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The influence of working time arrangements on work-life integration or 'balance': A review of the international evidence

Colette Fagan, Clare Lyonette,
Mark Smith and Abril Saldaña-Tejeda

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***The influence of working time arrangements
on work-life integration or 'balance':
A review of the international evidence***

by

**Colette Fagan, Clare Lyonette, Mark Smith
and Abril Saldaña-Tejeda¹**

Research synthesis paper prepared as an input to the report for discussion by
the Tripartite Meeting of Experts on Working Time Arrangements
(17-21 October 2011)

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE – GENEVA

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Preface

Working time has been an important issue for the ILO ever since the founding of the organisation. The establishment of limits on daily and weekly working hours was the subject of the very first ILO Convention: the Hours of Work (Industry) Convention, 1919 (No. 1). The recent economic crisis and the Global Jobs Pact of 2009 have put working-time issues back on the agenda. At the same time, recent trends such as technological advancements enabling teleworking have contributed to the creation of a “24-hour society” where line between work and non-work time is becoming increasingly blurred. This has been coupled with a significant shift away from the “normal” or “standard” working week towards “non-standard” work schedules, for example shift and part-time work, compressed workweeks, weekend work, on-call work etc. Together these trends point to a new context for working-time policy in the twenty-first century.

In order to respond to these new challenges for working time policy and to map out the way forward for the ILO decent work agenda in the area of working time, the Tripartite Meeting of Experts on Working Time Arrangements was held in Geneva from 17 to 21 October 2011. Meeting participants included experts representing trade unions, employers’ associations and governments. Prior to the Meeting, the International Labour Office had issued a report: *Working time in the twenty-first century: Report for discussion at the Tripartite Meeting of Experts on Working-time Arrangements (17-21 October 2011)*, to serve as the basis for the discussion. The report outlined contemporary trends, developments and effects with regard to different aspects of working time, such as hours of work and work schedules. This paper - alongside two other papers, one on working time, health and safety, and another on working time, productivity and firm performance - was used as input into the discussion report for the meeting.

This paper provides a comprehensive synthesis of previous research examining the link between different aspects of working time and outcomes in terms of work-life “integration” or “balance”, which includes but is not limited to the reconciliation of work and family life. It also explicitly considers the extent to which various types of working time arrangements not only facilitate work-life balance, but also promote, or hinder, gender equality in both the labour market and in personal life. These are crucial issues, both because of the continuing prevalence of long hours of work, especially in developing countries, and also in terms of the diversification of working time arrangements away from the so-called “standard workweek” (i.e., a Monday to Friday or Saturday daytime schedule). The paper begins by conceptualizing and measuring work-life “integration” or “balance”, reviewing the different types of terminology used and the dimensions of working time arrangements pertaining to this topic. It then considers the effects of the volume (quantity) of working hours on work-life balance, and finds that long working hours have been identified as an important predictor of work–life conflict. In contrast, workers working part-time were the most likely to report compatibility between their job and family life, even when compared with women and men without dependent children. Finally, it considers the effects of work schedules on various measures of work-life balance. It concludes that “non-standard” work schedules—such as shift work, night work, and weekend work—substantially increase work–family incompatibility. In contrast, where workers have some autonomy and control over their work schedules, or the scope to choose particular hours of work, this has a positive effect not only on work-life balance, but on workers’ health and well-being as well.

Overall, the growing diversification in the organisation of working time raises questions about its impact on workers' work-life balance, as well as the need for an awareness of this dimension when considering workers' and employers' preferences regarding working time. At the same time, this trend is also promising in the sense that it might offer "win-win" solutions that could potentially benefit both workers and employers. It is hoped that this study will provide useful guidance regarding how to respond to new trends and developments in the area of working time and develop innovative, mutually beneficial working-time arrangements.

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Introduction

Working time arrangements have diversified over several decades in the context of changes in the laws and regulations in many countries to permit more flexible and individualized arrangements (Messenger, 2004; Boulin et al., 2006; Rubery, 2005). This trend has occurred in parallel with the increased participation of women in the paid labour force. The amount and type of flexibility that employers and workers want does not necessarily coincide. For example, employers may want their workforce to be available to work longer hours at short notice, or to vary the days on which they work, while workers usually want the type of flexible arrangements that enable them to integrate better the time demands of their employment with domestic responsibilities and other activities. So one of the critical questions that has emerged concerns the effects of different working time arrangements on the so-called ‘work-life balance’ of workers. A second question relates to their implications for gender equality and gender equity policies.²

The present report reviews the research evidence on the effects of working time arrangements on work-life integration, reconciliation or ‘balance’ across paid economic activity (employment) and personal life (domestic responsibilities and other activities) according to a range of well-being and work-life balance outcomes. The gender issues involved are woven throughout the discussion. Women’s labour market participation and working time are generally more constrained than that of men by care responsibilities for children and other family members, resulting in the existence of gender differences in the volume and schedule of working hours in many countries. While certain working time arrangements, such as part-time work, may help women to combine employment with domestic responsibilities, they are ‘double-edged’ because they can reinforce or even exacerbate gender inequalities and segregation in the labour market and the home. This is because the need to find working hours that fit to some degree with family care responsibilities helps to channel women into a narrow range of female-dominated jobs, while this gender segregation of employment in turn reinforces the position of women as the primary carers within the family.

The connection between working time, family responsibilities and gender inequality is addressed in the ILO Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156). The Convention calls for policy to create effective equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women workers by enabling workers with family responsibilities to engage in employment “without being subject to discrimination and, to the extent possible, without conflict between their employment and family responsibilities” (Article 3, paragraph 1). The Convention also calls for the needs of workers with family responsibilities to be taken into account in terms and conditions of employment and social security, in the planning and development of child-care and other family services and facilities, and in vocational guidance and training.

The first chapter of this report provides an overview of the concepts used in the international literature, including the connotations of the pervasive term ‘work-life balance’; it then presents the analytical framework that has guided the present review. Chapter 2 focuses on the effects of the volume of hours worked and Chapter 3 on work schedules. Conclusions and policy implications are presented in Chapter 4.

² *Gender equality* refers to “the enjoyment of equal rights, opportunities and treatment [...] in all spheres of life. It does not mean, however, that men and women are the same or must become the same”, rather that they should be “free to develop their personal abilities and make life choices without the limitations set by stereotypes or prejudices about gender roles or the characteristics of men and women.” *Gender equity* “means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs and interests. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities” (ILO, 2007).

The report was commissioned by the ILO to inform the ILO Tripartite Meeting of Experts on Working time Arrangements, held in October 2011. The search was designed to cover a broad range of relevant literature published in English, French and Spanish.³ Most of the research in this field has been undertaken in Europe, North America and Australia. The geographical coverage was widened by explicitly searching for relevant studies for Japan and Latin America, although it was beyond the scope of the study to undertake a fully systematic worldwide review. It is expected that a work programme focussing on other regions of the world would provide valuable additional empirical detail that would reinforce rather than change the conclusions reached in the present report. The focus of the analysis is on outcomes for workers and their families in the formal economy. The views of managers and workers' representatives, and the impact of working time in the informal economy, are included where evidence is available.

³ A range of search terms were used, in accordance with the discussion of terminology in Chapter 1 of the report. Abril Saldana reviewed the Spanish literature with particular emphasis on Latin America (English language sources were also included in the search). For the Latin American sources, the search was widened to include the term 'occupational health', which was found to be relevant, as that is how the analysis and debate is mostly framed in that region. The literature search for sources on Latin America (and other relevant studies published in Spanish) was carried out through three main databases based in Mexico, Spain and Chile (see below), and the Jstor, google scholar and library catalogues. The three main databases are: Redalyc. Red de Revistas Científicas de América Latina y El Caribe, España y Portugal. <http://redalyc.uaemex.mx/>; Dialnet. Spanish based database (Universidad de la Rioja) artículos científicos hispanos en Internet. <http://dialnet.unirioja.es/>; SciELO Chile, Scientific Electronic Library Online <http://www.scielo.cl/>. Dr Mark Smith was responsible for the French literature, drawn largely from France and Quebec, with a range of search terms being used, including *conciliation travail/vie/famille/interférences/articulation/compatibilité/intégration/d'interface* and *enrichissement*. Dr. Clare Lyonette led the English-language literature review of European, United States, Australian, Japanese and Canadian research using a wide range of search terms; the primary databases used were: IBSS (International Bibliography of the Social Sciences) and the University of Warwick library catalogue, as well as PsycARTICLES and PsycINFO. The cut-off date for published work was 1990, except where articles are still frequently cited and well regarded.

1. Conceptualizing and measuring work-life integration or ‘balance’

This section provides an overview of the terminology and the range and adequacy of the measures of work-life balance that are used in the literature and assembled in our database.⁴

While the term ‘work-life balance’ has in recent years become the most widely used in policy debates, a range of terms are currently in use. The first distinction is whether the emphasis is on the interface between work – primarily referring to employment – and either a focus on ‘family’, ‘non-work’ or ‘life’ more broadly, with a less common variant referring to ‘personal life’. The second distinction is whether the focus is on ‘balance’ or another conceptualization of the interface. The metaphor of balance invokes the image of a set of scales – the idea that the two domains can be brought into a harmonious existence, that each have equal value (weight). Many writers have rejected or avoided the connotations invoked by the metaphor of ‘balance’ by using other terminology: a neutral description of the relationship between the two domains; one that emphasizes tensions; or one that focuses on identifying the potential positive synergies. A basic map of the terminology used in the field is summarized in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1. Summary of terminology used in this field

| Types of concepts used to describe the relationship between the domains of work/employment and family life/personal life | |
|--|--|
| Balance | Work-family balance/work-life balance |
| Neutral descriptions | Interface Articulation, dynamics Integration Coordination Reconciliation |
| Emphasis on tensions | Interference Tension Spill-over (negative) Conflict Intrusion |
| Positive synergies | Enrichment Spill-over (positive) |

In the view of the authors, the most appropriate terminology is to refer to ‘work and personal life’ since: (i) work is part of life, and therefore to see it in terms of a work/life interface is misleading; and (ii) ‘personal life’ captures the range of commitments and duties which an individual may have, and which can vary across the life course, while still allowing family to be a large part of personal life for most people. For most purposes, the authors also favour more neutral descriptions, such as integration or coordination, rather than ‘balance’. However, it is conceded that ‘work and personal life integration’ is rather cumbersome and that the prevailing language in international policy

⁴ The database of the literature reviewed extends beyond that cited in the present report. For each source, it documents the concepts, measures and scope of the study.

debates has become ‘work-life balance’. Accordingly, for the purpose of the present ILO report, that convention will be followed. A similarly pragmatic approach is adopted by Drobnič (2011).⁵

Studies of the work/employment and family/personal life interface have used a range of measures, often collected through surveys, although smaller more qualitative studies have also been undertaken. Many of the measures used are self-assessed reports by individuals of subjective measures of well-being, including:

- the degree of ‘fit’ (compatibility) that they consider to exist between their working time and their personal/family/social life
- the extent of ‘work-life balance’ they feel they have
- the degree of satisfaction they have with their work-life balance
- the mismatch between their preferred and actual working time
- reports of negative effects on well-being and health (fatigue, energy, burn-out, stress, general health)
- reports of ‘role conflict’ and the negative ‘spill-over’ effects of the time, energy and emotional demands of employment into tensions in personal relationships (arguments, distraction, poor quality intimate relationships and leisure time ...)
- reports of positive ‘spill-over’ synergies and enrichment of personal life (although it is more common for questions to be framed in terms of negative rather than positive spill-over).

Objective measures of the impact of working time on individual workers are less common, although some studies have directly measured the health of workers (stress levels, blood pressure, other general health problems, etc., including: Kawachi et al., 1995; Costa, 1996; Kawakami et al., 1999; Akerstedt, 2003).

Gender comparisons are a fundamental aspect of most research in this area, as it is recognized that women provide the bulk of care for children and other family members, and that these demands on their time usually mean that their employment hours are more constrained than those of men. Gender differences in working time arrangements, and in measures of work-life balance and well-being outcomes, therefore have to be interpreted with an awareness of the ‘double shift’ of employment and family care that is largely carried out by women. This ‘double shift’ is particularly intense in lone parent households, the majority of which are lone mother households. Part-time hours and other working time adjustments are frequently proposed as a solution to make it easier for women to combine these activities. However, such options may have the effect of reinforcing gender segregated employment patterns and the position of women as the primary carer in the family, if they are either only available in certain female-dominated jobs, or are more widely available, but are not used by men. As noted in the introduction, it is for these reasons that the ILO Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), in Article 3, paragraph 1, calls for policies to enable workers with family responsibilities to engage in employment with a view to creating effective equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women. Most of the studies on working time and ‘work-life balance’ that have been undertaken examine the outcomes for workers in general, or focus

⁵ What is meant by ‘work’ in these debates is employment, with other forms of work, notably unpaid labour in the home, being assigned to the personal sphere as an activity to be managed alongside employment.

on parents with child-care responsibilities, and particularly on mothers. Other population subsets are occasionally the focus of attention, such as older workers (50+ years) as a contribution to current policy debates on ‘active ageing’ and prolonging working life. Less is known about the ‘work-life balance’ of some other groups of workers, such as young people combining employment with education and training. Studies usually rely on workers’ accounts of their ‘work-life balance’, although it is rare for family members, such as spouses, children or parents, to be asked for their assessment of ‘work-life balance’ outcomes.

Some studies have tried to assess whether working time arrangements that are intended to facilitate work-life balance, which are sometimes referred to as ‘flexible’ or ‘family friendly,’ enhance business performance. Such arrangements include working time reductions, part-time hours, flexitime and teleworking. Typically, these investigations rely on assessments by managers of their impact on productivity and personnel issues (reduced absenteeism, reduced stress and better concentration, improved retention and recruitment, improved staff morale, promotion of equal opportunities and diversity). Occasionally, the opinions of unions and other workers’ representatives are sought.

The focus here is on the impact of working time arrangements – the time demands of employment – on work-life integration or ‘balance’. A large body of research has investigated this question, which is reviewed below. However, it should first be noted that other situational factors also influence the capabilities of men and women to secure ‘work-life balance’ (Hobson et al., 2011). A second strand of research in this field looks at the impact of aspects of job quality other than working time on work-life balance by leaving workers with insufficient mental and physical resources to fully engage in personal life. This approach draws attention to the issues of ‘boundary work’, ‘spill-over’ and psychological strain between the domains and roles of employment and personal life, which are not determined solely by working hours (for example, Hochschild, 1997; Kelly and Voydanoff, 1985; Staines, 1980; Alis and Dumas, 2003; Lewis et al., 2003; Pocock, 2003). Steiber (2009) expresses the issue neatly by drawing a distinction between ‘time-based conflict’ and ‘strain-based conflict’, building on Voydanoff (2005), who draws a third distinction concerning ‘boundary-spanning’ demands (see Drobnič, 2011). Thus, if a job combines high demands (a heavy workload, intense pace of work, emotionally demanding tasks, complex problem solving, insufficient resources to get the job done) with a lack of control or decision-making autonomy, this generates job strain, which is in turn correlated with stress, physical health problems and negative impacts on work-life balance (Karasek, 1979; Karasek and Theorell, 1990). Other studies have examined the impact of other dimensions of job quality on work-life balance. For example, job insecurity has a negative impact on reports of work-life balance, while variety in job content and autonomy of working methods have a positive influence (Voydanoff, 2005; Beham and Drobnič, 2010). Genin’s (2009) study of 350 French managerial level employees found that the characteristics of the job, the working environment and the individuals themselves determined the level of conflict between work and private life (see also Barel, 2008, for a study of a French shopping centre).

