

3. Comparing the Relationship between Satisfaction, Flexibility and Control of Work in Eight European Countries

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Flexibility is seen both as an opportunity to organise working life more freely and as a threat. In some countries, policies introduced since the 1980s have aimed to increase the power of employers to promote flexibility, but in others an explicit attempt has been made to promote the power of employees in encouraging flexibility through individually tailored and à la carte contracts. The paper sets out to compare how flexibility is conceptualised in different national contexts and to assess these divergent trends by considering whether flexibility leads to greater work satisfaction, and whether the control of flexibility by the individual is an important contributing factor. The data draw upon findings from a survey carried out in 2001 for a Framework Programme 5 project, entitled 'Households, Work and Flexibility', in eight countries chosen to represent both Eastern and Western Europe, as well as different approaches to flexibility: Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, UK, Sweden and the Netherlands (N=10123). The survey relied on quantitative measures of control, flexibility and satisfaction. The paper uses multivariate analysis to look at the influence of different contextual variables, such as gender, age, education, economic situation and region, on flexibility, work satisfaction and control of flexibility with a view to understanding their relative explanatory power. It considers the issues arising in cross-national comparisons of flexibility regimes and the impact these different regimes can have on the relationship between flexibility, control and work satisfaction. The guiding hypothesis is that flexibility on its own does not necessarily lead to greater work satisfaction because it is usually outside the control of the employee. However, the ability to control flexibility is an important factor leading to work satisfaction. The extent of variation between nations give an idea as to how the different policies aimed at promoting flexibility can have positive or negative effects for individual workers.

Introduction

The flexibility debate tends to divide between those who see flexibility as something negative, eroding working conditions and introducing insecurity (Dex, 1997; Standing, 1999; Beck, 2000; Bradley *et al.*, 2000), and those who see it as positive, as a way of integrating home, work and life (Hörning *et al.*, 1995; Spoonley and Firkin, 2002; Tietze and Musson, 2002). This contradictory debate raises the question of whether flexibility is imposed upon an unwilling workforce or whether it is embraced positively by the workforce.

Flexibility has been introduced in different ways in different parts of Europe (Lodovici 1999; Esping-Andersen and Regini 2000; Regini 2000) as a major plank of labour market reform since the 1980s. This has been encouraged in a context of increased global competition and where governments have been tackling high unemployment. Whereas de-regulation was seen as a major strategy for flexibilisation in the UK, time flexibility with security of contract was seen as the way forward in Sweden and especially in the Netherlands. In Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), flexibility mainly took the form of de-regulation, but this was in the context of strong state control of labour markets that had existed previously and the need to create a free and open labour market. Flexibility was seen by those populations as threatening, something which eroded their working conditions and was described as a 'deathly cocktail' in the public debate in the Czech Republic. Even within CEE countries, important differences were found, since Hungary was swift to introduce flexibilisation of various kinds, whereas more resistance was encountered in the Czech Republic and Slovenia.

Slovenia is now among the countries of Europe with the greatest degree of employment protection. In some ways, Bulgaria and Romania are the most flexible of all, since unemployment or underemployment forced many people into casual work, but some groups of workers still enjoyed considerable protection in a highly segmented labour market. In the latter two countries, contradictory policies and over-regulation of some aspects of flexibility, such as self-employment, has led to the growth of a large and very flexible informal economy alongside unflexible regular employment, as employers and employees find their own solutions outside the policy framework.

Flexibility is normally seen in terms of the extent of de-regulation of the labour market (Riboud *et al.*, 2001). It is assumed that, if job protection is removed, workers will become more flexible. We would question these assumptions. In the paper, we are examining the countries concerned in terms the extent of the strictness of employment protection legislation providing the policy framework with reference to 'regulation regimes', based upon an OECD and ILO study of employment protection legislation (Jager *et al.*, 2004). Then, we go on to look at the real nature of flexibility based upon the experiences of individual workers interviewed.

However, regulation regimes are also affected by the culture of the work as well as the culture of care: the extent to which people are prepared to work part time, full time and under what circumstances depends upon the way in which family life is organised and on traditions of work in different contexts (Haas, 2003; Wallace, 2003 a, b). Table 3.1 summarise the flexibility regimes of the countries studied and contrasts the 1980s with the 1990s and the current decade in the context of efforts to respond to pressures to make the labour market more flexible.

