

10 March 2021 | 1100 hrs | 046/2021

Working Time Flexibility: 2019

The data provided in this news release is extracted from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) ad hoc module carried out during 2019. The LFS is a household-based survey and is used as a monitoring tool across the European Union for assessing progress made in various spheres of labour market and social statistics.

The EU-LFS Regulation (EC) No 577/981 together with Commission Implementing Regulation EU 2017/2384 made up the legal framework for the collection of data on work organisation and working time arrangements. This ad hoc module focuses on elements that are considered to be important for the well-being of workers and their work-life balance.

This news release, part of a series of three releases concerning the 2019 ad hoc module, provides a snapshot on the flexibility of workers and employers in 2019. It provides information on variable working times, freedom in taking hours and/or days off from work and frequency of working outside the normal hours. The target group for this ad-hoc module was employed persons aged 15 and over.

Flexible working time arrangements in Malta and the EU-28¹

In 2019, working times of all employed persons in Malta were mostly decided by their employer or clients (64.8 per cent). This is 6.1 percentage points higher when compared to the EU-28 average (Table 1, Chart 1).

Results indicated that a further 15.3 per cent had full autonomy on the start and end times of their working day. Similar to other EU countries, a discrepancy was recorded among sexes. Males were more likely to decide their working time (18.1 per cent) when compared to females (11.2 per cent), resulting in a gender gap of -6.9 percentage points. This gap is slightly higher than the EU-28 gender gap of -5.8 percentage points (Table 1, Chart 1).

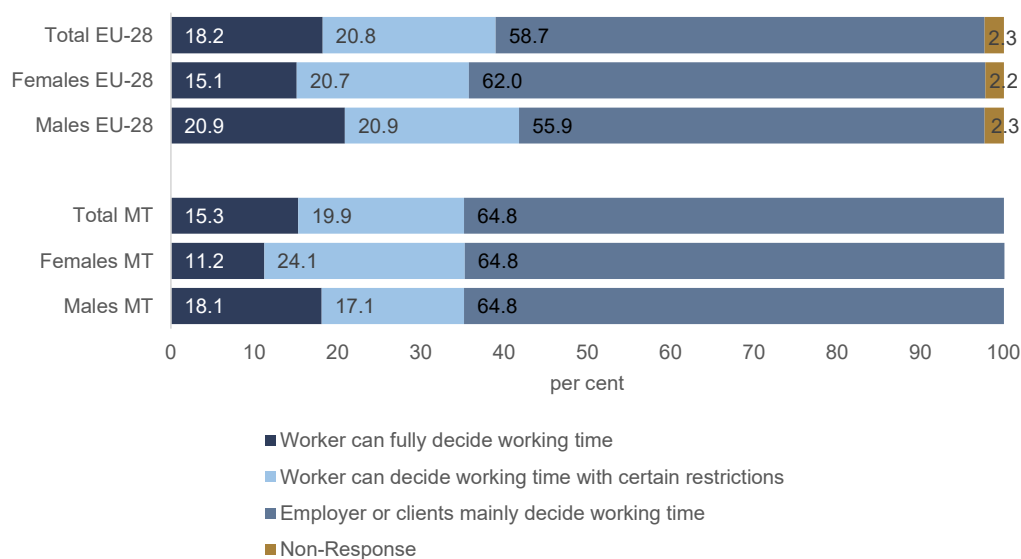
One out of every five workers in Malta had access to flexible working arrangements in agreement with their employer. With a share of 24.1 per cent, this situation was prevalent among females. Flexitime among males accounted for 17.1 per cent of all employed males (Table 1, Chart 1).

¹ The EU-28 aggregate is used for this ad-hoc module, since in 2019 the United Kingdom was still part of the European Union.

