

Work–life balance, health and wellbeing in European welfare states

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Lunau T, Bambra C, Eikemo TA, Van der Wel KA, Dragano N (2014) A balancing act? Work-life balance, health and wellbeing in European welfare states. Eur J Public Health. Jun;24(3):422-7.

Background

- ▶ Recent analyses show an association between welfare state regimes/policies and psychosocial work stress
 - ▶ Poor Work Life Balance can also have negative consequences for health
 - ▶ There is a possible association between welfare state regimes/policies and work life balance
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Research Questions

- ▶ Is the experience of a poor work-life balance associated with health across a variety of European countries?
 - ▶ Does the quality of work-life balance vary between countries?
 - ▶ Do welfare regimes with their different work life balance polices explain the variation of work life balance between countries?
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Data

- ▶ European Working Conditions Survey (2010)
 - ▶ Cross sectional survey
 - ▶ Same questionnaire in different languages
 - ▶ We included employed persons between 16 and 60 years
 - ▶ Data from 27 European countries with 24096 respondents
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Measures: Work Life Balance

- ▶ Time-based conflict
- ▶ ~~Strain based conflict~~
- ▶ ~~Behaviour-based conflict~~

Measures: Work Life Balance

- ▶ Work life balance: Do your working hours fit in with your family or social commitments outside work very well, well, not very well or not at all well?
 - ▶ We computed a binary variable
 - 0 = very well / well (good work life balance)
 - 1 = not very well / not at all well (poor work life balance)
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Mental Health (WHO-5 Well-being Index)

▶ Consists of five items measuring positive mood, vitality and general interests

- I have felt cheerful and in good spirits
- I have felt calm and relaxed
- I have felt active and vigorous
- I woke up feeling fresh and rested
- My daily life has been filled with things that interest me

(5 All of the time 4 Most of the time 3 More than half of the time 2 Less than half of the time 1 Some of the time 0 At no time)

▶ The index score ranges from 0 to 25. A score of 7 or less is recommended to screen for depressive disorders.

Self-rated general health

- ▶ How is your health in general ?
(1 Very good 2 Good 3 Fair 4 Bad 5 Very bad)
 - ▶ very good or good health versus less than good health
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Measures: Welfare State Typology

▶ **Scandinavian**

(Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway)

▶ **Bismarckian**

(Belgium, Germany, France, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Austria)

▶ **Anglo-Saxon**

(Ireland, United Kingdom)

▶ **Southern Europe**

(Greece, Spain, Italy, Portugal)

▶ **Eastern Europe**

■ **Former Soviet Union**

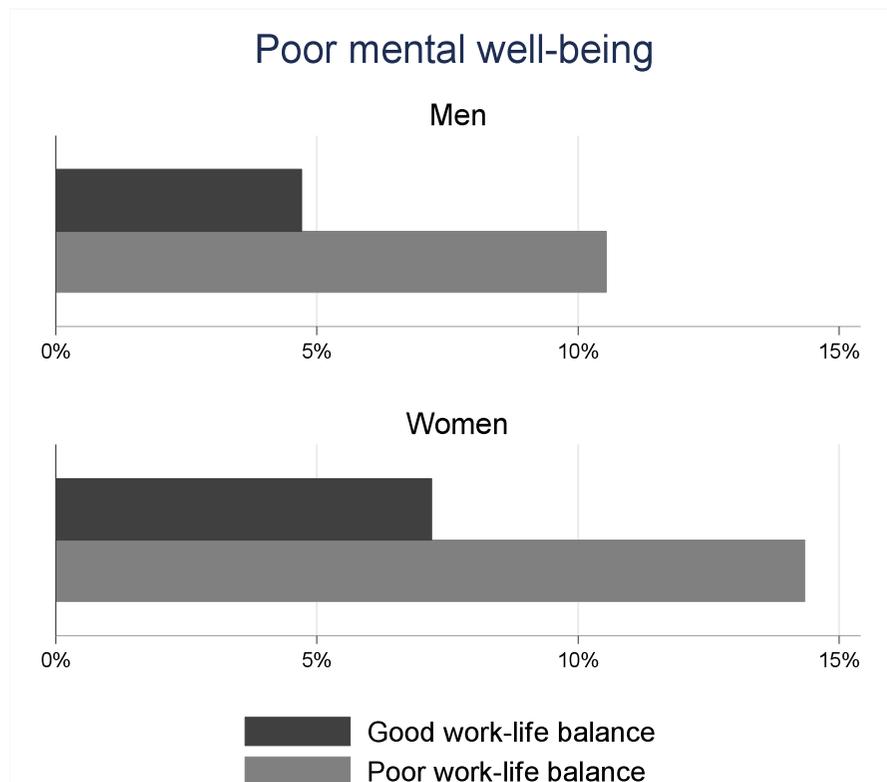
(Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania)