Table 3.1 Regimes of regulation

	1980s	1990s and 2000s
UK	De-regulated flexibility	De-regulated flexibility
Netherlands Sweden	Highly regulated labour markets	Regulated flexibility
Slovenia	Strong state control of labour markets with de-centralisation	Strongly regulated flexibility
Hungary (enthusiastic flexibilisation) Czech Republic (reluctant flexibilisation)	State control of labour markets	Partially regulated flexibility
Bulgaria (widespread precariousness) Romania (sectoral precariousness)	State control of labour markets	Strong regulation on the one hand and unregulated flexibility on the other

Whereas all countries studied have experienced similar pressures towards flexibilisation, the impact is very different. In the (de-)regulated flexibility countries (UK, Netherlands and Sweden) levels of labour market participation, part time work and self-employment are higher than in the other countries (Slovenia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania).

Flexibility is often measured by the extent of part-time, self-employed work and temporary contracts. It is our argument that none of these provides a particularly good indicator of flexibility, since temporary contracts are used most where the labour market is most regulated (Giesecker and Groß, forthcoming) and part-time work depends upon

the family–work context. Thus, while in the Netherlands, the tradition was for women to remain at home and care for children, the introduction of part-time work has enabled women to continue to care for children in the absence of alternative childcare facilities, although the situation may be changing. In the UK, part-time work is also the response of women who have no alternative childcare facilities, whereas the excellent public childcare facilities in Sweden mean that part-time workers have longer hours and it is seen as a way of integrating caring and work over the lifetime (both men and women have the right to work part time until the child is eight years old within the context of their regular jobs). In the CEE countries, there is no tradition of part-time work because women traditionally worked full time, and public childcare facilities enabled them to do so. Policies in the 1990s have encouraged women to remain at home for two, three or four years after the birth of a child on paid leave, but nearly all women have access to public childcare facilities after that period, enabling them to work full time. Thus, they are either full time at home (subsidised) or full time in the labour market. In Romania and Bulgaria, the crisis of public funding has meant that the nursery places for full time working women have been lost and have had to be replaced by family self-help, private sector or a care deficit (children are unsupervised). In CEE countries, part-time work was traditionally a pre-retirement strategy rather than a way for women to combine work and care. Attitudes to working time are, therefore, different from those in Western Europe, as shown in the paper.

Whereas, in Western Europe (at least in the north-west), the trend is increasingly towards employee-led flexibility, in CEE countries the trend has been mainly towards employer-led flexibility, with erosion of working conditions. This was also the dominant form of flexibility in Western Europe until the end of the 1990s. The European Commission's National Employment Action Plans often embody a model of employee-led flexibility by allowing employees the right to negotiate their own hours. This model is now being introduced in some CEE countries as a result of the accession process, but to what extent and how it is implemented in reality is topic requiring further research.

These observations raise the question: flexibility for whom? Is flexibility in the interest only of employers or also of employees? This question is important for the development of flexibility in labour markets and the directions that it might take. It is also important in considering whether a 'European model' of flexibility might be emerging (Ganßman, 2000). Thus, while the dominant Anglo-American model of flexibilisation is one of de-regulation, we can start to document alternative modes of flexibilisation, including one of regulated flexibility with enhanced employee control, which has been successfully introduced at least in some parts of Europe.

However, it may be that differences between regulation regimes are less important than differences between workers. What kinds of workers might find flexibility an advantage? It may be a working arrangement that is enjoyed by higher skilled workers and not by less skilled workers, by men and not by women. Stark contrasts are found between highly-paid professionals who prefer to arrange their daily timetables around golf, horse riding and tennis pursuits (Hörning *et al.*, 1995) and the low-paid piece worker who has to perform out-work on demand (Phizaklea and Wolkowitz, 1995).

Another dimension of the question is the extent to which workers can actually control flexibility. Several studies have indicated that the extent of control and 'structuring' of flexibility can be important in determining whether it is in the employee's interests or not (Perrons, 1998, Purcell 1999). Flexibility that takes place only at the employer's behest (employer-led flexibility) does not necessarily benefit the employee, and we might assume that flexibility under the employee's control might be viewed more positively. We, therefore, need to introduce the idea of control of flexibility into the equation in line with the hypothesis that individuals who have control over their flexibility are likely to be more satisfied than those who do not. This dimension is

seldom addressed in discussions of flexibility but it is crucial if we want to understand the impact of policy approaches. The dataset collected for the project 'Households Work and Flexibility (HWF)'¹ allowed us to address this question.

