



Work Autonomy,  
Flexibility and  
Work-Life Balance

# The gendered nature of flexitime: Explaining the access to flexitime across 27 European countries

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# Background



# The puzzle

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- Increasing number of companies/countries provide flexitime to address the work life balance needs of workers
- In this case, parents/mothers should have more access
- However, empirical research results show that either men have more access or that there is no gender difference... why?



# Why

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- Flexitime is used as a part of a high performance strategy
- Gendered rewards mechanism
- Women's work penalty



# Questions asked in this paper

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- Is access to flexitime gendered?
- Do women gain more access?
- Do workers working in female dominated jobs gain more access? Does access to flexitime change depending on the gender dominance of the occupation/sector?
- Do national contexts matter?



# What can explain the access & provision of flexitime?

Theories & Hypotheses



# Defining flexitime

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- Flexitime
  - worker's ability to change the timing of their work (that is, to alternate the starting and ending times), and in some cases, the ability to change the numbers of hours worked per day or week – which can be then lead to accumulation of hours to take days or weeks off (working time banking).
  - Aka schedule flexibility/control
- Control over *when* to work, rather than how (Karasek)



# Family friendly flexitime & gender



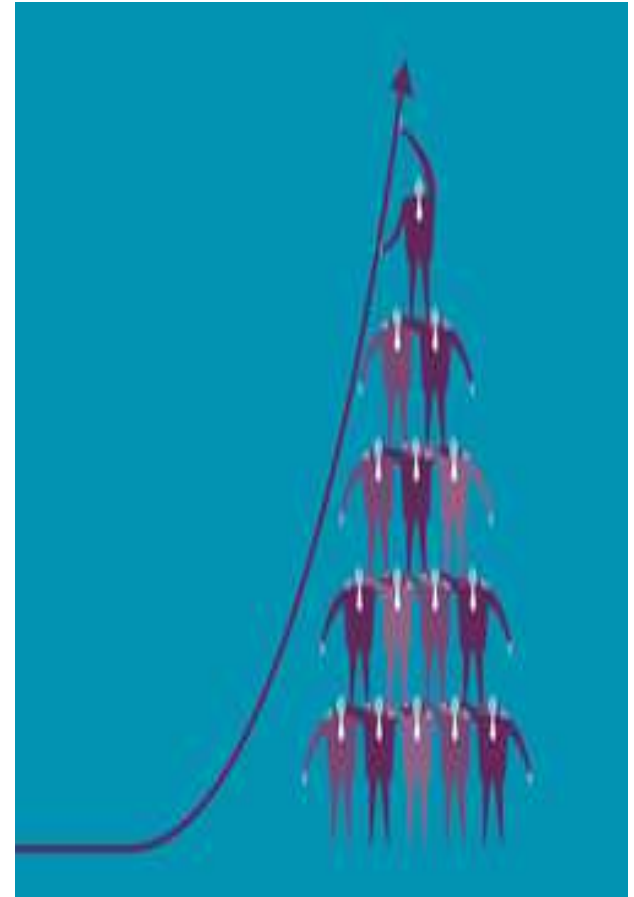
- Flexitime allows workers to adapt work life to **family demands** - work-family border theory (Clark 2000)  
Flexibility enactment theory (Kossek et al 2005)
- Women are still the main carers of children / relatives  
→  
women(mothers)/parents gain more access to flexitime





# High performance strategy flexitime & Gender

- Flexitime as a **high performance strategy**: encourage workers to influence the organisation of work and allowing the possibility to offer suggestions to improve productivity (Appelbaum, 2000; Davis and Kalleberg, 2006)
- Flexitime as a discretion over work – reward for higher status workers
- Employers assume men will take on the “ideal worker” role more → apply HPS
- Men are more likely to achieve higher statuses /are rewarded in these statuses → men are more likely to get access to flexitime



# Women's work provides better access

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- Internal pressures: Women dominated occupations and sectors are more likely to provide access to flexitime (constituents)(Goodstein)
- “Flexibility stigma” : using flexible work arrangements deviates from the ideal worker norm and may have detrimental impact on career progression (Anker, 1990; Williams et al 2013) - Male dominated sectors and occupations may especially be prejudiced (Cech and Blair-Loy, 2014)
- “Femininity stigma” - especially for men use of flexitime may deviate from the masculine worker's image



# Women's work provides worse access

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- Women's work valued less(Acker, 1990)
- Female dominated sectors – low skilled, low-wage  
→unlikely to apply HPS, less likely to use flexitime
- Feminization of occupations can lead to reduction of workers' control over work, and this effect is more evident for women(Adler, 1993; Jaffee, 1989; Glass 1990)
- Glass elevator effect for men(Williams, 1992)
- Cost issues



