

# Chapter 7

## SANDWICH GENERATION IN THE WORKPLACE – INTERNATIONAL COMPARATIVE RESEARCH

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### ABSTRACT

*The chapter discusses the assumptions and main conclusions from the international comparative research, the key purpose of which was to identify and characterise the representatives of the sandwich generation (SG) in selected European countries in relation to professional activity. The research covered five countries, and when choosing them we took into account the diversity of welfare state models. The research was carried out in the autumn of 2020 with the use of a proprietary questionnaire on representative samples of Internet users aged 45–65 from Belgium (only Flanders), Finland, Italy, Poland and Great Britain. The conducted analyses confirmed the diversification of the situation of SG representatives in specific countries.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Established to implement the *Time4Help* project financed by the European Social Fund, the partnership not only ensured the effective achievement of the planned goals but also inspired international comparative research in the field of sandwich generation (SG). The main aim of research was to identify

and characterise people from this group in selected European Union countries in relation to professional activity. Another goal was an attempt to develop, on the basis of the obtained results, recommendations for management in the context of the effective adaptation of representatives of this group in the work environment. The literature query showed only few studies describing the actual size of the SG (see [Burke & Calvano, 2017](#); [Herlofson & Brandt, 2020](#); [Vlachantoni, Evandrou, Falkingham, & Gomez-Leon, 2020](#)). Additionally, according to some authors, the probability of belonging to SG differs between countries and depends on gender ([Leopold & Skopek, 2015](#)).

For the research, we selected five European countries, and while choosing them we took into account the differentiation of welfare state regimes whose expected impact on the situation of the SG is significant. The following states appeared to be particularly interesting from the point of view of the planned analyses: Finland with a Scandinavian Social Democratic Model, Belgium with a Continental Conservative Model or the so-called the Bismarck Model, Great Britain with the Liberal Model, Italy with the Southern European Model and Poland with the Central and Eastern European Model ([Ebbinghaus, 2012](#); [Eikemo, Bambra, Joyce, & Dahl, 2008](#); [Emigh, Feliciano, O'Malley, & Cook-Martin, 2018](#); [Esping-Andersen, 1990](#)). The liberal model (e.g. Great Britain and the USA) provides citizens with social and economic protection with minimal interference on the part of the government. State aid is dedicated only to people with the lowest income, and the use of such support is associated with a lower social status. A moderate amount of social benefits is to motivate people to take up employment. Continental Conservative Model (e.g. Belgium and Germany) provides care to citizens mainly through decisions made at the local level, respecting the principle of subsidiarity. What prevails is the patriarchal model of the family and traditional gender roles, whereas the state acts as the guarantor of social rights for all citizens. Scandinavian Social Democratic Model (Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway) ensures common access to state services and benefits. It also promotes equality for all citizens, interpenetration of gender and family roles and a significant share of women in the labour market. The basic principle is egalitarianism. Southern European Model (e.g. Italy and Spain) emphasises the key role of the family in providing support to those in need. Available state support is selective – in favour of some groups at the expense of others. There is no specific minimum subsistence level and no right to achieve social well-being. Central and Eastern European Model (Poland and other post-socialist countries) was created as a result of social changes that took place in the 1990s. Its main characteristics include the partial withdrawal of the state from the provision of social services and the introduction of institutional pluralism in social security and pension funds.

For the purpose of the study two research questions were formulated:

- (1) Does the welfare state regime prevailing in a given country have a significant impact on the perception of the SG group in the workplace?
- (2) Is belonging to the SG group, including working sandwich generation (WSG), determined by demographic or professional characteristics, and is the situation of people in this group different?

## 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

Computer Assisted Web Interview (CAWI)<sup>1</sup> research was carried out in the period from September to November 2020 on representative samples of Internet users in Belgium (only Flanders), Finland, Italy, Poland and Great Britain. Its main objective was to obtain data characterising people from the SG group in societies that differ in terms of the adopted models of the welfare state. The questionnaire was prepared by a Polish–Belgian–Finnish research team and included 51 questions (for different target groups). It received a positive opinion from the ethics committee of Wrocław University of Economics and Business. The research was conducted by a specialised public opinion polling company, and the average interview duration was 12 minutes.