The extent and form of both time-based and strain-based conflict in jobs is shaped by the regulatory framework: legislation, as well as collective agreements and other voluntary provisions, set the contextual conditions for enhancing work-life balance or exacerbating the conflicts and tensions between employment and personal life. Whether employers believe that they have a responsibility to promote work-life balance, or consider it largely the responsibility of the state is an important consideration in analysing the pivotal issue of the extent and form of the work-life balance policies that are developed and implemented at the workplace (Den Dulk et al., 2011; Fagan and Walthery, 2011a; Ollier-Mulaterre, 2008; Richard, 2010; Solignac, 2009).

Finally, as suggested by Convention No. 156, work-life balance is affected by social infrastructure as well as job features. The availability of affordable and good quality child care, elder care and other community services, the effectiveness of transport systems and commuting distances from residential areas, adequate domestic infrastructure, including water and energy supplies,

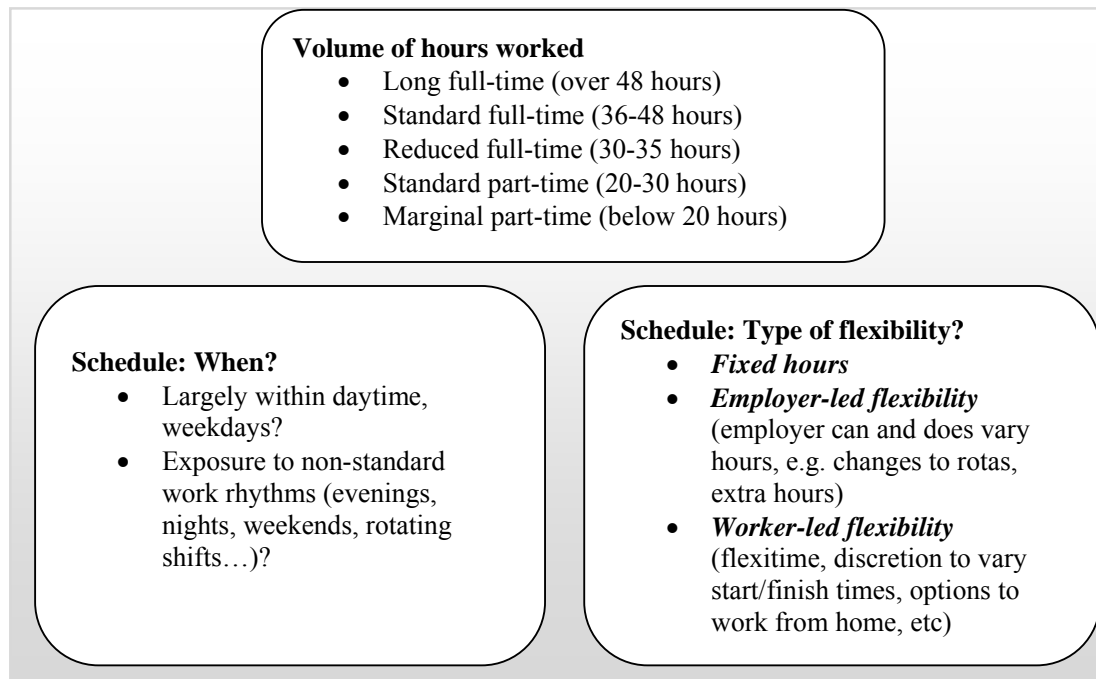
measures to promote a more equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work between women and men, and networks of social support, for example, all contribute to the quality of work-life integration. Hence, measures at the national, community and workplace levels together impact on the extent of the conflicts and pressures experienced by workers and potential workers by making working conditions (such as working hours) more compatible with family responsibilities, while services (such as care services) help to make family responsibilities more compatible with employment. The benefits extend beyond reduced stress and pressure on households and the enhancement of workplace productivity. Work-life balance measures support the labour market participation of women, with the result that their education and skills are used for their own benefit and that of society, and therefore help to alleviate poverty. Children's health, education and quality of life are also improved when parents have access to good quality and affordable child-care services, not least by reducing the problem experienced in some countries of the lack of such services resulting in children being left in poorly supervised situations, older children being taken out of school to look after younger siblings, or children accompanying parents to the workplace, where the environment may well be unhealthy or dangerous. For example, it is estimated that over 7 million children accompany their parents (mostly their mothers) to building sites in India (ILO, 2004).

Social infrastructure falls beyond the remit of the present report, but particular note should be taken of the importance of public policy in supporting women's employment and enhancing the work-life balance of families across the life course: family leave measures (maternity, paternity and parental leave); the legislation adopted in some countries granting individual employees the right to request reduced or flexible hours; and the provision of child and elder care services (OECD, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005; Fagan and Walthery, 2006; Plantenga and Remery, 2005 and 2010; Anxo et al., 2007; Barrère-Maurisson, 2010; Adema and Thévenon, 2008). Multivariate analysis reveals that family policies reduce work-family pressures, even when job demands and pressures are taken into account (Chung, 2011).

While working time arrangements are not the only determinant of work-life balance outcomes, research shows that they play a pivotal role in this respect. Working time arrangements have a significant effect, even when other job quality features are taken into account in multivariate models (Fagan and Walthery, 2011b). And, while social infrastructure is fundamentally important, studies covering a wide range of international, national and local settings consistently identify the specific working time arrangements that enhance or diminish work-life balance.

When considering work-life balance outcomes it is useful to delineate two dimensions of working time arrangements: the volume and the schedule of the hours worked (Figure 1.2). The volume of hours worked clearly impacts on the amount of time that is left for other activities. But the manner in which hours are scheduled is also important for the quality of the fit with domestic schedules and wider social life rhythms (Fagan, 2001). Work schedules encompass both: the times when hours are worked, including exposure to non-standard work rhythms (working during the evening, at night, at weekends or on rotating shifts); and the type of flexibility, which includes fixed and predictable schedules, those that vary frequently according to the needs of the employer (employer-led flexibility) and those that offer some autonomy for workers to vary when they work, including working from home (employee-led flexibility).

Figure 1.2. Dimensions of working time arrangements pertaining to work-life balance



The rest of the report summarizes research evidence of the impact of the volume of hours worked and the scheduling of hours on work-life balance along two lines of investigation for men and women: their impact on the well-being of workers (stress, anxiety, fatigue, mental health, lack of recovery time, ...) ⁶ and work-life/work-family outcomes (role strain, spill-over, conflict, lack of time, rushed, satisfaction with the balance, ‘fit’ or compatibility of employment with other activities, ...).

The present review covers the results of studies that have analysed the differential effects of hours of work and these various types of working time arrangements on work-life balance outcomes, including the effect of prior and mediating variables where they have been taken into account in the scientific literature. The prior and mediating variables that might be expected to affect the link between working time and work-life balance discussed in this section are summarized in Figure 1.3.

⁶ For a review of the health impacts of working time arrangements, see the companion ILO background paper (Tucker and Folkard, forthcoming), and Spurgeon, 2003.

Figure 1.3. Prior and mediating variables that might be expected to affect the link between working time arrangements and work-life balance

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Gender | The gender division of domestic labour means that women allocate more time than men to non-market work (child care, domestic work, subsistence farming) |
| Household composition | The amount of domestic work to be done in the home is greater when there are children and other dependants to care for. |
| Age | Expectations about what constitutes satisfactory work-life balance may vary according to life stage (early period of working life, core working years, period approaching retirement) |
| Job strain: demands and resources | Heavy job demands combined with a lack of control or decision-making about the work process creates job strain, which can have a negative spill-over into personal life |
| Social class position | Earnings and other household income affect the resources available to reduce domestic time pressures by purchasing substitutes (child care, cleaners, delivery services...) |
| Geographic location | Long commuting distances add to the time demands of employment and are a particular problem in some urban conurbations in both developed and developing countries |
| Social infrastructure | Working-time policy, including regulations Family leave policies (which are integrated into the social security system), child care, elder care and other community services Measures to promote a more equal sharing of unpaid care and household work between men and women (for example, quota allocations in parental leave systems) Transport systems (travel to work) Housing infrastructure and utilities (for example, domestic workload is reduced by reliable water and energy supplies) |

The literature search focussed mainly on research published since 1990, in addition to findings from earlier key and influential studies. As discussed in the introduction, the research on this topic is heavily skewed to studies undertaken in developed economies, although relevant published studies from developing countries were searched for and have been included.

2. Effect of the volume of working hours on work-life balance

Most of the literature on working time and work-life balance focuses on the effect of weekly hours of work. This is because what happens on a daily or weekly basis has a major effect on how employment and domestic schedules are coordinated (family meals, child-care arrangements) and the time available for participation in other personal life activities (volunteering, leisure, social activities with friends).

The present analysis focuses on weekly hours of work, although it should be noted that annual leave entitlements are also an important consideration, as longer leave periods can be expected to enhance work-life balance (all other things remaining equal). For example, annual leave entitlements are generally longer in continental Europe than in the United Kingdom, United States or Japan (Bosch et al., 1994; Bosch, 1997).

2.1. Volume of working hours and mental health/well-being outcomes

A sizeable proportion of the workforce in industrialized countries works long hours, that is 48 or more a week, and the incidence is even higher in developing countries (Messenger, 2004; Lee et al., 2007; Parent-Thirion et al., 2007).

Extensive research has been carried out, mainly in the United States and Europe, on the links between long working hours and health and well-being, particularly in relation to stress and other mental health problems, and this issue is high on the agenda of many European governments (see, for example, Dewe and Kompier, 2008). Golden and Altman have recently described overwork as “the point at which working hours begin to entail escalating risks or harms beyond those associated with normal, standard, agreed-upon hours” (2008: 65). Well over a decade ago, Sparks et al. (1997) carried out a review of the existing literature on the length of working hours and health, based on 21 study samples. The results indicated small but significant positive correlations between the number of hours of work and overall health symptoms (physiological and psychological), with longer hours being associated with poorer health. Qualitative analysis of a further 12 studies further supported these findings. In a more recent review in the United States, Dembe et al. (2008) highlighted several studies which also indicate an increased risk of physical health effects due to long working hours. A study of school teachers in Colombia found that just over one-third reported job strain and one-fifth reported an effort-reward imbalance, both of which were significantly related to mental health problems (Gómez Ortiz, 2008).

Burke and Cooper (2008) also report that long working hours tend to be associated with unhealthy lifestyle choices, such as smoking, coffee intake and alcohol consumption, lack of exercise and poor diet. These behaviour patterns then produce physiological changes, which lead to a higher risk of coronary heart disease and poorer overall health from a young age. A study of alcohol consumption among industrial workers in northern Mexico found that married men in their thirties had the highest consumption rates (Campa Magallón and Cruz Robazzi, 2005). Glass and Fujimoto (1994) found that paid employment in the United States was associated with lower levels of depression, but depressive symptoms started to increase when working hours were very long, although the actual threshold at which this occurred was higher for men with the highest job satisfaction scores.

Researchers have suggested that the link between long hours and poorer well-being may be explained in part by workers having insufficient recovery time to offset the negative effects (Burke and Cooper, 2008; Van der Hulst, 2003). Chandola et al. (2008) have also found that chronic work stress is associated with coronary heart disease and that this association is greater under the age of 50. In an earlier study of Japanese men, Kawakami and colleagues (1999) found a link between diabetes

and working over 50 hours overtime a month (on top of their regular 40-hour working week), as well as working with new technologies.

Table 2.1. Proportion of employees reporting health effects by hours of work (%): European employees, both men and women

| | 30-35 hours | 36-39 hours | 40 hours | 41-44 hours | 45 hours or more |
|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------|----------------|---------------------|
| Health affected overall | 55 | 58 | 63 | 63 | 68 |
| Backache | 30 | 32 | 35 | 31 | 38 |
| Headaches | 13 | 15 | 16 | 18 | 18 |
| Muscular pain (neck/shoulders) | 20 | 22 | 25 | 27 | 26 |
| Muscular pain (lower limbs) | 10 | 9 | 13 | 16 | 14 |
| Muscular pain (upper limbs) | 10 | 12 | 14 | 15 | 15 |
| Injury | 5 | 8 | 9 | 12 | 9 |
| Stress | 27 | 27 | 27 | 35 | 39 |
| Overall fatigue | 19 | 20 | 23 | 25 | 33 |
| Insomnia | 8 | 8 | 8 | 13 | 13 |

Note: data have been rounded to remove decimal places

Source: Third European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS), 2000, reported in Boisard et al., 2003.

Evidence regarding the health impact of long working hours has also been steadily increasing in European research. Using the Third European Working Conditions Survey, Boisard et al. (2003) found that the frequency of reported problems was significantly correlated with working time, particularly in relation to the incidence of stress, fatigue and backache (see Table 2.1). A total of 68 per cent of employees across Europe who worked 45 or more hours a week reported that their health was affected in some way, compared with 55 per cent of those working 30-34 hours.

Burchell et al. (2007) analysed later data from the Fourth European Working Conditions Survey (2005) and found that, among other factors, regularly working over 20 hours a week (and in particular, working more than 48 hours a week) contributes to an increased risk of work-related health effects. The risk of two or more work-related health impacts is also increased.

2.1.1 Gender differences

In almost all countries, men usually work longer hours in employment than women, although throughout the world women continue to bear the major responsibility for housework and child care, irrespective of their working status (Bianchi et al., 2000). Although women have increased their share of paid work, in most countries men have been slow to take up a greater share of the unpaid tasks in the home (Gregory and Milner, 2009). For example, a study in France found that the reduction in working time associated with the introduction of the 35-hour week did little in itself to challenge the existing gender division of domestic tasks: women devoted more time to cooking and other domestic tasks inside the home, while men did more repair and maintenance tasks on the house, garden, car, etc. (Méda and Orain, 2002). In Chile, younger men do more housework than older men, but the bulk is still done by women, and this gendered arrangement of social reproduction is a fundamental causal feature of gender inequality in the Chilean labour market (Godoy and Mauro, 2001). Lone parent

households face additional strains in combining employment with domestic tasks, which largely falls to women, as at least 90 per cent of lone parent households are lone mother households.⁷

When unpaid work is included in the calculation of the total length, women have a longer ‘total working week’ than men. Analysis for Europe shows that this applies even when women are engaged in part-time employment (Parent-Thirion et al., 2007; Fagan, 2010). In Portugal, where women’s employment is usually on a full-time basis, a study found that women spend an average of 12 hours a week more than men in combined paid and domestic work, although women in lower occupational classes spend a significantly longer time on domestic work than those in higher occupational classes (Lyonette et al., 2007). In Latin America and the Caribbean, women devote between 1.5 times (Chile) to four times (Mexico) more time than men to domestic chores and family care, and the gender gap in time use is widest for the lowest income groups (ILO, 2009: Figure 11). As in many parts of Europe, gender expectations regarding child-rearing and housework constrain the possibilities for women to enter or remain in paid work, as shown by studies covering Mexico (Riquer and Tepichin, 2001; Blanco and Pacheco, 2003). While employed women in Latin America and the Caribbean generally spend fewer hours in paid activity than men, they have a longer total working week.