# Importance of national context

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- Nature of flexible working changes due to national contexts (Mills and Taht 2010)
- (+) National level family policies, especially to promote mother's employment via coercive/mimetic powers may change companies so women/mothers more access to flexitime
- (-) Mandel & Shalev – generous family policies/leaves may increase employer's discrimination tendencies
- (-) Charles – larger service sector may provide more opportunities for women to take part in the labour force, but also enforce women's work stigma/segmentation



# Data & Methods



# European Working Conditions Survey

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- 2010 wave (EU27+ Albania, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Norway, Republic of Macedonia, Turkey) – will focus on EU27
- Representative national sample of 15+ individuals, with 1000+ per country.
- Restrict the sample to those in dependent employment



# Dependent variable

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- Flexitime
  - “Q39 You can adapt your working hours within certain limits (e.g. flexitime)”, or “Your working hours are entirely determined by yourself” (autonomous hours)
  - Combined to be flexitime



# Independent variables

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- Gender
- Gender of the supervisor : “Is your immediate boss a man or a woman?”
- Occupational segregation :
  - “At *your place of work* are workers with the same job title as you” : 1 - Mostly men; 2 – Mostly women; 3 – More or less equal numbers of men and women; 4 – Nobody else has the same job title.
  - Occupational level (ISCO 1 digit)
  - % of women in occupation (EUROSTAT)- national averages





# Independent variables (cont)

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- Sectoral segregation
  - Sectors (NACE Rev.2)
  - % of women in each sector(national average) (Eurostat)
- Work characteristics
  - Contract type (indefinite contract vs others)
  - Working hours (capped at 60)
  - Size of the company
  - Public company



# Independent variables (cont)

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- Industrial relations variable
  - Existence of a employee representative on the premises
  - Opportunity to express their views to the management
    - “At your workplace, does management hold meetings in which you can express your views about what is happening in the organisation” – HPS
  - Support from management
- Family structure
  - Lives with child under 18, preschool child <6
  - Lives with partner
- Age, education level also included



# National level data

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- Family policies
  - Family policy expenditure as % of GDP (Eurostat)
  - Effective parental leave: duration of the parental leave (including maternity, paternity)\*income replacement rate these months (Multilinks)
  - Childcare coverage for 0-3 year olds (eurostat)
- Female labour market participation rate
- European Value Study 2008: Gender norms
- Service sector size
- GDP per capita, and Work Centrality controlled for



# Modelling strategy

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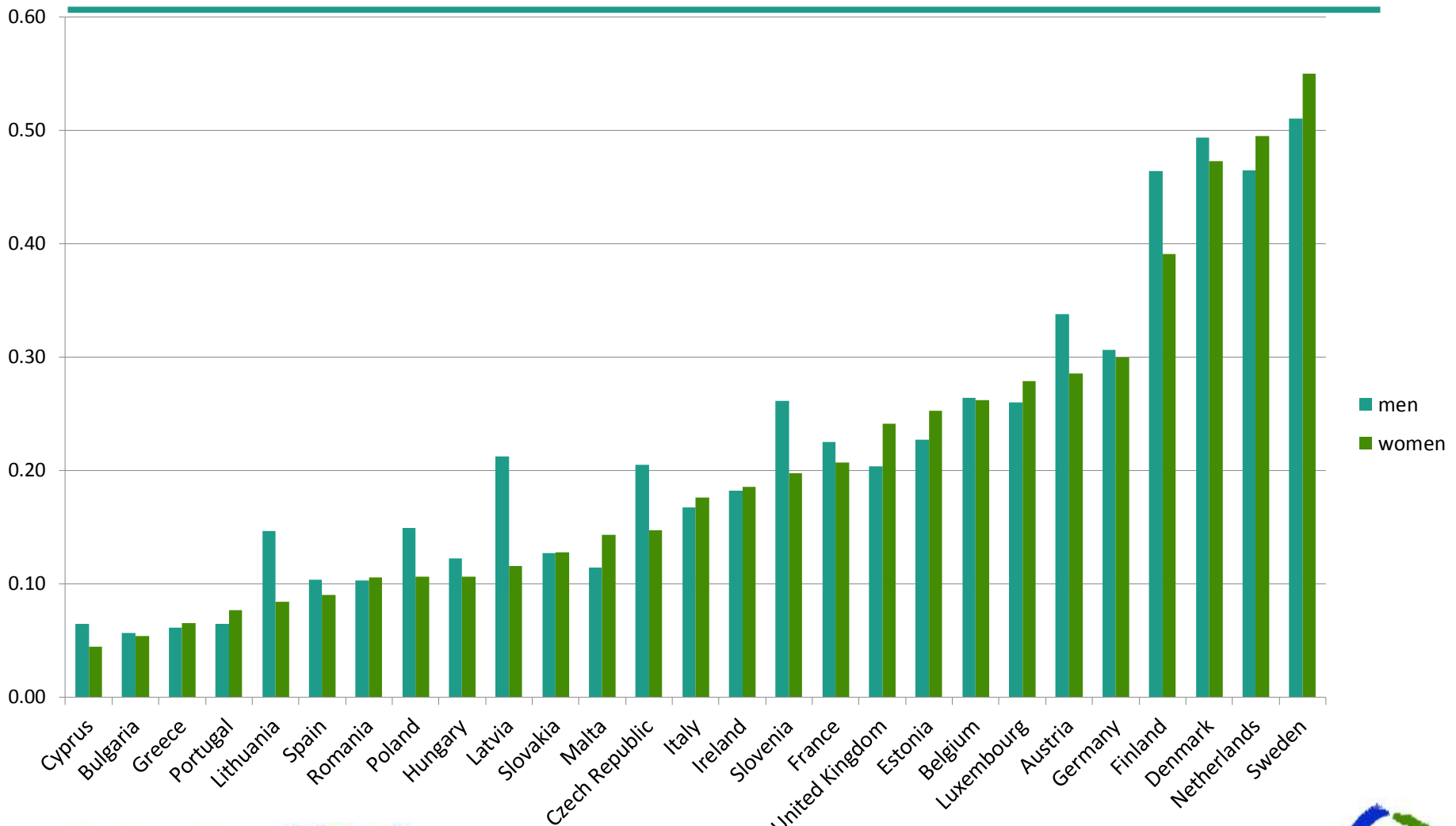
- **Multilevel modelling** technique
  - Individuals are embedded in countries
  - Country/contexts effect the access individuals have to flexitime
  - include determinants from different levels at the same time (individual(inc. organisational), country)
  - Examine country level determinants after having controlled for individual level composition
  - Can only include 2 (maybe 3) context variables at a time due to lack of country level cases



