

Flexibility and Fatherhood in Europe: An analysis of fathers' working time patterns in the EU-28

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Parents in Europe have different abilities to control their work-time arrangements and schedules due to institutional differences in work-time policies and workplace practices (Fagan et al, 2012). It is well-known that women are more likely to adjust their work schedules and to work part-time if they have children

(Fagan et al, 2014). Less is known about fathers' work-time arrangements other than (i) average full-time working hours are longer in some countries than others and (ii) men are less likely than women to reduce their work hours when they have children (Fagan and Norman 2016; 2012; Norman et al. 2014).

Objectives

The aim of the project was to explore whether work-time patterns and schedules vary markedly from other men in the EU-28 and to identify whether there are national differences in fathers' time availability for paternal involvement.

Data and Methods

I conducted descriptive analyses (frequencies, cross tabulations, chi-square tests) using the 6th European Working Conditions Survey (2015) in SPSS and produced graphs using Excel to present the data. The analysis focused on a sample of 35,765 households in the EU-28. I compared households in which fathers had a child under 18 (31.6%) (3% of which were lone father households) against households in which men had no children under 18. I also explored women's and mothers' work hours and schedules and compared these against each other as well as with men and fathers.

Results

The results showed that in the EU-28, fathers were significantly more likely to work long, full-time hours compared to other men who were more likely to work fewer, part-time hours. 24% of fathers worked 48+ hours per week compared to 19% of other men (see figure 1).

I also looked at the proportion of men and fathers who worked long, full-time hours by country and found that fathers were generally more likely to work 48+ hours per week than other men apart from in the UK. A slightly lower proportion of UK fathers (22%) work 48+ hours per week compared to the men (24%). (See figure 2).

I compared work schedules of fathers and men and found that fathers are slightly more likely than other men to work weekends and nights, though there is not much difference. However, a significantly higher percentage of fathers work long days compared to other men (47% compared to 38% respectively). (See figure 3). The work schedules data has generally the same pattern for each country; fathers are more likely than other men to work long days in all countries.

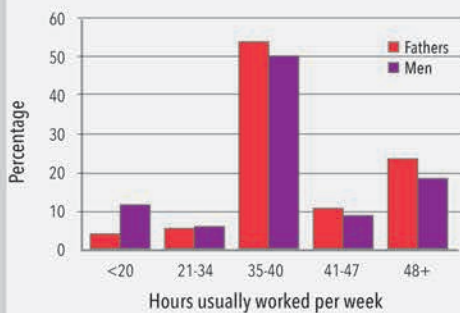


Figure 1

Usual weekly work hours, EU-28. Source: 6th European Working Conditions Survey 2015

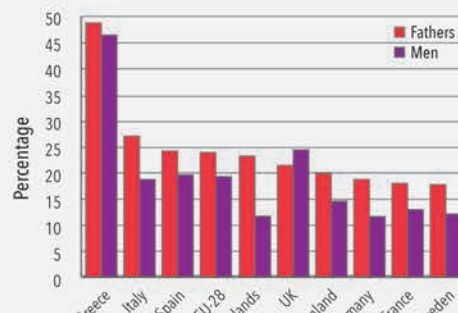


Figure 2

Percentage who work 48+ hours per week. Source: 6th European Working Conditions Survey 2015

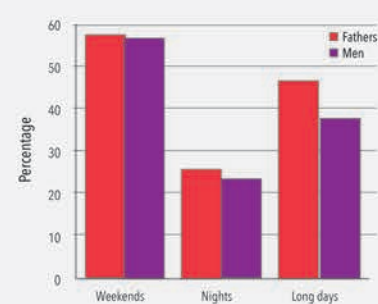


Figure 3

Percentage who work weekends, nights and long days, EU-28. Source: 6th European Working Conditions Survey 2015

Conclusions

Fathers are more likely to work longer hours and longer days compared to other men in the EU-28. This is problematic because longer hours have a negative effect on father involvement in childcare (Fagan and Norman 2016; Norman, Elliot and Fagan 2014) as well as work-life balance and health (Eurofound, 2016). As Fagan and Norman (2016) state, structural arrangements perpetuate the norm of fathers being primary earners which has negative consequences for gender equality in child rearing and the labour market.

Policy implications

It is important to reduce long work hours for fathers and create (and improve existing) conditions that support fathers to take time off work through well paid parental leave and flexible working.