Hours spent in domestic labour are rarely included in comparisons of the health impact of overall working hours by gender. However, those studies that do take this aspect into account show that the amount of time spent on housework tends to have a negative effect on well-being, particularly for women. Thus, a United States study (Glass and Fujimoto, 1994) found that paid employment was associated with lower levels of depression for men and women, but depressive symptoms started to increase when working hours were very long, albeit at different thresholds for men and women, while for both sexes time spent on housework was associated with increased depression. A later study by Boye (2009) using European Social Survey data from 25 European countries found that men’s well-being appears to be unaffected by hours of paid work and housework, whereas women’s well-being increases with paid working hours and decreases with increased levels of housework. Another European cross-national study found that employed mothers are slightly more likely to report negative work-related health effects if they do at least two hours of housework or child care a day (Burchell et al., 2007: Figure 59). In Chile, an analysis of over 28,000 cases of sick leave revealed that the main causes of morbidity among working women are behavioural disorders, depression and anxiety. Torres Aguayo and Klijn (2005) suggest that these ailments are related to long working hours and the double shift of employment and housework.

These results suggest that, while paid employment increases the well-being of women, those who work long hours in paid employment while retaining primary responsibility for domestic tasks at home are at particular risk of poorer mental health. For example, longer working hours (over 49 hours a week) were found to be associated with poorer mental health for women, but not men, by Kodz et al. (2003), using data from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS). In Canada, Shields (1999) found that women who worked long hours (an average of 41 or more hours a week) had an increased chance of subsequently experiencing depression, compared with those working standard hours (an average of 35 to 40 hours a week). The study also found that moving from standard to long hours was associated with increased alcohol intake for women, unhealthy weight gain for men and an increase in smoking for both men and women.

⁷ The gender role norms that shape the allocation of housework and child care in heterosexual couples do not map into practices in lesbian and gay couples in the same way, although the latter also have to negotiate how to combine employment with domestic work and the work-life balance conflicts that this can entail.

A study in the United Kingdom using longitudinal data (the British Household Panel Survey) found only limited overall effects of non-standard working hours on employees' mental health, but interesting evidence of a causal effect at the point of starting or ceasing to work long hours (Bardasi and Francesconi, 2000). The mental health of women with low qualification levels (compulsory education up to the age of 16) deteriorated if they started to work long hours, and the psychological health of higher-educated women improved when they stopped working more than 48 hours a week.

A Japanese study (Sekine et al., 2010) found that job strain, shift work and long working hours, and high levels of family-to-work and work-to-family conflict, are associated with poorer physical and mental functioning. Gender differences in family responsibilities have more of an impact on well-being (mental functioning) than gender differences in employment characteristics. The authors suggest that the gender division of labour leaves Japanese men free from child care and domestic tasks, and thus able to concentrate on their working lives, while women have to face the difficulty of combining employment and family roles. A Canadian study based on a survey of over 11,000 households found that women who reported satisfaction with their work-life balance devoted less time to household work, but also less time to paid work, than those who claimed to be dissatisfied (Frederiks and Fast, 2001). Interestingly, the same result was found for men, although at higher levels of time devoted to labour market work, and fewer to unpaid work in the home.

Further evidence of a gender difference in the effects of work-family conflict are provided by a Colombian study, which found that gender differences in the perception by individuals of their role in the family predicts differences in mental health issues resulting from work-family conflicts (Viviola, 2006). The perception of poor quality roles within the family is associated with low self-esteem and anxiety for men, and depression for women. The author suggests that the results emphasize the importance of fathering in relation to the self-esteem of men.

The gender differences in health outcomes associated with working long hours in employment may be less pronounced in countries where gender inequalities in domestic roles are smaller. One such example is Norway, where a recent study (Kleppa et al., 2008) found no gender differences in the mental health status of overtime workers, unlike earlier studies which recorded worse outcomes for women (for example, Ezoe and Morimoto, 1994, for Japan). Another example is a study of men and women nurses in the Netherlands, which found that emotional exhaustion has a significant positive effect on absence due to illness of both men and women. The risk of both emotional exhaustion and absence due to illness increases with the number of hours worked and the number of hours spent caring for children (Bekker et al., 2005). Contrary to expectations, men reported higher levels of emotional exhaustion than women (although the results were not significant) and, after controlling for all other explanatory variables, the illness rates of women were not significantly higher than those of men.

However, Galambos and Walters (1992) used path analysis, in which role strain was regressed onto work hours and schedule inflexibility for both Canadian wives and husbands. Long hours and schedule inflexibility increased role strain for wives and was a significant predictor of depression and anxiety. For husbands, role strain acted as a mediator in the relationship between work hours and schedule inflexibility, on the one hand, and between work hours and anxiety, on the other. The work hours of husbands had a direct effect on depression and anxiety, while those of wives also had a direct effect on the depression levels of husbands. The authors suggest that wives often play an emotionally supportive role and that working long hours makes them unavailable to provide a buffer against the work stress of their husbands.

2.1.2 Class differences

Exposure to long working hours and the associated negative effects on mental well-being varies by occupational class. Research in Europe (Parent-Thirion et al., 2007; Burchell et al., 2007) and the United States (Golden, 2006) shows that the longest hours are typically worked, on the one hand, by managers and some high-level professional positions and, on the other, by manual employees in poorly regulated and low-paid areas of the economy. This coexists with sectoral variations in exposure to long working hours in all countries, for example across agriculture, industry and services, but also within these broad sectoral categories (Lee et al., 2007).

Research in this field reveals that those who work long hours in lower status occupations have to contend with less job control and lower earnings than those who work long hours in higher status professional and managerial positions. The findings suggest that the negative effects of long working hours on health outcomes may be compounded if the hours are worked under conditions of limited job control and low earnings.

Financial reasons are a major motivation for manual and lower-paid employees to work long hours, as reflected in the premium pay rate offered in formal overtime schemes, where such schemes are operated. In the recent Norwegian Hordaland Health Study, Kleppa et al. (2008) found that overtime work is associated with increased levels of anxiety and depression for both men and women. The amount of overtime worked is highest for those with the lowest educational levels engaged in manual labour, shift work and with a low income. Similarly, a study of full-time workers in the Dutch postal service found that those who worked overtime received limited financial compensation and had a higher risk of health complaints, emotional exhaustion and home-work interference. These outcomes were even more acute for those under external pressure from their direct supervisors to work overtime (Van der Hulst and Geurts, 2001). The authors suggest that even a limited number of hours of involuntary overtime are associated with adverse mental health in low reward situations.

In industrialized economies, employees in higher-status better-paid occupations are the most likely to work long hours (see Kodz et al., 2003; Boisard et al., 2003). They are less likely than manual employees to receive overtime payment for doing so, although the financial compensation may come indirectly through performance bonuses and future promotion. Analysis of the British Workplace Employee Relations Survey (WERS) reveals that manual employees who work long hours are the most likely to say they do so for financial reasons, while managers and professionals usually emphasize their commitment to their work. Those with the highest degree of autonomy over how they organize their work are the most likely to attribute long working hours to commitment, even after taking into account their occupational level (Cully et al., 1999). This indicates the double-edged nature of autonomy: flexibility and discretion can go hand-in-hand with a sense of obligation to work long hours when required to cover variable or persistently heavy workloads. Working long hours may also become a key element of competition for promotion in flatter and more individualized organizational structures (Crompton and Brockmann, 2006).

In a study of 'extreme workers' in the United States and large multinational organisations (that is those working over 70 hours a week in high-earning, high-responsibility jobs), 48 per cent said that they were working an average of 17 hours a week longer than they did five years previously, 42 per cent took ten or fewer days holiday a year and 55 per cent said that they regularly had to cancel holiday plans. However, 66 per cent of these workers in the United States, and 76 per cent globally, said that they loved their job and 85 per cent reported that their job was interesting and challenging (Hewlett and Luce, 2006). More men than women were likely to be working in such jobs (17 per cent compared with 4 per cent in the United States sample and 30 per cent versus 15 per cent globally). On the other hand, 69 per cent believed that they would be healthier if they worked less extreme hours, 58 per cent believed that their work got in the way of their relationships with their children and

46 per cent that it affected their relationships with their spouses, while 50 per cent believed that their jobs made it impossible to have a satisfying sex life. In addition, half of the extreme workers did not want to continue with that amount of work pressure for more than a year.

These findings suggest that long and atypical working hours are detrimental for all workers, irrespective of occupational class. However, there are some factors that appear to moderate the negative effects of long working hours on individual health and well-being.

Sparks et al. (1997) referred to moderating factors in the relationship between long hours and health outcomes, including individual attitudes and motivations, and the prevailing organizational culture. The amount of compensation available to counterbalance long working hours may also affect the influence of working hours on health (BMA, 2000).

The match or discrepancy between actual and preferred working hours moderates the negative effects of long hours on health and well-being. Barnett et al. (1999) found that the degree of 'fit' between preferred and actual working hours (and those of partners) affected levels of burn-out among a sample of physicians in the United States. Similarly, an Australian study (Wooden et al., 2009) found that the relationship between work hours and subjective well-being is mediated by work hour preferences, both for those working short and long hours. However, the relationship is greater for over-employment than for under-employment. Another Australian study by Weston et al. (2004) found that the satisfaction of fathers with their working hours is very important in the relationship between work hours and well-being: those with greater satisfaction with their working hours, even when they are long, enjoy significantly higher well-being than those who are dissatisfied with their working hours (see also Glass and Fujimoto, 1994). In a study using the British Household Panel Survey, Scase et al. (1998) found that the self-employed tend to work longer hours but have fewer health problems than other employees. This, the authors suggest, could be linked with the extent of choice and control involved in the hours worked.

Another type of moderating factor is social support. This has been found to be important, for example, for men working long hours in retail (Steptoe et al., 1998) and for train drivers (Tucker and Rutherford, 2005).

Other studies have highlighted the importance of job control and autonomy over work schedules. A lack of control and work autonomy is associated with poorer health and well-being outcomes (Dhondt, 1997; see also the overview in Burke and Cooper, 2008: Chapter 3). Work schedule autonomy has been found to moderate the negative effects of long working hours for train drivers (Tucker and Rutherford, 2005). Tremblay's (2003a) study of women and men police officers in Quebec found that the lack of control and diversity of working schedules required in the sector created a significant challenge for their work-life balance. The issue of work schedules and autonomy is explored further in Chapter 3.

2.2. Volume of working hours and work-family outcomes

The increase in the employment rates of women (and particularly married mothers) in developed countries since the 1970s has meant that many couples with dependent children are now spending more time in the workplace than ever before. The number of lone parent – primarily lone mother – households has also increased, in which the challenge of combining employment with child care is more acute. Not only are many parents working long hours, but a substantial number of fathers and mothers are also regularly working 'atypical' or 'non-standard' hours (for example, early mornings, evenings/nights and weekends), as discussed in Chapter 3.

In many parts of the world, a large proportion of women's employment is concentrated in the informal economy, which accounts for over half of women's employment, for example, in Latin America and the Caribbean (ILO, 2009). Women there are commonly exposed to long or irregular working hours with little or no social protection, yet paradoxically one of the reasons why women may become trapped in such jobs is as a means of earning a living while raising a family (see also Bettio et al., 2000, for Europe). This is because there may be more scope in the informal than the formal economy for mothers to work closer to home, vary the hours worked through casual arrangements or be accompanied by a young child. For example, in Guatemala, 40 per cent of mothers employed in the informal sector said that the lack of child-care services was an obstacle to them seeking employment in the formal economy (ILO, 2009).

Many women in the informal economy are domestic workers, who are estimated to account for 14 per cent of women's employment in Latin America (ILO, 2009: 70). This occupation can give rise to additional tensions in the interface between employment and work-family outcomes (Chaney and Castro, 1989; Saldaña, forthcoming; Salazar, 2001; Durin, 2008). In its most acute form, domestic work may involve long absences from home as a live-in worker. For women who migrate internationally for employment as domestic workers, or even in better paid occupations as nurses, this usually means leaving their children behind for prolonged periods to be raised by other relatives (Anderson, 2000; Salazar, 2001; Chang, 2000; Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002).

Furthermore, in many parts of the developing world where child labour is prevalent, the lack of work-life 'balance' of children is of paramount importance. For example, in the Mexican agrarian sector, where migrant child labour is commonplace, children are exposed to considerable health risks and few have the opportunity to go to school (Becerra et al., 2008).

A final point to note about work-family conflict, which however lies beyond the scope of the present study, is how in developed countries the logistics of combining employment with raising a family have contributed to a decline in the fertility rate (Bettio and Villa, 1998). This is particularly evident during times of major economic transformation, such as the transition to the market economy in Central and Eastern European countries (Pollert, 2005; Kotowska, forthcoming), or chronic and persistently high levels of unemployment, such as in Spain, where having a job is associated with deferring the start of a family or prolonging birth spacing (Cordero, 2009).

2.2.1 Work-family conflict and interference

A lack of fit between work and family – the work-family conflict – is a source of stress (Frone et al., 1992). Long working hours are a significant source of work-family conflict, as they reduce the amount of time available to be spent with children and other family members. Research has shown that working long hours is the main predictor of work-life conflict (Berg et al., 2003; White et al., 2003; Fagan and Burchell, 2002; Burchell et al., 2007). The proportion of men and women who report a poor fit between their employment and family life increases with the length of their working hours, both in the case of older workers without dependent children and those raising young children (Fagan and Walthery, 2011b).

There is a wealth of evidence that work-family conflict contributes to negative health outcomes for many employees. In an overview of the literature, Frone (2000) found that a majority of research studies identified links between conflict and poorer employee health (Hughes and Galinsky, 1994; MacEwen and Barling, 1994; O'Driscoll et al., 1992) in terms of poor mood, anxiety and substance dependence disorders, with some evidence of a link between conflict and significant mental health problems. Other research has found a link between work-family conflict and an elevated need for recovery and prolonged fatigue (Jansen et al., 2003), as well as negative effects on work productivity, job and life satisfaction, personal effectiveness, marital relations, child-parent

relationships and even child development (Lewis and Cooper, 1987 and 1988; Hochschild, 1997; Gornick and Meyers, 2003). A Canadian study found that work stress and imbalance between work and family/personal lives are independently associated with mood and anxiety disorders, but there was no evidence that they interact to increase the likelihood of mental disorders (Li Wang, 2006).