Table 1. Working time flexibility for employed persons in their main job by sex

Working time flexibility	Males		Females		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Worker can fully decide working time	27,021	18.1	11,390	11.2	38,411	15.3
Worker can decide working time with certain restrictions	25,610	17.1	24,561	24.1	50,171	19.9
Employer or clients mainly decide working time	96,902	64.8	66,042	64.8	162,944	64.8
Total	149,533	100.0	101,993	100.0	251,526	100.0

Chart 1. Flexible working time by sex in Malta and the EU-28¹



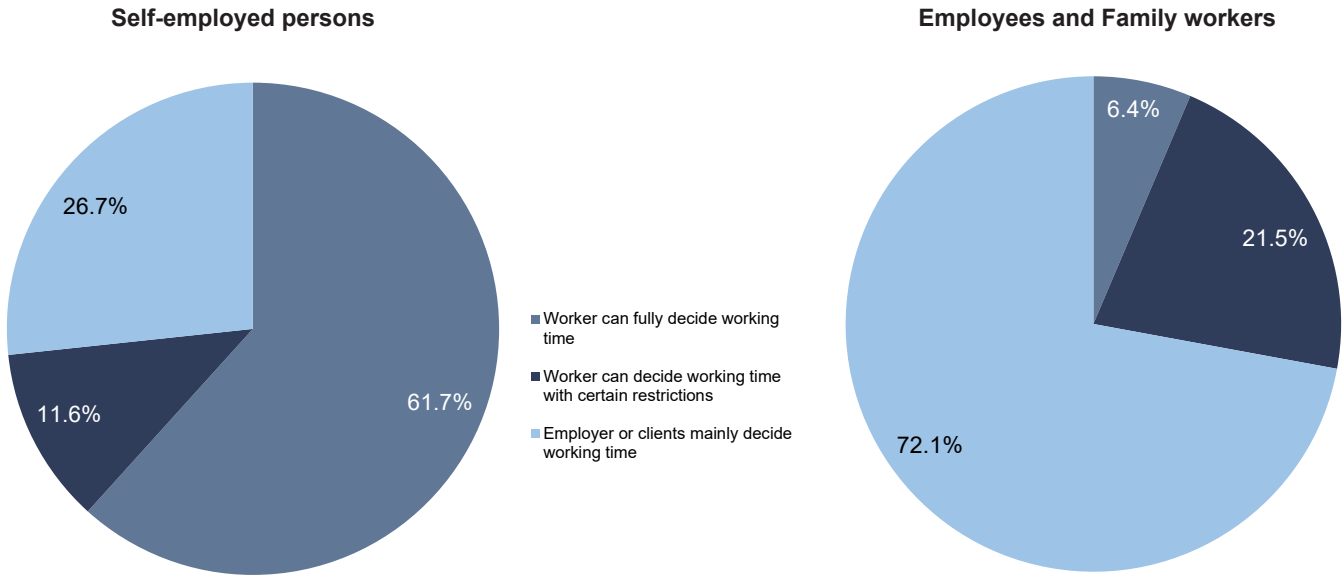
¹ The EU-28 aggregate is used for this ad hoc module, since in 2019 the United Kingdom was still part of the European Union.

A higher degree of flexibility was recorded among self-employed persons, where 61.7 per cent had full control of their working hours as opposed to 6.4 per cent of employees and family workers. Nearly 12 per cent of the self-employed could decide the start and end of their working day with certain restrictions while 26.7 per cent of the self-employed did not have any possibilities to determine their working time due to a number of situations such as clients' demands, legal regulations or set deadlines. In contrast, the start and end day of employees and family workers was mostly determined by the employer (72.1 per cent) (Table 2, Chart 2).

Table 2. Working time flexibility for employed persons in their main job by professional status

Working time flexibility	Self-employed		Employees and Family workers		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Worker can fully decide working time	24,886	61.7	13,525	6.4	38,411	15.3
Worker can decide working time with certain restrictions	4,696	11.6	45,475	21.5	50,171	19.9
Employer or clients mainly decide working time	10,750	26.7	152,194	72.1	162,944	64.8
Total	40,332	100.0	211,194	100.0	251,526	100.0

Chart 2. Working time arrangements



Possibility in taking hours or days off work at short notice

Nearly three out of every four workers, with restricted working times, found it easy to take some hours off work for personal or family matters at short notice (Table 3). Moreover, 72.8 per cent of all employed persons found it easy to take one or two days off within three working days’ notice (Table 4, Chart 3).

When compared with the other EU countries, Malta has the third highest share of workers for whom it is very or quite easy to take a few days off. The Czech Republic (75.9 per cent) and Slovenia (75.4 per cent) ranked first and second place respectively (Chart 3). The national share is much higher than the EU-28 average of 53.6 per cent (Chart 3).