In the paper, rather than assuming that flexibility results from removing employment protection or from the incidence of part-time, self-employed and contract work, we consider the kinds of flexibility that are actually taking place both inside and outside regular employment. In particular, we focus upon three kinds of flexibility, of time, of place and of contract, seen from the individual's point of view. Flexibility of time concerns working hours and different working schedules; flexibility of contract indicates the duration of the contract and the extent to which it varies from place to place. We consider whether flexibility leads to greater work satisfaction. We assume that people with more flexibility in their choice of time, place and contract are more satisfied with their general working conditions, especially when they can exercise control over them. The issue of satisfaction with flexibility can help us to decide if this kind of flexibility is really in the worker's interest. The extent to which satisfaction with work and control over flexibility varies with different regimes of regulation can be tested by looking, firstly, at the extent to which these variables are associated across countries and then by looking at variations within countries.

Methodological approach

Hitherto, most comparative studies have adopted a traditional approach to the analysis of flexibility. They identify a relationship between part-time or full time jobs, self-employment or fixed term contracts and the regimes of flexibility mentioned above. The regulation of flexibility leads to fewer people on irregular contracts and in the black economy. Although the numbers of people in part-time work appear to be higher in countries with de-regulatory and regulatory regimes, this probably has as much to do with the traditions of work and care as with the regimes of regulation. Attempts to introduce part-time work in Hungary and elsewhere resulted in low take up because of the lack of tradition of part-time work, the low wages for part-time workers and the tradition of women as full time workers (Wallace, 2003 a, b). Finally, the number of temporary workers is likely to be a response to the lack of flexibility in labour market regulations rather than their presence.

For these reasons, conventional indicators do not offer a very good measure of flexibility from a comparative perspective. Using data from the HWF survey, we have, therefore, developed new ways of looking at flexibility. We consider flexibility to mean variations in place or time of work, making it possible to measure flexibility in relation to typical rather than a-typical employment. In other words, it is possible to measure the degree of flexibility within regular, full-time or part-time jobs, thereby producing a broader notion of flexibility that more accurately reflects the variety of working patterns that in fact exist. To capture different forms of flexibility, data from the HWF survey were used to analyse time, place and contract flexibility. In addition, the analysis takes into account of the extent to which people can control their work conditions as well as their satisfaction they express with them.

The investigation was based on a representative sample survey of 10123 interviews with people aged between 18 and 65, carried out in eight countries in 2001: UK, Netherlands, Sweden, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Romania and Bulgaria. Variance analysis was used to look at the extent of flexibility and associated satisfaction. The model cannot tell us the 'causes' of European satisfaction with different sorts of flexibility; it is rather about the effects that are 'carried' by situations and experiences. In contrast to traditional ways of looking at flexibility, which focus on either working hours, type of contracts, part-time or full-time jobs, a more complex model has been constructed to enable us to go beyond description of the dataset, and

to identify the main and interactive effects resulting in satisfaction with work conditions. In addition, the multivariate analysis gives us a far better understanding of the relationship between satisfaction, flexibility and control, given that bivariate correlations between variables do not show significant results. Only by building a multivariate model are we able to assess the differential impact of the many factors involved. Moreover, these variables are mostly of a categorical nature. They have to be treated as dummy variables, which is how they are coded in the General Linear Model Univariate (analysis of variance), because we cannot assume linear effects upon the satisfaction variable.

This method provides a powerful tool for explaining the different effects of independent variables on one dependent variable, making it possible to explain differences between people working with different work schedules, working hours or types of contract, and belonging to different socio-demographic groups, compared to a reference group. Furthermore, in looking at the main and interactive effects between countries and at factors other than gender, we are in a better position to elucidate the role of differences either between countries or between men and women, both of which are highly significant in our model.

Satisfaction with main job

With a view to understanding their relative explanatory power, factors were included in the model that might influence the degree of satisfaction, such as different kinds of flexible work, hours of work¹, control over time and place, type of contract as well as the country where the workers were based, gender, age and income.

An explanation was sought for the answers to the questions: How satisfied are you in general with your main work? 'Main work' is taken to mean the main income generating activity. People were also asked about second or third income activities, although they are not analysed here. As independent variables, three different dimensions of satisfaction with working arrangements were included: flexibility of time, flexibility of place and flexibility of contract².

