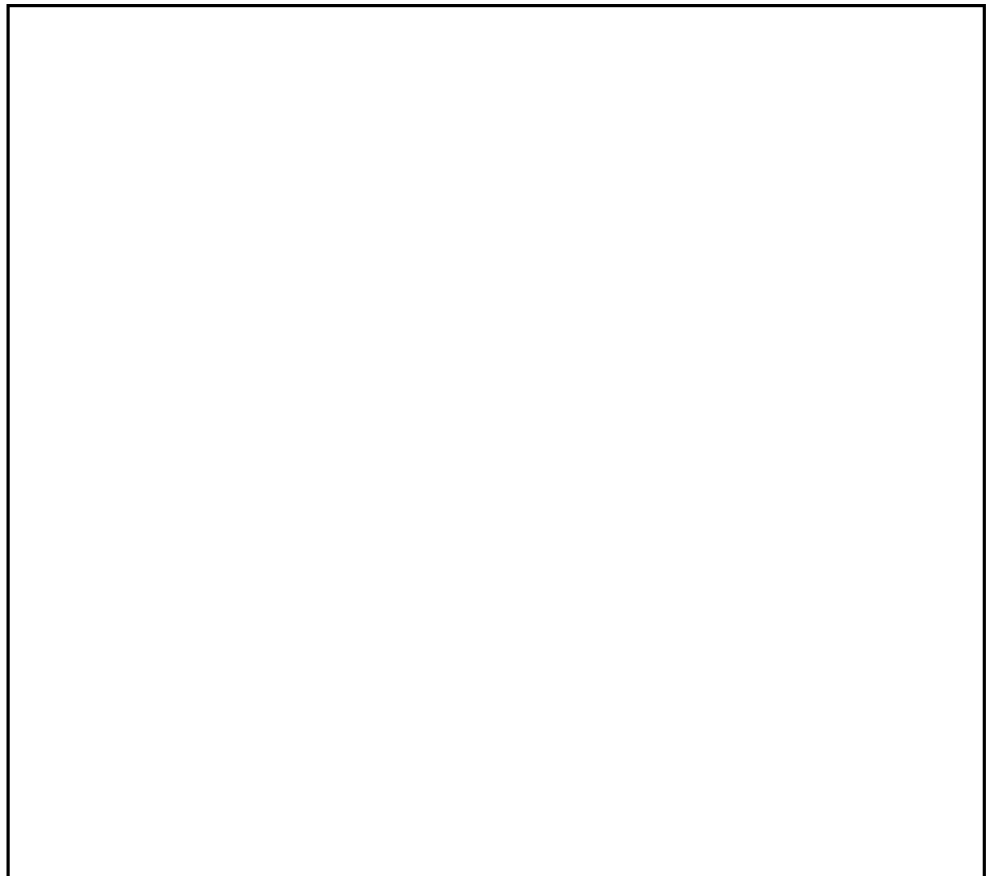




Gender, jobs and working conditions in the European Union



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European survey on working conditions

The Third European survey on working conditions was carried out in 2000 by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions; information was collected on the working conditions, health and well-being of the people in paid employment in the 15 EU Member States. The information was collected from individual workers in face-to-face interviews, in which they were asked to describe a number of aspects of their work and workplaces through a series of structured questions. Two previous surveys were carried out in 1991 and 1995/6 that permit an analysis of trends in some working conditions, and this latest survey has been expanded to include a much wider range of issues.

This summary relates some of the main findings of the third survey in terms of gender-related issues and relies on extensive secondary analysis of the third survey dataset. It is a synopsis of the report *Gender, jobs and working conditions* by Colette Fagan and Brendan Burchell.

Key findings

- The pattern of working conditions in Europe, and the gender dimension in these patterns, remained quite stable during the 1990s.
- The fundamental gender difference in working conditions is the fact that women continue to shoulder the main responsibility for running the home and looking after children, even when employed full-time.
- There are major gender differences in working time patterns, especially in the volume of hours worked: women are more likely to be in part-time work.
- Part-time jobs are segregated into a narrower range of occupations than full-time jobs and are typically lower-paid, more monotonous and with fewer opportunities for advancement. However, there are some more positive dimensions to the working conditions associated with part-time work: lower rates of exposure to physical, material and ergonomic hazards, a less intense pace of work, and more compatibility with social and family life.
- Both men's and women report that their work schedules tend to be compatible with their family and social life when they have 'standard' work schedules of daytime, weekday, fixed hours and if they do not work long full-time hours.
- While there are gender differences in some aspects of working conditions there is not a systematic pattern in all the indicators investigated: many working conditions are more closely related to occupational position (or sector) than to gender per se.
- When differences in men's and women's working conditions and occupational position are controlled in the analysis, we found that women were more susceptible to work-related ill-health than men.
- The key working condition that reduces the 'work-family' compatibility of jobs for both women and men is long and unsocial hours.