■ **Central/Eastern European countries**

(Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia)

Results: Work Life Balance and Mental well-being

- ▶ Associations between adverse work-life balance and poor health: multilevel estimates (Odds Ratios and 95% CI)



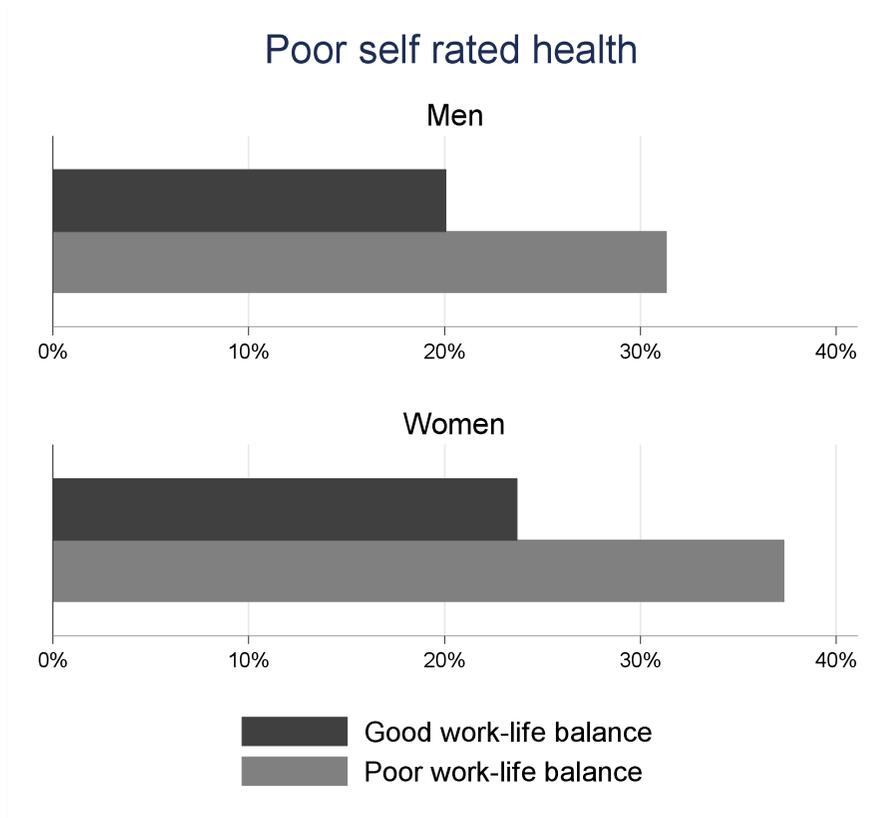
OR 2.18 (1.82–2.62)

OR 2.03 (1.75–2.36)

All odds ratios are based on logistic multilevel models with individuals nested in countries, and are adjusted for age, education, NACE, ISCO, Sector, years at current workplace, weekly working hours, contract, company size, children, household characteristics and working time arrangement.

