University of
Kent

WORK AUTONOMY, FLEXIBILITY AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Final Report

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SUMMARY OF THE KEY RESULTS OF THE PROJECT

There are high levels of work-family conflict across Europe and the UK

- A large proportion of workers across Europe feel that their work and family lives are not compatible with one another, and worry about work when not at work
- British workers are more likely to feel work-family conflict, and more likely to feel that work spills over to family life compared to other Europeans
- While the majority of workers feel that the ability to combine work/family is important when choosing a job

Large and growing number of workers are working flexibly

- On average a quarter of all employees across Europe state that they have access to flexible schedules
- Almost 1 out of 5 employees across Europe work from home or in public spaces at least several times a month

Flexible working helps reduce work-family conflict, but not always

- Flexible working provides workers with the flexibility and control over the temporal and physical boundaries between their work and home domains, allowing workers to adapt work to fit around family demands
- Flexitime – flexible scheduling – helps reduce work-family conflict(the conflict felt between work and family life) for most workers but not to a large degree
- Teleworking on the other hand seems to increase work-family conflict.

This report sets out four reasons as to why this may be the case.

Flexible working is not always used for family-friendly purposes

- The evidence suggests that flexitime provision is driven more by performance goals rather than by worker' potential care demands
- Female dominated job posts and sectors are those with the worst access to schedule control
- Companies that provide flexitime usually provide it alongside other arrangements that may motivate workers to work harder – such as performance related pay

Flexible working can lead to increased work spill-over and work intensity

- Flexible working makes work spill-over to other spheres of life
- Flexible working can increase overtime hours of workers, especially for men in higher occupations
- This increase in work intensity seems to pay off but mostly for men

Workers hold biases towards flexible working

- More than 1/3 of workers in the UK hold flexibility stigma – that is, bias towards those who work flexibly and fear that working flexibly can lead to negative career outcomes
- Flexibility stigma reduces the likelihood of the worker taking up a flexible working arrangements even when it is made available to them

Flexible working allow women to maintain their employment status after childbirth

- A large proportion of women drop out of the labour market and reduce their hours after childbirth
- Allowing women to work flexibly increases their chances of staying in employment after the birth of their first child
- Allowing women to work flexibly increases their chances of maintaining their working hours after childbirth
- This increase in work capacity can explain why women with flexitime are generally more satisfied with their work-life balance

Work cultures and contexts matter in flexible working outcomes

- Flexitime especially beneficial for workers working long hours (overtime), and working in long hours cultures
- Teleworking only bad for those in supervisory roles and/or in very demanding jobs
- Flexible schedules are more detrimental in terms of work spill-over in countries where unemployment rates are higher

Policy recommendations

- Flexible working is not a panacea, we need to examine it in the context of existing work cultures/systems to ensure flexible working can lead to a better work-life balance for all
- More campaigns are need to tackle flexibility stigma and other problematic work cultures head on highlighting the productivity outcomes of flexible working
- Right to request is not enough and stronger legislative right to flexible working is needed to ensure all workers have access to flexible working
- We should encourage men to take up flexible working for family friendly purposes, to ensure that flexible working does not lead to further traditionalisation of gender roles
- We need to learn from the experiences of other countries to ensure that flexibility can work for all
- We need to re-examine our existing labour laws to enable the protection of workers outside of the work premises and working hours

KEY CONCEPTS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

Flexible working – can encompass a wide range of arrangements that allow workers to work more flexibly, but this report mainly focuses on flexitime, working time autonomy and teleworking.

Flexitime – worker's ability to control their schedules, eg, flexible starting and ending times – can also be accompanied by the ability to accumulate hours to work less one day and more another

Working-time autonomy – worker's complete autonomy over their working hours and schedules, the ability to work whenever the worker wants.

Flexible schedules – encompasses both flexitime and working time autonomy

Teleworking – worker's ability to choose where to work freely – eg, being able to work from home on occasion/on a regular basis

Work family conflict – tension workers feel due to the conflicting demands coming from work and family life. In this project we focus mostly on the conflict workers feel when work demands prohibit workers from giving time/energy to family and household work

Work life balance – balance between work and other personal spheres of life

Overtime hours – the additional hours workers work on top of their contractual hours

WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF WORKERS ACROSS EUROPE[1]

Workers across Europe are struggling with work-life balance…

A large and increasing number of workers across Europe struggle to balance work with family life as a result of a number of factors, including the increase of women's labour market participation, and dual-earner families, alongside the intensification of both work – eg, more workers in demanding jobs working longer hours (Burchell, 2009), and parenting – eg, parents increasing 'quality time' with children (Dotti Sani and Treas, 2016). My analysis of the most recent European data (EWCS, 2015) shows that more than one out of five workers in Europe feel they are too tired to do household work always or most of the time, and more than one out of ten workers in Europe feel like their jobs prevent them from giving time to their family always or most of the time, as shown in Figures 1 and 2. If we include those who at least sometimes feel that their job prevents them from giving time to their family, this number jumps to 37%. Furthermore, I find that more and more people feel that work spills over to other spheres of life. As Figure 3 shows, I find that one out of seven Europeans worry about work when not at work always or most of the time. This may explain why most workers (86%) across Europe believed that a job that allows you to combine work/family is important or very important when choosing a job (Figure 4), and found it more important than high income (ESS 2010).

British workers are worse placed in terms of their work-life balance compared to other European countries. In the UK, more than one out of six British workers worry about work when not at work, more than a quarter of British workers feel that they are too tired to do household work always or most of the time, and finally more than 41% of workers feel that their job prevents them from giving time to their family at least sometimes.
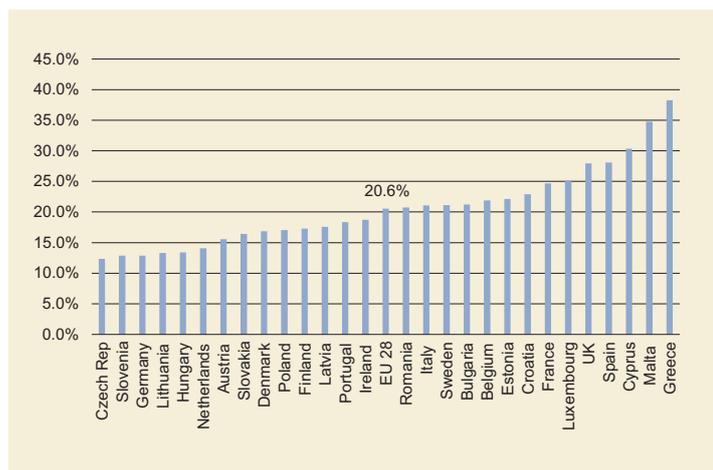
Figure 1. Proportion of individuals who always or most of the time feel that they are too tired after work to do some of the household jobs which need to be done across 28 EU countries in 2015 (Source: EWCS 2015)
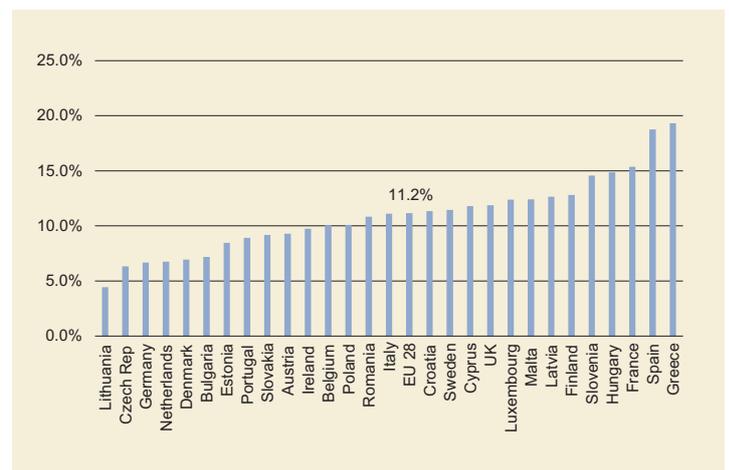
Figure 2. Proportion of individuals who always or most of the time feel that their job prevents them from giving time to their family 28 EU countries in 2015 (Source: EWCS 2015)
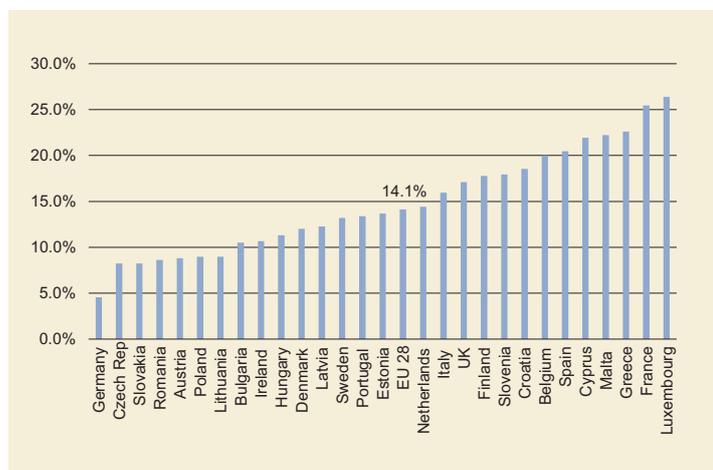
Figure3. Proportion of individuals who always or most of the time worry about work when not at work across 28 EU countries in 2015 (Source: EWCS 2015)
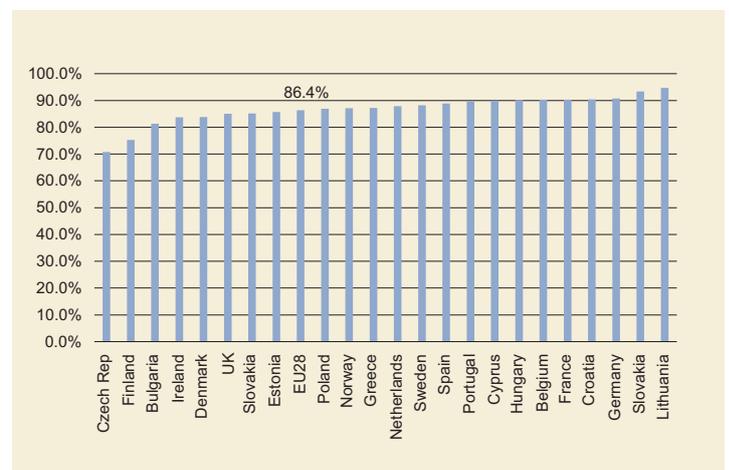
Figure 4. Proportion of individuals who state that the ability to combine work/family is important/very important when choosing a job across 23 European countries in 2010 (Source: ESS2010)