- Satisfaction with working conditions was reduced by poor ergonomic conditions, exposure to physical and material hazards, disruptive interruptions, an intense pace of work, the volume of hours worked and weekend work. Satisfaction was enhanced by working-time autonomy and task autonomy. The effects of these working conditions on satisfaction were similar for men and women, except that the volume of hours had less of an effect on men's satisfaction levels than on women's.

Occupational status and gender

Men and women are disproportionately represented in particular occupations relative to their share of overall employment. Broadly speaking, women's jobs involve caring, nurturing, and service activities for people, while men monopolise management and the manual and technical jobs associated with machinery or physical products which are considered to be 'heavy' or 'complex' (see Table 1). Men hold 80% or more of the jobs in the armed forces, the craft and related trades and plant and machine operation. Men also hold more than two-thirds of the skilled agricultural and fishery jobs. At the top of the occupational hierarchy men occupy more than 60% of the legislative and managerial occupations. In contrast, two-thirds of clerical, and service and sales workers are women.

The professional, associate professional and elementary manual occupations are more evenly split between the sexes at this aggregate level, but in these groups the segregation is only exposed at the sub-category level. Hence, men predominate in the physical, mathematical and engineering professions and associate professions, while the majority of health and educational professionals and associates are women. In the elementary occupations women are disproportionately represented in cleaning and agricultural-related jobs, while men dominate general labouring activities.

Table 1: *Occupational segregation by gender*

ISCO main occupational groups	% of the jobs in each occupation that are filled by men and women in full-time and part-time jobs						Total
	Men			Women			
	Full-time	Part-time	All	Full-time	Part-time	All	
1. Senior officials and managers	58	5	63	30	7	37	100
2. Professionals	41	9	50	27	23	50	100
3. Technicians and associate professionals	46	6	52	31	17	48	100
4. Clerks	28	3	31	45	24	69	100
5. Service and sales workers	28	5	33	33	34	67	100
6. Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	59	10	69	22	8	31	100
7. Craft and related trades workers	83	4	87	9	3	13	100
8. Plant and machine operators and assemblers	77	6	83	14	3	17	100
9. Elementary occupations	41	9	50	22	28	50	100
10. Armed forces	90	2	92	7	1	8	100
All employment	50	6	56	26	18	44	100

Note: *Part-time is defined as all those working less than 35 hours per week. All = Full-time + part-time.*

Source: *Third European survey on working conditions, 2000.*

Table 2: Occupational concentration by gender

ISCO main occupational groups	% concentration of employment across occupations					
	Men			Women		
	Full-time	Part-time	All	Full-time	Part-time	All
1. Senior officials and managers	9	6	9	9	3	6
2. Professionals	10	19	11	12	16	14
3. Technicians and associate professionals	13	14	13	16	14	15
4. Clerks	8	7	8	24	19	22
5. Service and sales workers	8	12	8	18	27	21
6. Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	5	7	5	3	3	3
7. Craft and related trades workers	27	12	25	6	2	5
8. Plant and machine operators and assemblers	12	8	12	4	3	3
9. Elementary occupations	7	15	8	8	14	11
10. Armed forces	1	--	1	--	--	*
All employment	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: ‘..’ indicates less than 0.5%. Part-time is defined as all those working less than 35 hours per week. All = Full-time + part-time.

Source: Third European survey on working conditions, 2000.

Women part-time employees are even more segregated into female-dominated jobs than women full-timers. They account for particularly large proportions of the workforce in service and sales, cleaning, clerical and health and teaching professions. By contrast, the lower incidence of male part-time employment is more dispersed across the occupations, but with the highest rates found in agricultural, driving and teaching jobs. Part-time employment is rare in managerial positions, regardless of gender.

Related to this gender segregation is the different pattern of occupational concentration for the sexes. One quarter of employed men in the European Union are concentrated in the craft and related trades, and a further 12% are plant and machine operators. Overall, half of employed men are in manual (blue-collar) jobs, compared to just over one in five employed women. Women’s employment is mainly concentrated in clerical, service and sales work, where 43% of employed women are found. Around one quarter of each sex are employed in the professional and associated occupations, with 9% of employed men and 6% of employed women in the highest level government and senior management grades.

Women part-timers are even more heavily concentrated into service, clerical and elementary jobs than women in full-time jobs. By contrast, men’s part-time jobs are less heavily concentrated into particular occupational areas, and a high proportion of male part-timers are employed in professional or managerial areas compared to the situation of women in part-time work.

