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Working Conditions in Greece : Experiences and Attitudes around the Labour Market

Brief report in English with the most
important findings of the 2022 Edition

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NICOS POULANTZAS
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Report

Most important findings of the recent NPI/Prorata survey (2022)

Working Conditions in Greece: *Experiences and Attitudes around the Labour Market*

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The survey on labour market conditions in Greece and the experiences and attitudes of the workforce on relevant policy issues was first launched by the Nicos Poulantzas Institute in 2020 and has been conducted annually since then. This survey is particularly important in a country like Greece, where employment, wages and labour rights were severely affected by the economic crisis and the bail-out programmes implemented in the 2010s.

This report focuses on the findings of the aforementioned survey that explain how the increase of inflation for basic commodities as well as the high cost of housing and energy and the insufficient wages would not allow the working population in Greece to achieve a decent standard of living for themselves and their families. Our report provides also some additional information on the gap between different genders and age cohorts.

Introduction

The labour market in Greece is currently recovering from the effects of the pandemic but at the same time the cost of living is skyrocketing. Consequently, the disposable income of workers and employees is shrinking, causing concerns about an acute social crisis in the coming months. This fact places great emphasis on the problem of wages.

Following the pandemic, the average salary has not recovered to the levels of 2019, presenting a significant deviation from the corresponding EU average. Simultaneously, constant revaluations and increases in prices began to significantly reduce the purchasing power of wages. In addition, deviation from the EU levels also appears in other qualitative aspects of the labour market, such as the protection of workers and employees granted by collective agreements.

In the following chapters we summarise in English the most important and relevant findings of the recent quantitative research conducted by the Nicos Poulantzas Institute in collaboration with the polling company Prorata S.A. The detailed findings of this research can be found (in Greek) on the NPI website¹.

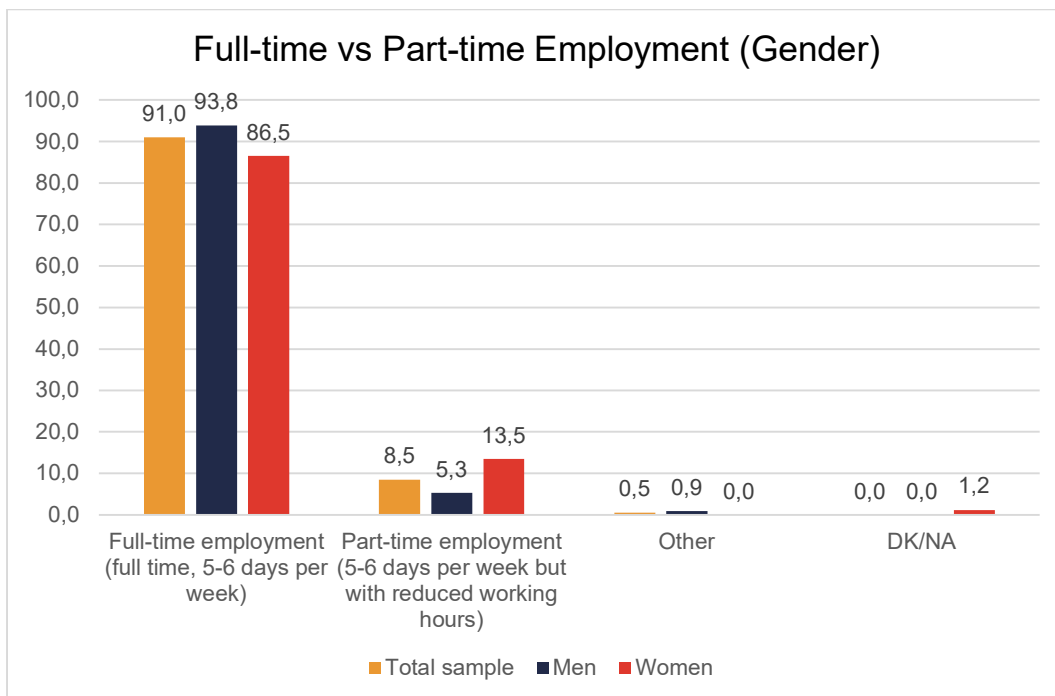
The fieldwork of the quantitative survey ***Working Conditions in Greece: Experiences and Attitudes around the Labour Market*** was conducted on October 13-31, 2022, using a structured questionnaire and following the self-filling mode on the online platform of Prorata SA. The sample (no quota sampling) consisted of 804 persons (general population) over 17 years old residing across the Greek territory. The sample was selected using two initial filter questions for the determinations of the respondents' position in the labour market and it consists of salaried persons employed both in the public and in the private sector, including technically self-employed persons who are de facto dependent on one employer both for their income and for the way they organise their day-to-day work. The results were ex post weighted according to the gender quotas in the Greek workforce according to the Workforce Survey of the Greek Statistics Authority.