The few studies available on Latin America echo these results. A Venezuelan study found that working women who report increased work interference with family life are more likely to report stress, anxiety, depression or poor self-esteem (Vivas et al., 2008). A study of two organizations in Bogotá, Colombia, found that workload and family responsibilities trigger an increased sense of work-family conflict and stress for individual workers, which is more pronounced for women, especially if they have child or elder care responsibilities (Montenegro, 2007). A study of basic education teachers in Mexico found that 88 per cent of staff suffer from work-related stress and that up to 54 per cent suffer from moderate to severe stress levels (Rodríguez, Oramas and Rodríguez, 2007). According to the authors, the stress experienced by teachers is significantly affected by work interference with family life.

In a meta-analysis, combining 169 samples with a total of over 35,000 respondents, Gilboa et al. (2008) found that work-family conflict is negatively correlated with both self-rated work performance and general performance, lending support to another meta-analytical review which highlighted the potentially negative effects of work-family conflict on general job performance (Allen et al., 2000). Family interference with work was also found to result in stress and an increased desire to change jobs over a six-month period (Kelloway et al., 1999). Similarly, a study of 1045 respondents in Quebec confirmed that long working hours are related to difficulties in reconciling work and family life, and that such difficulties are related to the intention to quit; controlling for a range of factors, men are one-and-a-half times more likely to report favourable work-life balance (Tremblay, 2003b). A study in the United States (Cullen and Hammer, 2007) found not only that strong work performance norms and high work overload are associated with higher work-family conflict, but also that increased family-to-work conflict is associated with decreased compliance with safety rules and less willingness to participate in discretionary safety meetings.

A national study in Australia found that work overload is the strongest predictor of work-life conflict for full-time employees, although working hours, the fit with work preferences and control over scheduling also have small to moderate associations with work-life conflict (Skinner and Pocock, 2008). In a study of government workers in New Zealand (Haar, 2006), both work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict were found to predict employee burn-out. 'Direct action coping', such as focusing more on work, leads to an increased likelihood of burn-out, possibly as a result of intensifying the source of the conflict/burn-out relationship. A study by Haar and Bardoel (2008) examined the positive spill-over between work and family among public and private sector workers in Australia. The results showed that work-family positive spill-over is associated with reduced psychological distress and turnover intentions, while family-work positive spill-over is linked with reduced psychological distress and family satisfaction. The authors contend that work and home experiences are not always negative and can improve outcomes, both within and outside the workplace.

Although work-life conflict research tends to focus almost exclusively on persons with child-care responsibilities, Grant-Vallone and Donaldson (2001) found that conflict was not limited to employees with child-care responsibilities or to those holding higher level positions. For a diverse sample of employees, the majority of whom had no college experience and a low income, the tensions in balancing work and family roles were detrimental to their overall well-being. Furthermore, the relationship between conflict and well-being was consistent for employees in different family situations (parents and non-parents) and for men and women.

In the United States, Milkie et al. (2004) found that almost half of parents reported having too little time with their children and that this feeling is strongly linked with long working hours. Golden's (2006) multivariate analysis of over-employment explored which workers in the United States wished to reduce their hours of work. Working long hours, being a woman, being married and having a young child all have significant and independent positive effects on the likelihood of being over-employed.

Research in the United Kingdom also shows that working parents express dissatisfaction with long working hours. For example, La Valle et al. (2002) found that 79 per cent of mothers who work 41-48 hours a week, and 84 per cent of those who work 49 hours or more, would prefer to work fewer hours. Mothers expressed similar preferences for their partners who work such long hours. Research using British Social Attitudes survey data from 1989 to 2005 found that working full time and wanting to spend more time with the family is significantly associated with reports of stress (Crompton and Lyonette, 2007). Long working hours are widespread in the United Kingdom and a Trades Union Congress (TUC) report (2008) states that 62 per cent of all workers would like to cut their working time. The majority of them (71 per cent) are not receiving overtime pay, but over half of those with paid overtime also wish to reduce their working hours.

Table 2.2. Percentage of employed people reporting that their job prevents them spending enough time with their partner/family*

| | 1996 | | 2003 | | 2007 | |
|--------------------|------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| Austria | 31 | 17 | 21 | 20 | 37 | 24 |
| Belgium | 13 | 12 | 26 | 27 | 24 | 33 |
| Denmark | 19 | 14 | 15 | 22 | 19 | 24 |
| EU-15 | 24 | 20 | 27 | 26 | 27 | 25 |
| Finland | 24 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 19 | 21 |
| France | 30 | 23 | 26 | 19 | 18 | 16 |
| Germany | 20 | 17 | 30 | 21 | 23 | 26 |
| Ireland | 21 | 23 | 22 | 24 | 26 | 23 |
| Italy | 23 | 17 | 26 | 30 | 27 | 19 |
| Netherlands | 15 | 8 | 18 | 21 | 32 | 26 |
| Portugal | 26 | 26 | 37 | 39 | 27 | 31 |
| Spain | 32 | 33 | 29 | 35 | 40 | 35 |
| Sweden | 23 | 22 | 23 | 28 | 17 | 20 |
| UK | 24 | 18 | 31 | 30 | 29 | 28 |

Notes:

* Eurobarometer: percentage of employed people who often or always find that their job prevents them giving time to their partner/family, measured on a four item scale. European Quality of Life Survey: share of people for whom it has been difficult to fulfil their family responsibilities because of the amount of time spent on the job "several times a week" or "several times a month" (% of employed people, men and women).

Decimal places have been rounded

Source: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/qualityoflife/eurlife/index.php?template=3&radioindic=26&idDomain=2&firstDifferentiator=61>

Table 2.2 shows a modest increase between 1996 and 2003 in the proportion of European employees who reported that their job prevented them from spending time with their partner or family, and a broadly stable picture between 2003 and 2007 (Eurofound, 2007). Among the EU-15 countries in the study, the proportion of men and women who reported a lack of time increased between 1996 and 2007 in all countries, with the exception of men and women in Sweden and France, men in Denmark and Finland and women in Ireland. These different trends are likely to be connected to developments in the length and flexibility of working hours, with time pressures being more acute in European countries that have long hours and/or less developed flexibility options (Fourth European Working Conditions Survey, 2005, reported in OECD family database, 2009).

2.2.2 Relationship quality

Many studies have identified links between long working hours and relationship stress and breakdown. For example, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD, 2001) found that long working hours in the United Kingdom affected relationships between employees and other family members, particularly partners, while 40 per cent of respondents felt that their long working hours had caused arguments with their spouse, and 40 per cent also felt guilty about not having had enough time to help with household chores over the previous two months. An earlier CIPD survey (1999) found that, although only 3 per cent of respondents felt that long working hours were responsible for their divorce, 27 per cent believed that their hours of work had put a strain on their relationship. For those who were not married, 11 per cent reported that long hours had been responsible for their break-up with a partner in the past few years.

In 1999, Cooper reported on the IM-UMIST Quality of Working Life Survey and suggested a link between long working hours and family breakdown. In the study, 59 per cent of managers claimed that long hours adversely affected their health and 56 per cent their morale at work. Moreover, 72 per cent of the managers surveyed also indicated that long working hours had negatively affected their relationship with their spouse/partner. A comparative study of industrial women workers and women university professors in Mexico explored women's perceptions of the benefits and difficulties of their involvement in the labour market (Landeró Hernández et al., 2001). For industrial workers, the main problem deriving from their job was related to low wages, while for women academics the difficulty of finding a partner was perceived as an unwanted consequence of their job.

However, based on an overview of the literature, primarily from the United States, Crouter et al. (2001) found that for many male employees long working hours were associated with *positive* marital outcomes. They argued that for some couples long hours may allow the husband to get ahead in an organization or earn overtime wages. They concluded that in marital relationships the subjective interpretations of work demands appear to be far more important than work hours per se. Similarly, in Australia, Weston et al. (2004) found no evidence that fathers working very long hours have poorer relationships with their partners than those working standard hours, *if* they are satisfied with their working hours. The authors suggest that this may reflect personality differences among those who enjoy hard work (for an overview of this literature, see Burke and Cooper, 2008), or that some of the benefits of long working hours may accrue to partners. Other studies have also shown no association between long hours and relationship quality, although role conflict for men has been shown to be associated with negative marital outcomes (Hughes et al., 1992; Coverman, 1989). However, Crouter et al. (2001) suggested that these results may reflect selection effects (for example, couples which regard long work hours by men as problematic may reduce their hours or may have already separated or divorced, which would disqualify them from the sample). This would in turn reduce the association between long hours and marital quality.

In their research into long working hours and marital quality in the United States, Crouter et al. (2001) found similar results to those outlined above: although husbands who spent over 60 hours a week in work-related activities spent less time in shared activities with their wives than husbands who put less time into work, those couples did not evaluate their relationships less positively. However, there was a consistent association between the role overload of husbands and subjective reports of marital quality: when husbands experienced higher overload, partners felt less loving, saw themselves as less able to take the spouse's perspective, saw the spouse as less able to take their perspective and reported more conflict. Earlier work by Crouter et al. (1999) found that the work pressure of husbands predicted their own overload, as well as that of their wives, although for wives work pressure only predicted their own overload.

Ilies et al. (2007) studied employees in the United States and found that perceptions of work-to-family conflict affect their engagement in social activities with their spouses and children. Those who report high levels of work-to-family conflict on particular days are less likely to interact socially with their families, even when controlling for the amount of time employees spend at home. Previous work has also shown that depressed parents are less spontaneous and are more withdrawn, angry and sad (Downey and Coyne, 1990; Lovejoy et al., 2000). These studies, along with other recent work, demonstrate the many direct and indirect ways in which work-related pressures and overload can affect families (see, for example, Dembe, 2005).

French research into the impact of the 35-hour week legislation (now much weakened) showed positive effects of reduced hours on families: for example, among those with children under 12, 43 per cent of women and 35 per cent of men reported that they had found a better work/family balance since the introduction of the 35-hour week, and 43 per cent of parents reported spending more time with their children on various activities (Garner et al., 2005). Approximately 30 per cent of parents with school-age children also reported that they were spending more time with them on their school work (Estrade et al., 2001; Méda and Orain, 2002). With the weakening of the 35-hour week, it remains to be seen how increased working hours will affect levels of work-family conflict among parents in France. Interestingly, the reduction in working time in France also led to a reduction in the collective spirit at work as a result of the increased variety of work schedules and a new tendency for individualism in work schedules (Sanséau, 2002 and 2005).

2.2.3 Gender differences

As already noted, men usually allocate more hours to paid work than women, although once non-market work is added in, the 'total working week' is on average longer for women (section 2.1.1). This gender difference in work patterns provides the context within which reports by men and women of their work-life balance need to be interpreted. Women therefore experience more conflict than men, as they take on more of the responsibilities for their children in the home (Thévenet, 2001; Méda et Orain, 2002).

In the Third European Working Conditions Survey (2000), workers across Europe were asked whether or not the time demands of their job were compatible with family life and other commitments (Fagan and Burchell, 2002).⁸ Gender differences in assessments of the impact of working hours on work-life balance are likely to reflect expectations about the meaning of compatibility that are rooted in gender differentiated domestic roles and responsibilities (Geist, 2005). It is therefore no surprise that mothers employed part time are the most likely to report compatibility, as many of them have selected reduced hours to reconcile employment with child-care responsibilities. Fathers (most of whom work full-time) and mothers who work full-time are the least likely to report such compatibility, with a quarter of both saying that their working hours are incompatible with family life.

⁸ Note that this and other measures of job satisfaction typically produce distributions that are highly skewed to positive scores and are shaped by social expectations about what is acceptable, for which the reference points vary between countries and with changes in the economic context. It is therefore more valid to focus on differences among the population, or on satisfaction scores for different job dimensions, rather than the absolute level of satisfaction (see Fagan and Burchell, 2002; Drobnič, 2011).

Table 2.3. Compatibility of working hours (full-time/part-time) with family and other commitments among employed parents (%)

| | Fathers | Men without children | Mothers employed full-time | Mothers employed part-time | All employed mothers | Women without children |
|---------------------------|---------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Very well | 27 | 31 | 27 | 50 | 38 | 40 |
| Fairly well | 48 | 49 | 48 | 41 | 45 | 45 |
| Not very well, not at all | 25 | 20 | 25 | 8 | 17 | 15 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: Third European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS)

‘Full-time’ and ‘part-time’ classifications give little indication of the actual number of hours worked by individuals and the impact that this has on their perceptions of compatibility with family life and other commitments. Not surprisingly, the proportion of men and women who report incompatibility between working hours and family life increases with the number of hours worked, with a steep increase for those who work over 48 hours a week (Table 2.4). Similar trends were found in the 2005 EWCS with a sharp decrease in the proportion of parents who work over 48 hours a week reporting a good fit between work and family life (Burchell et al, 2007) . There was also a significant decline in persons without children reporting work-life balance when working over 48 hours a week, although married/cohabiting fathers working these hours reported the lowest work-life balance.

Table 2.4. Lack of compatibility of working hours with family and other commitments for working parents (%)

| Hours a week | Men | Women | All |
|--------------------|-----|-------|-----|
| Less than 20 hours | 17 | 9 | 11 |
| 20-29 hours | 14 | 7 | 8 |
| 30-34 hours | 23 | 12 | 16 |
| 35-39 hours | 15 | 17 | 16 |
| 40-47 hours | 22 | 23 | 23 |
| 48 hours and more | 42 | 36 | 40 |
| Total | 22 | 16 | 19 |

Note: the Table presents the percentage of respondents saying that there was ‘little’ or ‘no’ compatibility between their working hours and family life and other commitments.

Source: Fagan and Burchell (2002), based on the Third European Working Conditions Survey (2000)

European data show that more men than women report incompatibility between their working hours and family and other commitments. This is in part because a higher proportion of men work long hours (48 or more a week). However, as Table 2.4 shows, this is true even when taking into account the smaller proportion of women who work long hours. Part of the explanation may be that the incompatibility experienced by men in terms of the resulting stress and conflict is still less acute than that borne by women, although this is not captured by the survey question. Another reason may be that men are more constrained in their working time arrangements than women, either because there are fewer opportunities for them to reduce their work hours, or because the loss of earnings could not be managed by the household. The latter may be a particular pressure for couples in which the woman has reduced her employment due to child-care responsibilities. A recent Australian study (Pocock et al., 2007) also found that men reported more spill-over from work to life and less satisfaction with their work-life interaction than women. However, the authors add that women feel much more pressed for time, reflecting their greater unpaid work: 73 per cent of women with children often or always feel that there are not enough hours in the day. Using a combined 2002 and 2006 dataset from the British Social Attitudes survey, Crompton and Lyonette (2008b) found that the main predictors of work-life conflict for men are being younger, working longer hours and having a non-working wife. The authors suggest that, although men in these couples are less likely to be required to make work adjustments in line with the employment patterns of their partners and are less likely to do

housework (Crompton and Lyonette, 2008a), they may work even longer hours than other men to compensate for the reduced household income.