The research was carried out on two types of samples. In each country, the basic sample included  $N=500$  participants, that is, people aged 45–65, ensuring their representativeness for features such as age, gender, education and place of residence. For better characteristics of the analysed target group we obtained the so-called boost sample with 200 people belonging to the SG group in each country. Ultimately, there were 2,522 respondents in the main sample and 833 respondents in the boost one. It is worth noting that the literature on the subject does not provide any specific definition of the SG group. Therefore, for the purpose of the research, we relied on the explanation of the SG and WSG consistent with the majority of studies addressed to these target groups (cf. e.g. [DeRigne & Ferrante, 2012](#); [Pagani & Marenzi, 2008](#); [Riley & Bowen, 2005](#); [Steiner & Fletcher, 2017](#)). By SG we meant people taking care of family members at a young (children and grandchildren), the same or old age (parents, in-laws, aunts and uncles) for more than 3 hours a week. By WSG we meant people who meet the above mentioned criteria and additionally work for more than 15 hours a week. The characteristics of the research samples due to the distinguished features are presented in [Table 1](#).

In the main sample, the share of respondents according to gender and distinguished age groups was comparable. In the case of education level,

**Table 1. Characteristics of the Main Sample and Boost Sample.**

Characteristic	Characteristic Categories	Country					Total
		Belgium	Finland	Great Britain	Italy	Poland	
Main Sample – Percentage of Respondents							
Gender	Female	48.5	50.2	49.5	52.3	50.3	50.2
	Male	51.5	49.8	50.5	47.7	49.7	49.8
Age	45–50	9.9	22.7	27.1	35.7	40.0	27.1
	51–55	12.9	23.5	19.8	26.0	26.6	21.8
	56–60	30.3	25.9	25.7	22.5	17.5	24.4
	61–65	46.9	27.9	27.3	15.8	15.9	26.8
Education level	Primary or lower	23.8	11.9	14.6	45.6	8.9	21.0
	Secondary, post-secondary	39.4	43.1	42.7	39.3	71.0	47.1
	Tertiary, academic degree	36.8	45.1	42.7	15.2	20.1	32.0
Boost Sample – Percentage of Respondents							
Gender	Female	51.8	62.0	54.2	53.8	65.1	58.5
	Male	48.2	38.0	45.8	46.3	34.9	41.5
Age	45–50	15.1	30.4	28.2	38.8	46.0	32.4
	51–55	15.7	22.2	24.9	27.5	29.8	24.2
	56–60	38.0	25.9	27.7	21.3	17.1	25.6
	61–65	31.3	21.5	19.2	12.5	7.1	17.8
Education level	Primary or lower	2.4	8.9	7.3	1.3	0.0	3.8
	Secondary, post-secondary	41.0	57.0	45.8	42.5	43.3	45.9
	Tertiary, academic degree	56.6	34.2	46.9	56.3	56.7	50.3

Source: Own elaboration.

most people had secondary/post-secondary education, followed by tertiary/academic degrees, whereas the least numerous group included people with primary or lower education. The situation differed from country to country, mainly due to the participation of representatives of different age groups and people with different education levels. In the case of the boost sample, where

the research group consisted of only SG representatives, the majority of people were women, people from the youngest distinguished age group and those with education level higher than primary.

In order to evaluate the occurrence and intensity of the SG phenomenon in the five European countries, we used descriptive statistics determined based on of the main sample. To assess the differentiation of the respondents' situations according to the selected demographic characteristics, we applied the significant difference test (Chi-square test) in the share of people with different categories of these characteristics in the answers to individual variants of questions from the questionnaire. Moreover, we applied the test of significance of mean differences (Student's *t*-test for two independent samples) in the case of characteristics with two distinguished categories and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) for characteristics with more than one category. For the last method in the case of significant differences between the groups, post-hoc tests are used to interpret the detected patterns. For multiple comparisons, Tukey honestly significant difference (Tukey HSD) test was used. For all the tests carried out, the significance level of 0.05 was assumed. In order to evaluate the specificity of SG representatives, and above all the WSG against other groups, we used descriptive statistics from the boost sample and the above-mentioned significant difference tests.