Three out of every 10 employed persons in Malta reported difficulty in taking days off within three working days’ notice (27.2 per cent), 15.6 percentage points lower than the EU-28 average of 42.8 per cent. Results showed that the majority of employed persons in certain EU countries such as Romania, Slovakia and Bulgaria found it very difficult to take vacation leave within three working days’ notice (65.9 per cent, 55.8 per cent and 53.0 per cent respectively) (Chart 3).

Table 3. Level of difficulty in taking hours off from work at short notice by sex

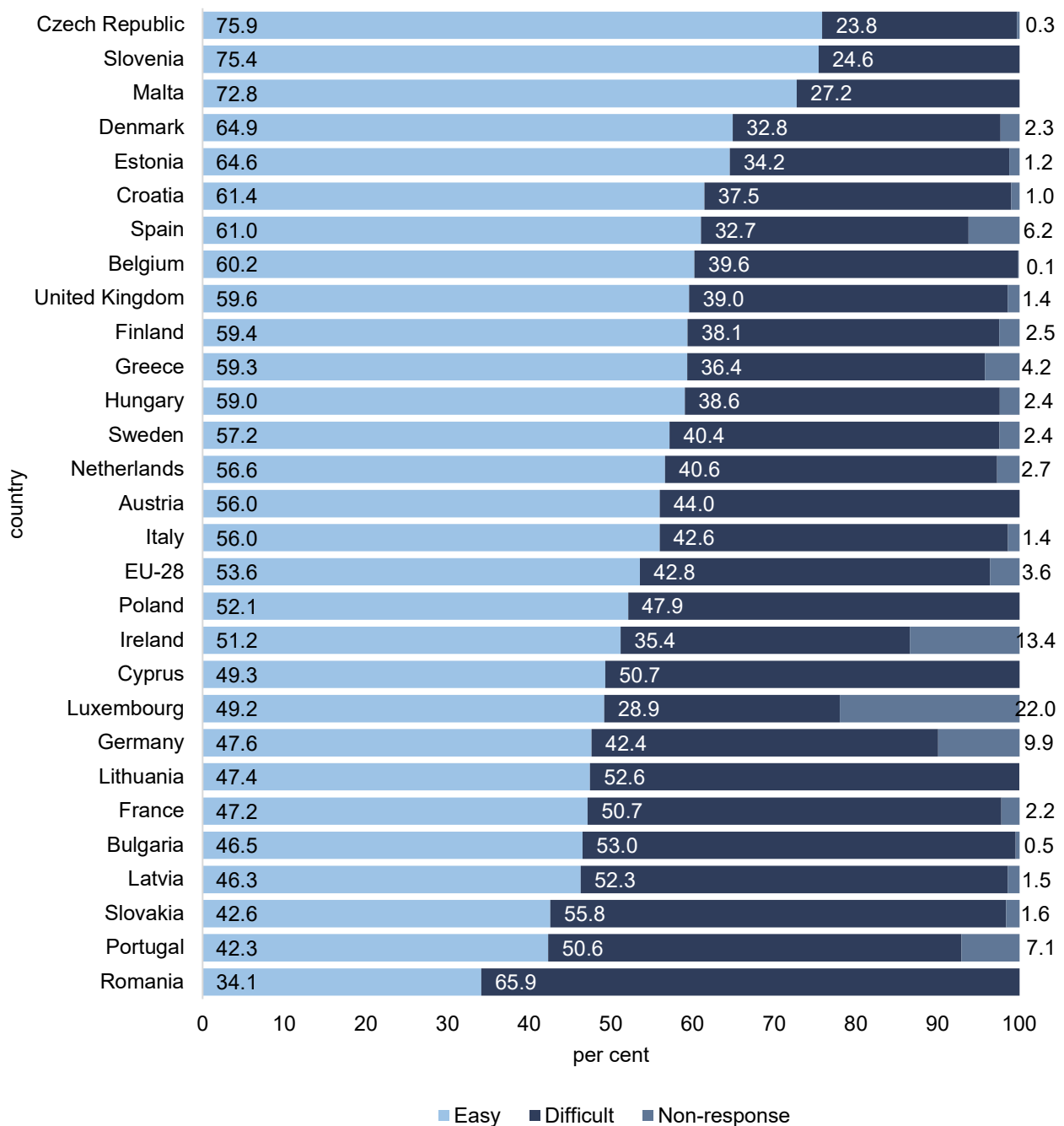
Level of difficulty	Males		Females		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very easy	47,409	38.7	34,672	38.3	82,081	38.5
Quite easy	42,724	34.9	30,469	33.6	73,193	34.4
Quite difficult	20,213	16.5	15,675	17.3	35,888	16.8
Very difficult	12,166	9.9	9,787	10.8	21,953	10.3
Total	122,512	100.0	90,603	100.0	213,115	100.0

