

# **Gender, Recession and work-life balance: Evidence from the European Social Survey**

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# Outline of Presentation

- 1) Introduction to work-family balance/conflict
- 2) Previous findings on job and family demands and resources
- 3) Outline research questions (gender differences, economic crisis; comparative approach)
- 4) European Social Survey data
- 5) Some results
- 6) Conclusions

# Introduction: why study work-family balance?



- Changes in employment and demographics led to growing interest in how work and family reconciled
- Social and economic changes have challenged traditional arrangements for balancing demands between work and family life e.g. Dual earner families
- Negative effect of high WFC on well-being, individual and family (Jacobs and Gerson 2004)
- Linked to work problems- decreased job satisfaction, absenteeism (Allen et al, 2000)
- Much of literature based on period of economic growth – still relevant in recession?

# Work-life balance: introduction

- Some authors point to changing nature of work, like rising work intensity (Green and McIntosh, 2001, Gallie and Zhou, 2013)
- Others point to changes in household context, like household working hours (Jacobs and Gerson, 2004)
- The demands-resources perspective distinguishes demands, or work-role requirements, and resources, which are assets used to cope with demands (Voyandoff, 2005)

# Demands/resources perspective: previous research

- Work demands – aspects of job relating to physical/ mental effort: high hours, pressure, insecurity (eg. Scherer, 2009; Voyandoff, 2005)
- Work resources- assets to cope with demands – flexibility, supportive colleagues/boss, autonomy (eg. Fagan & Waltery,2011; Russell & Gallie, 2009; Byron, 2005).
- Home demands – children, partner’s long hours, financial strain, (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010) .
- Home resources – partner short hrs, household income, gender role attitudes (Crompton and Lyonette, 2006).

# Measurement of work-life balance

- Work-life balance not unproblematic to measure
- Often in surveys work-life conflict is measured as a combined index of 4 questions
- This paper takes a different approach
- **Satisfaction:** *How satisfied are you with the balance between the time you spend on your paid work and the time you spend on other aspects of your life?*  
0 'extremely dissatisfied' to 10 'extremely satisfied'.
- Captures reactions to an unspecified level of balance rather than the level of balance itself; also v focused on time.

# Research Questions I

- Previous research found that work demands & resources were stronger predictor of work family conflict than family demands and resources (Gallie & Russell, 2009)
- Indicators relate work to family life (too tired after work, work prevents time for family, partner fed up, worrying about work) .
- Is satisfaction with work-family balance more affected by working conditions than family factors?
- Do these effects vary for men and women?

## Research questions II

- Do we find that family factors are more salient in understanding work-life balance for women?
- Do we find that working hours/scheduling are more salient for women (McGinnity and Russell, 2013)?
- Do negative changes in the 3 years preceding 2010 influence satisfaction with work-life balance for men and women?
- Finally, to what extent does regime variation in working conditions account for cross-national differences in satisfaction with work life balance?



# Country Groups

	<b>Liberal</b>	<b>Nordic</b>	<b>Continental</b>	<b>Southern</b>	<b>Transition</b>
Country	UK Ireland	Denmark Norway Sweden Finland	Germany NL Belgium	Greece, Spain Portugal	Estonia Poland Hungary Slovakia Czech Rep Slovenia
Employment Regime	Market	Inclusive	Dualist	Dualist	Market (ex.Slovenia)

## Data –European Social Survey

- Wave 5 - 2010, special module on work, family and recession; Use 18 countries.
- Selections
  - Working age 20-64 years
  - Employees (self-employed not asked all of working condition questions)
  - Those who live with a partner (consistent with other research, and to include info on partners as indicator of hh resources/demands)
- Weighted with EULFS

# Modelling Strategy

- First look at associations between satisfaction with WLB and key job and family factors for men and women (OLS regression modelling)
- Then focus on recession factors and their association with WLB
- Then focus on regime differences and gender: use nested OLS modelling to examine effect of family factors, working hours, working conditions, and recession indicators on the pattern of regime results