¹ <https://poulantzas.gr/yliko/erevna-synthikes-ergasias-stin-ellada-ebeiries-kai-staseis-gyro-apo-tin-agora-ergasias-3o-kyma-2022/>

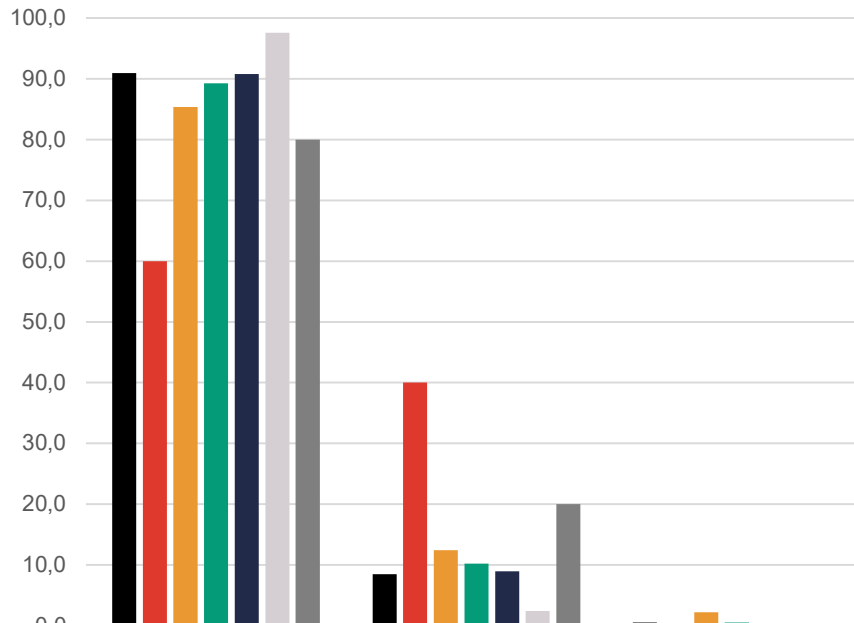
I. Job Insecurity and Precarity

I.1. Full vs Part-time Employment

Generalized precarity is one of the basic characteristics of the Greek labour market. According to our survey, 1 out of 10 employed persons work on a part-time contract (either voluntary or not voluntary), which is not a negligible percentage. We also notice a difference depending on gender: 93.8% of men are in full-time employment compared to 86.5% of women. Similarly, the percentage of full-time employment increases with age, except for the older age group category (65+), which may be related to employees close to retiring.



