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# Women and men working weekends and their family circumstances

*Ana Franco & Karin Winqvist*

A growing number of employees across the European Union work at the weekend on a regular basis. In 2000, over 40% of women and over 45% of men either usually or sometimes worked on a Saturday, while almost 23% of women and just over 26% of men either sometimes or usually worked on a Sunday, all the figures higher than in 1992 (Fig. 1). This in part reflects the trend towards more flexible labour markets and the response of producers to the demand of consumers to be able to purchase goods or services 7 days a week. In practice, however, there are comparatively few sectors of activity where there have been significant increases.

The issues examined here concern the effect of this trend on women relative to men, the sectors in which it is occurring and how far it affects those with caring responsibilities for young children as opposed to those without. In the latter regard, the effect of weekend working on those with families is mixed. Although in two-person households it might represent a means of helping to reconcile caring responsibilities with the pursuit of a career, insofar as the other person in the household can assume these responsibilities at this time; it might also serve to reduce the amount of time the family spends together as a unit. The analysis is confined to employees who tend to have less control over working arrangements than those who are self-employed.

In practice, women with young children were on the whole less likely to work at weekends than those without, while for men, family circumstances seem to make comparatively little difference to whether they work weekends or not. Whether or not women and men work at the weekend, however, is much more influenced by the country they live in than whether or not they have children.

**Fig. 1 Share of women and men employees working at week-ends in the EU, 1992 and 2000**



*Includes D, IRL 1992 and 1997; E, L 1992 and 1998; A, FIN, S 1995 and 2000*

## Rising numbers of women and men work at weekends

According to the latest data from the EU Labour Force Survey (for 2000 in most cases), in most of the 15 Member States, around 20% or more of women and men employees have a job which involves them usually working on Saturday, while a similar proportion – though less for women than for men – sometimes work on this day (Fig. 2, where the data relate to the latest and earliest years for which they are available; see Methodological Note for details of the data). Only in Belgium did a significantly smaller proportion of women usually work Saturdays (only around 5%), though 27% sometimes did. Here, therefore, Saturday working was not only more limited than elsewhere but seems to be shared out more between employees. This was also the case for men in Belgium, for whom the respective proportions usually and sometimes working on Saturdays were much the same as for women.

For men more generally, however, there is evidence of more variability in working arrangements than for women. In 11 of the 15 Member States, a larger proportion of women than men usually worked Saturdays, but in all 15 countries (though the difference was marginal in Belgium), a larger proportion of men than women sometimes did so. The difference was particularly marked in Ireland and the UK, where the relative number of women and men usually working on a Saturday was similar but where substantially more men than women sometimes worked on this day. In all

but four countries (Belgium, Spain, Finland and Sweden), moreover, the proportion of male employees usually or sometimes working on Saturdays was greater than for women throughout the Union.

Although there is an overall tendency for the proportion working Saturdays to have risen over the 1990s, the trend is not universal. In Denmark, Spain, Italy and Finland, the relative number of both women and men working on a Saturday, at least some of the time, declined significantly over this period. In France and the UK, the proportion of men remained much the same, though the proportion of women increased. In Belgium, while the overall proportion of both women and men rose, there was a shift from usually working to sometimes working. The relative number of people involved, therefore, increased. As would be expected, a much smaller proportion of employees work Sundays, though as many women and men worked on Sunday in the UK as worked on Saturday in a number of other Member States, as was also the case for women in Denmark and Sweden, where around a third worked Sundays at least occasionally. Nevertheless, in 10 of the 15 Member States, around 10% or more of both women and men employees usually work on Sunday according to the latest LFS data (Fig. 3).