Note: Persons who can fully decide their working time (illustrated in Table 1) were not included.

Table 4. Employed persons' level of difficulty in taking one or two days' leave within three working days' notice by sex

Level of difficulty	Males		Females		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very easy	63,808	42.7	40,565	39.8	104,373	41.5
Quite easy	47,241	31.6	31,552	30.9	78,793	31.3
Quite difficult	25,115	16.8	18,643	18.3	43,758	17.4
Very difficult	13,369	8.9	11,233	11.0	24,602	9.8
Total	149,533	100.0	101,993	100.0	251,526	100.0

Chart 3. Possibility of taking one or two days leave within three working days' notice among the EU-28¹



¹ The EU-28 aggregate is used for this ad hoc module, since in 2019 the United Kingdom was still part of the European Union.

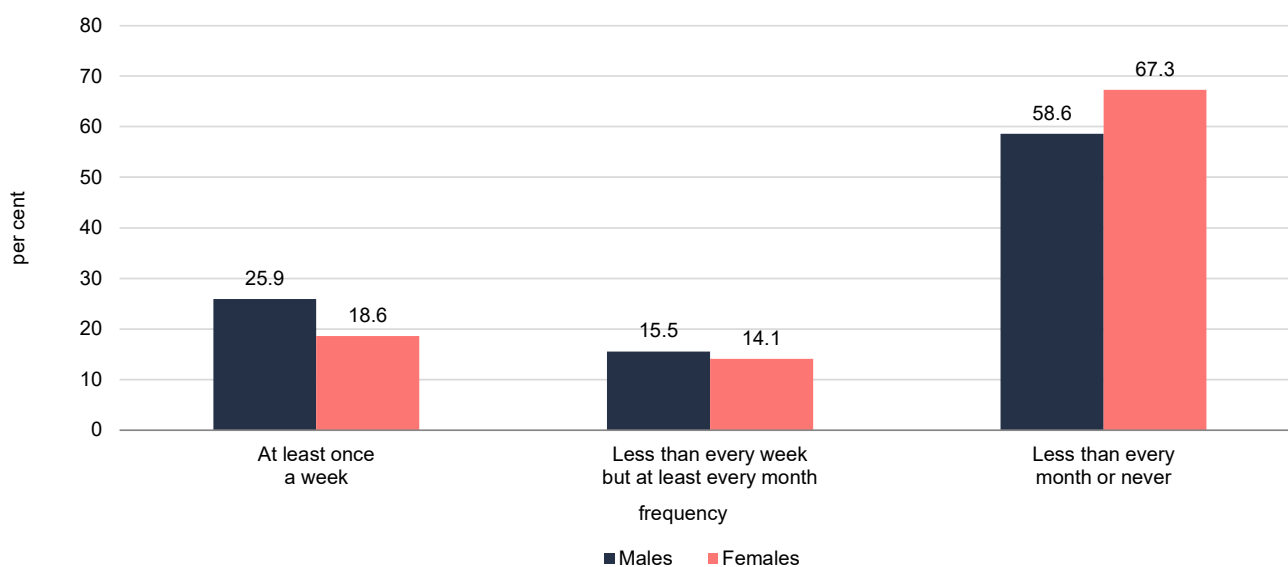
Adaptation in working time due to work demands

In 2019, nearly 40 per cent of all employed persons in Malta had to adapt their working time due to unforeseen demands such as requirements by tasks, clients, or supervisors. Results showed that more males than females were expected to adapt their working time by starting earlier or by working longer hours to fulfil their tasks. More than one fourth of males had to make such changes on a weekly basis (25.9 per cent) as opposed to 18.6 per cent of females. A further 15.5 per cent of employed males and 14.1 per cent of employed females experienced adaptations in their working time at least once a month (Table 5, Chart 4).