WORKER'S ACCESS TO FLEXIBLE WORKING[2]

A large number of workers have access to flexible working

Across the 28 EU member states in 2015, approximately 1/5 workers had access to flexitime, and another 6% had access to full working time autonomy (Figure 5). There is quite a large cross-national variation across Europe. Workers in Northern European countries such as Sweden, Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands have the most access to flexible schedules. Workers in southern and some eastern European countries – such as Bulgaria, Cyprus, Lithuania, Greece and Romania have the least access with less than 10% of the population having access to any types of flexible schedule. On closer inspection, countries with generous family policies supporting working parents were those where workers were most likely to have access to flexible schedules. Comparing that data from 2015 with data from 2010, at the European average there has been a slight increase in the access workers have to flexitime but not to a large degree. In 2015, almost 1/5 of people also indicate that they have worked from home or in public spaces at least several times a month in the past year, and approximately 13% have said they work from home several times a month in the past year (Figure 6).

In the UK in 2011 (WERS) – as Figure 7 shows 56% of all companies provided reduced hours/possibility to work part-time, 35% provided flexitime, and 30% provided possibilities to work from home to at least some of their employees. Further, approximately one-fifth of all companies say they allow at least some employees the possibility to use compressed hours, job-sharing or term-time only work arrangements. When looking at the employee survey, approximately 30% of those surveyed used flexitime, 17% teleworked/worked from home on occasion, and less than 10% said they used the other types of flexible arrangements in 2011. This proportion is somewhat higher for those with caring responsibilities especially for the former two. What is interesting is that since the last WERS survey in 2004, there has been little change in the proportion of workers gaining access to flexible working arrangements (Wanrooy et al., 2013).

The main question asked in this project is whether flexible working can help workers better balance the demands of work with the demands of family life.
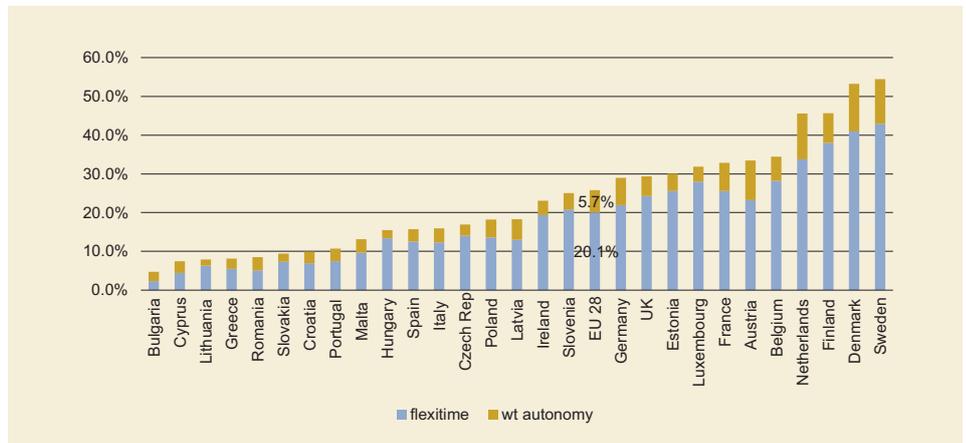
Figure 5. The proportion of workers across 28 European countries with access to flexible schedules in 2015 (source: EWCS 2015, author's calculations) Note: weighted averages
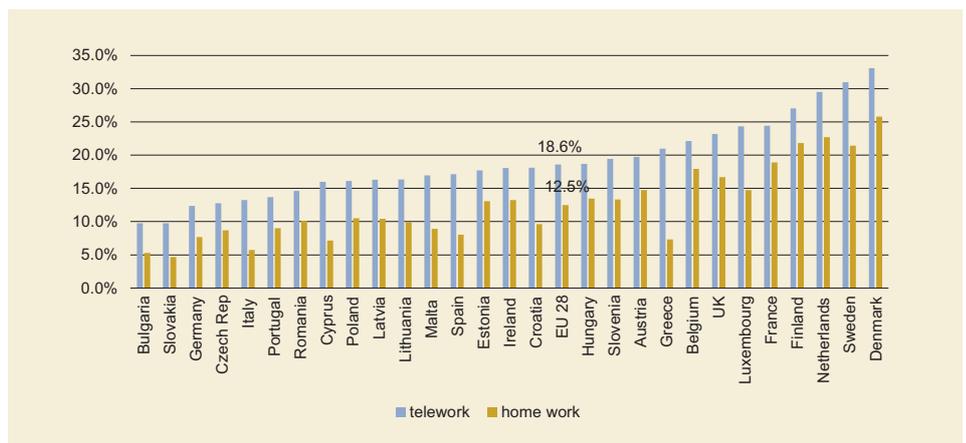
Figure 6. The proportion of workers across European countries that teleworked in the past 12 months in 2015 (source: EWCS 2015, author's calculations) Note: weighted averages
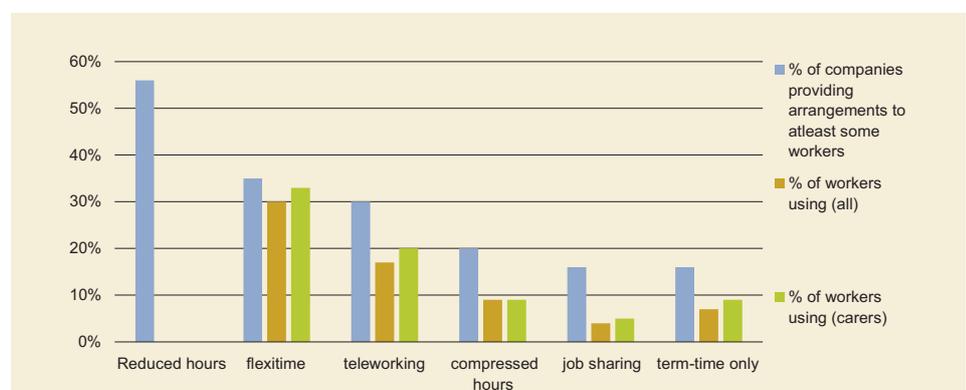
Figure 7. The proportion of companies providing flexible work arrangements, and % of workers taking up flexible work arrangements (Source: Wanrooy, et al, 2013, WERS 2011)
Note: % of workers using reduced hours not included in the graph