### 3. OCCURRENCE AND INTENSITY OF THE SG PHENOMENON IN THE ANALYSED EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

The analysis of the main sample in the international comparative research showed that the SG group covered 12.6% of the population aged 45–65, including 15.0% women and 10.2% men. Chi-square tests indicated the existence of statistically significant differences between the representatives of both genders belonging to this group. The value of the Pearson's Chi-square test at the level of 13.386 ( $p$ -value <0.000) indicates that statistically women take care of younger, the same or older generations more frequently than men. The analysis of belonging to the SG in specific countries, both in general and in terms of gender, showed a significant differentiation of this situation and made it possible to create two groups of countries with different occurrence and intensity of this phenomenon. The first group with at least a double-digit percentage of representatives of both genders in the SG consists of Italy and Poland, whereas the second one, where this percentage is single-digit, includes Belgium, Finland and the UK. The country with the highest percentage of people identifying with the SG is Italy – as many as 24.6% of respondents

were qualified to this group, including 26.0% of women and 23.1% of men. Poland came second with an average result of 15.9%, including 20.2% of women and 11.6% of men. It is worth noting that the conducted significant difference tests proved that the number of Polish women belonging to the SG is considerably higher than men (Pearson's Chi-square test at the level of 6.886,  $p$ -value = 0.009). In the other countries, we observed a significantly lower percentage of people belonging to the SG, and in each of them the share of women exceeded that of men. In Finland, the share of people aged 45–65 in the SG was 9.3%, including 11.4% of women and 7.1% of men, in Belgium it was 7.5%, including 9.4% of women and 5.8% of men, whereas in Great Britain, it was on average 5.6%, with 7.3% of women and 4.0% of men.

An equally large differentiation across the analysed countries was observed for the results obtained for the WSG group. In total, 8.3% of respondents admitted that they belonged to the group of working people taking care of the representatives of two other generations. At the same time, it is worth emphasising that in the entire sample we did not find any major differences between the percentage of women and men in such a situation (8.5% for women and 8.1% for men). Again, the highest percentage of respondents who declared that they belonged to the SG were those from Italy – on average, it was 15.8%, including 12.1% of women and 19.8% of men. The performed significant difference tests showed a considerably higher number of Italian men belonging to the WSG group (Pearson's Chi-square test at 5.730,  $p$ -value = 0.017). In the other countries, we did not observe any statistically significant differences between the percentage of women and men belonging to this group, whereas the percentage of respondents who declared that they belonged to the WSG in Poland totalled 12.1%, including 13.8% of women and 10.4% of men, 6.3% in Finland, including 7.5% of women and 5.2% of men, 3.8% in Belgium, including 4.5% women and 3.1% men and 3.4% in Great Britain, including 4.0% of women and 2.8% of men.

We noticed an interesting situation in specific countries in relation to the level of education of people belonging to the SG group. This characteristic was considered on three levels – primary or lower, secondary or post-secondary and tertiary education (academic degree). While in the entire sample we did not find any differentiation between the share of people with different education levels in the SG group (the percentage of people with primary education was 10.4%, with secondary education – 13.6% whereas with tertiary education – 12.7%), the situation in specific countries developed differently. The country where this differentiation was the smallest turned out to be Great Britain (4.1% for primary, 6.5% for secondary and 5.1% for tertiary education). No statistically significant differences between respondents with

different levels of education were found in Belgium (4.2% for primary, 7.5% for secondary and 9.7% for tertiary) or in Poland (6.7% for primary and 16.8% for each of the two remaining ones), but they were observed in Finland (1.7% for primary, 8.7% for secondary and 11.8% for tertiary) and Italy (18.6% for primary, 26.6% for secondary and 37.7% for tertiary). The values of Pearson's Chi-square test at the level of 11.969 ( $p$ -value = 0.003) for Italy and 5.986 ( $p$ -value = 0.050) for Finland indicate statistically more frequent belonging to the SG group in these countries among people with secondary or higher education.

Even greater differentiation in terms of education was found in the WSG group. At the level of the entire sample, we found statistically significant and more frequent belonging to this group among people with secondary or higher education (4.5% for primary education, 8.7% for secondary and 10.2% for tertiary education), whereas the value of Pearson's Chi-square statistic was 13.801, which corresponds to  $p$ -value = 0.001. Statistically significant differences in this respect were also found in Belgium (Pearson's Chi-square 10.347,  $p$ -value = 0.006) and Italy (Pearson's Chi-square 33.379,  $p$ -value <0.000).