Results: Work Life Balance and Self Rated Health

- ▶ Associations between adverse work-life balance and poor health: multilevel estimates (Odds Ratios and 95% CI)

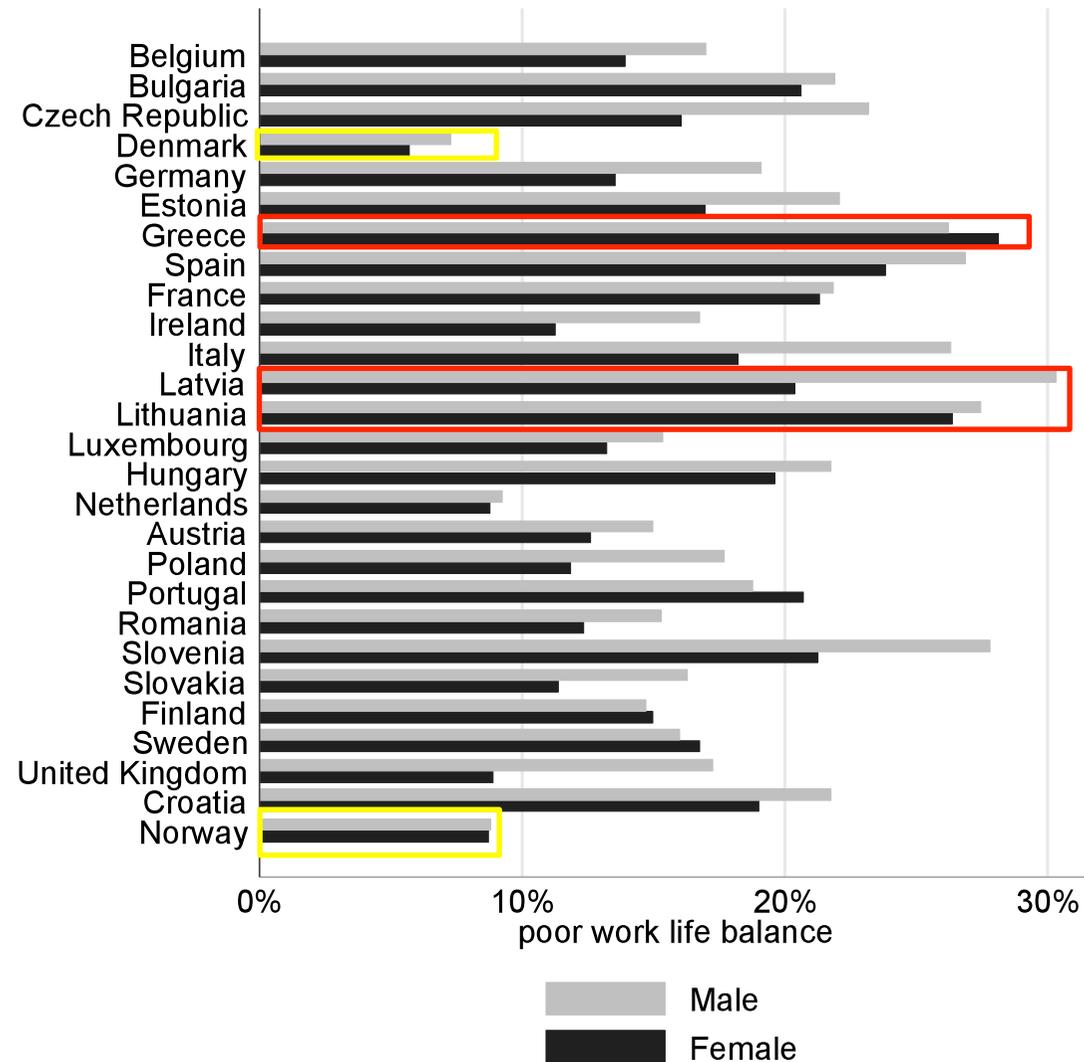


OR 1.91 (1.70–2.15)

OR 2.09 (1.87–2.34)