Full-time vs Part-time Employment (Age Cohorts)



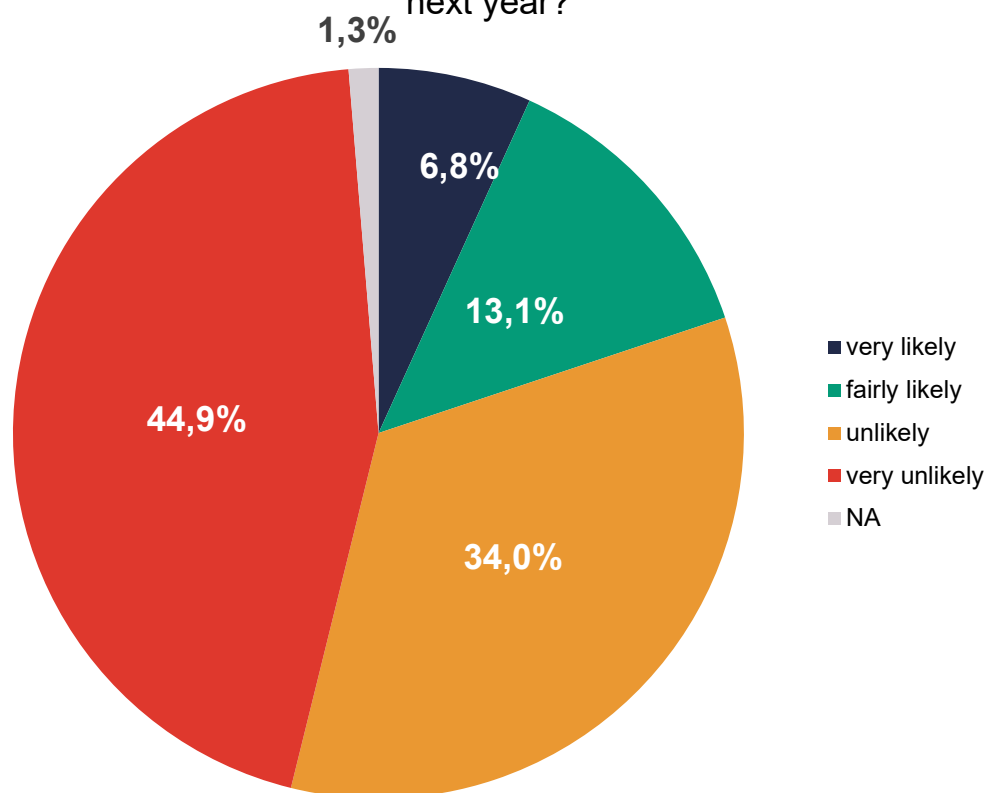
	Full-time employment (full time, 5-6 days per week)	Part-time employment (5-6 days per week but with reduced working hours)	Other
■ Total sample	91,0	8,5	0,5
■ 17-24*	60,0	40,0	0,0
■ 25-34	85,4	12,4	2,2
■ 35-44	89,3	10,2	0,5
■ 45-54	90,8	8,9	0,4
■ 55-64	97,6	2,4	0,0
■ 65+	80,0	20,0	0,0

* The numbers for the 17-24 y.o. cohort are indicative due to the small absolute number ($N < 60$) in our sample.

I.2. Job Insecurity

Regarding job insecurity, 19,9% (1 in 5 employees) consider it "very" or "fairly likely" that they will lose their job (or that their contract will not be renewed) in the next year. This is even more worrying if one takes into consideration the previous year's wave of our survey (2021), according to which 88,2% of employed persons in all categories (employees and self-employed) stated that finding a new job similar to their current one would be "not very easy" or "not at all easy".

Job Insecurity | How likely is it in your opinion to lose your job (or not have your contract renewed) in the next year?



II. Wages

II.1. Wages level and distribution

The level of wages emerged during the previous years as a central question for the Greek labour market. An issue of particular importance for Greece is the increase of the minimum wage since its level indirectly affects all salaries. It is characteristic that Greece remains among the countries with the lowest minimum wage, excluding countries of Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Currently, the minimum wage in Greece is 780 euros gross.