Another characteristic that was taken into account when analysing the occurrence and intensity of the phenomenon on the basis of representative groups of respondents was age. We created four categories, namely people 45–50 years old, 51–55 years old, 56–60 years old and 61–65 years old. As for the SG, for the entire sample, the highest percentage of respondents belonging to it was recorded in the youngest age group (17.7%), whereas the lowest – in the oldest one (7.1%). This situation was observed in all the analysed countries, except Great Britain, where the most numerous group was the one of 51–55-year-olds, and not the youngest one like in the entire sample and other countries. The declining share of respondents from subsequent age groups was also observed in the WSG group, where the share of the youngest respondents was 12.6%, whereas of the oldest – 1.6%. Such a result, however, is not surprising. In Poland, for example, according to applicable law, women retire at the age of 60, so their share in this group is dramatically decreasing (only 1.3% in the case of WSG for the oldest group, and 6.3% in the case of SG).

After analysing the characteristics in the main sample, we tried to answer the question about recognising the SG phenomenon in the workplace in the countries covered by the research. To this end, we analysed the answers of all professionally active respondents to the following question: *Do you have any co-workers or employees who can be classified as SG?* In the entire sample, 28.9% of respondents answered 'yes', with women doing it more frequently than men (33.9% vs 24.6%, respectively). We also observed significant

differences in specific countries, and, interestingly, much lower recognition of this phenomenon in Poland and Italy, that is, in countries with a high percentage of SG representatives. The affirmative response to the question about co-workers from the SG was given by 44.5% of the Finns (49.0% of women, 39.9% of men), 42.7% of the Belgians (50.0% of women and 35.8% of men) and 24.1% of the Britons (30.6% of women and 19.3% of men). In Poland, the total number of affirmative answers was 19.2%, and like in other countries, they were more often given by women (20.1%) than by men (18.3%). In Italy it was 18.8% for all professionally active people, 23.2% for women and 15.6% for men.

Another area of the main sample analysis was the evaluation of health and financial situation of SG representatives in comparison with people not belonging to this group. To this end, we used a question from the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) research – *To what extent have your activities, which other people normally do, been limited due to health problems in the past six months?* In this question, there were three possible answers – ‘There was a major limitation’, ‘There was a limitation but not that serious’ and ‘There was no limitation at all’. The comparison of responses given by the representatives of the SG and other research participants showed a poorer assessment of one’s health in the SG group. The Chi-square tests indicated the existence of statistically significant differences between belonging to the SG and worse state of health (the value of the Pearson Chi-square statistic at the level of 25.166,  $p$ -value <0.000). On average, major limitations were indicated by 13.0% of the respondents, including 15.1% from the SG group and 12.7% of the others. Averagely, 34.9% of the respondents indicated the occurrence of some limitations – this answer was chosen by as many as 45.9% of SG representatives, compared to 33.3% of the other participants. About 52.2% of all respondents from the main sample did not report any health limitations. However, only 39.0% of SG representatives chose this answer, compared to 54.1% of people not belonging to this group.

The respondents were also asked to evaluate their financial situation. They had three options to choose from: ‘Bad’, ‘Neither bad, nor good’ and ‘Good’. Using this question, we strived to assess the financial situation of SG representatives both against the entire sample as well as professionally active people. About 35.3% of the respondents evaluated their financial situation as good, including 32.4% from the SG group and 35.7% of the remaining respondents. Interestingly, a lower percentage of people from the SG than the mean in the analysed group also described their financial situation as bad (on average, 21.2%, compared to 17.6% for SG representatives). The greatest

differentiation was observed in the ‘neither bad, nor good’ option, where as many as half of SG representatives described their situation in this manner, with the average for the entire sample at the level of 43.5%. Interesting results were also obtained when comparing only professionally active people belonging and not belonging to the SG group. In the case of evaluating one’s financial situation as bad, practically no differentiation was noted – all professionally active respondents as well as SG representatives and people not belonging to this group indicated this variant of the answer in 15.0% of cases. However, some differences were noted when both groups were assessing their financial situation as ‘good’ – on average, this answer was chosen by 40.7% of professionally active people, including only 32.5% from the SG and 42.1% of the other respondents. The conducted Chi-square tests showed the existence of statistically significant differences between belonging to the WSG and a poorer assessment of one’s financial situation compared to other professionally active people (Pearson Chi-square statistic at the level of 7.866,  $p$ -value = 0.020).

The visualisation for the analysed questions is presented in [Fig. 1](#).

