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Abstract

Flying to Mars and Venus. The gendered nature of in-work poverty in Europe

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This paper addresses the invisibility of women in in-work poverty research by analyzing the Eurostat in-work poverty indicator in combination with a novel individualized in-work poverty indicator by Knittler and Heuberger (2018). The latter relies on individual income, but still accounts for the household via adjusting the poverty threshold. I show that men are often inwork poor due to household factors, while women are mostly individually poor, but lifted out of poverty on the household level. Therefore, the focus on household income by the Eurostat in-work poverty indicator systematically underestimates women's in-work poverty. Additionally, correlating the indicators with measures of individual material deprivation shows that both are not very good in identifying material deprivation and absolute poverty. Further, regression and decomposition analyses show that household dynamics drive this gendered nature of in-work poverty. Having a partner (and children) increases Eurostat in-work poverty risk for men, but decreases it for women. However, women's risk to be individually in-work poor increases when having a partner (and children), while men's decreases. These patterns differ across countries.

Austria, Ireland, Croatia, Poland, and the Southern European countries show the greatest gender difference in in-work poverty realities and also the highest influence of the household context, while Sweden and the other Eastern European countries seem to be more gender equal. The individualised indicator thus lends itself perfectly to measure (women's) financial independence of the household, also termed defamilialization in the literature, providing new insights in gender inequality across countries.