2   This section is based on the results from the following papers:
    1) Chung, H. (2017) "National-Level Family Policies and workers' Access to Schedule Control in a European Comparative Perspective: Crowding Out or In, and for Whom?" *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis. Online first.*
    2) Chung, H. (2017/forthcoming) "Dualization and the access to occupational family-friendly working-time arrangements across Europe" *Social Policy & Administration. Online first.*

FLEXIBLE WORKING AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE[3]

Those who telework are 1.5 times more likely than those who do not to feel that their jobs prevented them from spending time with their family

Can flexible working relieve the conflict felt between the demands coming from work and family life?

Flexible working provides workers with the flexibility and control over the temporal and physical boundaries between their work and home domains, allowing workers to adapt work to fit around family demands. It may also allow a certain level of blending, where work and family demands can be met at the same time. Such flexibility and control is crucial especially in countries such as the UK where there is a general lack of affordable full-time formal childcare provision (OECD, 2011; Chung and Meuleman, 2017). Further, in many cases, childcare schedules (pre/school pick up times at 3pm for example) may conflict with more typical work schedules (e.g., 9am to 5pm) which drives an increased need to have more flexibility in work schedules in order to balance work with family life.

Several studies argue that control and autonomy over one's work and flexible working can relieve workers' work-family conflict (eg, Chung, 2011; Kelly et al., 2014), that is the conflict workers feel due to the conflicting demands coming from work and family life, especially during the transition into parenthood (Erickson et al., 2010). However, other studies note that flexible working has very little influence over the work-family conflict of workers (Allen et al., 2013), or the relationship is not significant (Michel et al., 2011) or even argue that flexible working can increase work-family conflict (Golden et al., 2006). Yet majority of these studies look at data from the US, and an analysis of more recent European data is needed.

Working from home can increase feelings that work is preventing you from spending time with your family.

An analysis of data from across 28 EU member in 2015 (EWCS) uncovers the counterintuitive conclusion that those who telework were more likely than those who do not telework to feel work-family conflict – that is, to feel that their job prevents them from giving time to their family and feel that they are too tired after work to do some of the household jobs which need to be done. At the European average, compared to workers who do not telework, those who teleworked were almost 1.5 times more likely to feel that their jobs prevented them from giving time to their family. On the other hand, both flexitime and working-time autonomy do not seem to significantly influence work-family conflict, once other factors are taken into account.

Flexitime doesn't help relieve work-family conflict as much as expected

These results are similar to that found using data from the UK in 2011 (WERS), where the use of telework was found to increase feelings of work family conflict – that is, feeling that it is difficult to fulfil commitments outside of work because of the time spent on the job. This held true even after taking into account a wide range of factors such as working hours and other working conditions. Those using flexitime were generally less likely to feel work-family conflict. However, the effect was quite small compared to other factors such as age and number of children in the household, working hours, having a demanding job, and different working conditions such as having a supportive manager etc.

This begs the question: why is flexible working not as effective in reducing work-family conflict as we expect it to?

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3   This section is based on results from the following papers:
    1) Chung, H (work-in-progress) "Examining the impact of schedule flexibility on work-family conflict – gender and occupational variance" presented at the 2016 ILREA European Congress 7th – 9th September, University of Milano & 2016 Work Family Researcher's Network Conference 23-25 June, Washington DC.
    2) Chung, H (work-in-progress) "Examining the influence of schedule control on work-life balance, and the importance of country context". Earlier versions presented at the 2016 ILREA European Congress 7th – 9th September, University of Milano & 2016 ESPAnet conference 1st – 3rd September, Erasmus University Rotterdam.
    3) Chung, H. & van der Horst, M. (2017/forthcoming) "Women's employment patterns after childbirth and the perceived access to and use of flexitime and teleworking. *Human Relations. Online first.*

WHO HAS ACCESS TO FLEXIBLE WORKING[4]

Parents are twice as likely to take up flexible working arrangements when made available to them

Flexible working is also a strategy to improve business performance.

The first answer to this question can be found by looking at who gets access to flexible working arrangements. Flexible working or giving workers more control over their work is not only used to increase family friendliness of the company, but also to enhance its performance (Ortega, 2009). Flexible working can be used as a part of a high-involvement systems (Wood and de Menezes, 2010) or high performance strategy. High performance strategy gives workers more discretion and influence over their work to help increase performance (Appelbaum, 2000; Davis and Kalleberg, 2006). In fact, one of the main reasons why companies are keen to introduce flexible working is due to such better performance outcomes that can result from its introduction.

Based on the project's findings examining data across Europe in 2010 and 2015 (EWCS), the most important determinants of getting access to flexitime and working time autonomy was skill levels. In other words, higher skilled workers – for example, managers, (associate) professionals, those with tertiary education, in supervisory roles – were more

likely to have access to flexible schedules even when a whole range of other influential factors are taken into account. Parental status and family demands (eg, living with young children, care responsibility etc) made very little difference as to whether workers get access to flexible schedules or not. Furthermore, despite the fact that women still carry out a large bulk of family care and household work (Bianchi et al., 2012; Eurofound, 2013), there were no gender differences in the access to flexible work arrangements. However, parents were more likely to take up flexible work arrangements when they were made available. Based on UK data in 2011 (BIS WLB), mothers and fathers were twice as likely as women and men without children to use teleworking when it is available to them. Mothers were twice as likely to use flexitime when made available compared to women without children.

I also found that, small medium sized companies and sectors such as Mining and construction, Education and Health, and Social Care sectors were less likely to provide flexible schedules. Female dominated jobs and sectors are the ones where flexitime and working time autonomy are least likely to be made available. In other words, in addition to the wage penalty frequently found for female

dominated workplaces, there is also a flexibility penalty in female dominated jobs, and this effect was especially evident for women. This raises concerns regarding the provision of good working conditions in for disadvantaged workers (Swanberg et al., 2005) whose the demands for flexible working may be stronger either due to the responsibility they have in providing care or because of the lack of other means to address family demands, such as via higher income.

Furthermore, employers use flexible working arrangements alongside a wide range of other high performance strategy arrangements that may lead to better performance, and increased work intensity of workers. According to company data across Europe in 2009 (ECS), companies that offer flexitime to their workers were more likely to be those with higher proportion of skilled-workers and also those with performance related pay and self-managed team work. This is confirmed by the worker's data in 2010 (EWCS) where those who have access to flexible schedules were also more likely to have performance related pay, and work in self-managed teams. In other words, there is evidence to show that when employers introduce flexible work arrangements they may introduce other arrangements that motivate workers to work harder.

4   This section is based on the results of the following papers:
   1) Chung, H. (2017/forthcoming) "'National-level family policies and workers' access to schedule control in a European comparative perspective: Crowding out or in, and for whom?" *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis. Online first.*
   2) Chung, H. (2017/forthcoming) "Dualization and the access to occupational family-friendly working-time arrangements across Europe" *Social Policy & Administration. Online first.*
   3) Chung, H (work-in-progress) 'Women's work penalty' in the access to schedule control across Europe. presented at the Community Work & Family Conference, 21st March 2015, Malmö, Sweden.
   4) Chung, H (2014) Explaining the provision of flexitime in companies across Europe (in the pre-and post-crisis Europe): role of national contexts, *WAF Working Paper* 1. Canterbury, University of Kent.