# Model of Satisfaction with WLB: Family Demands/resources



	MEN		WOMEN	
	Beta	P value	Beta	P value
Constant	8.649	0	8.64	0
Age	0.006	0.082	0.004	0.366
N. own children in hh, any age	0.013	0.698	0.041	0.235
Any child under 6	-0.200	0.022	-0.161	0.107
Partner unsocial hours <sup>1</sup>	-0.021	0.463	-0.014	0.603
Partner not in paid work	0.050	0.632	0.312	0.017
Partner 1- 29 hrs paid work	0.159	0.121	0.480	0.019
Partner over 40 hrs paid work	-0.048	0.672	0.060	0.496
Total housework hours (log)	0.030	0.586	0.016	0.784
Working hours (usual)	-0.030	0.000	-0.046	0.000
Work evenings or nights	-0.182	0.036	-0.101	0.295
Work overtime, short notice	-0.530	0.000	-0.445	0.000
Work weekends	-0.059	0.442	-0.227	0.008
Can decide start/finish times	0.089	0.239	0.185	0.037
Job Pressure Index	-0.400	0.000	-0.289	0.000
Health/safety at risk	-0.334	0.000	-0.579	0.000
Job Control	0.077	0.000	0.095	0.000
Support from colleagues	0.333	0.000	0.566	0.000
Insecure about job <sup>1</sup>	-0.324	0.000	-0.162	0.039

Note: Model includes regime dummy controls

# Model of Satisfaction with WLB: Work conditions



	MEN		WOMEN	
	Beta	P value	Beta	P value
Constant	8.649	0	8.64	0
Age	0.006	0.082	0.004	0.366
N. own children in hh, any age	0.013	0.698	0.041	0.235
Any child under 6	-0.200	0.022	-0.161	0.107
Partner unsocial hours <sup>1</sup>	-0.021	0.463	-0.014	0.603
Partner not in paid work	0.050	0.632	0.312	0.017
Partner 1- 29 hrs paid work	0.159	0.121	0.480	0.019
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Support from colleagues	0.333	0.000	0.566	0.000
Insecure about job <sup>1</sup>	-0.324	0.000	-0.162	0.039

Note: Model includes regime dummy controls

# Model of Satisfaction with WLB: crisis indicators



	Men		Women	
	Beta	P value	Beta	P value
Household: Income difficulties	-0.262	0.013	-0.380	0.001
Households: Cutbacks (index)	-0.107	0.000	-0.099	0.000
Firm difficulties (scale)	-0.051	0.059	-0.049	0.091
Job change: reduction in pay	0.098	0.255	0.094	0.328
Job change: reduction in hours	0.239	0.028	-0.008	0.944
Job change: reduction in security	-0.207	0.014	-0.294	0.002

Note: model also controls for regime, demographic, family and work characteristics, as in previous slides.

# Nested Regression Models: Sat WFB



	1 Regime Only		2 Add family factors & working hours		5 Add working conditions & crisis	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
	Coeff	Coeff.	Coeff.	Coeff	Coeff	Coeff
Transition	.		.			
Nordic	.833 ***	.697 **	.651 ***	.452 ***	.196 *	-.013
Liberal	.336 **	.363 **	.166	-.150	.245 *	-.008
Southern	.106	.072	-.022	-.061	.153	.084
Continent	.565 ***	.494 ***	.349 ***	.041	.158	-.154
N	7891	7891	7891	7891	7891	7981
R square	0.03	0.02	0.07	0.09	0.18	.20

# Results I

- Family demands/resources explain relatively low proportion of the variance in WFB satisfaction, no strong evidence that family factors more important for women than men
- Family factors less well captured? Also, family boundaries are more permeable i.e. adjust to work demands
- For women, satisfaction with work-life balance more closely linked to working hours than for men
- Working overtime at short notice reduces satisfaction with WLB for both men and women, also working weekends



## Results II

- Schedule flexibility more salient for women
- In terms of working demands, work pressure more salient for men; work resources – supportive colleagues more salient for women.
- Recession – job insecurity reduces satisfaction with work-life balance, more so for men than women....
- But income difficulties in the household reduces WLB satisfaction more for women
- Regime differences in Sat WLB are more marked for men than women. In particular the role of working hours – which varies a lot by regime – plays a large role in understanding differences between regimes.

# Conclusions I

- Limitations of work-life balance/conflict research
  - Only focus on those in employment;
  - some current and future 'costs' ignored – fertility, financial costs of part-time work, promotion etc
- Policy lessons?
  - predictable working hours that are not too long, being able to decide start/finish times and working during the standard working week enhance WLB
- Job autonomy enhances WLB satisfaction (which is less clear on index measures).
- Managing levels of pressure and health and safety also has beneficial influence of WFB.



**Thank you!**

**Comments/ Questions very welcome**

**See also**

***[www.esswellbeingmatters.org](http://www.esswellbeingmatters.org)***