#### 4. WSG IN TERMS OF DEMOGRAPHIC AND PROFESSIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

In order to create an in-depth profile of the SG group, we additionally relied on the data from the boost sample that consisted of the respondents from the countries covered by the research meeting the criteria described for the SG group, with particular attention to the WSG group. Thus, the general sample, including the main ( $N=2,522$ ) and the boost sample ( $N= 833$ ), had a total of  $N=3,355$  respondents. Of them, 1,151 people (34.4%) belonged to the SG (including the respondents meeting the criteria from the main sample), including 784 who belonged to the WSG group (23.4% of the full sample, 67.9% of the SG). It is worth noting that the indicated targeted sample did not meet the requirements of representativeness and, therefore, we do not recommend drawing conclusions for the population based on the analysis. Nevertheless, a significant increase in the size of the SG group, and especially the WSG, allowed us to conduct additional analyses based on characteristics such as gender or country of origin, which, due to the limited number of respondents meeting the criteria of the target group in the main sample, was difficult to carry out. The purpose of the in-depth analyses was primarily to characterise the situation of the SG in the labour market, as well as to evaluate the differentiation of the nature of care provided due to the demographic and professional characteristics of the respondents.



Source: Own elaboration.

**Fig. 1. SG – Differentiation of the Situation.**

Firstly, we analysed the structure of the research samples due to the situation of respondents in the labour market, but we did not find any significant differences between the structure of the main and the general sample. In the main sample, 58.3% of the respondents were professionally active – 76.6% of them stated they worked full-time, whereas 23.4% – part-time. In the general

sample, 62.3% of the respondents were professionally active, and the share of those working full-time was 76.1%. Next, we compared the respondents from the general sample belonging and not belonging to the SG in terms of the situation in the labour market, and discovered significantly higher professional activity in the SG group. As many as 72.7% of respondents belonging to the SG indicated that they were employed, compared to 56.5% of professionally active people not belonging to the SG (see [Table 2](#)). At this point, it is worth pointing out that the percentage of people belonging to the SG who are self-employed is higher than among respondents who do not belong to this group (8.9% and 6.1%, respectively). As far as of full-time and part-time employment is concerned, we did not find any differences between the two analysed groups. In both of them, about 76% of the respondents claimed they worked full-time. We also compared professionally active people belonging and not belonging to the SG, but again we did not observe any significant differences in terms of the nature of employment. There were 88.8% of employees in the SG group and 90.0% in the group of other professionally active people, 11.2% of self-employed working in the SG group, and 10.0% in the group of other professionally active people.

In the subsequent part of the research, we considered the situation in the labour market of women and men who belong to the WSG. In this group, on average, 72.6% of people declared full-time employment – among women it was 66.0%, whereas among men it was 80.1%. On average, 16.2% of the respondents from this group declared part-time employment, with significantly more women (24.5%) than men (6.8%). Male respondents also much more often indicated self-employed working full-time or part-time (13.1%), compared to 9.5% of women, with the average being 11.2% (see [Table 2](#)).

Significant differences between women and men from the WSG were observed in terms of working time. On average, 71.7% of female respondents indicated full-time work, whereas 28.3% – part-time. On the other hand, the percentage of men working full-time was as high as 91.3%, with only 8.7% working part-time. Very interesting information was provided by the analysis of working time according to gender in specific countries covered by the research. Considering the situation of women it can be stated that in Poland it looks significantly different as only 14.1% of female WSG representatives work part-time, which is a half less than indicated for the entire sample. On the other hand, in Belgium 50.0% of women from the WSG group stated they worked part-time, and 41.5% in Great Britain. In the group of men, a very low percentage of respondents from the WSG working part-time was recorded in Finland (4%), compared to 12.1% in Belgium or 11.0% in Italy (see [Table 2](#)).

**Table 2. The Status of the SG Group in the Labour Market (% of Respondents).****The Situation in the Labour Market – People from the SG Versus Other People**

SG	Full-time Employee	Part-time Employee	Self-employed Full-time	Self-employed Part-time	Not Employed
Yes	49.5	14.3	5.6	3.3	27.3
No	39.0	11.4	4.1	2.0	43.5

**The Situation of People from the WSG Group in the Labour Market – Gender**

Gender	Full-time Employee	Part-time Employee	Self-employed Full-time	Self-employed Part-time
Female	66.0	24.5	5.7	3.8
Male	80.1	6.8	11.2	1.9
Total	72.6	16.2	8.2	2.9

**The Situation of People from the WSG Group in the Labour Market – Country and Gender**

Country	Full Time Work		Part Time Work	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Belgium	50.0	87.9	50.0	12.1
Finland	75.9	96.0	24.1	4.0
Great Britain	58.5	91.4	41.5	8.6
Italy	63.0	89.0	37.0	11.0
Poland	85.9	92.5	14.1	7.5
Total	71.7	91.3	28.3	8.7

**Feeling the Need to Change the Amount of Working Time in the WSG Group**

Gender	I Would Like to Work Less	I Would Like to Work Longer	I Would Devote as Much Time to Work as I Do Now
Female	46.9	7.1	46.0
Male	39.8	11.8	48.4
Total	43.6	9.3	47.1

Source: Own elaboration.