We also considered how influential the possibilities are for controlling working conditions. For the different dimensions of control over working hours, we created a summary index³ for the following questions: Regarding this activity do you decide or does someone else decide on the number of hours that you work; the general working schedule, the overtime that you work (for each question three response categories were possible: 'I decide'; 'Employer and I decide together', or 'Employer decides alone'). Regarding this activity do you decide or does someone else decide on the place of work? The same categories were used as in the control time index.

Finally, demographic variables were included: country, gender, age groups (18–29; 30–59; 60–65, education (primary, secondary, tertiary); income (low; mid-low; mid-high and high).

The model explains about 12% of the variance in the satisfaction with main job. The coefficients (B parameter estimates) of the model had a baseline respondent with the following characteristics: 'female' 'aged 60–65 years', a 'high income', living in 'Bulgaria', 'has no control over working time, working schedule and/or overtime', and is 'working between 1 and 20 hours' a week, with an 'irregular work schedule', an 'irregular working contract' and with a very flexible place of work (abroad, always changing) and whose working place is determined by the employer .

The respondents with a regular schedule were found to be more satisfied compared to those working irregular schedules with varying conditions. Also, the flexitime workers

¹ For Hungary travelling time is also counted into people's working hours.

were more often satisfied with their main work. This supports the arguments of Kate Purcell (1999), who found that structured flexibility was preferable to unstructured flexibility.

Long working hours did not lead to greater satisfaction with work conditions: those working between 35 and 40 hours or more were more dissatisfied compared with part timers working only up to 20 hours.

As expected, the possibility of controlling working time and place arrangements (hours of work, schedule, overtime and place) enhanced satisfaction with conditions. Those who can decide alone, but also those who decide together with their employer, were significantly more satisfied than those who had no chance of controlling their working conditions. In general, not having a contract resulted in great dissatisfaction.

Gender differences were rather small, but men tended to be more dissatisfied with their main job than women. Compared to gender, country differences were more important: Respondents in Western countries were more satisfied with their jobs and those in CEE countries less satisfied. The strong country differences meant that we have to analyse countries separately to look at the interactions between these different factors in different contexts.

Cross-national differences

Satisfaction with the main job and the factors that affected it were different in Eastern and Western Europe. Long hours could mean less satisfaction, but this was only the case in the UK, Netherlands and Sweden, where all respondents working longer than the statutory working week were unhappy about the arrangements. It should be noted that, in general, the working week was much shorter in western than in Eastern and Europe and was shortest of all in the Netherlands (Wallace *et al.*, 2003). Control over working time was important in explaining satisfaction with the main job, especially in Sweden. The place of work and control over it were not generally significant, although country analysis showed that, in Sweden and the Netherlands, respondents like to work at home. Strong employment protection regimes were found to be associated with a strong relationship between satisfaction and flexibility and greater importance of control. It could be that, in the CEE countries, because flexibility is mostly employer-led and outside the control of individuals, control was not such an important issue. Certainly, these variables were most important in the Netherlands, where policy debate had given considerable prominence to flexibility.

The level of income was very important, but only in CEE countries, where it was the most important overall factor determining satisfaction with the job. Hence, we could argue that, in the CEE countries, the working week had always been long for men and women (for example it was reduced from 42 hours in Bulgaria only in 1993), so people were accustomed to long hours of work. Wages were low and people need to maximise their income by working the maximum number of hours. Therefore, in these countries, material considerations were more important than work satisfaction, and flexibility was seen as a threat because it might erode what are already precarious material conditions. In the affluent North-West European countries, by contrast, post-materialist considerations about work satisfaction and balancing work and life became more important (Inglehart, 1990). Working hours for men and women were shorter, but people would like to work even less. The country most approaching the values of Western Europe was Slovenia, where wage levels were highest and where employment protection was strongest compared to the CEE countries.

Discussion

The paper has considered the issues arising in cross-national comparisons of flexibility regimes and the impact these different regimes can have on the relationship between flexibility, control and work satisfaction in eight EU member states and candidate countries.