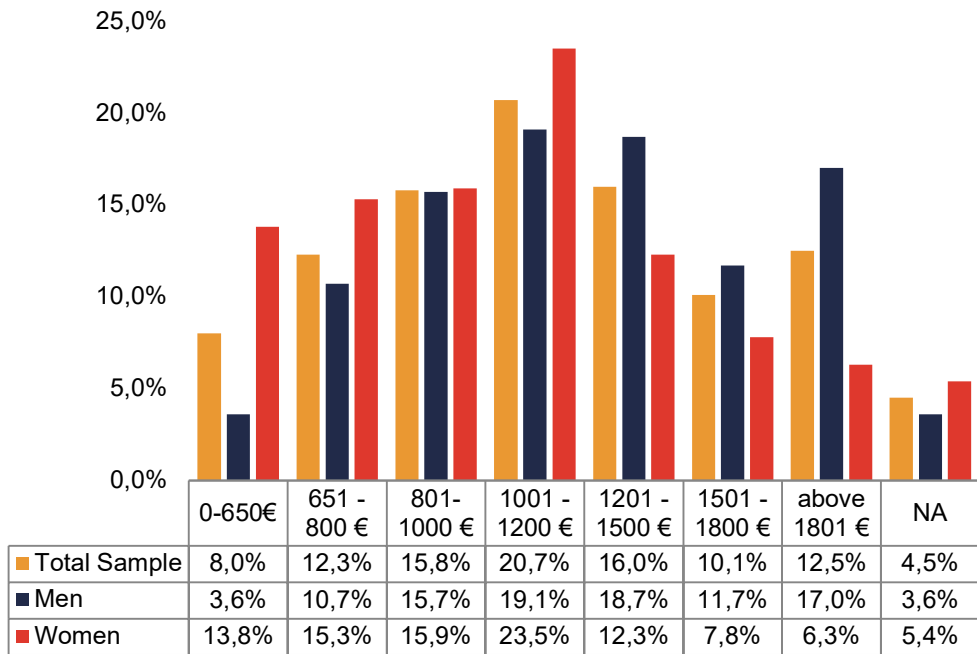
According to the findings of our survey, 29,0% of the private sector employees are paid with less than 800 euros per month (of which 12,1% with less than 650 euros). At the same time, the great majority of employees working in the public sector (58,0%) are paid between 1000 and 1500 euros.

The gender wage gap is also obvious. According to our findings, 29,1% of women are paid less than 800 euros per month, compared to 14,3% of men. Similarly, only 26,4% of women are paid above 1200 euros per month, compared to 47,4% of males. In the highest pay scale (above 1.800 euros per month), where 17,0% of men and just 6,3% of women are employed, the discrepancy is even more significant.

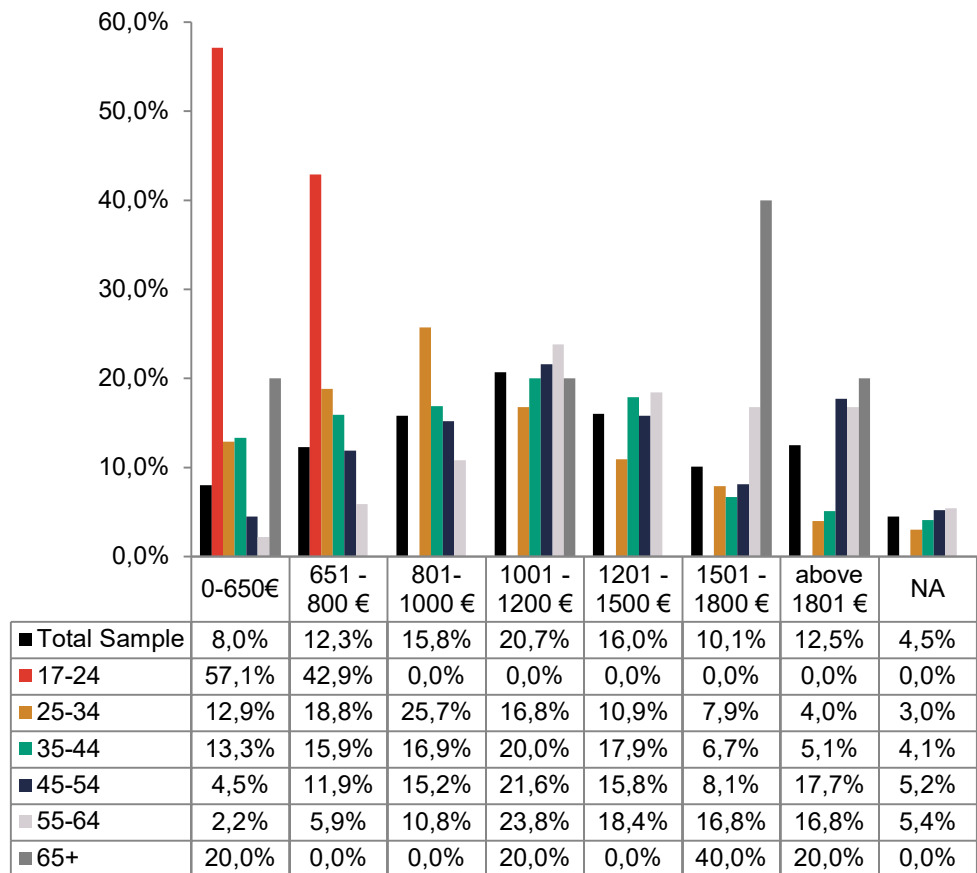
Age cohorts are another area where the disparity in wages between groups is clear. All employees aged 17 to 24² and 57,4% of those between 25 and 34 are paid less than 1000 euros. The same figure for workers aged 55 to 64 is 18,9%, and for those over 65 is 20,0%.

