), 30-49 (31%) and 50+ year-olds (35%).
- Main results: observation on how family responds and emerges as a main referent; family relationships and strong ties are intensified; households become denser based on technologies and clear changes can be appreciated in relation to a range of feelings and moods.
- Even though adults with children have been most affected, in our sample they are the most satisfied during confinement, while the less satisfied and more pessimistic are adult children living with their parents. Future expectations point towards more sustainable practices.
- Many families with children report taking pleasure on having more time and meals together, despite overburden due to telework and homeschooling

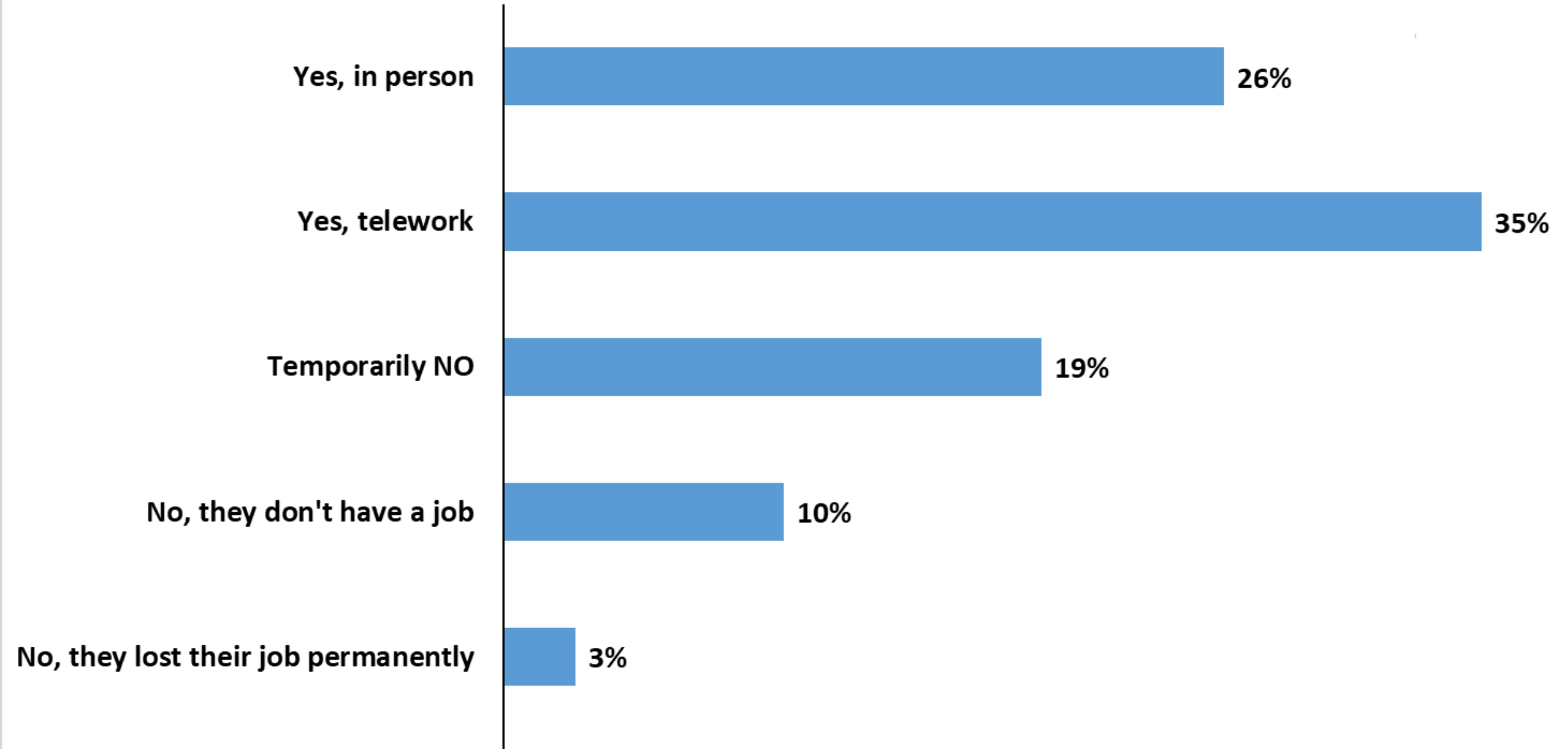
Household practices

- Households have become denser in all kind of activities, with the support of communication technologies (concentrating telework and home tele-schooling).
- The employment and economic situation in most households during the confinement do not yet show a great impact from the crisis, thanks to telework and because temporary interruptions at work are being carried out with flexi-security, accompanied by very active social policies, with mechanisms for job protection and income maintenance.
- From a public health perspective, it is relevant to notice how in a significant household proportion people moved to work, leaving and coming back home daily, during the confinement. Furthermore 17% of respondents provided help to other households (e.g. elderly people) and 7% received help in this sample.

Working during the confinement



Working of people confined with respondents



Results from snowball survey conducted by UAM

- sample of 476 adults in Spanish households, highly biased by education (83% tertiary studies), but not by sex (58% women), where 23% have children under 14.
- Many families (with children under 14) felt overloaded by the situation, even though 61% of the interviewed could work from home:

21% with less than tertiary education felt not capable (plus 32% only scarcely) to help their children with the tasks assigned to them or to take distance school lessons” (4 + 18 % with tertiary education; no sex difference).

Another 21% with less than tertiary education felt not capable to help their children with to cope with the life changes that the health emergency requires (10% with tertiary education; no sex difference).

42% with less than tertiary education felt not capable “Maintain a firm position when your child violates the rules or fails to comply with commitments” (15% with tertiary education: no sex difference).

Forthcoming Results (Lapuerta, et al.)

First online snowball survey focusing on gender inequalities initiated during the state of alarm, followed by a representative regional survey (Navarre) to 1800 adults living in couple or with under 16 years old children. Results will be available at the of this year.

Conclusions, research perspectives and policy implications

- More focus on sickness leave and flexisecurity measures (from Sept 22nd onwards?) than on extending paid parental leave arrangements.
- **Debate on leaves for working parents with sick or confined children: How is this working in other EU countries?**
- Flexisecurity seems to be more used by women and those with more education, and requires household conditions (e.g. technological connectivity and individual space)
- Families with children seem to have taken the opportunity of being more time together, as a positive issue, at least for those having basic resources.
- Much research in progress will give more light on how this crisis is affecting social inequalities (including gender and age divides)

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