The aim of the analysis of the HWF survey was to understand what factors influenced satisfaction with time, place and contract flexibility and to understand if the control of flexibility made an impact. Our hypothesis was that, if people controlled their flexibility, they were more likely to be happy with it. Control of working time did make a difference to satisfaction with both time flexibility and the working contract, and also with overall job satisfaction. However, important variations were found across countries: respondents in Western European countries were more likely to be satisfied with their hours of work and were more likely to be able to exercise control over it. Nevertheless, there is a difference between de-regulated flexibility regimes like the United Kingdom and the regulated flexibility regimes of Sweden and the Netherlands. On the one hand the respondents of these countries do not differ in their satisfaction with work conditions either with their main work, hours of work, location of work, stability of work and duration of contract. On the other hand the extent of control differs: In the United Kingdom there was less chance to control the working schedule, overtime or place of work compared to the Netherlands or to Sweden. Furthermore British people were not very happy with fixed term contracts and British women did not like to work 40 hours or more. In the Netherlands, by contrast, men were more satisfied with working conditions if they were part time employed (with up to 20 hours per week) than those working between 21 and 39 hours. In Western countries workers were not unhappy with variations in work place (especially working at home for Swedish people) and variations in time (flexitime, other regular schedules), but an important factor also was the chance of controlling these conditions.

Strongly regulated (SL) and regulated employment regimes (NL, SE) are important for determining the extent of control and satisfaction with working-time arrangements. This 'structured' time flexibility is especially well developed in the Netherlands (with its flexicurity system).

The type of working schedule is consistently found to be important for an understanding of satisfaction with work in the strongly regulated regime of Slovenia. Most people preferred regular full time working schedules (5 days a week), flexitime and other regular schedules, furthermore the possibilities of controlling time aspects together with the employer increased the satisfaction with work. In all CEE countries, regardless of their kind of regulation regime, income was the most important factor in explaining satisfaction with the job in general. We could, therefore, conclude that, whereas in Western Europe the employee-led flexibility characterised by individual control was more important, and material considerations were less important, in most CEE countries, where people were less likely to control their flexibility, and flexibility was in general more employer-led, material considerations were more important.

Therefore, in general we can conclude that the regulation regime and the type of flexibility being developed affect the extent to which people are happy about flexibility. However, not all kinds of flexibility have the same meaning and impact. For example, in affluent countries, time flexibility is seen as a way of integrating work and life (especially family life), but in less affluent countries people just want to work more hours to maximise their income. Control of flexibility made more sense in countries where flexibility was strongly regulated but not in countries where it was not. Place flexibility means the freedom to work from home in the Netherlands and Sweden, but the necessity of working from home in Romania and Bulgaria, where regular jobs had disappeared.

Flexibility is often attributed to the extent of de-regulation, meaning the removal of worker protection, the withdrawal of state interference in the labour market, the lowering of social protection and weakening of the power of worker's representation. We have shown that removing employment protection is not the only way of introducing flexibility. The regulation of flexibility and the involvement of social partners, with significant worker control of the process, can represent a more progressive 'European' style of flexibility within the context of social and job security, in contrast to the Anglo-American style of labour market liberalisation. Indeed, it is precisely the regulation of flexibility that can help to create employment and provide a flexible labour market rather than the opposite. Increasingly, in some countries, a more progressive form of employee-led or negotiated flexibility is taking over from employer-led flexibility in the individualisation of work contracts and conditions. Furthermore, the enlightened regulation of flexibility can help to produce progressive forms of flexibility, marked by employee satisfaction and control over the work process, whereas lack of regulation can lead to unfavourable forms of flexibility where the worker has little control and little satisfaction. However, the regulation of flexibility needs to be developed in such a way that workers are not driven into the black economy. This can be done for example by reducing the number of permits and documentation needed to develop self-employment and by liberalising working hours.

Another common measure of flexibility is the extent of so-called 'a-typical' work, such as part-time employment, fixed-term contracts and, sometimes, also self-employment. We argue that such assumptions are also likely to prove to be inadequate because extensive regulation can also be found within the context of a-typical jobs. Sweden and the Netherlands could serve as examples of good practice; paving the way towards more employee-led flexibilisation rather than solely employer-led flexibilisation: flexibility that is negotiated according to needs between the worker and the employer.

Due to the varying cultures of work and care across Europe as well as the different structure of employment in each country, different roads would seem to lead to flexibility and different reasons can be found for being satisfied or dissatisfied with conditions. Therefore, flexibility needs to be seen not only in terms of the extent of de-regulation, as if one measure would fit all societies, but rather in terms of the varying cultures of care and work as well as the different kinds of regulatory regime. Furthermore we need to see what forms flexibility really take place in practice rather than assuming flexibility automatically follows from de-regulation.

Reflection on Methods of Cross-National Research on Flexibility

There are a number of issues which emerged in the course of research. Although we tried to find a better measure of flexibility, one that was more context friendly than the ones normally used, our approach also raises methodological issues that can be summarised below.

