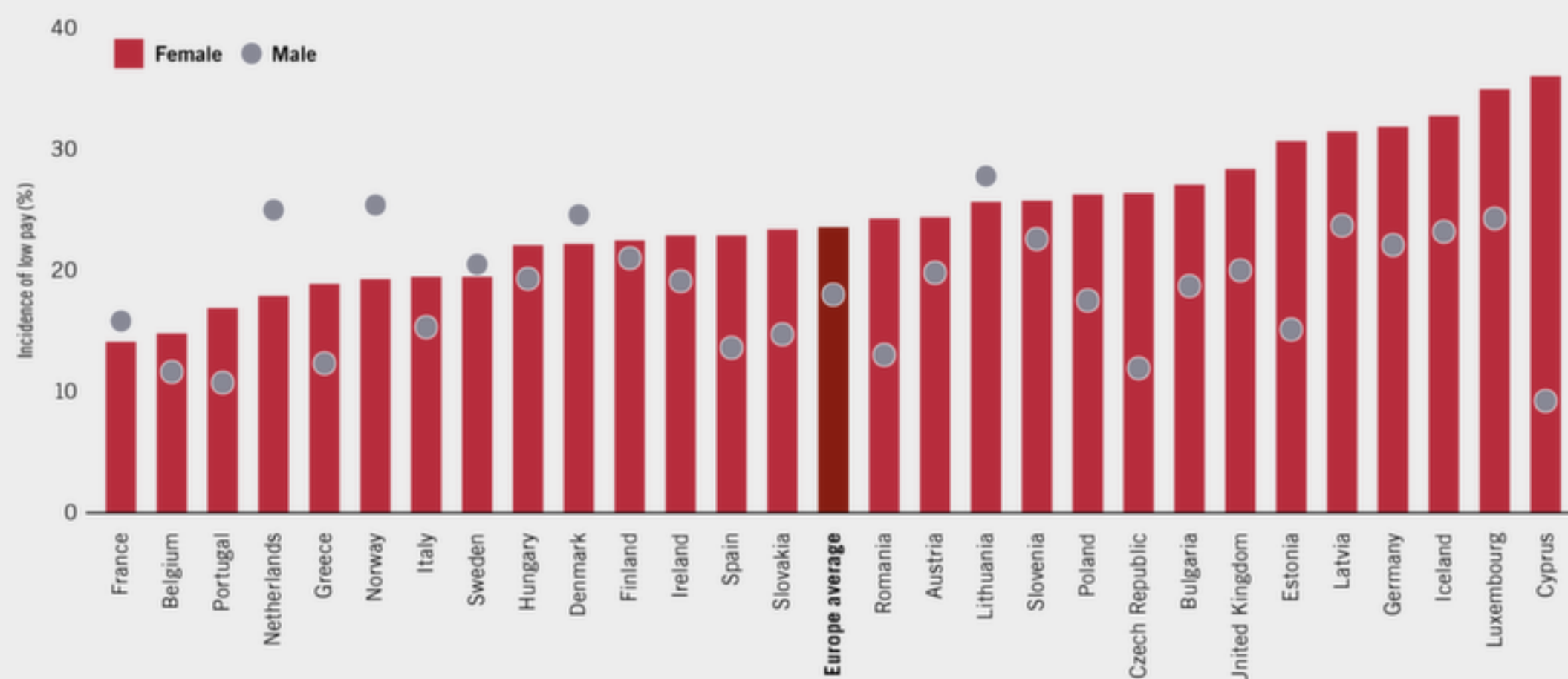


Figure 28**Incidence of low pay for women and men, 28 European countries, 2011**

Note: The incidence of low-paid employees is defined as the share of full-time workers earning less than two-thirds of gross median earnings of all full-time employees in the 16-65 age group.

Source: ILO calculations based on Eurostat (EU-SILC), 2011.

D. Working time and gender wage gaps

The amount of time that women can spend in paid work is a key determinant of wage levels. As shown in Part One, large numbers of women in many countries around the world work short hours or part-time, through work arrangements involving reduced hours of work, which allow otherwise excluded groups to participate or remain in paid labour, in particular workers with family responsibilities, students and retirees. Employers may rely on part-time workers because of the lower costs associated with such employment, but also the flexibility that it offers to enterprises to adapt to volatile markets (ILO, 2015m).

1. Effect of part-time work on women's earnings and working conditions

The practice of working reduced hours is also associated, however, with less favourable conditions regarding wages (sometimes referred to as “the part-time pay penalty”) and other employment benefits, inferior job security, restricted social security coverage, and more limited career prospects. These inequalities related with part-time employment are not inherent to part-time work per se, but are due rather to the way in which part-time work is constructed, stemming from labour market institutions favouring working-age, male-dominated full-time professions (Messenger and Ray, 2015).

Two important issues are related to the quality of part-time work. The first is whether part-time work is voluntary or involuntary – that is, whether employees freely choose such work, or are effectively compelled to take it up for lack of a viable alternative, in particular, the limited availability of paid parental leave and affordable and quality social care services. The second is whether part-time work is a regular, long-term prospect or a temporary arrangement – the former usually being linked to other priorities outside work or a limited skills set, while temporary arrangements usually concern people in transition, such as students, retirees and often parents returning from parental leave. Research shows that involuntary regular or long-term part-time employment is a major source of inequality, both in respect of full-time employment and because it is often a characteristic of female employment in low-skilled jobs (Kjeldstad and Nymoen, 2012).

As shown in Part One, across the world the majority of those working less than 35 hours per week are women, most likely because of their primary role as caregivers in most societies. Sectoral and occupational segregation is responsible for the high share of women in part-time employment in two ways. First, large differences in women and men's uptake of part-time employment lead to greater occupational segregation. Second, part-time employment is available in a limited number of sectors and occupations which tend to be female-dominated, such as health and social work, education and hotel and restaurant work (Eurofound, 2011) and service jobs and some intermediate clerical jobs (Fagan et al., 2014).