

**Submission to the 4th EU-Microdata User Conference, Mannheim, March 5-6, 2015**

**Sonja Bekker, Reflect, Tilburg Law School, Tilburg University, The Netherlands, email: S.Bekker@uvt.nl**

**Lena Hipp, Research Group Work and Care, Social Science Research Centre, Berlin, Germany, email: lena.hipp@wzb.eu**

**Janine Leschke, Department of Business and Politics, Copenhagen Business School (CBS), Denmark, email: jle.dbp@cbs.dk**

### **Working reduced hours?**

## **The micro- and macro-level determinants of married and partnered men's part-time work in Europe and the US**

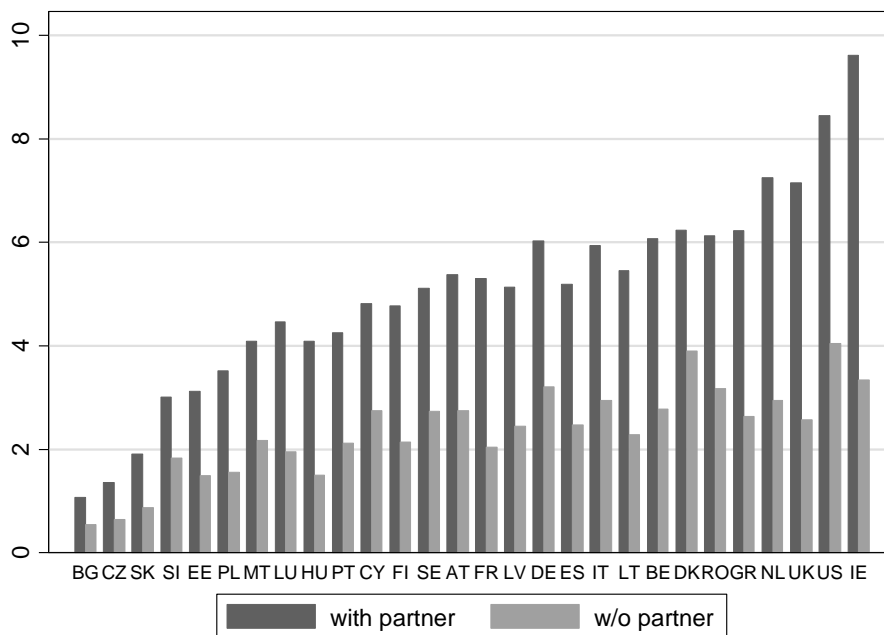
**Key words:** Part-time Work; International Comparison; Multilevel Analyses; Welfare State

## Working reduced hours? The micro- and macro-level determinants of married and partnered men’s part-time work in Europe and the US

In the current discussions on combining work and family, the idea of shorter working times for individuals is undergoing something of a renaissance. Although part-time work can, in principle, contribute to calming down men’s and women’s “rush hour of life” and thus adapt the working world in response to changes in family life, part-time work today is still predominantly a “female” phenomenon. Despite increases in men’s part-time work during the last two decades and particularly during the great financial crisis, we know little about men’s motives to reduce their working hours and the contextual characteristics that encourage men to work part-time.

This paper therefore attempts to close this research gap by assessing the micro and macro determinants for married and cohabiting men’s part-time employment across a large number of European countries and the US. As the household context is *the major* determinant for men’s and women’s working hours and involvement in paid labor (e.g. Cooke, 2011; Esping-Andersen, Boertien, Bonke, & Gracia, 2013; Hilgemann, 2007; Jacobs & Gornick, 2002), we examine the interplay with this central institution for gender inequality with national-level characteristics. This is made possible by way of using a unique data set combining the European Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the American CPS (ipums) with country-level institutional and macro-economic information. Figure 1 illustrates the centrality of individuals’ relationship status for men’s part-time work for the countries included in our sample.

Figure 1: Weighted proportion male part-time workers (25-54 yrs) by partnership status (2011)



Data Source: EU-LFS (2011) and ipums CPS (2011)

We use social exchange theory as our theoretical framework. Social exchange theory allows us to characterise reciprocal power-dependence relations that bind actors – and in our case partners – together in a mutual relationship (Emerson 1962). Social exchange theory emphasizes the role of commitment and reciprocity in relationships (Blau 1964) and is particularly useful for the analysis of gender relations (McInnes Miller and Bermudez 2004). Recently, social exchange theory has also been conceptualised in the framework of different approaches to manage new life course needs and risks (Moen and Sweet 2004).