Moreover, in the 5 other countries, where the proportion was less than 10%, some 10% or more sometimes worked on this day. In 10 of the 15 countries, the proportion of women usually working Sundays was higher than for men, though in 3 of these,

Fig. 2 Share of women and men employees working Saturdays, 2000

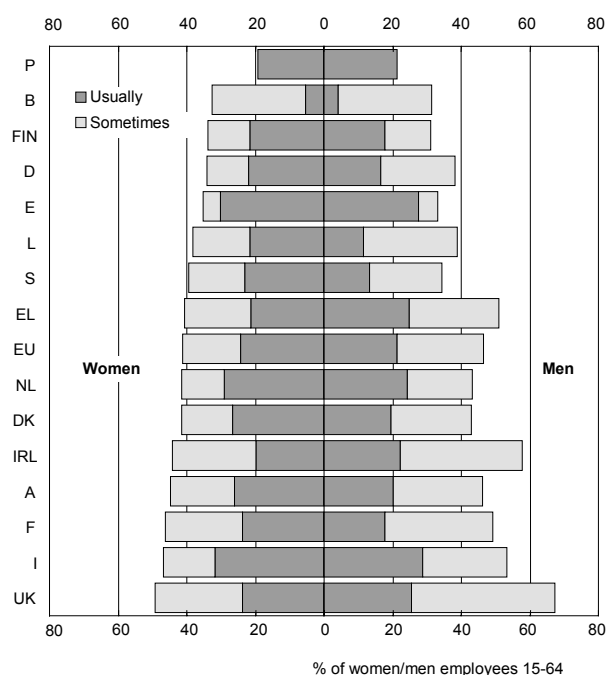
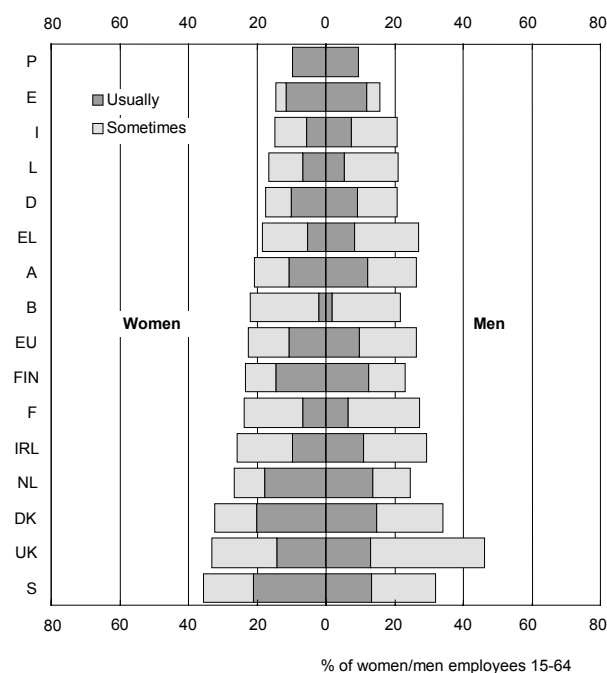


Fig. 3 Share of women and men employees working Sundays, 2000



Note: D, IRL: 1992 and 1997; E, L: 1992 and 1998; A, FIN, S: 1995 and 2000; P: no breakdown for "usually/sometimes"