European studies reveal national variations in the level of work-family conflict reported by men and women. Among married/cohabiting employees across seven European countries, Gallie and Russell (2009) found that the lowest rates of work-family conflict for men occur in Denmark, Sweden and Norway, while for women 'raw' levels of work-family conflict are particularly high in France, Denmark and Sweden. The high level of conflict experienced by French women may be explained by higher levels of family pressure, whereas for Danish and Swedish women conflict appears to be associated with longer working hours. Using International Social Survey Program data from five European countries, Crompton and Lyonette (2006) found that work-life conflict is highest in the United Kingdom and lowest in Finland and Norway. In all five countries, working hours are the most significant predictor of work-life conflict, although being female and having a child in the household are also significant factors. Another recent European study has also found that when working hours, job characteristics and domestic circumstances are taken into account, workers are less likely to report a fit between their working time and their family and other commitments if they live in Mediterranean or Eastern European countries than in Nordic countries (Fagan and Walthery, 2011b).

Further evidence that work-family/family-work conflict affects men as well as women comes from North American studies. Frone et al. (1996), using two samples of employed parents in the United States, found that reports by individuals of work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict were associated with depression, poor physical health and heavy alcohol use. The authors hypothesized that, because men have been socialized to give priority to the breadwinner role, and women to give priority to the homemaker and motherhood roles, work-to-family conflict would have a stronger impact on health outcomes for women, while for men family-to-work conflict would have the stronger impact. However, no such gender difference was found. Similarly, a Canadian study of full-time professional employees (McElwain et al., 2005) did not find any significant gender differences in the impact of work demands on work interference with the family. However, women are significantly more likely to experience high levels of family interference with work when they have high family demands, while men's levels of family demands do not affect their family interference with work. The authors suggest that women may still feel that they are primarily responsible for their family, and thus experience increased family interference with work. Conversely, the findings could indicate that men have been socialized not to allow their family responsibilities to interfere with their work.

A review of the situation of Colombian workers found that spill-over was more pronounced for women than for men, and also varied according to the amount of social support and the working conditions of the individual (Guerrero and Barrios, 2003).

2.2.4 Class differences

It has been noted above that the incidence of long-hour working varies across occupational classes, and this differentiation is more pronounced in countries with limited working time regulation, such as the United States and the United Kingdom. Long working hours are common in some of the most highly paid occupations – managers and certain professions – and for some categories of manual employees employed in poorly regulated and low-paid areas of the economy. This class difference is often accentuated at the household level, as men and women tend to form partnerships with people of a similar class position (assortive mating: see, for example, Lesnard and de Saint Pol, 2009). In particular, some of the most acute time pressures arise in dual-professional households, although the high income of such households means that they have a higher level of material resources to draw on to improve their work-life balance compared with dual full-time low-income couples.

Using data from the European Social Survey, McGinnity and Calvert (2009) found that work-life conflict is higher among professionals than non-professionals in each of the European countries covered by their study. This is partly explained by the fact that professionals work longer hours and experience more work pressure than those in other social classes, although the effect remains even after accounting for these factors.

An examination of class differences in work-to-family conflict in Canada found that both men and women in higher level jobs report greater conflict than those in lower level jobs, supporting the 'stress of higher status' hypothesis (Schieman et al., 2006). In addition, those who are self-employed, those working longer hours, with more demands, job authority and involvement, also report higher conflict. Among workers in non-routine jobs (that is, jobs that are not perceived as boring and routine), men report higher levels of conflict than women.

Pocock et al. (2007) also found some occupational class differences in work-life outcomes in Australia. Overall, those most at risk of poorer outcomes are: long hours workers; workers who do not have a good match between their actual and preferred hours of work; workers in jobs that are insecure, with high demands or little say over working time; managers, professionals and workers in community and personal services and technical occupations and trades; workers aged between 35 and 55; and people who spend ten or more hours a week commuting to work. Burchielli et al. (2008) conducted a study of senior women staff and managers at a bank and a hospital in Australia. The key findings suggest that senior staff and managers have no work-family balance, and there is evidence of work-family conflict, which is not alleviated by additional resources. The authors conclude that employees manage both domains at great personal cost. Similarly, Linehan's (2001) study of 50 women on international assignments in Europe found high rates of marital break-up and divorce as a result of the workload, high pressure and mobility of senior positions.

A study of middle managers in Japan, where long hours are prevalent, found that the nature of their jobs has changed, with an increase in working hours and workload, together with an extension in the range of their tasks and more accountability (Iida and Morris, 2008). This has led to increased stress, which in turn has had a negative effect on work-life balance. An Australian study of middle managers (Parris et al., 2008) found that, when speaking about work-life balance, respondents expressed high levels of dissatisfaction with the impact of work on their friendships, feeling both anger and sadness at the negative effects on the quantity and quality of their time spent with friends. Respondents also recognized the value of friendships for their well-being, with friends acting as a form of stress relief through the provision of practical and emotional support, and/or companionship and relaxation.

A comparison of full-time men and women in Portugal and the United Kingdom showed that routine and manual women workers in Portugal and professional and managerial women staff in the United Kingdom both have very high levels of work-life conflict (Lyonette et al., 2007). The authors conclude that the high levels of conflict experienced by women working in routine and manual occupations in Portugal is due to the very long hours of domestic work, combined with worries over unsatisfactory child-care arrangements and a lack of support from partners and informal networks. In the United Kingdom, in contrast, the high levels of conflict for full-time employed women in professional and managerial occupations is explained by the pressures of very long working hours, combined with a perception of increasing work demands, as well as additional domestic work. Further research in the United Kingdom has revealed that employed women are more likely to experience this conflict if they work longer hours, are in a professional or managerial position, or have a child under 11 years of age, whereas occupational class is not significantly predictive of higher work-life conflict for men (Crompton and Lyonette, 2008a). An earlier report by the CIPD (1999) found that over half of employees working over 48 hours a week reported that they had a good balance between work and home, although this figure fell for those working over 60 hours a week and for those working long hours who did not receive overtime pay or were in debt.

Overall, research shows that long working hours increase conflict between work and family, especially in the case of very long hours. It would appear that various factors increase the levels of conflict for men and women in different occupational class groups: while professional and managerial workers are more likely to have greater control at work, they are more liable to work unpaid overtime and to have high demands at work. On the other hand, they are also more likely to have greater resources to offset the negative impact of conflict (such as an ability to pay for domestic help) than men and women in lower occupational groups, who also tend to have lower levels of control at work.

The implementation of new regulations on working time can also be expected to have an impact that is differentiated by class. For example, the study by Méda and Orain (2002) of the reduction in working time in France showed that professional groups were among those that benefited most, with professional women being among those most likely to report an improvement in daily life (73 per cent). This proportion was much higher than for low-skilled women and men (40 and 29 per cent, respectively). This was related to the way in which the working time reduction was achieved through the adjustment of work schedules in different sectors and workplaces (Letablier, 2006; Fagnani and Letablier, 2004).

2.3. Part-time work as a means of integrating employment and personal life?

It has been seen that long working hours are a major impediment to the integration of employment and personal life and have a significant negative impact on work-life balance. Conversely, part-time work or reduced working hours arrangements can enhance work-life balance by making it easier to combine employment with care responsibilities and other activities.

There is evidence that many of the workforce in industrialized economies – men as well as women – would like to work part time at some stage during their life. Surveys of individual preferences in industrialized countries show that a sizeable proportion of full-time workers would prefer part-time work, although conversely many part-time workers would prefer to work longer part-time hours or to switch to full-time work (Fagan, 2004). This preference by some workers for part-time work co-exists with involuntary part-time working for others, while for many households part-time earnings are simply not a feasible option. Hence, preferences for part-time work as a means of enhancing work-life balance vary according to domestic and workplace circumstances. For example, a study of women working in the finance sector in Chile found that those with jobs requiring lower educational levels who are raising children are more satisfied with their job and family life if they work part time. In contrast, single women, and those with higher educational levels in general, are more satisfied with full-time employment (Figuroa et al., 2009).

It is currently mainly women who switch to part-time employment because of care responsibilities, and women constitute the majority of part-time workers in most countries. The problem from a gender equality perspective is that part-time work is chosen in a context in which work-family reconciliation options are limited by gender inequalities within the family and the inadequacy of public care services, and that many of the part-time jobs on offer are of poor quality. Switching to part-time work means a reduction in weekly earnings. It may also involve downward mobility if it entails changing jobs. Or job stability may be maintained, but at the cost of reduced prospects of career advancement. This is because part-time jobs in most countries are concentrated in a narrow range of low-paid female-dominated service jobs and certain intermediate clerical positions (O'Reilly and Fagan, 1998). Opportunities for part-time work are more limited in professional and managerial positions, and are usually confined to the lower grades. Even in countries with a high level of part-time employment, such as the United Kingdom, the amount and type of part-time work varies by sector and the type of firm, and eligibility may be restricted to limited occupational levels and job areas (Kersley et al., 2006).

An expansion of part-time work may therefore reinforce or widen gender inequalities if it channels women into low-paid jobs or confines them to the lower rungs of professional career ladders. It offers a means of increasing the participation of women in employment in some societies, and therefore helps to change attitudes so that it becomes the norm for women to be employed when they have young children or other care responsibilities, but at the same time it perpetuates a traditional gender division of labour in the home. The expansion of part-time work in itself therefore does little to promote greater gender equality in domestic and employment roles.

Where employees are able to negotiate reduced or flexible hours in their current job, it may enable them to retain their current occupational position. This in turn provides them with some protection against downward mobility, although they may still face reduced prospects of subsequent career advancement unless the principle of equal treatment between full- and part-time workers is widely implemented in training and promotion criteria (see, for example, Nord et al., 2002; Smithson et al., 2004).⁹ It may also mean that they are able to secure part-time work in an occupation, grade or workplace where such an arrangement is uncommon, which may help in the long run to make part-time work available in a wider range of jobs across the economy. The right of employees to request reduced hours of work is most developed in the Netherlands, although such provisions also exist in a number of other European countries, Australia and New Zealand. Some parental leave schemes also allow the leave to be fractioned on a part-time basis (Fagan and Walthery, 2006).

Evaluation studies show that, to improve the efficacy of policies establishing an individual right to request reduced hours of work, several features need to be built into their design (Fagan and Walthery, 2006). First, it is important for the legislation to provide a clear definition of the procedure and the ‘business grounds’ on which such a request may be turned down. The legislation in the United Kingdom provides for very little redress if the employer rejects the request, in contrast with the Dutch and German legislation, under which the grounds for rejecting a request are narrower and the courts have the right to scrutinize and evaluate the ‘business case’ evidence presented by the employer. Legal provisions allowing for trial periods for new arrangements also help employers and employees to reach agreement, following the example set by judgements in New South Wales in Australia concerning employees with family responsibilities who requested alternative work schedules (Bourke, 2004). An option to request a move from part- to full-time hours is also a necessary policy feature to facilitate time adjustments across the life course.

Second, such a policy tool is more likely to succeed if it is part of broader initiatives to promote personal flexibility and a life course approach to working time through workplace agreements, combined with resources and training for personnel departments and line managers to devise and implement flexible working arrangements (including training, good practice manuals, budget lines and financial incentives). Third, it also means that reforms may be required in social protection systems to make periods of part-time employment possible, rather than penalizing them.

Sustained spells of part-time employment may enhance the employment integration and work-life balance of women, but the risk is that they may result in little or no earnings progression or career advancement over their life course. The Netherlands is an example of a country in which fewer penalties are incurred from part-time work than in many other countries, as illustrated by the fact that there is no discrepancy in the average hourly pay rates for full- and part-time workers, there is better representation of part-time workers at higher occupational levels, as well as a system of labour law

⁹ The principle of equal treatment is detailed, for example, in the ILO Part-Time Work Convention, 1994 (No. 175), and the European Union Part-time Work Directive.

and social protection that offers greater protection for periods of part-time work (Fagan et al., 1998). Penalties still exist for working part-time in the Netherlands, as periods of part-time employment reduce future promotion and earnings prospects, even following a return to full-time employment (Román, 2006). However, these penalties are less pronounced than in other countries, such as the United Kingdom. These important differences in the quality and organization of part-time work, and their impact on life course career progression can be traced to the different approaches to flexibility adopted by the governments and social partners in these countries in the 1980s and 1990s (Fagan et al., 1998; Yerkes and Visser, 2006).

The penalties on lifetime earnings resulting from extended leave or reduced working hours can be mediated by other policies and institutions, with particular reference to the level of wage dispersion between high and low-paid jobs, training and employment systems, and social protection systems. The returns on human capital and the extent of the penalty for employment discontinuity or periods of part-time work therefore vary nationally (Blau and Kahn, 1992; European Commission, 2003; OECD, 2001). Measures to improve the re-integration of leave-takers and the quality of part-time work options (including the transition back to full-time work) are important in mitigating their impact on subsequent career progression and lifetime earnings.

The role and relevance of part-time employment within national reconciliation policies is likely to vary across countries. In countries where full-time employment has become the established norm for women, a reduction to part-time hours may not be affordable or desirable for many households. If part-time employment is advocated as a measure to facilitate work-family reconciliation and enhance work-life balance more generally, it is important for this to be developed within an integrated package of policy measures designed to: (i) enhance the quality of part-time working arrangements; and (ii) provide other working time options (parental leave, flexitime, shorter full-time hours, ...) and infrastructure (child-care services, adult care services, ...) so that workers have more options to organize their lives.

2.4. Summary of key findings

Men usually spend more hours in paid work than women, although once non-market work is added in women's 'total working week' is on average longer because they usually have the main responsibility for domestic work and child care. This division of domestic labour is still widely accepted, even though social attitudes and norms are slowly changing in many countries. The current arrangement of gender roles leaves men freer from the responsibilities of child care and domestic tasks, and thus able to concentrate on their working lives, while women have to contend with the difficulty of combining employment and family roles. This gender difference in work patterns and responsibilities provides the context for the interpretation of the comments of men and women on their work-life balance.

The pressures of managing the combination of employment and family life and other responsibilities are even more acute in developing countries, where working hours are longer than in most industrialized countries. In developing countries, a large proportion of women's employment is concentrated in the informal economy and public policies and infrastructure to facilitate work-life balance are more limited than in some of the more industrialized parts of the world.

Paid employment has a positive effect on health as it is associated with lower levels of depression. And, of course, earnings help to reduce the risk of living in poverty, which has a major negative impact on health. However, the research reviewed suggests that this positive effect of employment on health is reduced when long hours are worked.