FLEXIBLE WORKING AND WORK INTENSITY[5]

## Flexible working can increase work intensity

One main reason why flexible working has been linked to increase in workers' productivity is due to what is called the 'happy worker thesis' (Leslie et al., 2012). In other words, better work-life balance and more control over one's work makes workers happy and allows them to work more effectively, with fewer days of sickness and absenteeism, and thus are generally more productive (Kerkhofs et al., 2008; Chung, 2009). Furthermore, companies may experience both recruitment and retention benefits – meaning workers are less likely to leave the workplace or likely to take on a job when better family-friendly arrangements are in place (for a review, see de Menezes and Kelliher, 2011). Another reason why flexible working can lead to increased performance outcomes, but also can explain why it doesn't necessarily reduce work-family conflict, is because flexible working can make workers work longer and more intensively (Kelliher and Anderson, 2010; Glass and Noonan, 2016).

Why does flexible working increase worker's work intensity?

Firstly, when the time boundaries between work and family life become blurred, this can lead to more, rather than less, focus on work (Clark, 2000), multi-tasking of the two roles or spill-over of work to the family sphere (Schieman et al., 2009). This is more likely to happen to workers who prioritise their work over other aspects of their life, such as higher skilled and high status workers (Schieman et al., 2009). This has been called the 'the autonomy paradox'; when enhancing individual's control over when and where workers work leads to a "collective spiral of escalating engagement, where (workers) end up working everywhere/all the time" (Mazmanian et al., 2013: 1338). A good example of this autonomy paradox can be found in the Silicon Valley, where long working hours are conflated into measures of success and despite being offered relative autonomy, workers end up working (sometimes extremely) long hours (Williams et al., 2013).

Another explanation for why flexible working can lead to work intensification is found in gift exchange (Kelliher and Anderson, 2010) or social exchange theory (Kossek et al., 2006). These theories suggest that to reciprocate for the favourable work arrangements "gifted" by the employers, workers expend greater effort, and increase their motivation and commitment, which leads them to work harder and/or longer hours. This can especially be the case when flexible working is not normalised and there is negative stigma towards its use, as workers may feel they have to work even harder to over compensate for such stigma. Enforced intensification can happen when employers detach work from fixed hours and make contracts more task based. For example, unlike fixed working hours where by labour laws there is a limit to the number of hours workers are allowed to work per day/week[6], when workers have full autonomy over when and how long they work (full working-time autonomy), it is difficult to regulate the number of hours worked. This is especially true when workers "voluntarily" work longer hours to meet demands at work or when there are incentives for workers to work harder. Recent studies have noted that that managers sometimes negotiate for, or expect increased work intensity from, employees in exchange for the opportunity to work from home (Bathini and Kandathil, 2017). Whatever the cause, if flexible working can in some cases lead to an increase in work intensity and working hours/overtime hours, this can explain why flexible working can lead to increased work-family conflict.
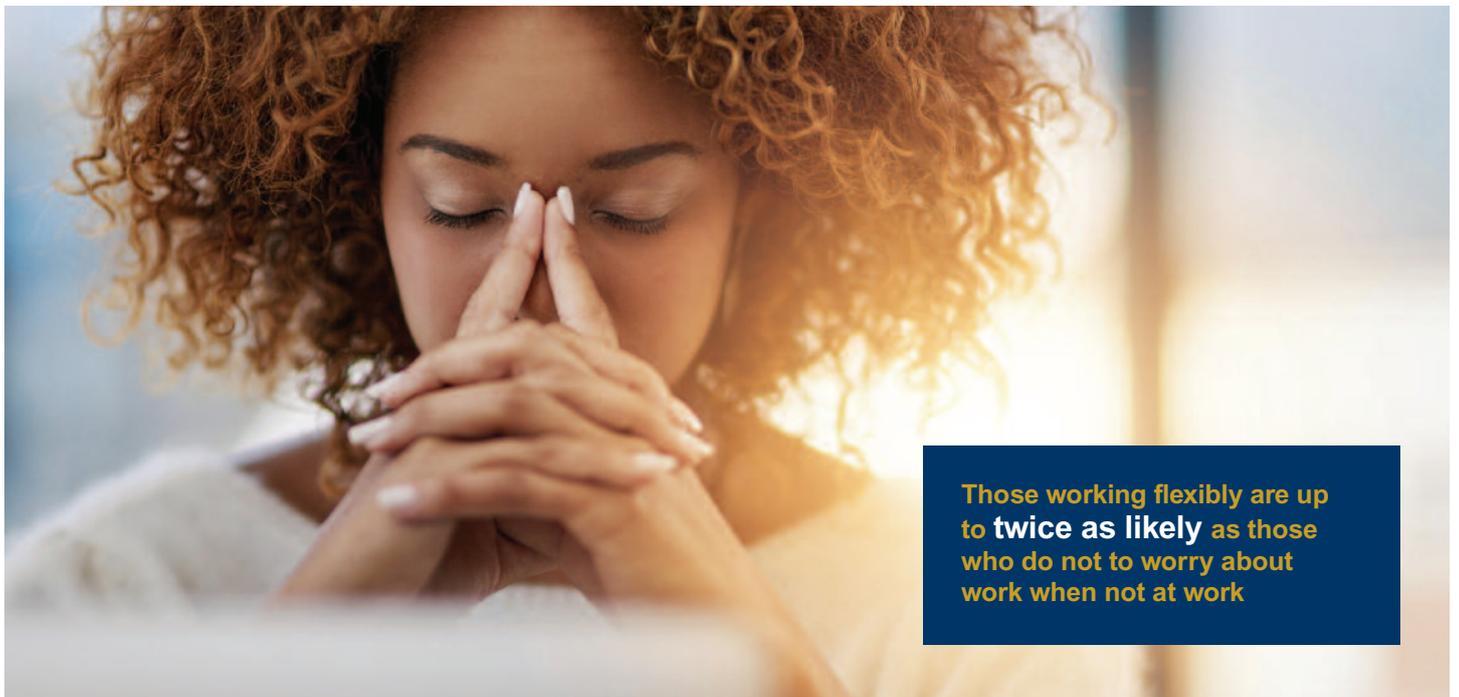
Those working flexibly are up to twice as likely as those who do not to worry about work when not at work

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5   This section is based on the results from the papers:
    1) Chung, H (work-in-progress) "Examining the influence of schedule control on work-life balance, and the importance of country context". Earlier versions presented at the 2016 ILREA European Congress 7th – 9th September, University of Milano & 2016 ESPAnet conference 1st – 3rd September, Erasmus University Rotterdam.
    2) Lott, Y & Chung, H (2016) "Gender discrepancies in the outcomes of schedule control on overtime hours and income in Germany" *European Sociological Review. 32(6)752-765.*
    3) Chung, H and van der Horst, M (work-in-progress) "Gendered discrepancies in the outcomes of flexible working: the case of overtime and income in the UK" presented at the 2016 Work, Employment and Society Conference, 6-8th September, University of Leeds & presented at the 2017 Community, Work and Family Conference 25-27th May, University of Milan.
6   For example the European Working Time Directive restricts workers working longer than 48 hours a week.

FLEXIBLE WORKING AND WORK INTENSITY (CONT)

Flexible working linked to work spilling over to other spheres of life

I examined European data in 2015 (EWCS) to see how flexible working can increase spill-over of work. The results show that flexitime, working time autonomy and teleworking increase workers' likelihood of worrying about work when not at work, even after taking into account a wide range of other factors such as line of business, occupational level, and working hours. Those who telework were almost twice as likely as those who do not to worry about work when not at work. Similarly, those with complete working time autonomy were about 1.7 times likely, and those with flexitime were 1.3 times more likely compared to those with fixed schedules to worry about work when not at work.

Furthermore, those working flexibly were also more likely to work during their free time to meet work demands. For example, according to the EWCS those who were teleworking were 3.3 times more likely to work during their free time at least several times a week in order to meet work demands compared to those who do not – with an average of a quarter of those teleworking working during their free time at least several times a week. Those with working time autonomy were twice as likely, and those with flexitime were 1.2 times likely to work during their free time compared to those with more restricted work schedules. However, the strong association found for telework and tendencies to work during one's free time should be treated with caution. It may be that those who need to work during their free time were those who were likely to take work home after normal working hours, leading them to work from home and other public spaces.