**Table 1: Women and men employees working at weekends by sector, 2000**

*% all women/men employees in each sector*

		B	DK	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK	EU
<b>Saturday</b>																	
Agriculture, Fishing (A+B)	Women	35	52	46	90	46	41	54	56	:	39	62	28	52	53	64	49
	Men	44	76	46	73	51	55	80	68	54	58	50	43	40	44	74	56
Electricity/gas/water, mining C+E)	Women	7	:	12	12	10	19	19	18	:	37	6	:	5	15	48	22
	Men	25	55	39	46	24	44	59	45	40	54	39	17	28	42	68	43
Manufacturing (D)	Women	12	20	22	31	13	28	33	28	32	26	29	6	19	17	37	25
	Men	24	35	34	42	20	40	56	44	53	39	42	15	27	28	65	39
Construction (F)	Women	11	23	17	48	9	18	26	20	9	15	29	14	10	16	26	19
	Men	10	25	26	56	11	23	55	45	28	29	33	17	14	19	67	31
Distribution (G)	Women	57	63	57	70	70	68	67	67	62	62	67	45	62	61	68	64
	Men	42	43	49	59	53	60	67	61	42	52	49	28	37	36	76	57
Hotels, restaurants (H)	Women	74	88	71	92	81	70	75	73	77	77	74	56	67	73	70	72
	Men	82	85	84	92	85	78	89	90	88	89	87	64	74	76	87	84
Transport, communication (I)	Women	24	53	44	36	38	53	56	56	38	52	38	22	31	43	59	48
	Men	45	60	54	65	46	63	67	65	53	61	56	21	44	47	75	59
Financial services (J)	Women	15	14	7	6	19	25	16	11	7	13	16	2	10	10	46	21
	Men	23	27	18	11	29	43	27	13	15	30	33	4	17	16	49	29
Business services (K)	Women	17	29	15	23	21	32	27	27	15	18	24	16	20	20	34	25
	Men	28	45	37	29	30	44	52	43	24	31	45	20	25	27	59	43
Public administration (L)	Women	22	13	12	12	12	28	18	39	26	23	18	7	9	13	34	23
	Men	38	49	34	48	40	55	60	61	28	32	46	24	41	42	61	47
Education (M)	Women	14	36	15	9	3	55	11	56	49	18	32	2	22	18	28	31
	Men	24	45	34	9	5	56	21	65	68	28	47	7	26	27	55	42
Health (N)	Women	53	47	50	57	57	60	62	66	51	49	56	25	40	54	56	54
	Men	46	41	57	67	61	61	58	74	64	55	64	28	42	56	67	61
Other (O-Q)	Women	37	51	38	64	32	42	55	53	30	66	50	21	36	44	63	45
	Men	44	58	53	68	59	68	61	70	19	60	67	38	46	55	74	62
<b>Sunday</b>																	
Agriculture, Fishing (A+B)	Women	18	54	34	40	11	17	32	19	:	11	34	6	45	50	55	26
	Men	23	69	28	49	19	31	53	27	31	16	36	20	27	40	57	30
Electricity/gas/water, mining C+E)	Women	3	:	7	7	4	11	5	1	:	:	4	:	3	13	26	11
	Men	21	55	30	35	12	37	35	27	20	40	29	8	24	38	54	32
Manufacturing (D)	Women	9	18	6	8	4	11	12	3	7	7	11	2	15	15	20	9
	Men	17	26	14	12	8	18	22	10	35	19	20	5	22	26	42	19
Construction (F)	Women	7	16	7	10	1	5	8	2	9	12	7	:	9	12	19	8
	Men	7	19	6	9	1	6	13	5	3	11	17	2	9	17	41	11
Distribution (G)	Women	16	23	7	6	9	23	25	25	18	23	10	16	24	42	41	21
	Men	12	20	11	8	8	19	19	16	9	17	16	6	14	27	43	20
Hotels, restaurants (H)	Women	60	75	64	78	69	55	61	61	67	71	58	41	52	65	54	60
	Men	70	70	78	82	73	62	79	77	80	84	72	48	64	71	73	72
Transport, communication (I)	Women	15	35	21	24	18	19	36	15	25	25	20	16	25	32	35	23
	Men	34	47	35	53	26	35	44	35	41	40	36	15	35	47	52	38
Financial services (J)	Women	6	10	2	1	1	3	4	2	1	2	6	:	2	11	14	6
	Men	9	21	7	4	2	12	11	2	4	12	16	1	9	16	29	12
Business services (K)	Women	10	28	8	3	6	11	9	6	2	9	13	7	13	20	22	12
	Men	17	43	24	11	16	25	28	15	11	20	25	12	19	26	43	28
Public administration (L)	Women	17	11	8	9	4	14	12	10	9	17	9	5	7	11	24	12
	Men	32	48	31	44	32	45	53	37	21	27	39	20	39	40	54	38
Education (M)	Women	11	31	10	2	1	32	6	2	8	12	15	0	10	18	23	15
	Men	15	43	25	2	2	39	10	4	10	14	23	4	15	24	43	24
Health (N)	Women	48	45	46	49	41	47	57	47	39	47	44	21	38	54	48	46
	Men	40	40	53	62	44	50	52	52	59	49	56	22	36	56	59	52
Other (O-Q)	Women	19	35	18	28	9	17	23	16	8	32	20	5	20	39	35	20
	Men	35	49	38	47	35	48	41	35	14	44	51	27	37	57	56	43

Note: D, IRL 1997; E, L 1998

the difference was marginal. As in the case of Saturday working, however, the proportion of men sometimes working Sundays was higher than for women in all Member States, except for Belgium, again indicating more variability in their working arrangements. Accordingly, the proportion of men usually or sometimes working Sunday exceeded that of women in 10 of the 15 Member States (the exceptions being Belgium, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden and Portugal, where there are no data for those sometimes working on Sunday), though the difference was relatively small

(under 5 percentage points) in 5 of the 10.