Table 5. Employed persons' frequency in changing their working time due to work demands by sex

Frequency	Males		Females		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
At least once a week	38,724	25.9	19,009	18.6	57,733	23.0
Less than every week but at least every month	23,246	15.5	14,365	14.1	37,611	15.0
Less than every month or never	87,563	58.6	68,619	67.3	156,182	62.1
Total	149,533	100.0	101,993	100.0	251,526	100.0

Chart 4. Adaptations in employed persons' working time due to work demands by sex



Contacted during leisure time

The majority of employed persons were not contacted during their leisure time (54.5 per cent). The remaining 45.5 per cent of workers were contacted by their employers or clients during their leisure time, and among this group, 12.6 per cent were expected to take action before the next working day (Table 6). This circumstance was more prevalent among males (14.3 per cent) when compared to females (9.9 per cent) (Table 6, Chart 5a, 5b).

Table 6. Frequency of work-related contacts during leisure time by sex

Frequency	Males		Females		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Was not contacted	76,479	51.1	60,618	59.4	137,097	54.5
Was contacted on a few occasions	41,808	28.0	26,744	26.2	68,552	27.3
Was contacted several times and expected to act before the next working day	21,435	14.3	10,138	9.9	31,573	12.6
Was contacted several times and not expected to act before the next working day	9,811	6.6	4,493	4.4	14,304	5.7
Total	149,533	100.0	101,993	100.0	251,526	100.0

Chart 5a. The share of employed males who were contacted during leisure time

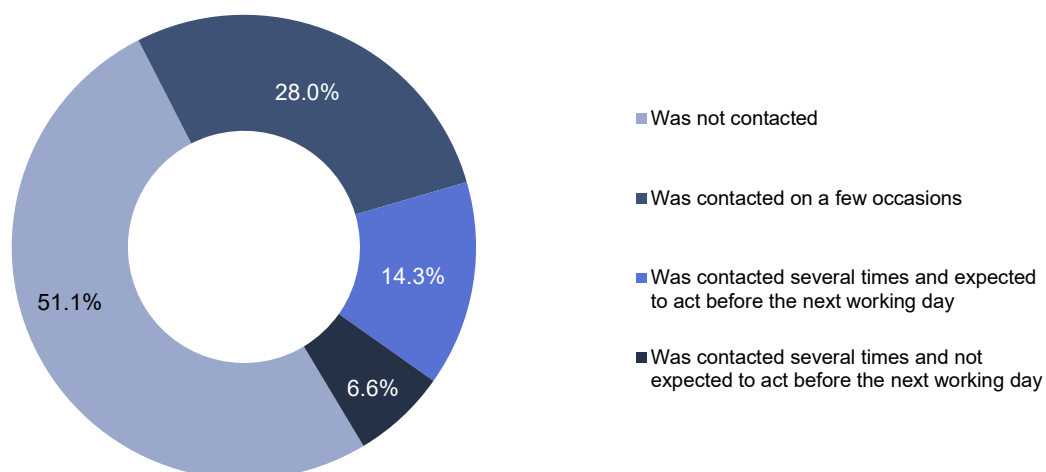
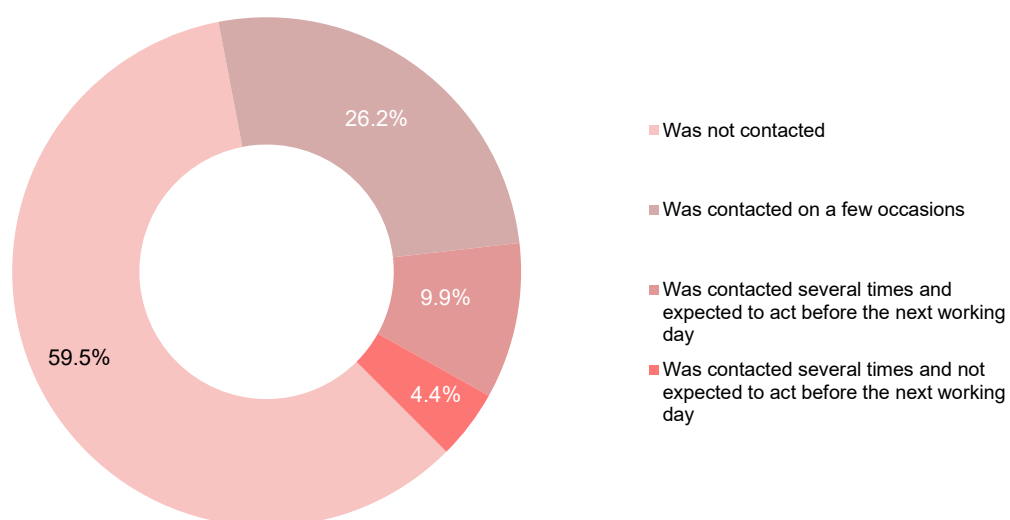