Long working hours and schedule inflexibility reduce health and mental well-being and are a significant source of work-family conflict, role strain and dissatisfaction with the extent of the fit between employment and family and other commitments, or ‘work-life balance’. They have a direct effect on physiological and psychological health indicators, as well as indirect effects, such as reduced recovery time and a tendency for long hours of work to be associated with an unhealthy lifestyle (poor diet, insufficient exercise, high levels of alcohol consumption, ...). Women’s well-being is lowered by the time demands of parenting and daily housework on top of paid employment.

The proportion of men and women who report incompatibility, tension or time pressure between employment, family and social life rises with the number of hours worked. In European surveys, men report greater incompatibility than women, even after controlling for their longer average paid working hours. This may be because men are more constrained in their working time arrangements than women, as they are the main earner on the household, or because they have few opportunities to reduce their hours of work. It is also probable that the stress and conflict that accompanies the experience of incompatibility is less acute than that borne by women due to gender differentiated expectations concerning domestic roles. Other indicators certainly show that women feel more pressed for time, particularly if they have children, reflecting their greater domestic responsibilities. There are therefore likely to be gender differences in expectations of what compatibility means, rooted in the gender differences in domestic roles and responsibilities.

Work-family conflict reduces mental well-being (resulting in fatigue, stress, anxiety, depression), lowers job and life satisfaction, is detrimental to family life and has negative effects on personal effectiveness and productivity. Long working hours reduce the scope for shared activities, social interaction and time together as a couple/family, which can be a major source of conflict. When individuals in dual-employed couples have such schedules, this also has negative effects on the mental well-being of their spouses. Studies have identified links between long working hours and relationship stress and breakdown. However, other research, primarily in the United States, has found that long working hours have a positive effect or no effect on marital outcomes. A subjective assessment of whether long hours are worthwhile – in terms of job satisfaction, financial rewards and career progression – may be more important than the hours worked per se. Alternatively, where long working hours have been a source of conflict, couples may have taken action to reduce their hours of work, or the relationship may already have broken down. The French experiment with the 35-hour week is instructive in this respect. Research on its impact before the legislation was weakened found positive effects on work-life balance and family life, such as parents spending more time with their children, including helping them with their school work.

Falling fertility rates have also been attributed to the lack of social infrastructure to support work-life integration. Conversely, positive spill-over between work-family and family-work can improve outcomes in both of these areas.

These results suggest that, while paid employment increases the well-being of women, those who work long hours, while retaining primary responsibility for domestic tasks at home are at particular risk of poorer mental health and work-family conflict. However, long paid working hours are more prevalent among men, which means that more men are exposed to the risk of negative impacts on health, well-being and work-life balance.

European surveys show national variations in the level of work-family conflict reported by men and women. Differences in public policy concerning the regulation of working time, the provision of child-care services, etc., probably shape these national differences.

There are occupational class differences in exposure to long working hours. Long working hours are common for some of the most highly paid occupations – managers and certain professions –

and for some categories of manual employees employed in poorly regulated and low-paid areas of the economy. Studies show that workers in lower status occupations and with lower incomes feel compelled to work overtime, and as a result experience negative outcomes for their well-being and work-life balance. However, some of the most acute cases of time pressure arise in dual-professional households, in which both partners work full-time, although the high income in such households means that they have a different level of material resources to draw on to improve their work-life balance, in comparison with dual full-time low-income couples.

In some 'high performance' managerial and professional jobs, long hours may feel more acceptable because employees are motivated by their high level of commitment to an interesting and challenging job, the financial rewards are good and they have a sense of autonomy in their work. Nevertheless, such long working hours are associated with demanding workloads, and may be expected as part of the organizational culture if the employee wishes to compete for promotion. Long working hours in such circumstances can still impact negatively on health and the quality of family life, as noted by the employees themselves and their family members.

Part-time work offers some scope for enhanced work-life balance. However, for many households it is simply not feasible to consider living on the earnings from part-time work. Preferences for part-time work as a means of enhancing work-life balance therefore vary according to domestic and workplace circumstances. The problem from a gender equality perspective is that part-time work is chosen primarily by women in a context in which options to reconcile work and family responsibilities are limited by gender inequalities within the family and the inadequacy of public care services, and because many of the part-time jobs on offer are of poor quality. Measures to improve the quality of part-time work are therefore necessary if it is to be advocated as a major component of working time policy, accompanied by investment in child-care services if full-time work is to be a viable option as part of a work-life balance strategy.

At the same time, measures to curtail long hours are a key part of the policy jigsaw for the promotion of work-life balance and gender equality. The long hours worked by many men are a barrier to renegotiating the gender division of labour within the home, constrain the ability of men to be present and involved in parenting on a daily basis, and may limit the working time options of the women with whom they live. The performance of long hours by men also sets workplace norms which make it difficult for workers with care responsibilities to enter or advance in those parts of the economy, for example into senior grades in certain professional and managerial occupations.

3. Effect of work schedules on work-life balance

From the evidence discussed in Chapter 2, it is clear that long working hours have a detrimental impact on the well-being and work-life balance of men and women. This Chapter considers the impact of different work schedules, when hours are worked and the type of flexibility involved (see Figure 1.2 above). The scheduling of paid working hours, for both part- and full-time workers, has an impact on the fit and coordination with domestic routines for other household members (meal times, getting children to/from school, regular visits to elderly relatives) and social life (leisure activities, volunteering).

The type of flexibility involved also has an impact on work-life balance. *Fixed hours* may be rigid, but at least they are predictable and allow for easier planning. *Employer-led flexibility* in schedules can be disruptive of work-life balance, depending on the notice given and whether or not workers are able to refuse overtime, a new rota, an overnight business trip, variable hours within an annualized hours contract, etc. *Worker-led flexibility* consists of working practices in which workers have some degree of autonomy to vary when they do their work, to work from home, etc. It includes arrangements such as flexitime schemes and other forms of time banking (working time accounts) or compressed schedules (for example, nine days worked in every two weeks), in which employees have some control over when they work their hours.

3.1. Non-standard work schedules and health/well-being outcomes

In many countries, a sizeable proportion of men and women work at non-standard times, for example in the evening, at night or during week-ends. While the prevalence of such arrangements varies between countries, their incidence has been rising as part of the spread of a more globalized 24/7 economy. Time series data for Europe reveal an increase during the 1980s and 1990s, and then signs of stabilization (Parent-Thirion et al., 2007). Such arrangements have also increased in the United States (Presser, 2006) and are common in Australia (Pocock et al., 2007) and in many other industrialized and developing economies. This trend applies to parents and workers without such care responsibilities, and may involve being absent in the evening or at weekends when children and/or partners are at home.

Not only do a high proportion of employees prefer not to work at the weekend (La Valle et al., 2002), but their health appears to be adversely affected when they do so. A Canadian study (Jamal, 2004) found that full-time employees working at weekends report significantly higher emotional exhaustion, job stress and psychosomatic health problems than employees not involved in weekend work. An earlier paper (Jamal and Baba, 1999) found that shift time was not related to burn-out, but that nurses on rotating and night shifts suffered more in terms of well-being than other nurses. In European-wide research by Boisard et al. (2003), respondents were asked about health problems, based on whether or not they worked at weekends (Table 3.1). The results were highly consistent in showing that people working on Saturdays are more likely to report health effects than those who do not, and people working on Sundays are more likely to report problems than those not doing so. Sunday working appears to have an even greater impact on health than Saturdays.

Table 3.1. Proportion of men and women employees in Europe working on Saturdays or Sundays (%) reporting health effects

| | No Saturdays | At least one Sat/month | No Sundays | At least one Sun/month |
|--------------------------------|--------------|------------------------|------------|------------------------|
| Health affected overall | 56 | 63 | 57 | 67 |
| Backache | 30 | 37 | 31 | 39 |
| Muscular pain (shoulders/neck) | 20 | 25 | 21 | 27 |
| Muscular pain (upper limbs) | 11 | 14 | 12 | 15 |
| Muscular pain (lower limbs) | 9 | 13 | 10 | 14 |
| Injury | 6 | 9 | 7 | 10 |
| Stress | 25 | 32 | 26 | 37 |
| Overall fatigue | 19 | 26 | 20 | 29 |
| Insomnia | 6 | 11 | 6 | 15 |

Note: decimal places have been rounded

Source: Third European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS), 2000

Analysis of the Fourth European Working Conditions Survey (2005) by Burchell et al. (2007) showed that both long working hours and working unsocial hours have independent effects on the risk of negative work-related health outcomes, as do exposure to poor ergonomic conditions, physical and material hazards and a high degree of work intensity. Having some autonomy to vary hours of work slightly reduces the risk of illness.

Boisard et al. (2003) also assessed the self-reported health impact of working evenings or nights, compared with those not working at such times (Table 3.2). Again, workers are more likely to report health problems if they work at least one evening a month than those who do not working evenings (66 as against 54 per cent), as were those working at least one night compared to those not working nights (68 compared with 57 per cent). The negative health effects can be expected to be more pronounced for those more regularly involved with evening and night work.

Table 3.2. Proportion of men and women working evenings or nights (%) reporting health effects¹⁰

| | No evenings | At least one evening/month | No nights | At least one night/month |
|-------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| Health affected overall | 54 | 66 | 57 | 68 |
| Backache | 30 | 37 | 31 | 40 |
| Stress | 23 | 36 | 26 | 36 |
| Overall fatigue | 18 | 28 | 21 | 29 |
| Insomnia | 5 | 13 | 6 | 18 |

Note: decimal places have been rounded

Source: Third European Conditions Survey (EWCS), 2000.

Many researchers have examined the links between shift work and health. The present report therefore only provides a brief overview of the most relevant issues in relation to specific working patterns and health and well-being outcomes for men and women. The most commonly identified effects of shift work on health include disturbed sleep, which often continues during days off (Akerstedt, 2003). Shift work negatively affects work performance and efficiency, with consequent

¹⁰ Other complaints were also included, but are not reported here. In all cases, those working evenings reported fewer complaints than those working nights, and those working Saturdays reported fewer complaints than those working Sundays.

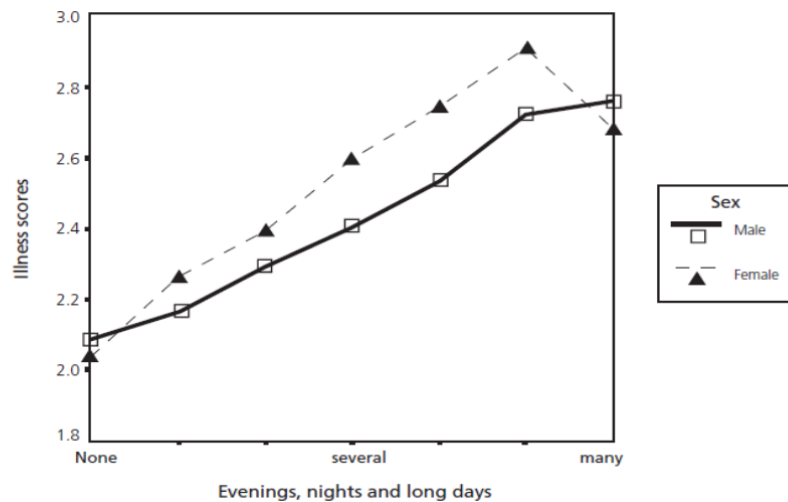
errors and accidents. It also disturbs eating habits, with the potential for more severe gastrointestinal, neuro-psychic and cardiovascular disorders (Costa, 1996). Other recent studies have shown that industrial accidents and injuries are also more likely to occur during night and evening shifts than day shifts (Brogmus and Maynard, 2006; Dembe et al., 2006; Folkard et al., 2005). Jamal (2004) also found that Canadian employees working non-standard shifts reported significantly higher overall burn-out, emotional exhaustion, job stress and health problems than employees on fixed day shifts. A comparison of shift workers and those working extreme shift patterns in Chile (such as long shifts and/or in locations that take them away from their homes for long periods, such as in mining) showed that the negative effects of shiftwork on psychological well-being and satisfaction with family life are even more pronounced for ‘extreme’ shiftworkers (Baez and Galdames, 2005).

The relationship between shift work and health outcomes appears to be consistent cross-culturally, with findings from different studies producing very similar results. For example, studies of women nurses in the United States (Kawachi et al., 1995) and men workers in a Swedish paper mill (Knutson et al., 1986) both showed that workers who had ever worked shifts were 40 per cent more likely to have had incidents of coronary heart disease than those who had never done shift work.

3.1.1 Gender differences

European surveys show that, while women are less involved than men in non-standard schedules, the gender gap is not very large (Burchell et al., 2007). Fagan and Burchell (2002) show that there is a more pronounced negative health impact of unsocial schedules for women than for men (Figure 3.1). There is little evidence of why women’s health appears to be more affected than that of men, except to infer that women’s heavier domestic responsibilities fuel their negative health outcomes.

Figure 3.1. Effect of evening/night work and long days on health of men and women



Source: Third European Working Conditions Survey (2000)

In a study in the United States, Glass and Fujimoto (1994) found that rotating shifts increased depression in wives only. Other studies have examined the effects of shift work on women’s reproductive health and, in a review of the literature, Nurminen (1998) concluded that, although the evidence remains ambiguous in several areas, partly because of inexact definitions of the type of shift work involved, shifts do appear to pose a potential risk to reproduction.

3.1.2 Class differences

Shift work, including evening, night and week-end shifts, is more prevalent in manual occupations, with the result that manual workers are more exposed to the health risks associated with these schedules.

A study of Venezuelan fishers found that up to 33.3 per cent suffer from mental health problems, which are associated with unstable work time schedules (Yanes and Primera, 2006). The study describes the difficulties that fishers face in balancing work and personal life, as their work schedules are very unstable, they do not have annual leave entitlements and sometimes work up to 14 hours a day. Similarly, a study of drill supervisors in the Venezuelan oil industry found that, at the end of the workday, 43 per cent of workers show mental fatigue, 50 per cent develop symptoms of anxiety and 43 per cent of depression (Sánchez et al., 2008). Mental health problems are related to extended working hours, sometimes up to seven continuous days, and insufficient time to rest and engage in family life and other interpersonal relationships.

In the United States, Perry-Jenkins et al. (2007) have found that, for a sample of dual-earner working class new parents, work in the evening or on night shifts is related to higher levels of depressive symptoms and, in the case of mothers only, rotating shifts predicted relationship conflict, supporting the gender differences highlighted by Glass and Fujimoto (1994). Dembe et al. (2008) found that construction workers are particularly at risk of injury on evening shifts, as opposed to either night or day shifts.

3.2. Non-standard work schedules and work-family outcomes

In France, researchers examined whether or not the 35-hour week, now weakened, made it easier for parents to achieve a work-life balance (Fagnagni and Letablier, 2004). For those working atypical hours, almost half reported that the 35-hour week had *not* made it easier, compared with 36 per cent of those working standard hours. Simply working shorter hours does not appear to resolve work-life conflict issues for those on atypical working schedules. Complicated child-care arrangements, combined with reduced traditional family time at weekends and in the evenings, appear to reduce parental satisfaction with atypical working schedules, even when the working hours are relatively short.