There was a more widespread increase in Sunday working over the 1990s than in Saturday working. Denmark, Finland and Belgium apart, in the first of which, there was no change and in the last of which a decline was accompanied by a much larger rise in those occasionally doing so, the proportion of women usually working Sundays increased in all Member States, as did the proportion sometimes working this day, except in Finland, Denmark, Germany and Spain, in the last three

of which it remained much the same. The proportion of men usually working Sunday also rose in most countries, though it fell in Greece, Luxembourg and Portugal as well as in Finland and Belgium. In three of these cases – all apart from Finland and Portugal where there are no data – it was combined with a larger increase in those sometimes doing so. Overall, in all countries, apart from Finland, where the figures fell significantly, and Luxembourg, there was a larger rise in the relative number of women than men either usually or sometimes working on Sundays over the 1990s.

### Pronounced differences between sectors of activity

There are significant differences in the prevalence of weekend working across the economy. Over half of women employees in hotels and restaurants in the Union and over two-thirds of men usually worked Saturdays in 2000, while another 19% of women and 16% of men sometimes did (Fig. 4). The figures were similar in all Member States – except Portugal where there are no data (Table 1). In addition, some 47% of women employees in the EU and just under 36% of men in distribution usually worked on Saturday and another 17% of women and 21% of men sometimes did so.

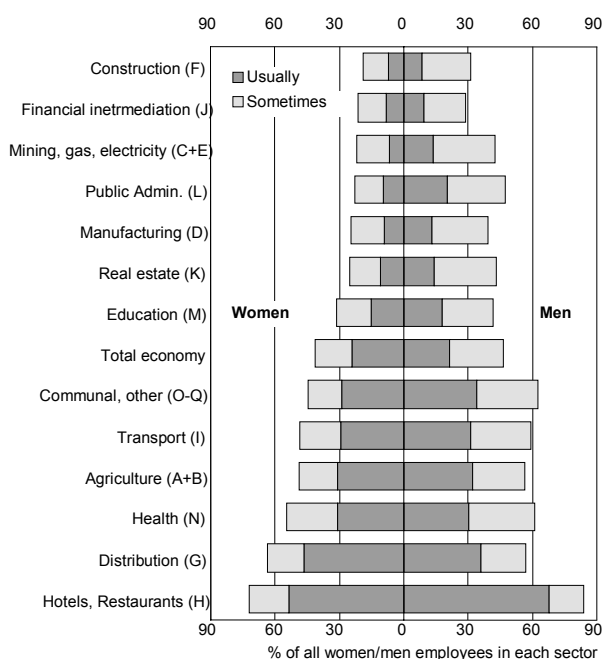
However, whereas well over half of women in distribution worked on Saturdays at least occasionally in all Member States, in 8 countries, over half of men employees never worked on a Saturday. By contrast, only around 25% of women employees in industry and business services ever worked on Saturday at all (under 15% in industry in Belgium, Spain and Portugal) and

only just over 20% in financial services and public administration (which includes the security services). While the figures were higher for men (although in Greece, the figure was under 11% in financial services and in Portugal, under 5%), they were nevertheless much lower than in distribution.

There were only a few sectors of activity in which the proportion of women working Saturdays in the Union increased significantly over the second half of the 1990s (the revision in the NACE system of classification makes it difficult to go back before 1995 or so). Apart from the energy sector, where few women work, the proportion rose by 1 percentage point or more only in hotels and restaurants, distribution and financial services. In hotels and restaurants, however, where the rise was some 2½ percentage points, higher than in any other sector, this increase was offset by a decline in the proportion sometimes working Saturdays. By contrast, the relative number of women either usually or sometimes working Saturdays declined in all other service sectors apart from transport. For men, distribution was the only sector in which the proportion usually working Saturdays rose by more than 1 percentage point (by 1½ points) and here the rise was partly offset by a fall in the proportion sometimes doing so. In most other sectors, there was a general decline in Saturday working.