Heteronomy   **Autonomy**

OVERTIME

Having more autonomy over your working hours **makes you work more overtime**

Flexible working can result in longer overtime hours

Using longitudinal data from Germany from 2003-2011 (SOEP), the project examined whether flexitime and working time autonomy can lead to longer overtime hours. On average, workers with flexible schedules work longer overtime compared to workers with fixed schedules. For example, comparing workers with working time autonomy to those with fixed schedules, the former works almost 4 hours more overtime per week. In addition, when workers start working more flexibly, they increase their overtime hours. Workers increase their overtime by half an hour per week when moving from fixed schedules to flexitime, and work almost one and a half hours more overtime when switching to working-time autonomy. There were gender differences in the extent to which flexible schedules led to more overtime hours. Men were more likely to work overtime when they had schedule control, especially with working-time autonomy. As Figure 8 shows, men moving from fixed schedules to working time autonomy worked two hours more overtime whilst those moving to flexitime increased their overtime hours by one hour. For women this number was half of what was found for men. However, this was only due to the fact that a large fraction of women were part-time workers. When comparing

full-time men and women, this gender discrepancy largely disappeared.

This result was not restricted only to Germany. Similar results were found for UK workers (Understanding Society) and in the US (Glass and Noonan, 2016) where teleworking was linked to longer overtime hours. However, in the UK analysis, it seemed that it was largely the flexible working arrangements introduced for performance enhancing purposes that led to longer overtime hours. Those introduced more for family-friendly purposes did not lead to longer overtime hours, although it also did not lead to shorter overtime either.

There are different ways in which these results can be interpreted. On the one hand, these findings may reassure managers who might otherwise have hesitated before giving workers access to flexible working arrangements. The results of this project show that workers will not shirk away from work when given more freedom to choose when and where to work, and can possibly increase their work intensity. In this sense, managers need not worry about deviating away from the presentism culture and furthermore worry about "managing" flexible workers to ensure that they are as productive as workers working standardized 9 to 5 schedules in the office. However, this can also be interpreted as a potential negative consequence of flexible working. Blurring of boundaries combined with the rise in technology can potentially result in workers worrying about work and working everywhere and all the time (see also Eurofound and the International Labour Office, 2017). However, there is some scepticism towards whether flexible working really directly causes increases in work intensity or workload increases, or it is a mere correlation rather than a causation we are detecting. It is difficult to untangle this relationship, despite our use of longitudinal data, but one clue may lie in understanding who gets access to flexible working arrangements and the perception workers have towards flexible working.
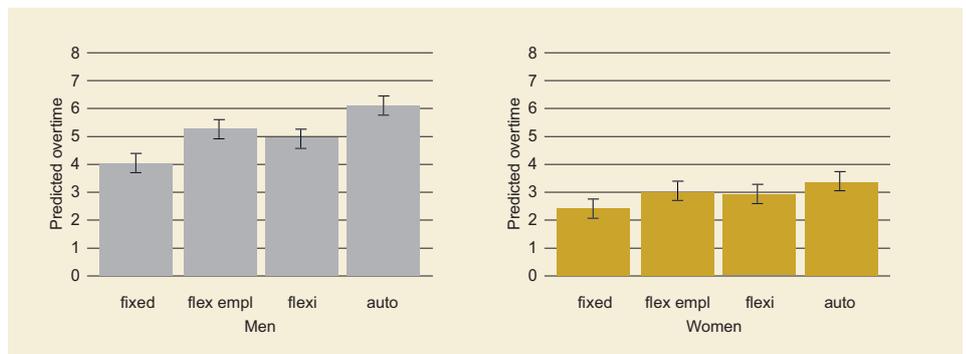
Figure 8: Predicted overtime (in hours) with fixed schedules, employer flexibility, flexitime and working-time autonomy for men and women
Note: Predicted overtime (in hours) based on predictive margins; within-estimates separately for men and women (full estimation results in Table 2); SOEP 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2011.
Source: Lott, Y & Chung, H (2016) "Gender discrepancies in the outcomes of schedule control on overtime hours and income in Germany" *European Sociological Review. 32(6)752-765.*

FLEXIBILITY STIGMA[7]

Large numbers of workers hold negative stigma towards flexible working

Another reason behind the increase in work intensity when working flexibly is perhaps due to the guilt of using flexible working or the fear of the career consequences due to flexible working. It has been reported that the stigma surrounding the use of flexible work arrangements hinders workers from taking them up (Working Families, 2017). Despite the evidence that flexible workers are more likely to increase their work intensity and are more productive, a large proportion of workers hold negative perception towards those working flexibly. In the project's analysis of the UK in 2011 (BIS WLB), more than 1/3 of workers believed that flexible working creates more work for others, and 32% believed that working flexibly decreases chances for promotion. The perception of flexibility stigma vary

depending on gender and parental status. Men are more likely to hold feelings of flexibility stigma towards those working flexibly. Even having controlled for a large number of other factors – eg, occupations, sectors, and other individual and work characteristics, men were 1.8 times more likely to believe that those working flexibly create more work for others. Parental status matters but only for women – ie, mothers with children below the age of 12 are 1.5 times more likely to feel that flexible working comes with negative career consequences compared to women without young/school aged children. This is most likely because mothers with young children were likely to take up flexible working themselves, and thus are more likely to fear that it will come with negative career consequences or may have even directly experienced such consequences.

Men are more likely to hold feelings of flexibility stigma
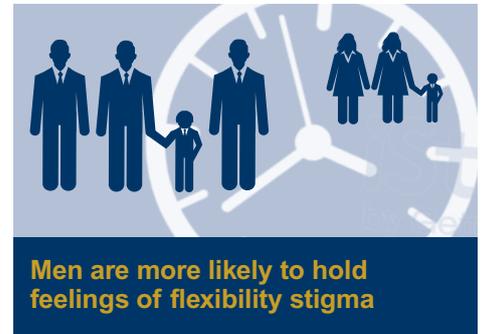
Flexibility stigma prohibits take up of flexible work arrangements

Even when flexitime and telework is available, flexibility stigma can hinder the take up of these arrangements. Figure 10 shows how both types of flexibility stigma reduces the likelihood of workers taking up flexitime or teleworking- in some cases reducing the likelihood by half. Examining the model where other factors are taken into account, both types of flexibility stigma reduced the likelihood of workers taking up flexitime in the past 12 months even when it is available to them. Similarly, the stigma that flexible workers make more work for others reduced the likelihood of workers taking up teleworking. Long hours culture – that is a workplace where those who want to progress usually need to put in long hours, also prohibits workers from taking up flexible working arrangements. UK data (WERS) shows that those who work in long hours cultures are less likely to take up flexitime even when it is made available to them – confirming that work cultures are crucial in flexible working take up.