We also analysed the answers to the question about the average weekly working time in the WSG group. In the entire WSG sample, the average number of working hours per week was 37.49, with 34.93 hours for women and 40.44 hours for men. People working the longest hours appeared to be the Poles with 39.34, followed by the Finnish (39.13 hours). The British spent the least time at work – 35.05 hours per week.

The average weekly involvement in looking after people from two generations is 19.6 hours for the entire SG sample, while for the WSG group it is 18.88 hours and for the non-working SG group it is 19.77 hours. From the point of view of gender, women are much more burdened with providing such care (on average, 20.43 hours a week, including 19.47 hours for the WSG and 21.99 hours for the non-working SG) than men (on average, 17.36 hours a week, including 18.21 hours for the WSG and 14.57 hours for the non-working SG). When comparing different countries, it seems that in Poland the respondents from the SG are burdened the most (on average, 22.40 hours a week, including 23.13 hours for women and 21.05 hours for men). Great Britain took the second place with 22.26 hours per week, followed by Italy (19.4 hours), Belgium (15.26 hours) and Finland (14.74 hours).

Another set of questions addressed to SG representatives concerned the structure of time dedicated to the younger and older generation they take care of. In the entire sample, the respondents indicated that they devoted, on average, 51.8% of their time to the younger generation (children and grandchildren), with no greater differentiation in terms of the respondents' country of origin observed. The highest percentage share was observed in Poland (54.0%), whereas the lowest – in Great Britain (48.7%). While analysing the involvement in taking care of the younger generation by people from the age groups indicated in the previous point, it is worth noting that younger people are much more burdened with providing such care (45–50 years old, approx. 56.3%) than older ones (56–60 and 61–65 years old).

Next, all professionally active respondents were asked whether they would like to change the number of working hours. To the question: *If I had the opportunity to change the amount of time I usually devote to work during the week, at the same rate per hour ...* there were three possible answers: 'I would like to work less', 'I would like to work longer' and 'I would devote as much time to work as I do now'. The distribution of answers was respectively 42.1%, 8.8% and 49.1%. Interestingly, in the WSG group we could observe a greater share of both those who wanted to work less (43.6%) and those who wanted to work longer (9.3%). Considering the answers to this question only for the WSG group, but broken down by gender, it can be stated that women more often strive to work less (46.9%) than men (39.9%). Only 7.1% of women from the WSG group expressed willingness to increase the number of working hours compared to 11.8% of men (see [Table 2](#)).

Analysing the answers given by the SG in terms of different characteristics, we also asked about the place of residence of the older generation whom they take care of. There were four possible options, namely: 'We live together', 'We live in the same town', 'We live in different places, but within the distance of 50 km' and 'We live in different places, more than 50 km away'. For the entire

SG group, the distribution of the answers was the following: 18%, 51%, 23% and 8%, respectively. It is worth noting that no significant differences were observed between the WSG and non-working SG representatives. Slightly more people from the WSG live in the same household (18.2% compared to 16.6% for the non-working SG) or live in the same town (52.3% compared to 47.7% for the non-working SG). The analysis of the situation in specific countries showed significant differences, though. As many as 26.8% of Polish and 25.4% of Italian respondents indicated that they shared a household with the person staying under their care. On the other hand, only 3.4% of Finnish and 10.7% of Belgian respondents selected this answer. Additionally, in Poland 57.5% of respondents indicated that they lived in the same town as the person they took care of. In Finland, 25.4% of respondents stated that the person they took care of lived in a place more than 50 km away (with only 2.1% Polish respondents choosing this answer). We asked the same question about a person from the younger generation which the SG took care of, and the distribution of answers looked in the following way: 44.3%, 34.1%, 14.7% and 6.9%. In this case, it was possible to observe much larger differences between the WSG group and non-working people from the SG group. For example, 50.5% of respondents from the WSG group stated they shared a household with the person they took care of, compared to 31.1% for people from the non-working SG group. Taking into account the country, the highest percentage of respondents living in the same household was observed in Italy (54.6%) and Poland (51.2%), whereas the lowest in Finland (29.8%). On the other hand, as many as 20.0% of respondents from Finland stated that they lived in a town more than 50 km away from the place of residence of the person of younger generation they took care of (compared to 2.9% in Belgium and 3.3% in Poland).