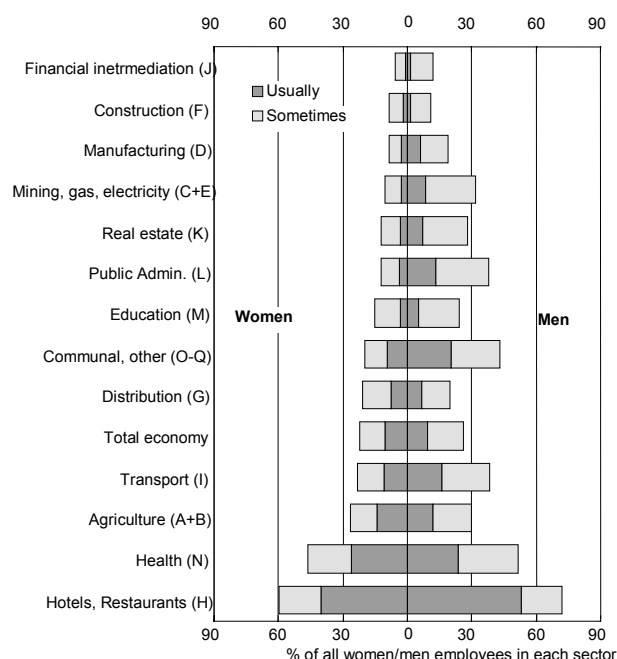
The difference in the importance of Sunday working between sectors of activity is even more pronounced than for Saturday working. Only in two sectors of activity, hotels and restaurants and health and social services, did significantly more than 10% of women employees usually work Sundays and only in these two

Fig. 4 Share of women and men employees working Saturdays by sector in the EU, 2000



EU incl. D, IRL 1997 and E, L 1998

Fig. 5 Share of women and men employees working Sundays by sector in the EU, 2000



EU incl. D, IRL 1997 and E, L 1998

activities plus distribution was this the case for those sometimes doing so (Fig. 5). This was also true in the first two sectors in individual Member States, though in distribution, under 10% of women employees ever worked on Sundays in Germany, Greece and Spain and only just over 10% in Austria. This compares with over 40% in Sweden and the UK, where laws and regulations on Sunday trading are less restrictive. There was a similar concentration in hotels and restaurants and health and social services among men usually working on Sunday, though in both transport and community and personal services, the proportion was also significantly above 10%. There was, however, a more even spread across sectors in those sometimes working Sundays.

The proportion of women usually working Sundays increased significantly in hotels and restaurants and distribution, where it was accompanied by a similar rise in the proportion sometimes doing so. In most other sectors, there was a small rise in women working on Sunday. For men, there was also a rise in the proportion working Sundays in distribution as well as in hotels and restaurants, though less so than for women. The relative number of men usually working on a Sunday increased too in health and social services, but here it was offset by a fall in those sometimes doing so. In most other sectors, there was a decline in the proportion of men working Sundays just as for women.

### Family responsibilities – fewer women with young children work at weekends

Women employees aged 20 to 49 with a child under 6 are less likely than those without to work at weekends. For men in the same age group, the picture is more mixed. In both cases, however, there is a greater difference between the extent of weekend working between countries than between those with and without

young children within countries.

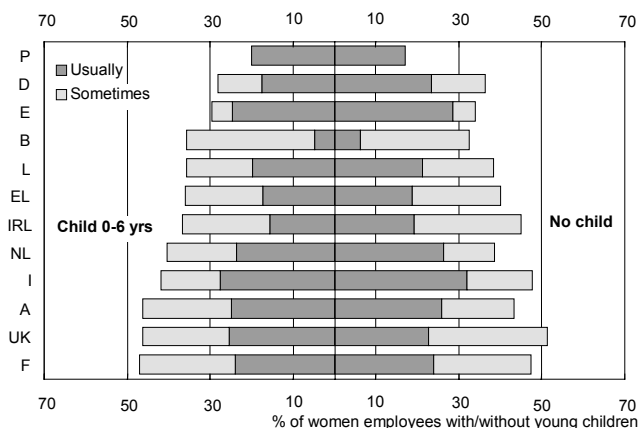
In 9 of the 12 EU countries for which data are available – no data are available by household for the three Nordic countries – a smaller proportion of women employees in this age group with a child under 6 than without usually worked on Saturdays according to the latest data (which again relate mostly to 2000). In France, where schools are open Saturdays, there was little difference between the two groups (Fig. 6). Only in Portugal and the UK, was the proportion larger for women with a child than without.