This finding can also explain why workers will try to increase their work intensity when taking up flexible working. Workers may fear that using flexible working arrangements will be seen as not meeting the ideal worker culture – ie, the worker who prioritizes work and work constantly, without any other responsibilities (Williams et al., 2013), and that it will result in negative career consequences. It is thus understandable that workers who do use flexible work arrangements would work harder to overcome and compensate against these negative stigma.
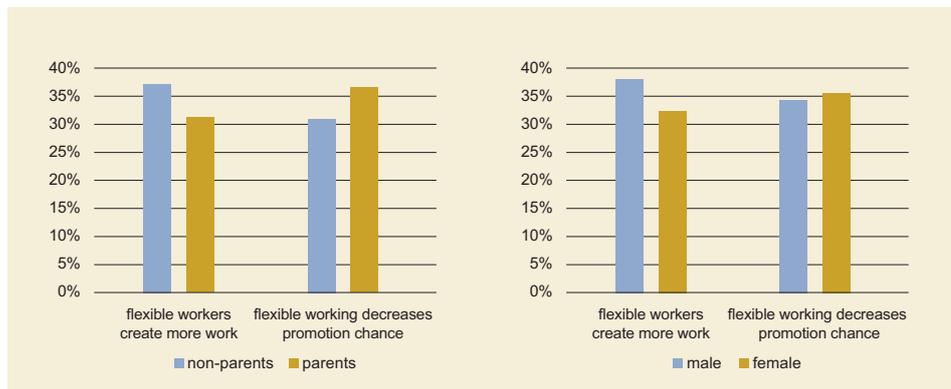
Figure 9. Proportion of workers with flexibility bias
Note: authors calculations, Source WLB 2011 (weighted averages)
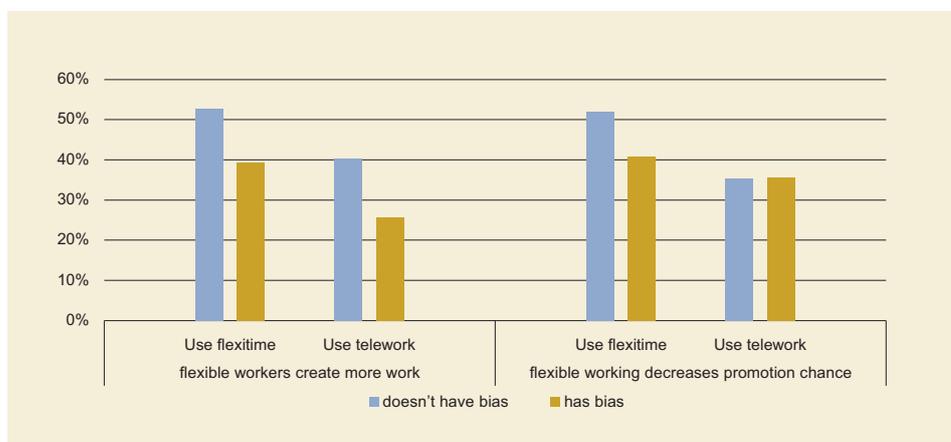
Figure 10. How flexibility stigma reduces take up of flexible working arrangements for workers
Note: authors calculations/for workers that have flexitime and telework available, Source WLB 2011

7   These results are based on the paper:
    Chung, H (work-in-progress) "Flexibility stigma and parent's access to and use of flexible work arrangements" presented in the 2017 Community, Work and Family conference on the 24-27th of May, 2017 at the University of Milano, Italy.

FLEXIBLE WORKING AND WORK CAPACITY[8]

A final reason why flexible working may not necessarily help reduce work family conflict is because flexible working allows workers to remain in the labour market, who would have not been able to otherwise.

One major cause of the persisting gender wage gap in the labour market is childbirth and the subsequent reduction of work by women to deal with the childcare responsibility. On average across the 28 EU member states in 2015, 78% of women between the ages of 25-49 without children were employed, while this number was only 69% for women with children. This drop in mother's employment rates is much larger in the UK from 85% for women without children to 71% for women with children (data from Eurostat). Further, in the UK in 2015, only 16% of all women between the ages of 25-49 without dependent children worked part-time, while this triples for women in the same age group with children to 52%. This increase is much lower for the EU28 average with an increase from 20% to 36%. Moving into part-time work may allow women to balance work with family life better but is not neccessarily a desirable option for women given the low quality of part-time jobs in the UK. For many moving to part-time jobs entail moving into worse paid, lower status jobs with fewer opportunities for career enhancement (Tomlinson, 2006; Connolly and Gregory, 2008). Women moving into part-time jobs or those significantly reducing their working hours after childbirth may experience serious career consequences, which can reinforce gender inequality structures in the labour market and within the family.

Flexible working increases work capacity of women in times of high family demands

This project examined whether providing women the possibility to work flexibly results in fewer mothers dropping out of the labour market or substantially reducing their working hours. The results from the analysis using longitudinal UK data (Understanding Society) show that using flexitime halved women's likelihood of reducing their working hours after childbirth. Approximately half of all women who did not have access to flexitime reduced their working hours after the birth of their child, while only about a quarter of women reduced their hours when given access to flexitime (see Figure 11). Giving women access to teleworking also proved to be useful in allowing women to maintain their working hours. Furthermore, there were some evidence that for first-time mothers, being able to work flexibly reduced their likelihood to drop out of the labour market after childbirth. In other words, flexible working can help support women's careers after childbirth through enhancing their work capacities in times of increased family

demands. However, by enabling women to work longer/more hours, this can make women feel that their work life is encroaching on their family life, possibly leading to higher work-family conflict.

Flexible working increases work-life balance satisfaction especially for women

The fact that flexible working can allow women to remain in the labour market, and maintain their hours explains why flexible working has been linked to worker's satisfaction between work with family life (Eurofound and the International Labour Office, 2017), despite the fact that flexible working can potentially increase work-family conflict due to increasing both work and family demands. The project's analysis of European data in 2010 (ESS) shows that those who answered "very true" that they can adapt their schedules are more satisfied with their general work-life balance (Figure 12). This was especially true for women – perhaps linked to the fact that flexible working was more likely to lead to

Women who use flexitime were only half as likely as those who do not to **reduce their working hours after childbirth**

increase in work intensity for men (see also, Lott, 2015). Furthermore, despite increasing feelings of conflict between work and family, allowing women to maintain their employment status in times of high family demand can potentially increase their life satisfaction through role expansion (Grönlund and Öun, 2010) – ie, being a mother while maintaining their career.
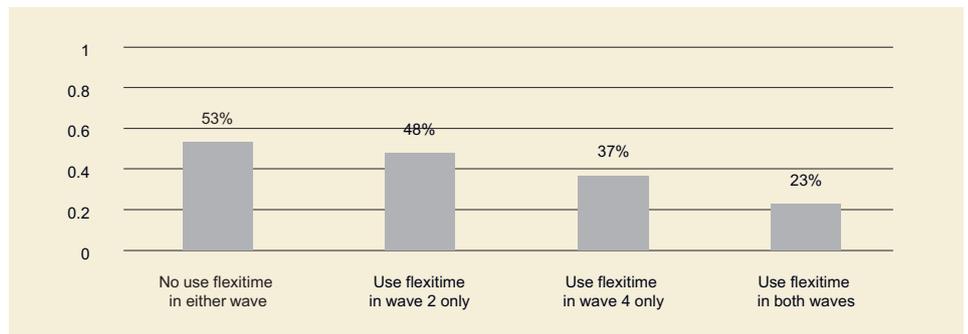
Figure 11: Predicted probabilities of women reducing their working hours (more than 4 hours a week) after childbirth
Note: Predicted probabilities based on logistic regression of the likelihood of reducing working hours on flexitime use. Source: Chung, H & van der Horst, M (2017/forthcoming) Women's employment patterns after childbirth and the perceived access to and use of flexitime and teleworking. *Human Relations. Online first.*
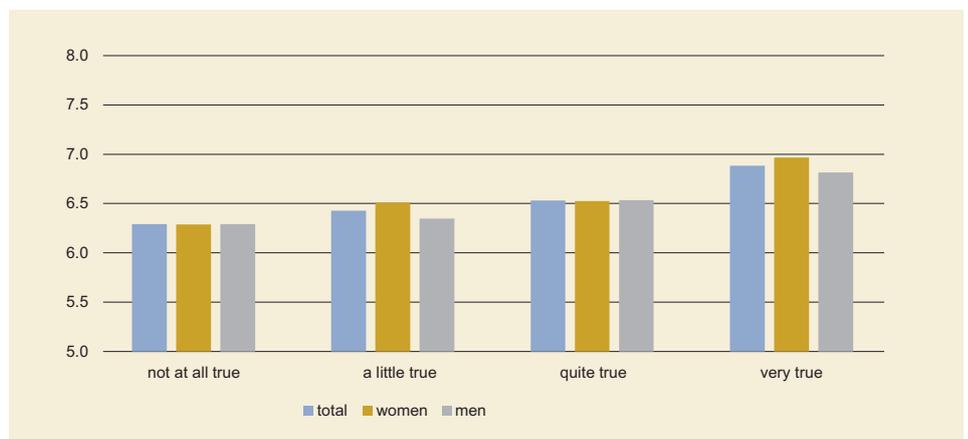
Figure 12. Average life satisfaction between work with family life (0-10) for workers across 23 European countries with different levels of flexible schedules (author's calculation, source: ESS 2010).