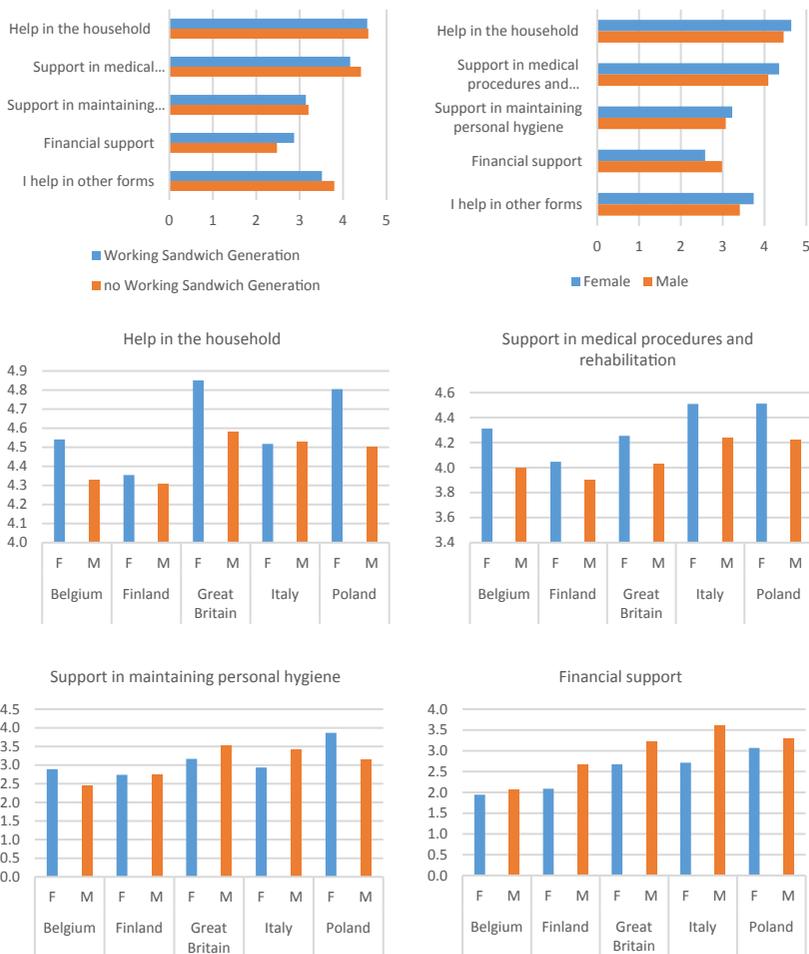
Another area of the analyses was the nature of the care provided. As far as elderly people who SG representatives looked after were concerned, we specified the types of activities performed as part of this care and their intensity. The respondents were asked to perform an evaluation using a 1–6 scale, where 1 meant ‘never’ and 6 – ‘very often’. The activities included in the research were the following: help in the household (e.g. shopping, cleaning, etc.), support in medical procedures and rehabilitation (e.g. visiting a doctor together, arranging formalities related to obtaining medical or rehabilitation services), support in maintaining personal hygiene, financial support and other forms of help. According to the answers obtained, SG representatives most often help older family members with activities related to the household and support in the area of medical care and rehabilitation. This finding distinguishes this group from carers of the elderly whose activities focus mainly on helping in

the household. While conducting the research, we also paid attention to the intensity of help according to characteristics such as employment, gender and country of origin of people providing care. As far as statistical significance is concerned, non-working people from the SG are more involved in support in medical procedures and rehabilitation ( $p$ -value for  $t$ -statistic at the level of 0.001) and other forms of help ( $p$ -value for  $t$ -statistic at 0.01) than those who are professionally active. However, they provide financial support to the older generation less frequently ( $p$ -value for the  $t$ -statistic below 0.000). Women more often than men perform household chores, ensure support in medical procedures and rehabilitation, and other forms of help. However, compared to men, they less often support elderly family members financially. In the case of the analysis of the differences in the intensity of care provided by the SG to their elderly family members by country, statistically significant differences were found for all forms of care included in the research. For example, helping with household chores is significantly more intensive in Poland and Great Britain than in Finland. Assistance in the medical and rehabilitation area, on the other hand, is characterised by significantly greater intensity in Poland and Italy rather than in Finland. Taking into account the assistance in maintaining personal hygiene, three groups of countries can be distinguished – Belgium and Finland, where the share of this type of care is relatively low, Poland and Great Britain with a relatively high intensity of this type of support and Italy with a moderate level compared to the other countries. Financial support for the older generation is significantly more common in Italy, Poland and Great Britain rather than in Belgium and Finland. In the ‘other forms of help’ category, the respondents specified the type of assistance provided. The most frequently mentioned forms included spending time together, talking, going for walks together, visiting places of culture (e.g. theatre, opera, and cinema) or financial consulting.