Other commitments also increase conflict between work and family roles. A qualitative study of Muslim men in Australia (Sav et al., 2010) found that they tend to choose jobs with atypical schedules and lower status to help them achieve a balance between work, family and religion. While they acknowledge that such jobs allow them a degree of control and flexibility, the majority report that they still experience difficulties in retaining a balance between these three important areas.

The incidence of atypical work schedules is high in the United Kingdom and United States, particularly in lower-level occupations. Some parents opt for evening, night or week-end work to allow informal child care by spouses working at different times (so-called ‘shift-parenting’), or by grandparents and other family members or friends, in order to minimize child-care costs or in accordance with their preference for informal rather than formal care (Fagan, 1996; Fagan et al., 2008; Harkness, 2008; Presser, 2006; Deutsch, 1999). However, many would prefer not to work such schedules. For example, La Valle et al. (2002) found that three quarters of mothers in the United Kingdom who regularly worked at atypical times did so because it was a job requirement rather than a deliberate choice. Nearly half of the mothers who usually work shifts would prefer different or regular hours (47 per cent), two-thirds of those who work every Saturday would prefer not to (67 per cent), and over three quarters of those who work every Sunday would prefer not to (78 per cent). Mothers with partners working atypical schedules would also prefer their partners not to do so. Atypical

workers in the United Kingdom are less likely than the average for the EU-25 to report that their schedules are convenient (Eurostat, 2007). Similarly, a Statistics Canada study showed that, although many employees had variable hours, few had variable schedules that were favourable to their work-life balance (Comfort et al., 2003). In Spain, split work schedules are increasing work-family conflict (Amuedo-Dorantes and De la Rica, 2009). Younger women, with fewer career opportunities and no children, are more likely to have a split work schedule. Moreover, despite the preference for a continuous work schedule, there seems to be no compensating wage differential for split work schedules.

A recent Australian study (Townsend et al., 2011) found that restructuring the working week of construction shift workers from the traditional six days to five days leads directly to a perception among workers of an improvement in their work-life balance. Similarly, in a review of the international literature, Bamba et al. (2008) found that the introduction of a compressed working week (working longer hours, but over fewer days) improved the work-life balance of shift workers. Various organizational factors were also examined in another Australian study of 530 nurses working shifts (Pisarski et al., 2008). Support from supervisors and colleagues, as well as team identity, influence time-based work-life conflict through two mediating variables: team climate and control over the working environment. Reduced conflict, in turn, produces enhanced psychological well-being and diminished physical symptoms.

Another study of nurses in France and Canada (Vallerand et al., 2010) found that the type of job commitment is another mediating variable. In both countries, nurses with a ‘harmonious passion’ for their job (that is, a passion in which they freely engage with no external coercion) have higher job satisfaction and lower conflict levels than nurses with an ‘obsessive passion’ for their jobs (one that is uncontrollable and which takes over other life domains), who experience higher conflict. Job satisfaction and conflict are also associated with increases or decreases in levels of burn-out over time.

Not only do parents report a lack of time with other family members, but also a reduction in the time available for specific activities. In the United Kingdom, a third of mothers who frequently worked atypical hours, compared with 12 per cent of mothers with more standard working hours, said that their work limited the time they could spend reading with, playing with or helping their children with their homework every week (La Valle et al., 2002). Almost half of mothers whose partners frequently worked atypical hours also said that work limited the time partners spent on these activities every week, compared with 18 per cent of women whose partners worked standard hours. Of women working one Sunday every two or three weeks, 49 per cent said that their work limited the time they spent with their children on these activities, as did 47 per cent whose partners worked the same number of Sundays. Overall, working non-standard hours was associated with a higher level of dissatisfaction about the amount of time spent with children (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3. Satisfaction of mothers with the time they or their partners spend with children (%)

| | Mothers | | Fathers | |
|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| | Frequent atypical work | Occasional or none | Frequent atypical work | Occasional or none |
| Extremely satisfied | 21 | 30 | 14 | 23 |
| Fairly satisfied | 55 | 56 | 54 | 64 |
| Fairly dissatisfied | 19 | 12 | 26 | 11 |
| Extremely dissatisfied | 5 | 2 | 7 | 3 |
| Total % | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Weighted base | 508 | 458 | 761 | 209 |

Source: NatCen survey (La Valle et al., 2002)

Other researchers have also examined the links between parental working patterns and the time spent with children. In Spain, Gutiérrez-Doménech (2007) found that a work schedule that finishes no later than 6 pm significantly raises the time allocated to child care by working parents. Research in both Australia (Bittman, 2005) and the United Kingdom (Barnes et al., 2006) found that parents who work on Sundays are unable to recover family time later in the week and spend less time with their children and sharing family meals than other workers. Barnes et al. (2006) also reported that atypical working affects the time that working mothers spend with their family more than fathers, as mothers tend to spend more time with children on average, particularly at weekends.

Non-standard schedules can have negative outcomes for the quality of marital relationships. An early United Kingdom study carried out in the iron and steel industry reported that 40 per cent of (male) shiftworkers complained of not having enough time to spend with their spouses (Wedderburn, 1975), while a French study of 800 nurses reported that 60 per cent of those working fixed day or night shifts, and 85 per cent of those working alternating morning/afternoon or night/day shifts, also felt that they had insufficient time to spend with their partners (Estryn-Behar et al., 1990). Similarly, an Austrian survey by Koller et al. (1990), which questioned refinery shift workers twice over a period of five years, reported a decrease in compatibility between the workers and their partners. La Valle et al. (2002) assessed the impact of atypical working patterns on relationships among couples in the United Kingdom by asking partnered mothers how satisfied they were with the time spent together as a couple (Table 3.4). Satisfaction levels were much lower among those frequently working atypical hours: 41 per cent of those in couples in which both partners frequently worked atypical hours said that they were dissatisfied with the amount of time spent together as a couple, compared with 17 per cent in couples in which neither partner regularly worked at atypical times. When only one parent worked atypical hours, dissatisfaction was higher than in couples in which neither partner worked such hours, but lower than in couples in which both worked atypical hours.

Table 3.4. Working patterns of couples and satisfaction with their time as a couple (%)

| | Mother only frequent atypical work | Father only frequent atypical work | Both frequent atypical work | Both occasional/ no atypical work |
|------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Extremely satisfied | 9 | 11 | 8 | 22 |
| Fairly Satisfied | 64 | 55 | 51 | 61 |
| Fairly dissatisfied | 23 | 27 | 27 | 14 |
| Extremely dissatisfied | 4 | 7 | 14 | 3 |
| Weighted base | 91 | 344 | 417 | 113 |

Base: all partnered mothers.

Source: La Valle et al. (2002)

Other studies have shown that non-day working schedules are also associated with relationship stress and work-family conflict (Kingston and Nock, 1987; Mellor, 1986; Rubin, 1994; Simon, 1990; Staines and Pleck, 1983). However, as Perry-Jenkins et al. (2007) point out, much of this research is cross-sectional and it is therefore unclear whether non-day shift work schedules lead to troubled relationships, or if negative relationships lead individuals to work opposite shifts.

Some insight into the causality is provided by a study by White and Keith (1990) examining the effects of shift work on relationship quality over a longer period of time. Non-day shift schedules were shown to have a modest, but consistently negative effect on relationship quality, and significantly increased the likelihood of divorce from 7 to 11 per cent over a three-year period. More recently, Presser (2000) also found that non-day shift schedules in the United States had negative effects on relationship stability, especially for parents. Among men married for fewer than five years and with at least one child, working fixed nights made separation or divorce six times more likely

than working days. Mothers married for longer than five years and who worked fixed night shifts were three times more likely than day shift workers to separate or divorce. Furthermore, analyses did not support the alternative hypothesis that couples with troubled relationships may be more likely to select non-day shiftwork (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2007). Gareis et al. (2003) focused on the perception of the 'fit' between work schedules and personal and family needs. For women and men, a better partner/family schedule fit predicted higher relationship-role quality. However, the more fathers felt that their schedule met their *own* needs, the lower their partners assessed the quality of their relationship. On the other hand, a European-wide study (Eurofound, 2000) could not provide any conclusive evidence as to whether or not shift work leads to a greater frequency of relational break-ups.

Parents with young children who work atypical hours may be at risk of even greater pressure, especially as younger children require more care and supervision, and may also be more sensitive to changed routines and parental moods caused by distress (Lovejoy et al., 2000). Evening, night and weekend working could also limit the opportunities of parents for social interaction, closeness and support from others (Strazdins et al., 2006), as well as from each other. Strazdins et al. (2006) demonstrated that the timing of both fathers' and mothers' work is important, and that similar effects occur when mothers *or* fathers work at atypical times. However, the authors suggest that shift parenting, while possibly increasing the involvement of fathers with children, may also mean reduced time for companionship and support. Moreover, if fathers do not combine child care with extra domestic work while the mother is at work, this could exacerbate any feelings of pressure and stress felt by mothers (associations were found between work schedules and parental depression, especially among mothers).

Relationship quality with other family members can suffer as a consequence of atypical working schedules. Using a sample of 376 dual-earner families in the United States, Davis et al. (2006) found that, although mothers' relationships with their adolescent children are not negatively affected by working non-standard schedules, fathers' relationships are affected. Indeed, adolescents with mothers who work shifts reported more relationship intimacy than adolescents with mothers working during the daytime. In contrast, fathers with non-standard shifts know significantly less about their teenagers' daily activities than those with daytime shifts. The combination of fathers having non-standard schedules and a marriage with high conflict predicts even lower intimacy with adolescent children. Another study in the United States (Heymann and Earle, 2001) used a sample of 1133 school children aged five to ten and the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME), which has previously been shown to predict children's school, developmental and health outcomes. Having at least one parent working in the evening had a significantly negative effect on the home environment, both for families living in poverty and those not considered to be poor (an 11 per cent decrease in scores when mothers worked evenings and an 8 per cent decrease when fathers did so). Joshi and Bogen (2007) similarly found a link between the non-standard work schedules of mothers and negative child behaviour. There is some evidence that these negative effects of non-standard schedules on child behaviour operate indirectly through increased parenting stress.

3.2.1 Gender differences

European-wide analyses have highlighted that, for both men and women, the proportion reporting work-family incompatibility is almost double if they: (a) work evenings/nights, compared with days; and (b) work shifts, compared with those not working shifts (Fagan and Burchell, 2002). An even greater difference was found between those working on Saturdays or Sundays, compared with those not working on those days (almost three times as many men and women respondents working these days reported incompatibility, when compared with those not working weekends). Men, however, reported greater incompatibility than women for *all* types of atypical work schedules, largely because men's atypical schedules usually involve longer hours, for example working at weekends as well as during the week. Regression analyses demonstrated that, in order of importance, those

variables significantly associated with men's and women's dissatisfaction with work-life balance are: working long days/evenings/nights; working weekends; having some influence over working time (negative association); the number of hours worked; high work intensity; poor ergonomic conditions; the variability of hours of work; disruptive interruptions; and having some autonomy in work methods, order and breaks (negative association) (ibid.).

Table 3.5. Lack of compatibility of working schedules with family and other commitments (%): Men and women employees in Europe

| Schedule | Men | Women | All |
|----------------------------------|-----|-------|-----|
| Daytime only | 20 | 14 | 17 |
| Evenings and/or nights | 37 | 28 | 33 |
| Do not work shifts | 19 | 13 | 16 |
| Work shifts | 34 | 27 | 31 |
| Same number of days per week | 18 | 14 | 16 |
| Variable number of days per week | 33 | 23 | 29 |
| No Saturdays | 12 | 9 | 10 |
| Regular Saturdays | 35 | 25 | 31 |
| No Sundays | 16 | 12 | 14 |
| Regular Sundays | 45 | 30 | 39 |

Source: Third European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS), reported in Fagan and Burchell, 2002.

In their recent European-wide analysis of the Fourth European Working Conditions Survey, Parent-Thirion et al. (2007) also found that satisfaction with work-life balance across Europe is higher for those working full-time standard hours than for people working unsocial or long hours, doing shift work or working irregular days and work schedules.

Although shift work has been found to be disruptive for both men and women, some researchers have found that it creates greater work-family role conflict for women (Staines and Pleck, 1983) because it interferes with their more involved family roles (Kinnunen and Mauno, 1998). Moreover, attempts to balance work-family responsibilities can lead to higher rates of absenteeism for women workers (Vandenhoevel and Wooden, 1995).

Steiber (2009) conducted an analysis of European Social Survey data across 23 European countries and found differences between time-based conflict and strain-based conflict. For instance, weekend work affected time-based more strongly than strain-based conflict. Unpredictable working hours, however, have an equally strong relation to both types of conflict. Moreover, there are gender differences cutting across the two types of conflict, with women reporting higher levels of strain-based conflict than men (but lower levels of time-based conflict), before controlling for differences in working hours. The author concludes that, while long and unsocial working hours have similarly strong effects on both women's and men's experience of time-based conflict, they are more strongly related to strain-based conflict for women than men.

3.2.2 Class differences

A high proportion of those working at atypical times are from lower occupational classes. La Valle et al. (2002) demonstrated that a very high proportion of partnered mothers working at atypical times reported having no choice in their working hours. When parents have made a deliberate choice to work at atypical times, and the hours of work are relatively short, atypical working tends to be perceived as beneficial. However, where parents feel they have little choice over their working arrangements and work *long* atypical hours, the effects on family life are primarily negative (Dex, 2003).

Not only are low-income parents more likely to work at weekends and do shift work, but they may also be especially vulnerable to the strains arising from atypical work schedules (Strazdins et al., 2006). Low income has previously been identified as a risk factor for parent depression and less effective parenting (Mistry et al., 2002), and could be particularly problematic when combined with atypical schedules, which place greater pressure on parental mental health and parenting (Strazdins et al., 2006). A lack of affordable child care may exacerbate such strains for low-income families.

3.3 Worker-led flexibility, autonomy and control

Where workers have some autonomy and control over their work schedules, or the scope to choose particular hours of work, this has a positive effect on health, well-being and work-life balance. Control appears to buffer the effects of longer hours on work-family interference (Hughes and Parkes, 2007; Barton and Folkard, 1991) and to have a significant positive impact on a range of health outcomes (Fenwick and Tausig, 2001). Orellana Cano (2002) questions the effectiveness of laws designed to promote equality among men and women that do not fully address the issue of work flexibility and its connection with family-work conciliation.

However, flexible working time arrangements may offer less autonomy in practice than on paper. For example, within a flexitime arrangement it may be more difficult to secure permission to take time off in lieu during busy periods. Indeed, flexitime may become a means of securing flexibility for employers if it is used to obtain longer hours from employees when needed, with employees being able to bank hours and use them later (Lesnard, 2006; Letablier, 2006). Taking extra time off during quiet periods may not be beneficial for work-life balance. Working long hours during seasonal peaks and short hours during quiet periods does not help much in integrating employment with year-round activities, such as child or elder care. Other flexible arrangements which allow employees to work from home, including telework, can bring some relief to the coordination of work and family responsibilities, but may also generate other issues, such as isolation and boundary maintenance between 'work' and 'home' space (Sánchez and Gálvez, 2009; Felstead et al., 2002).