² Data for this age cohort are indicative. See above.

Monthly net earnings from work (Gender)



Monthly net earnings from work (Age)

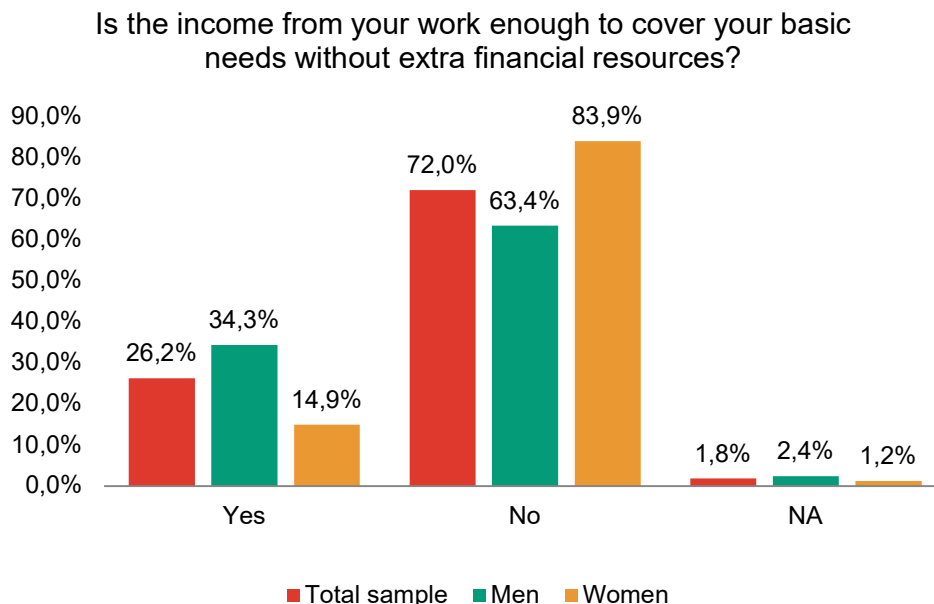


II.2. Income adequacy

Trying to record adequacy or not of income from work as an exclusive way of covering the workers' living needs, we used the question “Is the income from your work enough to cover your basic needs without extra financial resources?” and the percentage that answered negatively is alarmingly high (72,0%). In fact, it was significantly higher than the corresponding percentage in the 2021 survey (60,4%).