1. The applicability of different concepts

We have already indicated that topics such as "part time work" which seem to obviously concern women with children in North Western Europe, can have very different meanings and implications elsewhere, such as in Eastern Europe. However, other variables that one can use such as "control of flexibility" can suffer likewise in being applied cross-nationally to contexts where the worker might have much less control over their work or perhaps too much control over their work (as in the case of a peasant producer). Even the idea of "flexibility" can mean rather different things (Wallace, 2002). We have shown that it can be seen as both positive and negative in meaning. However, it can also refer more to time or more to

contractual conditions in different parts of Europe. Whilst the Dutch “flexicurity” has a particular connotation, with individually tailored rights to flexibility, elsewhere it refers more often to precarious employment, which might not be the same thing at all.

2. The choice of different countries

The countries chosen in the research were intended to illustrate different strategies of flexibilisation, especially Eastern and Western ones. However, by not including Southern European countries, we have left out a whole range of flexibility regimes that might offer some interesting contrasts. For example, the very high rates of unemployment in some Mediterranean countries, the widespread shadow economy and the role of peasant producers might offer some interesting parallels and contrasts. As it is we have compared Eastern countries only to some of the most successful and advanced European economies, something which makes them look perhaps more disadvantaged than they really are. The choice of this particular group of countries reflected the expertise of the core team and the limitations of funding. It would certainly be good to apply the approach elsewhere before drawing too firm conclusions.

3. The problem of “satisfaction”

In this analysis we have chosen satisfaction with the main job as the main dependent variable. However, satisfaction with the main job can reflect real happiness with work or it may reflect some extent of resignation to conditions. Hence women are more satisfied with their working hours because they can thus combine work and caring responsibilities. Since they do not have many alternatives in countries where there are no affordable child care facilities, they are forced to accept this solution and are thus “satisfied”. However, it may not represent an ideal solution. We have tried to break down “satisfaction” in more detail by looking at satisfaction with working hours, with working schedule, with place of work and so on. However, measuring satisfaction remains a problem. How could we interpret the fact that in all these models men seem to be more dissatisfied with their conditions than women? Maybe a low or even precarious labour market position of women does not necessarily lead to a high degree of dissatisfaction. This proves Jean Claude Barbier’s thesis (see previous paper of this series) that holding a “precarious” job does not deterministically mean that people experience it as being “precarious”.

However, as already mentioned, we have to analyse the women’s labour market position not only in the context of paid work conditions, but also of the unpaid work sphere (the double load of housework and childcare). Looking in more detail about differences between women and men with children of different ages did not show significant differences in satisfaction with hours of work, with main job or contract. Considering the fact that in our survey more than half of the respondents did not have any child care responsibilities for children younger than 14 years old, this question is still open for further research.

4. The connection between individual level data and policies.

A further issue is that we are asked to make policy relevant conclusions on the basis of the research and this was how the research was designed – to look at the implications of different policy strategies. And yet we can only describe the policy framework in the most general terms, whilst we can analyse the individual level survey data in much more detail. What is the connection between the two? Certainly, we cannot look at the effects of specific policy measures – such as working time directives – since we need to ask rather general questions on the questionnaire to make them

comparable cross nationally. The problem remains how to make the connection between policy and individual level survey data.

4. Multi-method approaches

Whilst survey data can tell us with some accuracy how different factors are connected, it cannot tell us why these connections are made. The “why” develops from our own theories and assumptions. It would be better to use combinations of qualitative, quantitative and policy analysis data to paint a broad picture of the phenomenon that we are addressing. Qualitative approaches were not included in this research design and indeed combining quali and quanti brings a new set of problems. However, most social phenomena can be better addressed using a variety of different methods.

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Notes

1. The survey was conducted for a project, called ‘Households, Work and Flexibility’, carried out for the European Commission under Framework Programme 5 (HPSC CT99-00030). The survey investigated different kinds of flexibility and family–work balance in the countries selected. The data are available in a series of reports on our home page: <http://www.hwf.at>.
2. Is your working schedule regular full time working hours: Monday morning to Friday afternoon; shift work; flexitime (meaning regular hours but can arrive or leave a little earlier/later; usually this means not more than one hour of flexibility in the day); other regular schedule; irregular, it varies.
Respondents were also asked: How many hours do you usually work per week on this activity? What sort of contract do you have with your employer in your main activity? The response categories were: permanent contract; self employed; fixed term; no contract or others.
3. The index sums up control over hours of work, work schedules and overtime.

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