8   This is based on the paper: Chung, H & van der Horst, M (2017) "Women's employment patterns after childbirth and the perceived access to and use of flexitime and teleworking" *Human Relations.*

IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXTS IN FLEXIBLE WORKING OUTCOMES[9]

Men gain additional income by working flexibly, while women do not
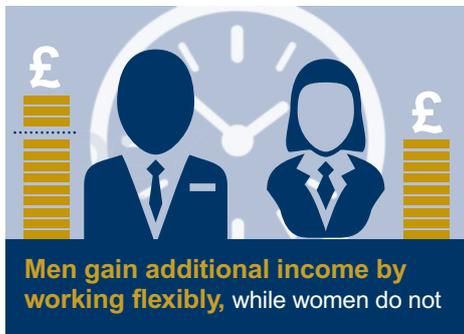
Flexible working can bring about income premiums for men

There was also evidence to show that flexible working can lead to income premiums – or that this increase in work intensity due to flexible working was rewarded. Based on our analysis of German longitudinal data (SOEP) there is evidence that workers experienced income gains when working flexibly.

However, we found that there was a considerable gender gap, where this gain was larger for men. Women, even full-time working women, did not reap the premiums despite increasing their work intensity. This gender discrepancy exists even when the sex segregation of the labour market and self-selection into certain jobs are taken into account.

Gender differences in flexible working

The reason why the income gained from flexible working may differ for men and women may have to do with the different motivations they have when using schedule control. Women were more likely to and to be thought to use flexibility in their work for family-friendly purposes while men use it and are thought to use it for career or other purposes (Clawson and Gerstel, 2014). Women may even forsake additional income for being able to work flexibly (see also Weeden, 2005). In our analysis, we also found evidence to show that mothers may be working overtime hours without additional pay in exchange for more control over their work. Men, by contrast, may gain schedule control as a part of their promotion or use it as high performance strategy, rather than as a mean to combine different life domains. This can explain why for men flexible working is more likely to lead to additional income.

However, beyond workers own motivations, this discrepancy may be due to employers' discriminatory perceptions. Even when women use flexible working for performance goals and increase their overtime hours and/or work intensity when gaining flexibility at work, their efforts might not be perceived as such by employers who might hold traditional gender role ideals (Brescoll et al., 2013). In other words, when women use flexible working arrangements employers are more likely to believe that it is used for family-friendly purposes and are less likely to reward the increased performance/work intensity (Leslie et al., 2012).

This raises the danger of flexible working potentially enforcing traditional gender roles in the division of labour rather than equalising it. This is because flexible working can expand work for men, ie, increase their working hours and work intensity and concomitant rewards, but expand family demands/responsibility for women by increasing their capacity to take on more (see also, Hilbrecht et al., 2008) while maintaining their work status.

Company and country contexts matter whether flexible working works or not

The various contexts in which flexible working is being used matters as well. Based on UK data (WERS), workers working long hours (overtime) and/or in long-hours culture – ie, where workers believe that they need to put in long hours in order to progress at the workplace, are more likely to feel work-family conflict. Flexitime moderates this influence, making long working hours and working in long-working hours culture less harmful for work-life balance. On the other hand, teleworking is only harmful for work-life balance for those who are in supervisory roles and in demanding jobs – ie, those who agree that their job requires them to work very hard. Unfortunately this constitutes 1/3 of all workers in the survey. Furthermore, country contexts matter as well. For example, looking at Europe in 2010 (ESS) the countries with high unemployment rates were those where workers were more likely to worry about work when not at work, when using flexitime. In other words, there are sub-groups of population in different contexts where flexible working may work better than for others. More investigation is needed to examine how and when flexible working can lead to better outcomes without resulting in the potential negative outcomes as noted in this report.

Flexitime leads to work spill over into family especially in countries with high unemployment rates

9   This section is based on the results from the papers:
1) Chung, H (work-in-progress) "Examining the impact of schedule flexibility on work-family conflict – gender and occupational variance" presented at the 2016 ILREA European Congress 7th – 9th September, University of Milano & 2016 Work Family Researcher's Network Conference 23-25 June, Washington DC.
2) Chung, H (work-in-progress) "Examining the influence of schedule control on work-life balance, and the importance of country context". Earlier versions presented at the 2016 ILREA European Congress 7th – 9th September, University of Milano & 2016 ESPAnet conference 1st – 3rd September, Erasmus University Rotterdam.
3) Lott, Y & Chung, H (2016) "Gender discrepancies in the outcomes of schedule control on overtime hours and income in Germany" *European Sociological Review.* 32(6)752-765.

SUMMING UP

More and more workers find it crucial to be able to balance work with family life, making it one of the most important factors when thinking of their next jobs. However, large numbers of workers are struggling with balancing work with family demands, many feeling that their work is prohibiting them from giving time and energy to their family and household tasks. Despite expectations, in general, flexible working did not help much in relieving workers of their work-family conflict. Several explanations are given in this report as to why this is the case;

One major reason behind this is because flexible working can potentially make work spill over into family lives, by making workers worry about work when not at work, and work longer hours, thereby encroaching into family time.

In addition, flexible working may be still predominantly used for performance purposes, for higher-skilled workers in contexts where workers are motivated to work harder. Also, workers may try to overcompensate for the potential negative stigma they could face due to working flexibly. Lastly, flexible working may allow people, especially mothers, to stay in work and to work longer than they would have been able to otherwise, which may increase the conflict between work and family, yet can increase their satisfaction with work-life balance.

Finally, this report examines the contexts in which flexible working is more likely to benefit workers – and found that gender, company culture, as well as country socio-economic contexts matter in making flexible working work for workers.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following notes possible policy recommendations based on this report.

Firstly, flexible working can help tackle the persistent gender inequalities in the labour market by allowing women to maintain their labour market positions after childbirth. This has huge implications for maintaining women's human capital and their career especially in a life-course perspective, which can help tackle the existing problems of gender wage gaps in the labour market. Yet, flexible working is still not being provided to many workers who need it most, especially with the most disadvantaged groups of workers without other means of tackling work-family conflict having the least access.

Campaigns such as Working Families' 'Happy to talk flexible working' is a good and important step to change employers' and workers' views by suggesting that all jobs could potentially be flexible from day one. However, a stronger legislative right for workers in terms of requesting flexible working may be more effective in changing work cultures. As in the Dutch right to request, legislative changes that require employers to state reasons for rejecting flexible working requests would be a useful in ensuring that workers have a true right to flexible working. Such changes will enforce managers to rethink the current presentism work culture and embrace flexible working that can be productive for both employers and employees, especially in the longer term.

At the company level it will be important to have campaigns to distribute the key messages of how flexibility can lead to better productivity outcomes to tackle the flexibility stigma still prevalent in our work places. It would be also be important to have work-life balance included as a part of the normal discussions between workers and managers.

We should ensure to bring work-life balance at the forefront to change the existing "ideal worker norm" from that of a worker whose only responsibility and priority lies at work, to a more balanced worker that is able to deal with both the demands of work and other spheres of life.

There is a potential for flexible working to reinforce gender roles by increasing men's work spheres and increasing women's family demands, due to the existing gender norms in our societies. More policies that encourage fathers to take up flexible working arrangements for family-friendly purposes are needed to overcome this.

We also need to think of reshaping our labour laws to take into consideration the mass changes occurring in the workplace. Many labour laws are still are based on the standard worker working fixed hours, under manager's supervision. Most of these assumptions have now changed and the protection of workers need to move beyond our assumption to protect workers from working (needing to work) everywhere and all the time. It will be useful to have a more comprehensive discussion on issues around flexible working, changing gender roles, and work-life balance, as well as other changes in the labour market such as increase in work intensity, employment insecurity. We should also examine how a wider range of flexible working, including the new types of working such as the gig economy, should be promoted or regulated. This will allow workplace issues to be examined in a holistic manner and enable new strategies for a more productive, sustainable economy and decent work-life balance for all.