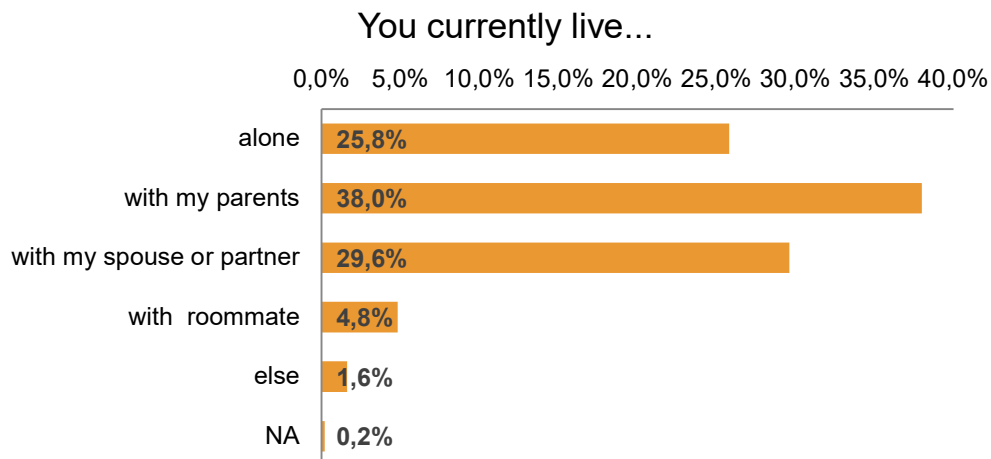
As for the adequacy of the minimum wage to cover one’s needs, the overwhelming majority of the respondents (88,2%) stated that it is/would be impossible or very difficult to cover their needs, if they are/were working on the minimum wage.

As expected, the current situation widens the wage gap between women and men. More specifically, 83,9% of women are unable to meet their basic needs without supplementary financial resources other than their work-related income, compared to 63,4% of men.

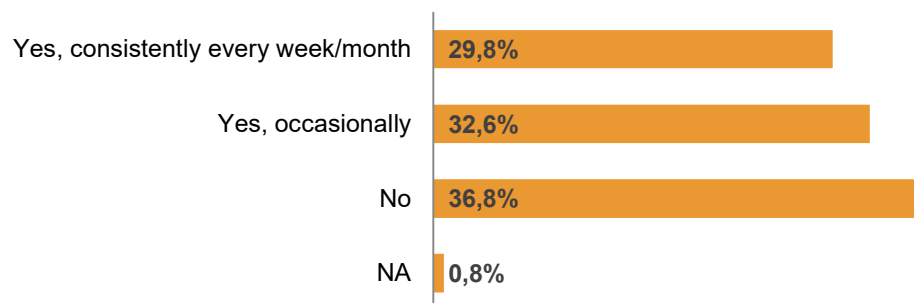


FURTHER INFO | Income adequacy and Youth

A closer look to the living conditions of the Greek Youth, who have many times been described as the “crisis generation”, is possible due to another survey conducted annually by the Nicos Poulantzas Institute in collaboration also with Prorata S.A. All findings suggest that the majority of the Greek Youth is unable to meet its basic needs. A typical example which is reflected in the 2023 wave of the survey “**Youth. Habits, Beliefs and Political Behaviour**”³ is that young people in Greece tend to live with their parents and they still receive regular or occasional financial help from their family.



Regardless of whether you live with them or not, do your parents or grandparents help you financially?