In the UK, however, there was a much larger difference in the opposite direction in the case of women sometimes working on Saturdays, the proportion being significantly lower for those with a young child than for those without (in Portugal, no data are available for this category). The same is true for most other Member States, though the difference was smaller than in the UK. The only countries in which a larger proportion of women employees with a child worked Saturdays on an occasional basis than those without were Belgium, the Netherlands and Austria, in all of which the difference was greater than the difference in the opposite direction for those usually working Saturdays.

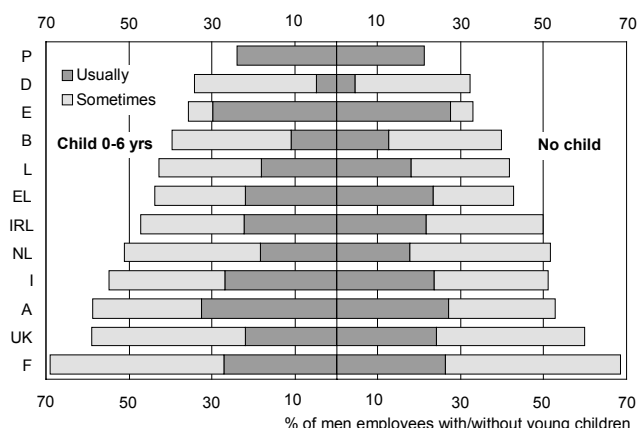
For men aged 20 to 49, the proportion usually working Saturdays was not systematically larger or smaller for those with a child than for those without. In four Member States (Greece, Spain, Italy and Portugal), it was larger, in five, much the same and in three, smaller. The proportion sometimes working on a Saturday was very similar in most countries for those with and those without a child (Fig. 7).

The relative number of women aged 20 to 49 working Sundays tends to be less for those with children than those without, though the difference is marginal. In only