The visualisation of the answers obtained for the forms of care for the older generation is presented in [Fig. 2](#) (mean of indications).

## 5. CONCLUSION

Referring directly to the research questions presented in the introduction, it should be stated that the analyses carried out on international data allowed us to obtain affirmative answers in both cases. The observed differentiation of the situation of SG representatives in the five countries covered by the research confirmed the influence of the welfare state regime prevailing in a given country on the perception of this group in the workplace. On the other hand,



Source: Own elaboration.

**Fig. 2. Forms of Care Provided by SG Representatives to the Older Generation.**

visible differences in the occurrence and intensity of the SG phenomenon in terms of demographic or professional characteristics showed the dependence of belonging to this group on the analysed features, and confirmed the strong differentiation of the situation of its representatives.

Taking into account the occurrence and intensity of the SG phenomenon in terms of the situation in the countries covered by the research, it is worth pointing out two distinguished groups of countries that differ strongly in

the level of its occurrence. The first group includes Italy and Poland, that is, countries with Southern European and Central and Eastern European welfare state regimes, while Belgium, Great Britain and Finland, that is, countries with the Continental Conservative, Liberal and Social Democratic regimes, belong to the second group. The different intensity of the SG phenomenon, ranging from 25% in Italy and 16% in Poland to 8–9% in Belgium or Finland and about 6% in Great Britain, indicates stronger level of involvement of middle-aged individuals in looking after people from two generations in the countries where the importance of family ties and defined gender and family roles are highlighted. On the other hand, it is worth noting a reverse dependency when it comes to recognising this phenomenon in the workplace. The presented results prove that in the countries with a high share of middle-aged people in the SG group, the representatives of this group in the workplace are unrecognisable or even invisible. On average, in the entire sample, 29% of professionally active respondents answered the question about co-workers or employees from the SG group in an affirmative way. In Poland or Italy, the average result was 19%, whereas in Finland and Belgium 44% and 43%, respectively. The reason for such results, apart from the current family model in Poland and Italy, and even ‘natural commitment to care’ expected especially of women, might be the sense of fear or shame preventing people from raising such topics in the workplace. It is also worth emphasising that the identified differences may result from both different welfare state regimes and the diversity of cultural dimensions in the analysed countries (Hofstede, 2011; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). However, this area of research requires a considerably deeper insight.

Interesting observations were also made when analysing the participants of the SG group, and especially the WSG, in terms of the distinguished characteristics. On the one hand, participation in the SG from the point of view of education of the respondents in the representative sample indicated that people with secondary or tertiary education belong to this group much more frequently. On the other hand, an increase in the occurrence and intensity of the SG phenomenon in subsequent age groups and the most numerous youngest clusters may indicate the effects of ageing in populations and the growing need for support as well as for a more numerous group of this type of carers. The need for support is proved by the worse health situation of SG representatives, especially a very low percentage of people who do not experience any discomfort, as well as the worse financial situation of the WSG compared to other professionally active people.

What should be the subject of special concern and systemic solutions is the support for women from the SG group whose situation is much worse

than that of men. This is proved by the level of intensity of this phenomenon, which in all countries covered by the research showed differences at the level of several percentage points to the disadvantage of women, but above all the level of involvement in looking after the older and younger generation and the perceptible level of fatigue. It is also worth noting the greater involvement of women in all forms of care for the older generation, except for financial support. An interesting observation concerns the differences found in the intensity of part-time work performed by women in specific countries, and especially a low percentage of Polish women from the SG group working in this employment system. This should be the subject of further research, as the high level of engagement in looking after others and full-time work lead to fatigue, deterioration of health and, consequently, increasing problems of carers.

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