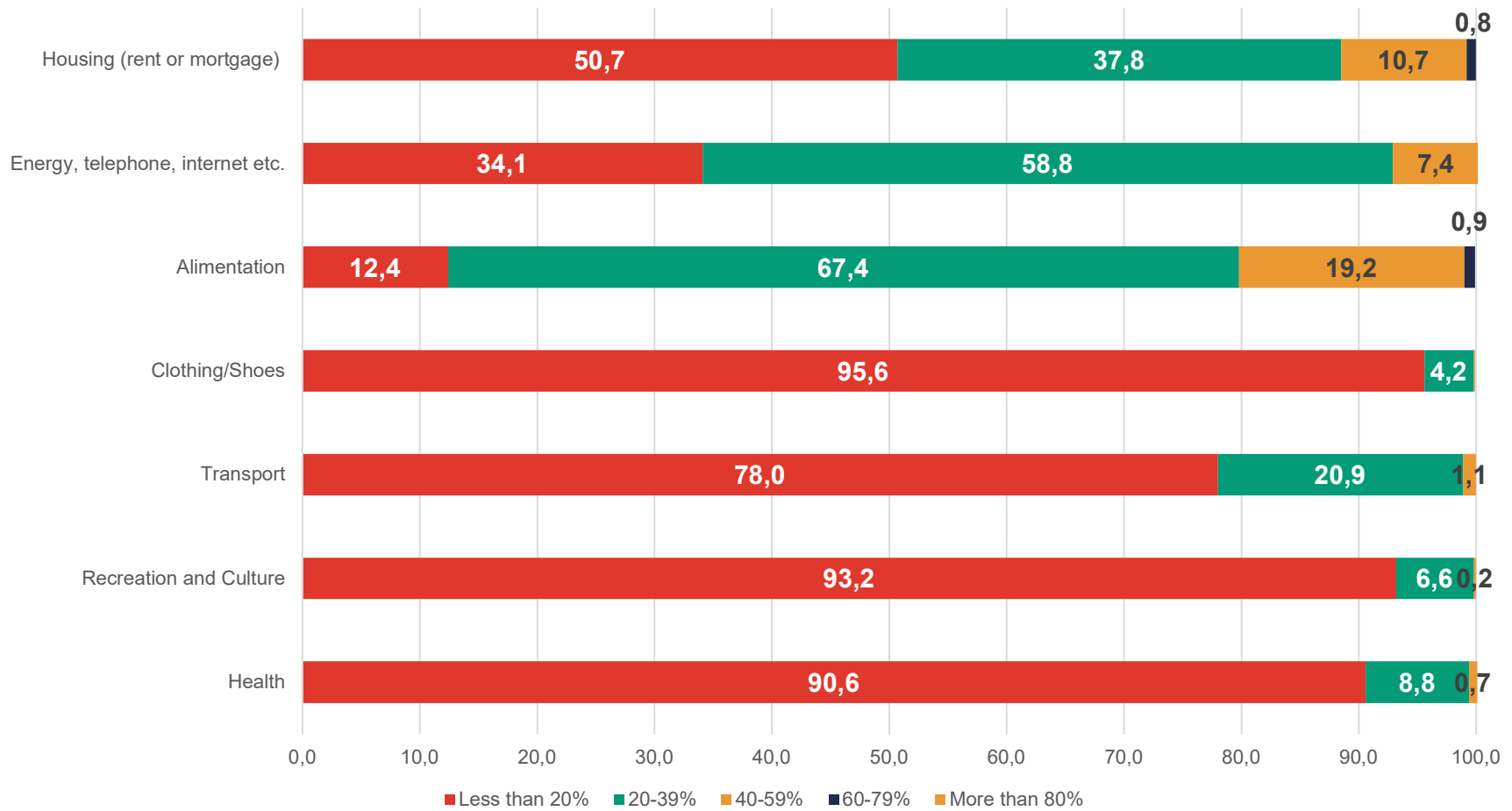
³ The survey can be found (in Greek) here: <https://poulantzas.gr/yliko/erevna-neolaia-synitheies-antilipseis-kai-politiki-syberifora-4o-kyma-martios-2023-meros-a/>

II.3. Income and basic needs

The working population in Greece spends a large part of their income for their basic needs. More specifically, according to our findings for 2022 49,3% stated that they give more than 20% of their income from work for housing (of which 11,5% more than 40%), 65,9% give more than 20% for paying electricity bills, internet, etc. (of which 7,9% more than 40%) and 87,5% give more than 20% for food expenses (of which 20,1% more than 40%).