**Fig. 6 Women employees aged 20-49 with and without young children working Saturdays, 2000**

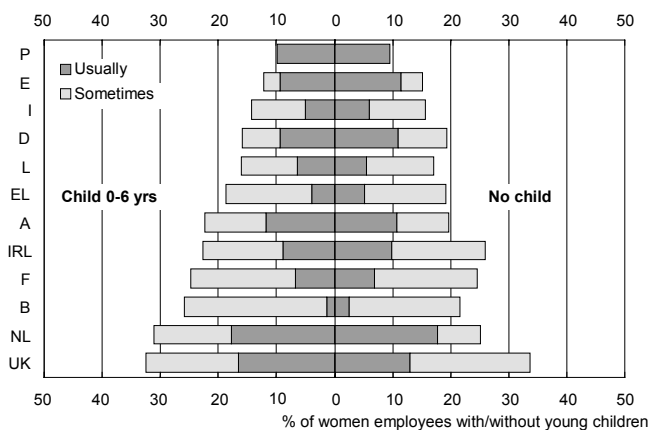


**Fig. 7 Men employees aged 20-49 with and without young children working Saturdays, 2000**

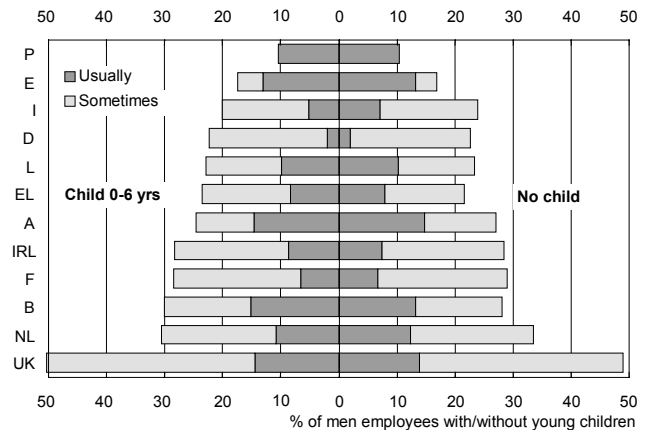


Note: Data only includes reference person and spouse/cohabiting partner. D, IRL 1997; E, L 1998; UK 1999; P: no breakdown for "usually/sometimes"

**Fig. 8 Women employees aged 20-49 with and without young children working Sundays, 2000**



**Fig. 9 Men employees aged 20-49 with and without young children working Sundays, 2000**



Note: Data only includes reference person and spouse/cohabiting partner. D, IRL 1997; E, L 1998; UK 1999; P: no breakdown for "sometimes/usually"

two of the 12 Member States, Spain and Germany was the proportion of women usually working on a Sunday significantly smaller for those with a child than those without, though in 5 others it was slightly lower. The proportion was significantly larger for women with a child than for those without in the UK alone (Fig. 8).

In the UK, however, as in the case of Saturday working, the proportion of women with a child sometimes working on a Sunday was much smaller than for those without. But, in this case, there were as many countries where the proportion of women with children sometimes working Sundays was higher than for those without as the number of countries where it was lower. Nevertheless, the only countries in which the proportion was significantly higher were Belgium, the Netherlands and Austria.

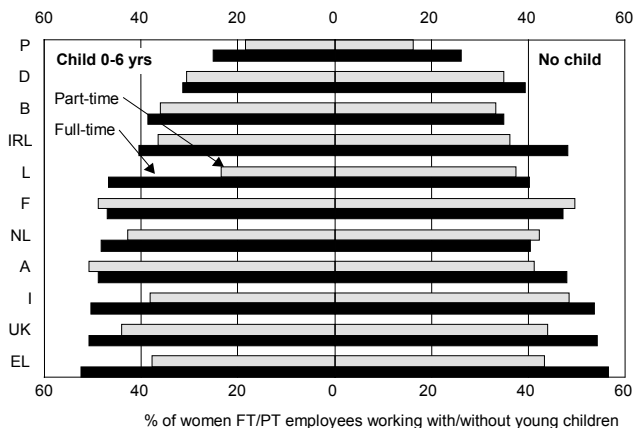
For men, there was not much difference in the

proportion working Sundays between those with and without young children. Only in Italy and Austria, was the proportion of men working on Sunday at least some of the time significantly larger for those with children than for those without, and only in Ireland, the Netherlands and Luxembourg was the reverse the case (Fig. 9).

### Children have a minor effect on weekend working among full-time and part-time employees

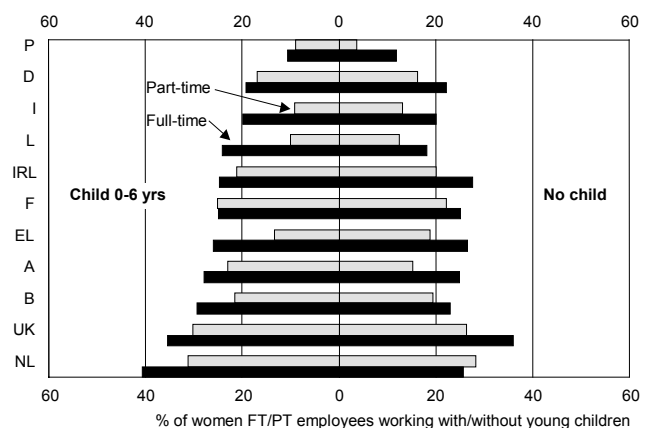
While women with young children tend to work less at weekends than those without in most parts of the Union, the question arises as to whether there are also significant differences between those working full-time and those in part-time jobs (defining part-time here to be those usually working less than 30 hours a week) and how far any such differences vary between women with

**Fig. 10 Women aged 20-49 full-time and part-time employees with and without young children working Saturdays, 2000**



Note: 1997 data for D and IRL, 1998 for E and L and 1999 for the UK

**Fig. 11 Women aged 20-49 full-time and part-time employees with and without young children working Sundays, 2000**



children and those without. (Since the number of men working part-time is very small in most countries, the analysis here is confined to women.)