LIST OF PAPERS FROM THE WAF PROJECT USED IN THIS REPORT

Published

Chung, H (2014) Explaining the provision of flexitime in companies across Europe (in the pre- and post-crisis Europe): role of national contexts, *WAF Working Paper 1*. Canterbury, University of Kent.

Lott, Y & Chung, H (2016) "Gender discrepancies in the outcomes of schedule control on overtime hours and income in Germany" *European Sociological Review*. 32(6)752-765.

Chung, H (2017/forthcoming) "Dualization and the access to occupational family-friendly working-time arrangements across Europe" *Social Policy & Administration*. *Online first*.

Chung, H & van der Horst, M (2017/forthcoming) "Women's employment patterns after childbirth and the perceived access to and use of flexitime and teleworking." *Human Relations. Online first*.

Chung, H. (2017/forthcoming) "National-level family policies and workers' access to schedule control in a European comparative perspective: Crowding out or in, and for whom?" *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis. Online first*.

Forthcoming

Golden, L, Chung, H and Sweet, S (forthcoming) "Positive and Negative Application of Flexible Working Time Arrangements: Comparing the United States and the EU Countries" in *Handbook of Comparative Human Resource Management*, Elaine Farndale, Chris Brewster and Wolfgang Mayrhofer (Eds.), Revised Second Edition, 2017. Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2881679

Work-in-progress/in submission

Chung, H (work-in-progress) "Flexibility stigma and parent's access to and use of flexible work arrangements" to be presented in the 2017 Community, Work and Family conference on the 24-27th of May, University of Milano, Italy.

Chung, H (work-in-progress) "Flexible working in companies across Europe: high performance or family friendly strategies?" presented at the SASE Annual Conference, 2nd July 2015, LSE, London

Chung, H (work-in-progress) "Women's work penalty' in the access to schedule control across Europe" earlier version presented at the Community Work & Family Conference, 21st March 2015, Malmö, Sweden

Chung, H and van der Horst, M (work-in-progress) "Gendered discrepancies in the outcomes of flexible working: the case of overtime and income in the UK" presented at the 2016 Work, Employment and Society Conference, 6-8th September, University of Leeds & to be presented at the 2017 Community, Work and Family Conference 25-27th May, University of Milan.

Chung, H (work-in-progress) "Examining the impact of schedule flexibility on work-family conflict – gender and occupational variance" presented at the 2016 ILREA European Congress 7th – 9th September, University of Milano & 2016 Work Family Researcher's Network Conference 23-25 June, Washington DC.

Chung, H (work-in-progress) "Examining the influence of schedule control on work-life balance, and the importance of country context". Earlier versions presented at the 2016 ILREA European Congress 7th – 9th September, University of Milano & 2016 ESPAnet conference 1st – 3rd September, Erasmus University Rotterdam.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE DATA SETS USED FOR THIS PROJECT

This project made use of a number of data sets from across Europe and the UK.

European Comparative data sets

The *European Working Conditions Survey* (EWCS) of 2010 and 2015: This data is gathered by the European Foundation and aims to provide information on a number of dimensions of working conditions for workers across Europe. Individuals across European Union (EU27 in 2010, EU28 in 2015) and five candidate countries were included. A representative sample was gathered of those aged 15 or over and in employment (minimum 1 hour a week) at the time of the survey and was conducted through face-to-face interviews. Approximately 1000 cases are included per country. Here flexitime was defined as those who "can adapt your working hours within certain limits", and working time autonomy is defined as workers where "working hours are entirely determined by yourself". Teleworking is defined here as workers who work from home or in public spaces such as coffee shops or airports, at least several times a month in the past 12 months in their main paid job. For more information see:
www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/european-working-conditions-surveys

The *European Company Survey* (ECS) of 2004/2009 from the European Foundation: The ECS provides information at the establishment level on various workplace practices, ranging from working time to social dialogue. A representative sample of establishments with more than 10 employees was gathered from 21 countries in 2004 and 30 countries in 2009 including EU27 member states and three candidate countries, with approximately 1000 companies per country. The surveys were conducted via telephone, with personnel managers and, if available, employee representatives being interviewed. This project makes use of the data from the manager survey. Flexitime is defined as employee's "possibility to adapt – within certain limits – the time when they begin or finish their work according to their personal needs or wishes". For more information see:
www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/european-company-surveys

The *European Social Survey* (ESS) of 2010 (5th wave) special module on work-life balance. This survey includes random sampling of population above 15 years of age, across 28 European countries and was conducted through face-to-face interviews, collecting approximately 1000 cases per country. Selecting those in employment, below retirement age, we are left with just over 15,000 cases for analysis. Flexitime is defined as those agreeing to "I can decide the time I start and finish work". For more information:
www.europeansocialsurvey.org/

UK data sets

Work-Life Balance Employee Survey (BIS WLB) of 2011 (4th wave), conducted by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills in the UK. The survey was conducted via telephone in the first quarter of 2011 with a sample size of 1874 for the core sample, and another 893 additional boost sample for parents with children as well as those with non-children caring responsibilities. Flexitime is defined as "where an employee has no set start of finish time but an agreement to work a set number of hours per week or month". Teleworking is defined as "Work from home on a regular basis, this means an employee works all or some part of the time from home as part of their working hours". For more information:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/work-life-balance-survey-number-4

Work Employment Relations Survey (WERS) of 2011 is a national survey of people at work conducted by the Department of Business Innovations and Skills in the UK. The survey covers all workplaces in Britain that have 5 or more employees and are operating in Sections C-S of the Standard Industrial Classification (2007). This population accounts for 35% of all workplaces and 90% of all employees in Britain. WERS has four components; a survey of managers, a survey of worker representatives, a survey of employees, and a financial performance questionnaire. This project makes use of the employee survey only which includes approximately 22,000 cases. Flexitime measured directly through the same wording, and teleworking is defined as "working at or from home in normal working hours". For more information:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-2011-workplace-employment-relations-study-wers

Understanding Society data 2009- 2014 (University of Essex, 2015): Understanding Society is a large household panel data containing (at wave 1) about 40,000 households in the UK (Knies, 2015) containing information about flexible working as well as a wide range of employment and household characteristics. A representative sample of UK households are included in the data and was conducted through face-to-face interviews. The 2nd, 4th, 6th waves include information on flexible working patterns of workers, where respondents were asked "If you personally needed any, which of the arrangements listed on the card are available at your workplace?", and "Do you currently work in any of the following ways?" – respondents could choose flexitime, and "to work from home on a regular basis" which is used to indicate teleworking. For more information: www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/

German Data set

German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) is a representative panel study of German households that started in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1984, and expanded to include the territory of the former German Democratic Republic in 1990 post-unification. Over 12,000 households and 32,000 persons are interviewed every year through a face-to-face interviews. In the survey respondents were asked "Which of the following working hours arrangements is most applicable to your work?" The possible answers are 1 = set by the company with no possibility of changes, 2 = flexible working schedules set by the company (employer-oriented flexibility), 3 = flexitime and 4 = hours entirely determined by employee (working-time autonomy). For more information: www.diw.de/soep.

SHORT SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

Work Autonomy, Flexibility and Work-Life Balance is a research project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council as a part of their Future Research Leader Scheme (Grant ES/K009699/1) and based at the University of Kent (2013-2017). This project aims to examine how flexible working, especially **flexitime** – the ability to decide when to work, starting and ending work in flexible times, and **teleworking** – the ability to work from home on occasion, is being used and provided, and whether and when it benefits workers or lead to increased intensification of work, blurring boundaries between work and family life, potentially reducing feelings of work-life balance. (www.wafproject.org)

SHORT INTRODUCTION OF THE PI

Dr Heejung Chung is Reader in Sociology and Social Policy in the School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research at the University of Kent, UK.

Dr Chung is a labour sociologist interested in the cross-national comparative analysis of welfare states and their labour markets. Her work focuses on individuals' capabilities to tackle issues confronted in the spheres of work and family life looking at, for example, flexible working and work-life balance. Other areas of her research include individuals' labour market insecurity perceptions and attitudes towards the welfare states. The main method used to answer these questions are multilevel modelling using secondary quantitative data, but she also uses various quantitative and qualitative methods in her research. (www.heejungchung.com)

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