Chart 5b. The share of employed females who were contacted during leisure time



Employed persons in roles with higher responsibility were more likely to be contacted during their leisure time. Results indicated that almost two thirds of Managers claimed that they were contacted, out of which 29.7 per cent were contacted on a few occasions. A further 24.4 per cent were contacted and expected to take action before the following day while 11.0 per cent were contacted during leisure time and not expected to take action before returning to work. Results indicated that over half of Professional grades (50.6 per cent) and Technicians and associate professionals (56.2 per cent) were contacted during their leisure time (Table 7).

By contrast, the majority of persons employed as Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers (76.8per cent); Elementary workers (69.2 per cent) and Clerical and support workers (68.5 per cent) were not contacted (Table 7).

Table 7. Frequency of work-related contacts during leisure time by occupation

Occupational group	Was not contacted	Was contacted on a few occasions	Was contacted several times and expected to act before the next working day	Was contacted several times and not expected to act before the next working day	Total
	No.				
Armed forces	975 ^u	:	:	:	2,041 ^u
Managers	9,836	8,396	6,903	3,121	28,256
Professionals	22,941	14,314	6,761	2,344 ^u	46,360
Technicians and associate professionals	15,717	11,038	5,975	3,180	35,910
Clerical support workers	18,669	6,377	1,354 ^u	:	27,257
Service and sales workers	30,339	13,122	4,464	2,014 ^u	49,939
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	2,035	:	:	:	2,651
Craft and related trades workers	14,525	5,887	3,529	1,639 ^u	25,580
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	8,218	3,701	1,099 ^u	:	13,538
Elementary occupations	13,842	4,567	:	:	19,994
Total	137,097	68,552	31,573	14,304	251,526
	% occupational group				
Armed forces	47.8 ^u	:	:	:	100.0 ^u
Managers	34.8	29.7	24.4	11.0	100.0
Professionals	49.5	30.9	14.6	5.1 ^u	100.0
Technicians and associate professionals	43.8	30.7	16.6	8.9	100.0
Clerical support workers	68.5	23.4	5.0 ^u	:	100.0
Service and sales workers	60.8	26.3	8.9	4.0 ^u	100.0
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	76.8	:	:	:	100.0
Craft and related trades workers	56.8	23.0	13.8	6.4 ^u	100.0
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	60.7	27.3	8.1 ^u	:	100.0
Elementary occupations	69.2	22.8	:	:	100.0
Total	54.5	27.3	12.6	5.7	100.0