The first conclusion which emerges is that there is no systematic difference across countries in the likelihood of a woman working at weekends between those with young children and those without, whether they work full-time or part-time. The second conclusion is that there is a discernible tendency for women employed part-time to be less likely to work on Saturdays and Sundays than those employed full-time whether or not

they have young children. In 10 of the 12 countries, the proportion of part-time employees working on Saturdays was less than those employed full-time in the case of both women with a child under 6 and those without (Fig. 10), while the same was true in 11 of the 12 countries in respect of Sunday working (Fig. 11).

The overriding conclusion to emerge, however, is that whether women work Saturdays or Sundays is more influenced by the country in which they live than whether or not they have young children or they work part-time or full-time.

## ➤ ESSENTIAL INFORMATION – METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

**Abbreviations:** : not available . not applicable 0 negligible – nil

### Data sources, classification and definitions

The data used in the analysis come from the EU Labour Force Survey. Since it is not compulsory for Member States to include questions on working at non-standard times (or during 'unsocial' hours) in the survey, an up-to-date set of data is not available for all countries. Most countries, however, continue to include these question and the latest data available, therefore, relate to 2000, but for Germany and Ireland, they relate to 1997 and for Spain and Luxembourg, to 1998. For Austria, the earliest year for which data are available is 1995 and these have been used in the analysis of changes over time. For Portugal, moreover, data are not available after 1997 for those sometimes working on Saturdays or Sundays (the figures for 1992 were 6.8% and 3.4% for men and women, respectively, sometimes working on Saturday and 3.3% and 9.7% for those sometimes working on Sunday).

Data on a household basis are not available for Denmark, Finland and Sweden while for the UK they are not yet available for 2000; 1999 data are therefore used for this part of the analysis.

The analysis throughout is confined to employees (ie the self-employed and unpaid family workers are excluded) aged 15-64 in section 1 and to employees of all ages in section 2 on weekend working by sector of activity. In the sections on parenthood, the data relate to those aged 20 to 49 and cover only the reference person and their spouse or cohabiting partner (ie all other relatives are excluded). In these sections, employees are divided into two groups, those with a dependent child under 6 and those without any dependent children under 15.

Saturday and Sunday working are defined in terms of formal working arrangements, so that those who work on their own initiative on either day or take work home to do at the weekend should, in principle, be excluded. Those 'usually' working on either day can be interpreted as those who worked on Saturday or Sunday on at least two occasions during the four week reference period preceding the survey and those 'sometimes' working as those who worked on one occasion during the four weeks.

The distinction between part-time and full-time employees in Figs. 10 and 11 is defined in terms of those usually working under 30 hours a week and those working 30 hours a week or more instead of in terms of self-assessment which is the conventional method.

# Further information:

## ➤ Databases

NewCronos, Domain: LFS

To obtain information or to order publications, databases and special sets of data, please contact the **Data Shop** network:

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### For information on methodology

Ana Franco, Eurostat/E1, L-2920 Luxembourg, Tel. (352) 4301 33209, Fax (352) 4301 34415, E-mail: [Ana.Franco@cec.eu.int](mailto:Ana.Franco@cec.eu.int)  
Karin Winqvist, Eurostat/E1, L-2920 Luxembourg, Tel. (352) 4301 35581, Fax (352) 4301 34415, E-mail: [Karin.Winqvist@cec.eu.int](mailto:Karin.Winqvist@cec.eu.int)  
Lárus Blöndal, Eurostat/E1, L-2920 Luxembourg, Tel. (352) 4301 35166, Fax (352) 4301 34415, E-mail: [Laurus.Blondal@cec.eu.int](mailto:Laurus.Blondal@cec.eu.int)  
In co-operation with Damian Grimshaw, Hugo Figueiredo (UMIST, Manchester) and Terry Ward, Loredana Sementini (Applica, Brussels)  
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