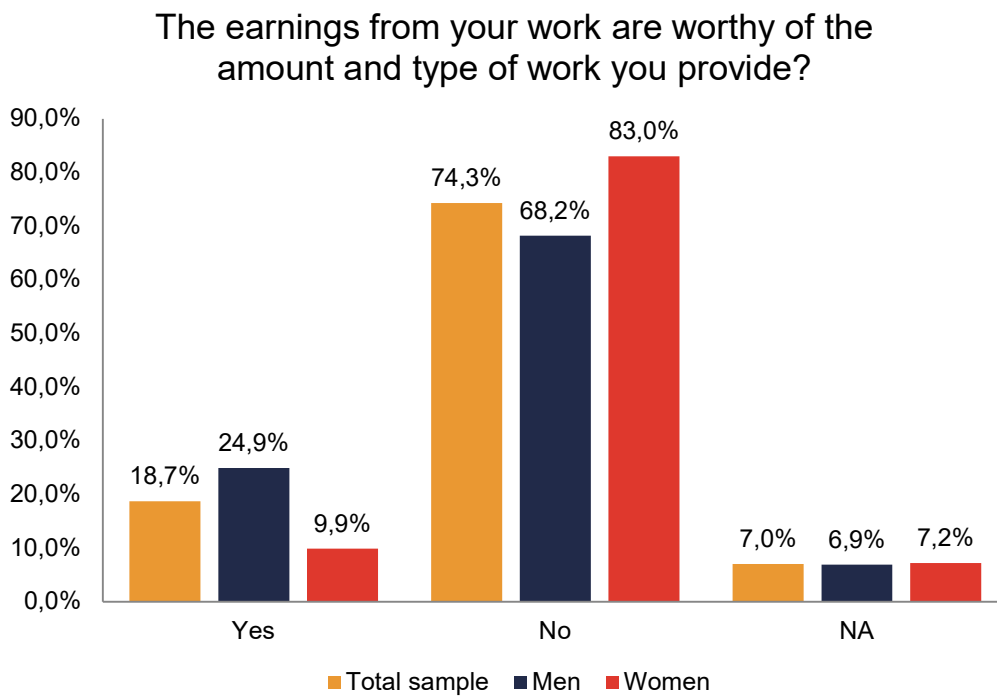
These data show that a large part of the working population in Greece -or at least a part that cannot be neglected- can barely afford the basic needs, based on their income from work: housing, energy/telecommunications and food.

What % of one's income from work is spent to each category?



II.4. Income and recognition

Net family income is an important factor for happiness and life satisfaction and work remuneration is not only key to covering one's needs but also have a symbolic value for the persons. In our research we asked the participants whether the earnings from their work are appropriate for the amount and type of work they provide, in other words whether their work is properly remunerated. Only 18,7% said that their work is properly remunerated given the amount and type of work they provide. Resentment and feeling unrecognised is more prevalent in women. More specifically, only 9,9% of working women consider that their salary is appropriate for the work they provide, while the corresponding percentage for men is 24,9%.



Conclusions

There is almost unanimity among the workers/employees of every category in Greece that wages are very low and must be increased. The same applies to the minimum wage, which is considered unsustainable by the overwhelming majority, while its recent increase is characterised as insufficient. According to our research, 91,3% responded that wages are low and 98,1% responded that wages should be increased

More specifically, youth and women face the greater problem. It is characteristic that -according to our specific Youth survey⁴- wages and working conditions are the main factor of concern among the youth (70,9% of the respondents). This concern is almost the exclusive material/financial factor of economic and social uncertainty. Other factors of concern are the lacking of housing (41,6%) and the unemployment (21,3%).⁵

As a way out of the situation described, the majority of workers propose a state legislative intervention, as a result of political change, while others express some expectations for the effectiveness of collective struggles and unions.

⁴ According to the 2023 wave of the “Youth. Habits, beliefs and political behaviour” study, which can be found here (in Greek): <https://poulantzas.gr/yliko/erevna-neolaia-synitheies-antilipseis-kai-politiki-syberifora-4o-kyma-martios-2023-meros-a/>

⁵ Ibid.