^u Under represented - between 20 and 49 sample observations

: Unreliable - less than 20 sample observations

Methodological Notes

1. The data provided in this release is based on the Commission Implementing Regulation 2017/2384 specifying the technical characteristics of the 2019 ad hoc module on work organisation and working time arrangements. The data was partly financed through EU grants.
2. During 2019, the ad hoc module was carried out on a sample of persons taking part in the LFS survey for the first and fourth time.
3. The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is carried out on an ongoing basis using a quarterly gross sample of 3,200 private households. The objective is to have a continuous assessment of labour market trends given that the reference weeks are evenly spread throughout the 13 weeks of the quarter. One-fourth of the sample is made up of households who have been selected to participate in the LFS for the first time. Three-fourths of the quarterly sample is made up of households who were selected to participate in the survey in previous instances, either one quarter before, or one year before, one year and a quarter before (2-(2)-2). Unless otherwise indicated, figures provided in this release refer to persons aged 15 and over and living in private households during the reference period. All criteria used for this survey match international methodologies used by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).
4. The LFS is designed to satisfy the concepts and definitions as outlined by Eurostat. This allows the comparability of results with other EU member states and countries following ILO definitions of employment and unemployment. Occupations are classified according to the ISCO-08 classification (International Standard Classification of Occupations) whereas the economic activity is classified according to NACE Rev. 2 (Nomenclature générale des Activités économiques dans les Communautés Européennes). Education attainment is classified according to ISCED 2011.
5. The 2019 ad-hoc module 'Work organisation and working time arrangements' comprises 3 sub modules. This release focuses on the 1st sub module 'Working Time Flexibility'. Two further releases on the other two sub-modules will be published as follows:
 - 18th March, 2021: Job Autonomy: 2019
 - 24th March, 2021: Commuting Time: 2019

6. Definitions:

- **Contact during leisure time** refers to contact by e.g. phone or e-mail during leisure time in the last 2 months (in the main job). Leisure time refers to 'time outside regular working hours'. Being contacted to take direct action means that action should be taken before the next working day.
- **Employees:** are defined as persons who work for a public or private employer and who receive compensation in the form of wages, salaries, fees, gratuities, payment by results or payment in kind.
- **Employed persons:** all persons aged 15 and over who, during the reference week, were in one of the following categories:
 - **paid employment:** includes those who during the reference week worked for at least 1 hour for a wage or salary, in cash or in kind.
 - **were employed but absent from work:** due to sick leave, bad weather, were undergoing training or education, did not work due to a labour dispute, were on maternity or parental leave, did not work due to slack work for technical or economic reasons, were absent from work for a period of less than 3 months, or were not working because on layoff and receiving at least 50 per cent of the salary/wage.
 - **self-employed:** covers persons who run a trade or business, rather than working as an employee for someone else. A person is self-employed if s/he is a sole proprietor or a partner working in a business.
 - **unpaid family workers:** refers to people who worked without pay in a family business or farm. Excluded from this definition are housewives.
- **Freedom to take hours off** measures the possibility to take one or two hours off in the main job for personal or family matters within one working day.
- **Freedom in taking leave** measures the possibility to take one or two days of leave within three working days in the main job. Days off are understood as holidays (excluding for example sick leave).

7. Key

- : Unreliable - less than 20 sample observations.
- ^u Under represented - between 20 and 49 sample observations.

8. Percentage totals may not add up due to rounding.

9. Absolute changes between one survey estimate and another must be treated with caution since minor changes (i.e. less than 2,500 persons) might be the result of sampling error.
10. More information is available from the NSO upon written request.
11. More information relating to this news release may be accessed at:
Sources and Methods: https://nso.gov.mt/en/nso/Sources_and_Methods/Unit_C2/Labour_Market_Statistics/Pages/Labour-Force-Survey.aspx
Statistical Concepts: <https://metadata.nso.gov.mt/concepts.aspx>
Metadata: <https://metadata.nso.gov.mt/reports.aspx?id=33>
Classification: <https://metadata.nso.gov.mt/classificationdetails.aspx?id=ISCO%202008>
<https://metadata.nso.gov.mt/classificationdetails.aspx?id=NACE%20Rev.%202008>
<https://metadata.nso.gov.mt/classificationdetails.aspx?id=ISCED%202011>
12. More information relating to this topic at Eurostat level may be accessed at:
Press Release: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-press-releases/-/3-29092020-AP>
News Items: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/news/whats-new>
Statistics Explained article on the submodule 1:
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Flexibility_at_work_-_statistics
Statistics Explained article on the submodule 2:
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Job_autonomy_and_pressure_at_work_-_statistics
Statistics Explained article on the submodule 3:
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Main_place_of_work_and_commuting_time_-_statistics
Eurobase tables:
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/lfs/data/database> (under: LFS ad-hoc modules | Eurobase code lfs_19)
13. References to this news release are to be cited appropriately.
14. A detailed news release calendar is available on:
https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/Release_Calendar/Pages/News-Release-Calendar.aspx