By taking the different motives for part-time work into account (economic pressure vs. realized preferences for family duties), the paper seeks to contribute to the broader knowledge on more equal working patterns between men and women closing an important gap in the existing literature that so far has almost exclusively explored women's motives for part-time employment (e.g. Korpi et al, 2013; Yerkes, 2013; Wielers et al. 2014).

Our hypotheses focus on both the micro and the macro level. At the **micro level** we are particularly interested in how the socio-economic characteristics of the married or cohabiting partner impact men's working time preference and motives for part-time work. At the **macro level**, our hypotheses reflect two different perspectives: the potential role of country-variation in social policies and employment regulation as well as the country's economic situation. The focus on different spheres of social policy (taxation, legal regulation and parental leave) reflects the complexity of work-life balance settings across post-modern societies.

Specifically, we test the following hypotheses:

The male partner's likelihood to work part time increases if...

- ... there are children in the household,
- ... the female partner has a higher earnings capacity and/or works long hours (particularly, in a setting with more progressive norms with regard to men's reproduction work),
- ... a right to work part-time exists,
- ... income is taxed on an individual basis (and the two partners are married),
- ... the more men participate in parental leave (and there are children living in the household),
- ... the richer the country,
- ... the poorer the economic conditions, and
- ... the more progressive the prevailing norms with regard to men's role in childcare and household duties.

In order to test these hypotheses, we employ multiple methodological approaches to the 2011 LFS and American CPS data, which we made comparable for the purpose of our analyses. First, we run fixed-effects logistic regressions by country including individual, household and work-place related control variables. The focus here lies on capturing individual and work-place characteristics of both partners in a household. In a second step, we run a multilevel model to assess the impact of macro-level determinants on men's part-time work. Important macro-level predictors include the right to work part-time, parental leave arrangements, a country's GDP as well as cyclical labour supply factors such as unemployment rates. These data are drawn from various sources, including the OECD, the Worldbank, Eurostat, the ISSP and the EVS. We further refine our models in a third step by adding cross-level interaction effects to assess whether social policies and economic development and conditions equally affect different types of couples (e.g. high educated couples vs. lower educated couples).

## Selected references

- Blau, P. M. (1964) *Exchange and power in social life*, New York: Wiley.
- Cooke, L. P. (2011). *Gender-Class Equality in Political Economies*. New York: Routledge.
- Emerson, R. (1962) Power-dependence relations, in: *American Sociological Review* 27, pp. 31-41.
- Esping-Andersen, G., Boertien, D., Bonke, J., & Gracia, P. (2013). Couple Specialization in Multiple Equilibria. *European Sociological Review*. doi: 10.1093/esr/jct004
- Hilgemann, C. (2007). *Cross-national variation in the gap in employment hours among couples*. (Doctor of Philosophy), University of California, Irvine.
- Jacobs, J. A., & Gornick, J. C. (2002). Hours of Paid Work in Dual-Earner Couples: The United States in Cross-National Perspective. *Sociological Focus*, 35(2), 169-187.
- Korpi, W., T. Ferrarini, et al. (2013). "Women's Opportunities under Different Family Policy Constellations: Gender, Class, and Inequality Tradeoffs in Western Countries Re-examined " *Social Politics* 20(1): 1-40.
- McInnes Miller, M. and Bermudez, M. (2004) Intersecting Gender and Social Exchange Theory in Family Therapy, *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, 16:3, 25-42.
- Moen, P. and Sweet, S. (2004) From 'work-family' to 'flexible careers', *Community, Work & Family*, 7:2, pp. 209-226.
- Wielers, R., Mnderlein, M.S. & Koster, F. (2014). Part-time work and work hour preferences. An international comparison. *European Sociological Review*, 30(1), 76-89.
- Yerkes, M. (2013). "Choice or Constraint? Women's Weekly Working Hours in Comparative Perspective." *Sociologia, Problemas e Prticas* 72, 9-30.