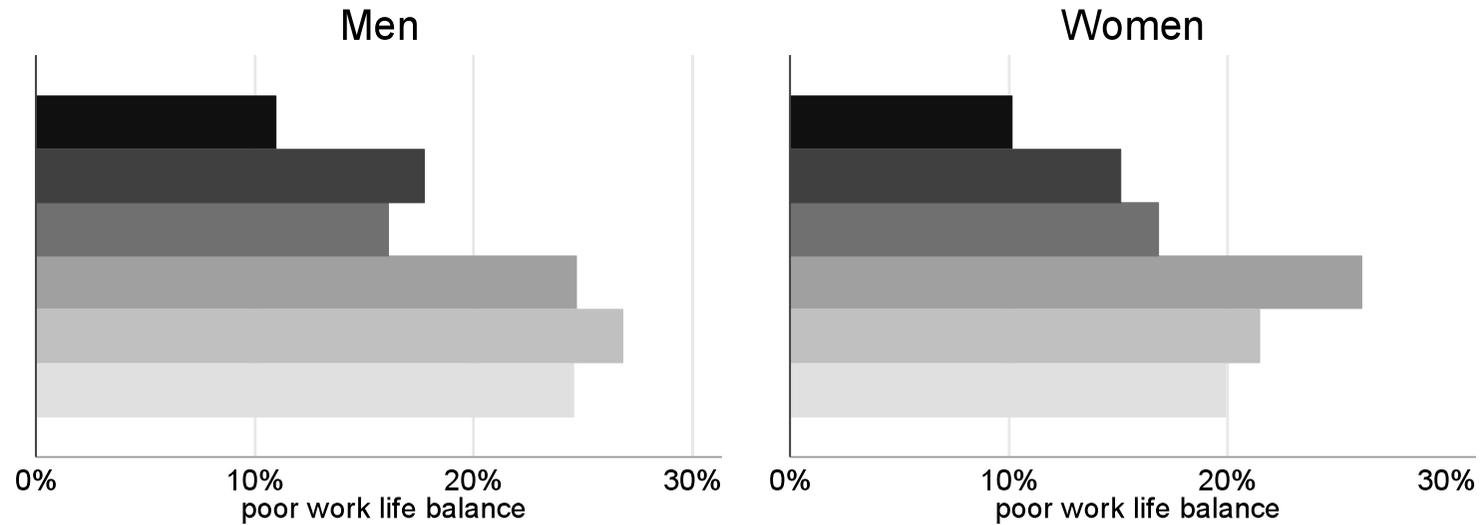
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Results: Work Life Balance and the Welfare State



Results: Work Life Balance and the Welfare State

Work Life Balance and the Welfare State Full time



- Scandinavian
- Anglo-Saxon
- Bismarckian
- Southern Europe
- Former Soviet Union
- Central/Eastern European countries

Results: Between country variation in Work-Life Balance

Reduction in the between country differences in poor work–life balance: results of multilevel models (Men N= 11 310 and Women N= 12 786)

	Model 1 Empty Model	Model 2 + Indiv.Variables	Model 3 Model 2 + working hours/working time arrangement	Model 4 Model 3 + welfare
Men				
PCV(%)	Ref.	5%	7%	57%
Women				
PCV(%)	Ref.	5%	33%	68%

*Individual variables are age categories, education, NACE, ISCO, sector (public or private), years at the workplace, contract (indefinite or fixed term), company size, children, household characteristics
PCV: proportional change in variance

Conclusion

- ▶ A poor work-life balance is associated with mental health problems and poor self rated health in men and women across 27 European countries
 - ▶ Work-life balance varies between European countries
 - ▶ Reconciliation policies and work time regulation might have an impact on the way employees can reconcile their work and family life and therefore promote mental health
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Limitations

- ▶ It was not possible to measure different dimensions of work-life balance
 - ▶ Future research should investigate more specific policy measures (e.g. expenditure in child care services)
 - ▶ Health measures are self-rated and analyses are based on cross sectional data
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