Gender and working conditions

The pattern of working conditions in Europe, and the gender dimension in these patterns, remained pretty stable over the 1990s on the dimensions that it is possible to analyse over time using the waves of the European survey on working conditions. The analysis found that the relationship between gender and the following working conditions had remained (largely) unchanged over the period of observation:

- type of contract, employer and employment tenure;

- physical environment and ergonomic conditions work;
- job control, autonomy and responsibilities;
- hours of work and many aspects of non-standard work schedules;
- health and safety characteristics of jobs;
- patterns of workplace consultation;
- perceptions of the effects of employment on health and the perceived health and safety risks;
- attitudes to work, including satisfaction with working conditions.

However, there are a few important exceptions, where male and female workers are either converging or diverging in their experiences of work.

The speed of work, which is a key element of work intensity, had increased for both sexes over the period, but the increase had been greatest among women, so that the 'gender gap' in exposure to this working condition had reduced over time.

Similarly, the gender gap in Sunday working was closing, largely due to women's growing involvement in this working pattern.

On both of these measures there were divergent trends when occupational position was taken into account. The speed of work was highest for men and women in blue-collar jobs and has risen further for these workers as well as for women in white-collar jobs, while work speed appears to have fallen for men in white-collar jobs. Sunday work was more prevalent for men in both job categories, but the incidence of this form of work has diverged among women over the period as the rates of Sunday working have risen for women in white-collar jobs. Similarly the reports of intimidation in the workplace are highest for women in white-collar jobs, and it is this group that has experienced the biggest increase in the rates of intimidation over the period.

The main conclusion is that continuity in working conditions is the norm and change the exception. The second general conclusion is that it is important to examine the interaction between gender and occupational position to tease out a fuller understanding of how gender is related to working conditions. For example, 49% of men's employment is in blue-collar jobs, compared with only 23% of women's employment. Therefore any change in the relative working conditions of blue-collar and white-collar workers will also have an impact on average gender differences.

Ergonomic hazards and ill-health

It is important to examine the interaction between gender and occupational position because many working conditions are more closely related to occupational position (or sector) than to gender per se. For some working conditions this more detailed analysis reinforced the message that the overall gender differences are still present when comparisons are made within occupational status groups, and in some instances the difference is more pronounced than when it is averaged across all white-collar and blue-collar employment. For some other working conditions there is an interaction between gender and occupational status whereby

the gender pattern within a particular occupational group contradicts the overall comparison for all employment. For example, the average gender difference in ergonomic conditions is slight, but, among professionals, women are more exposed to ergonomic hazards.

A number of working conditions have a significant and independent effect on the probability of having work-related illness. The 'traditional' health and safety hazards of poor ergonomic, physical and material conditions are bad for health. A number of aspects of working-time conditions are also detrimental to health: disruptive interruptions in the work-day, unsociable work schedules (evening, nights or long days), an intense pace of work and long hours of work. Working-time autonomy helped to reduce the risk of work-related illness. Once these specific working conditions are taken into account then being in managerial, professional or skilled manual work further increases the risk of work-related ill-health.

When differences in men and women's working conditions and occupational position are controlled in the analysis we found that women were more susceptible to work-related ill-health than men. This may be partly due to the additional domestic workloads that many women carry. It may also be because there are other working conditions to which women are disproportionately exposed but which are not picked up by the existing indicators in the survey. This issue requires further analysis and consideration in light of the current review of the EU regulatory framework on health and safety.

Working time

Working time conditions are another area of employment where there are major gender differences. There are major gender differences in working time patterns, especially in the volume of hours worked: women are more likely to be in part-time work.

The comparison of the working conditions of part-timers and full-timers has reinforced much of the evidence that is already well known about the conditions of part-time work. Part-time jobs are segregated into a narrower range of occupations than full-time jobs and are typically lower-paid, more monotonous and with fewer opportunities for advancement. Part-time work may mean shorter hours, but it does not necessarily protect workers from being involved in schedules that differ from the 'standard' of daytime, weekday schedules. We have also identified some more positive dimensions to the working conditions associated with part-time work, including lower rates of exposure to physical, material and ergonomic hazards and a less intense pace of work. Part-timers are also more likely to report that their work schedules are compatible with their family and social life.

The key working condition that reduces the 'work-family' compatibility of jobs is long and unsocial hours, for both women and men. Working-time control or autonomy also had a positive effect, but the effect is minimal compared to the negative effect of unsocial hours. It appears that a low level of unsocial hours over which the employed have no control is more compatible with family life than a higher level of unsocial hours over which they have some apparent control.

Conclusion

Gender segregation in employment is a persistent feature of European societies, as is the unequal division of unpaid household work. Women continue to shoulder the main responsibility for running the home and looking after children, even when employed full-time. This is the fundamental gender difference in working conditions. These results underscore the need for further reforms and initiatives in the development of equal

treatment legislation, and the implementation of formal organisational 'equal opportunities' policies, together with efforts to promote good practice in organisations. It is also important to tackle some of the more subtle or deep-rooted organisational practices and cultures that perpetuate gender inequalities, and to promote a more equitable gender division of work within the household.

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