With regard to shiftwork, low levels of influence at work and low predictability (not knowing the schedule in advance) have been shown to be risk factors in work-life conflict for both men and women (Jansen et al., 2003). Two studies based in Denmark and the Netherlands suggest that "shift work interferes directly with the rhythm of the family, and emotional demands may drain the worker of the mental resources needed to cope with the problems of children and marriage" (Kristensen et al., 2005: 448). Barton and Folkard (1991) found that the negative impacts of shiftwork were reduced when shift workers were able to choose particular hours of work. Fenwick and Tausig (2001) also found that control over scheduling has a highly significant positive effect on health and family outcomes for all workers, including those on standard and non-standard shifts. Of the eight family and health outcomes examined, control over scheduling has highly significant positive effects on six. These findings, as well as those reported earlier, suggest that the psychological effects of having more autonomy and control over working hours and work schedules appears to alleviate some of the negative effects of specific working conditions.

In Latin America, the general trend is for increased flexibility of working hours, although largely in the form of employer-led flexibility, with schedules being determined and varied according to operational requirements. In reality, this is precarious rather than flexible working designed to address the work-life balance needs of employees (Arriga, 2005). A Colombian study argues that work intensification and task fragmentation is generating widespread 'mental overcharge' and consequently leading to stress and its associated pathologies (Guerrero and Puerto Barrios, 2007). A study of occupational health in the Mexican *maquiladora* industry found that employer-led flexibility has significantly affected the working conditions of women, including unstable working schedules and multi-purpose responsibilities at work (Villegas et al., 1997). The risk of them giving birth to babies with a low birth weight is 2.8 times higher than for women employed in other areas of the

economy. In Spain, Moreno Colom (2010) suggests that flexibility at work gives younger workers an illusion of control and freedom of choice, in contrast with their actual situation of labour market vulnerability and financial instability.

Hayman (2009) has found direct links between the perceived usability of flexible work schedules and work-life balance outcomes in a study of 710 office-based employees in Australia. Employees who use flexitime display significantly higher levels of work-life balance than their counterparts on traditional fixed-hour schedules. However, no significant differences in the levels of work-life balance were found between employees with 'flexiplace' or job share arrangements and those with fixed-hour work schedules. The reason may be similar to the results of certain other studies of teleworking. For example, a study of teleworking among Canadian women employees found that the time saved from not having to commute to an office was reallocated to caregiving, housework or paid employment, rather than to time for themselves (Hilbrecht et al., 2008), echoing the findings of earlier research by Brannen (2005). In addition, the women experienced a traditional division of household labour, but did not question its fairness. These findings resonate with those of other studies of the domestic division of labour, which show that women's notions of fairness in this domain are more subtle than simply an 'equal share' and are heavily influenced by social norms about gender roles and obligations and whether or not their partner's paid work hours are much longer than their own (see Spain and Bianchi, 2006). Therefore, although time flexibility enhances the sense of work-life balance and the perceived quality of life of teleworkers, Hilbrecht et al. (2008) argue that the women do not appear to acknowledge the external control imposed by the employer, their family or social norms of intensive mothering.

In contrast, other studies find a positive effect of teleworking/working from home on work-life balance. In the United States, Hill et al. (2010) examined flexibility in where and when workers engage in work-related tasks, and found that working at home and perceived schedule flexibility are generally related to less work-life conflict. They also found that employees with workplace flexibility are able to work longer hours (often equivalent to one or two eight-hour days a week) before reporting work-life conflict, offering benefits for both employers and employees. For Japanese workers, flexible working practices (flexitime and longer maternity leave) have a significant impact in terms of lowering turnover among women employees, but there is no such impact for male employees (Yanadori and Kato, 2009).

Hecht and Allen (2009), using Canadian data, examined the blurring of boundaries between work and non-work. Boundary strength at home reflects the extent to which a person's work role permeates (psychologically or behaviourally) the time and space of their non-work life. On the other hand, boundary strength at work reflects the extent to which non-work roles permeate the time and space of work. The authors found higher inter-role conflict for those with weak boundaries between work and home, which the authors argue may contribute to increased absenteeism and use of health-care benefits. Individuals who are highly involved with work tend to have weaker boundaries at home, whereas those who are highly involved with their personal lives tend to have stronger boundaries at home. Although the authors were unable to test for the different organizational/individual antecedents of boundary strength, they refer to the locus of control over boundaries in different domains, with the possibility that workers have less power over boundaries at work than they do at home, and they note that other research has provided evidence that organizations use their power to influence the boundaries of employees (Perlow, 1999).

Analysis using the European Working Conditions Survey has shown that if workers have some personal autonomy and flexibility in organizing their working hours, this has a positive effect on the reported compatibility of their working hours with family and other commitments. However, the positive effect of this control is relatively weak compared with the much larger negative effect of long hours or unsocial schedules (Fagan and Burchell, 2002; Burchell et al., 2007 and 2009). In other words, work-life balance – at least when measured in terms of reported compatibility and 'fit' – is

higher for workers who have no control over their schedules and work some unsocial hours, than for workers with some self-determination of their working hours, but whose schedules entail longer hours and/or more extensive involvement in working at unsocial times. Interestingly, later European-wide work by Burchell et al. (2009) found that ‘active’ workers (those with demanding work, but also high autonomy) participate in many extra-professional activities, taking into account their socio-economic characteristics. However, they are more likely than ‘low-strain’ workers to report a poor fit between their working hours and their commitments outside employment.

Péllisse (2002), based on research covering 50 French companies, emphasized that the evaluation by employees of the 35-hour week was related to the quality of the newly acquired free time. Employees were more positive about the effect if they obtained additional days off, and therefore control over worked and non-worked periods. The quality of the newly acquired free time tended to be higher for professional than for low-skilled manual workers (Fagnani and Letablier, 2004).

Finally, reference should be made to occupational class differences in schedules (see sections 2.1.2, 2.2.4 and 3.2.2), as well as the additional layer of autonomy and self-determination of hours. Data for Europe and the United States show that white-collar employees tend to be those who have access to informal or formal flexitime systems (Fagan, 2004). Analysis of the European Working Conditions Survey confirms that time autonomy is primarily found in managerial and professional occupations. However, among managers and professionals, fewer women benefit from time autonomy in the EU-27 (Burchell et al., 2007: Figure 48). Moreover, access to the various types of flexible work schedules oriented towards the work-life balance of employees is also uneven across occupational levels and sectors in industrialized countries (Fagan, 2004; Chung et al., 2007; Riedmann et al., 2006; Parent-Thirion et al., 2007).

This unevenness has been demonstrated in the United Kingdom, where a growing number of establishments offer flexible working options (such as flexitime, working from home and job shares), but the availability and take-up varies (Bell and Bryson, 2005; Cully et al., 1999; Dex, 2003; Kersley et al., 2006). Broadly speaking, surveys in the United Kingdom show that managers and professionals have the most scope for variation of when they work, because their hours are not directly monitored or because they have formal flexitime arrangements, and are also more likely to be able to do some of their work from home. Flexitime is common for clerical workers, particularly in the public and financial sectors. Conversely, the working hours of routine and manual workers are more likely to be fixed by their employers, and to include shiftwork and part-time work (Warren, 2003). There are no occupational differences in the incidence of compressed weeks, jobsharing or term-time working (Kersley et al., 2006: Table 6.24). Flexible working options are more common generally in the public sector, in large workplaces, in workplaces where a union is recognized or where over half the workforce is female.

3.4. Summary of key findings

In many countries, a sizeable proportion of men and women work at non-standard times, such as in the evening, at night or at week-ends. While the prevalence of these working patterns varies between countries, their incidence has been increasing as part of the spread of a more globalized 24/7 economy. There is consistent evidence that these schedules have negative effects on health, particularly in the case of rotating shifts and night work, which disturb sleeping and eating patterns for both men and women. Research indicates that the negative health impact is more pronounced for women. This is not easily explained, but may be because women’s heavier domestic responsibilities fuel the negative health outcomes of unsocial schedules. Shift work also has negative impacts on women’s reproductive health.

Many who regularly work non-standard work schedules do so because it is a job requirement, rather than a deliberate choice made to coordinate employment and domestic schedules. Non-standard work schedules, particularly those involving long working hours, are associated with increased work-family conflict and stress and reduced satisfaction with the amount of time available to spend as a couple and with children. There is also evidence that such schedules are associated with relationship breakdown and may have negative effects on children's education by reducing the time that parents are able to spend helping them with homework and reading.

Simply working shorter hours does not appear to resolve work-life conflict issues for those on atypical or non-standard work schedules, while control over the scheduling of working hours is also important. Complicated child-care arrangements, combined with reduced traditional 'family' time at weekends and in the evenings by spouses working at different times to cover child care ('shift-parenting') appear to reduce parental satisfaction with atypical working schedules, even when working hours are relatively short. Options for teleworking and homeworking can free up time for family or other activities, but raise the issue of the blurring of boundaries between workspace and home life, which may create tension and spill-over between the two domains.

Where workers have some autonomy and control over their work schedules, or the scope to choose particular hours of work, this has a positive effect on health, well-being and work-life balance. However, the available evidence suggests that this positive effect is modest and insufficient to counteract the negative effects of long hours or unsocial schedules. Moreover, flexible working time arrangements may offer less autonomy in practice than on paper, depending on workload. Some research suggests that the ability of workers to use flexible work schedules, rather than simply the existence of such schemes, has an influence on work-life balance. This nuance is important in evaluating international developments in working time policy. For example, employer-led flexibility is the predominant form of flexibility in Latin America, but leaves workers with little control over the setting or variability of their hours.

Regression analyses using a European survey demonstrated that, in order of importance, the four variables with the most significant impact on men's and women's dissatisfaction with work-life balance, once other working conditions have been taken into account, are: working long days/evenings/nights; working weekends; having some influence over working time (which reduces dissatisfaction); and the number of hours worked (Burchell et al., 2007).

Non-standard work schedules, and particularly shift work, night work and evening or week-end working, are especially common in lower-level occupations. The combination of living on a low income and non-standard work schedules places additional stress on mental health and parenting for the families concerned. This may be exacerbated if there is a lack of affordable child care and other family support services. Conversely, autonomy and control over working time, whether through formal flexitime or the discretionary self-determination of working hours, is more common at the professional and managerial levels.

4. Conclusions and policy implications

There is little dissent and much consensus in the research evidence reviewed in the present report. The volume and scheduling of hours of work impact on the well-being and work-life balance of workers and their families. Working long hours has a key negative effect, as does regular involvement in non-standard schedules. Autonomy and control offer some mitigating effects.

The implications are that policy efforts to regulate and reduce long working hours remain as pertinent today as in earlier periods. The excessive requirement of non-standard working also needs to be addressed, for example by regulatory limits on nightwork and the improved design of shift rotas. Efforts are also needed to enhance the autonomy and control of workers over their working hours and to improve the quality of part-time work options. Finally, family leave policies, measures to promote a more equal sharing of unpaid care and household work between men and women, and the quality of the social infrastructure – child-care and eldercare services, transport systems – are also important in enhancing work-life balance. Social dialogue among the key actors – the state, employers' associations, unions and community associations – is vital to develop an integrated set of measures that promote the ability of men and women to secure their desired work-life balance. It is also important to extend the indicators used to monitor this dimension of the Decent Work Agenda (Ankor et al., 2002) so as to capture work schedules and autonomy, as well as the volume of hours worked, which will require additional questions in surveys in many countries.

This report has focused on the work-life balance of workers. There are also benefits for employers: a healthier and more contented workforce, and other business gains in terms of productivity, retention, reduced absenteeism and the reduced use of health-care benefits, as well as the development of skills by other workers through temporary covering or job enlargement resulting from the reorganization of work tasks.

The research confirms the negative effects of a poor work-life balance on individually reported job performance. The success of the 'business case' depends on the types of policies adopted and the particular circumstances of each sector and firm, although a persuasive case can be made based on research by employers and workplace studies (Gray, 2002; Gesualdi-Fecteau, 2010; Messenger, 2004; Plantenga and Remery, 2010). For example, where measures have been introduced to prevent very long hours of work, this has often been accompanied by productivity gains (Bosch, 2009). Similarly, employers report productivity benefits from having part-time workers in their workforce (Anxo et al., 2007). For example, a survey in the United Kingdom by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the largest employers' association, found that over 95 per cent of employers consider that the right to request reduced or flexible hours has a positive or neutral effect on productivity, recruitment, employee retention, absence rates and employee relations (Employment Task Force, 2008:4). In Spain, a study found that the majority of managers believe that work-life balance policies are beneficial for workers and companies. However, 73 per cent do not have any such policies in place and only 10 per cent of companies are evaluating the possibility of introducing them (Alcón and Garrido, 2006).

Countries and regions are of course at different starting points and face different challenges in relation to working time policy. Long working hours are a more pressing problem in many parts of the developing world than in certain European countries. Different challenges arise in addressing long hours of work by production workers in factories in comparison with better-paid professionals with 'self-determined' working arrangements, and in developing policy interventions for workers in the informal economy (Rubery, 2005; Supiot, 2001). The demand for part-time work and the quality of the part-time work opportunities available varies enormously across the world.

This report has considered the extent to which various types of working time arrangements not only facilitate work-life integration or ‘balance’, but also promote gender equality in both the labour market and in personal life. In this respect, reference should be made to the five objectives proposed for advancing gender equality as part of the ILO’s decent working-time agenda (Fagan, 2004):

- To reduce working time barriers to labour market participation and so contribute to raising women’s employment rate
- To address particular working time obstacles to women’s entry into management and other male-dominated activities
- To develop working time arrangements to improve the quality of the reconciliation of employment and family responsibilities and ‘work-life balance’
- To advance equal treatment between full and part-time workers including opportunities to make transitions between full-time and part-time hours at different life stages
- To adapt men’s working time patterns and increase their time involvement in parenting and other care activities

The report has emphasized that both men and women are negatively affected by a poor work life balance resulting from poor scheduling and long hours. The wider perspective that the negative effects extend beyond health to broader impacts on the family and other activities beyond the workplace, and that they affect men as well as women, and children as well as adults, emphasizes the need for work-life balance policies to be less ‘myopic’ (Eikhoff et al., 2007). A broader perspective on work-life balance would help to reduce these negative consequences, and would also promote gender equality through a more even distribution of paid and unpaid work.

Finally, it is important for working time policy not to be considered in isolation from the need for a good quality infrastructure of affordable child and elder care services. This is important in broadening the set of feasible working time options available to women and therefore in helping to prevent them from being channelled into poor quality part-time work or informal employment due to the lack of decent alternatives.

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