# Results



# Gender differences in access to flexitime



# Explaining access to flexitime: General population (1)

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- When other individual level factors are not included, women less likely to have access to flexitime
- However, once individual level (organisational factors) are included, there are no gender differences
- Gender of the boss/superior also insignificant when other individual level factors are controlled for



# Explaining access to flexitime: General population (2)

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- Occupational segregation
  - Workers in jobs with equal number of men and women with same job title likely to have access to flexitime > mostly men's jobs > mostly women's jobs
  - Occupations with higher concentration of women have more access
  - Higher occupational groups have more access – almost linear relationship





# Explaining access to flexitime: General population (3)

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- Sectoral segregation
  - Higher concentration of women in sector decreases likelihood of gaining access to flexitime
  - Two female dominated sectors (education, health and social services) are the ones with least access to flexitime
  - Equal represented sectors : financial services, public administration, Other services sectors have the highest likelihood of access
  - Male dominated sectors: Industry, construction – somewhat in the middle



# Explaining access to flexitime: General population (3)

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- Other factors
  - Older, higher educated have more access
  - Larger companies more access
  - Allowed to express opinions, support for management increase access
  - Having a preschool child increases access
- Strange results...
  - Having an indefinite contract reduces access?
  - Public companies(tried different coding), those with employee reps reduces access



# Modelling men and women separately (1)

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- Occupational segregation
  - Mostly **male job positions, bad for men** – not for women  
→ flexibility stigma prevalent in male dominant jobs for men
  - *Female jobs bad for both men and women*
- Sectoral segregation
  - *Female dominated sectors bad for women* not for men
  - Cost or low expectation of gains?
  - (when using dummies, women in general less likely to gain access to flexitime – but industry, construction, public admin women are able to gain more access)



# Modelling men and women separately (2)

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- Men
  - **Allowed to express opinions increases likelihood**
  - Having an ER reduces likelihood
  - Long working hours linked to men's access to flexitime : outcome? (Lott)
  - → a part of HPS system
- Women
  - **Management support significant**
  - Having a preschool child increases likelihood
  - → part of support for working families



# Cross-national variance in the gendered nature

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- Larger service sector → women gain more relative access
- Large service sectors → women's work penalty for women not as detrimental
- Long parental leave → women's work penalty stronger



# Conclusion

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- There is a gendered nature in the way flexitime is provided to workers – but more to do with occupational and sectoral contexts
- Female dominated jobs are bad for everyone, and female dominated sectors are bad for women
- Flexitime not only provided for family demand reasons → high performance strategy, and especially for men
- When employers do not feel that they will gain much out of the provision, they might not provide it even if the worker has great need for it



# Further steps

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- National level variation in women's work penalty
- Outcomes are different



# Thank you!

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