



Work Autonomy,  
Flexibility and  
Work-Life Balance

# Explaining the provision of flexitime in companies across Europe

Flexible Careers Network Workshop  
Friday. 14<sup>th</sup> of November, Leeds

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# Outline of the presentation

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- Background
  - Larger project
- Theories
  - Theories
  - Hypotheses
- Methods & Data
- Analysis outcomes



# Background



# Flexible working as a buzz word...



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## HBR Blog Network

### Winning Support for Flexible Work

by Amy Gallo | 4:04 PM December 1, 2010

Comments (19)



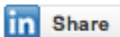
21



3



4



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Management experts have **long predicted** the demise of the standard 9-to-5 workday. Thanks to internet and mobile technology, we can now work where and when we want, they argue. So, why are so many people still sticking to those traditional hours, or more likely an extended version of them? The reality is that while flexible work arrangements have become more popular, few companies have an official policy or program. And even fewer managers are open to or equipped to handle employees with alternative schedules. But this doesn't mean you should give up on the idea of work flexibility. It just means the onus is on you to propose a plan that works for you, your boss and your company



# Clegg announces flexible hours plans

Deputy prime minister to unveil scheme to stop British women being 'locked out of the workplace' and boost GDP

Patrick Wintour

Sunday 11 November 2012 21.45 GMT

31 comments

Share this article



📷 Nick Clegg's plan aims to put to use the million women missing from the UK economy. Photograph: Barbara Lindberg/Rex Features



# Yet...

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- Not much know in a cross-national comparative perspective – lack of data
- Especially using company level data
- Which companies provide flexitime?
- Do contexts matter? Policies, demands, resources, agency?
- Changes over time 2004-2009 (- 2013)



# WAF project

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- ESRC funded project
- Running Dec 2013 – Dec 2016
- Examining the influence of flexitime on work-life balance (work family conflict)
- Focus on the varying impact based on context (family, work, company and country)
- 1<sup>st</sup> phase looks at the provision of flexitime
- 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> phase looks at the influence of contexts



# Theories





# Working time flexibility (flexi-time)

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- Ability to start and end work days flexibly
- Ability to accumulate hours to take days/weeks off (calculated across the year, or years) – working time accounts
- Dependent on data



# Flexitime provision

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- Most examine the use/provision of flexitime
- Other aspects of measuring provision
  - Proportion of workers covered
  - The ability to accumulate hours
  - Ability to take days off



# Organisational factors

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- Demand
  - composition of workers (skilled, women)
- Structural/resources
  - Company size, sector, public sector, good economic condition
- Agency
  - ER rep
  - Strong unions, attitude of ER
  - Manager's attitude
  - Managerial composition



# Context factors

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- Family policies
  - Institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell) – influence of institutions as coercive powers
  - crowding out theory (e.g. Etzioni) – welfare state policies crowd out occupational systems
- Industrial relations
  - Power resource theory, contagion from the left (Korpi)
  - VoC (Soskice & Hall) – competitive strategies
- National level demand
  - More women in the labour market
- Norms
  - Gender norms, Work ethics



# Context factors cont.

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- Economic condition
  - Affluence – more resources to use for flexitime & Mincer's theory of preference towards leisure
  - Labour market condition – negotiation positions of employers & employees (recruitment/retainment strategy)
  - Recession, economic cycle
- Economic structures (diffusion)
  - Service, public sector diffusion of practices



# Data & Methods



# European Company Survey

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- 2004(EU15+6 new accession countries), 2009(EU27+3candidate) approximately 1000 companies per country
- Representative of companies with more than 10 employees (excludes micro companies)
- Provision of flexitime
  - “Does your establishment offer employees the possibility to adapt - within certain limits - the time when they **begin or finish their daily work according to their personal needs or wishes?**”
  - Possibilities to accumulate hours, take hours, days/weeks off
- The proportion of workers covered by the scheme



# Definition

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- Flexitime – whether the company provides it for at least 1 employee
- Flexipro – the proportion of workers covered when flexitime is provided
- Flexihrs – the ability to accumulate hours to work shorter and longer days when flexitime is provided





# ECS continued..

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- Workforce composition: women, skilled
- Size, sector(industry), public sector
- Management approach in WLB (only in 2004)
  - Company should take into consideration the private responsibilities of its employees in its work organisation and working time regulations
- Industrial relations
  - ER representative exists
  - Collective agreement on working time (in 2004)
- Performance
  - Economic condition



# National level data

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- Family policy expenditure(EUROSTAT)
- Industrial relations: density, collective bargaining coverage, centralisation (ICTWSS)
- female labour market participation rate(EUROSTAT)
- Norms: ISSP 2002, EVS 1999, 2008
- Unemployment rate, service sector % (Eurostat), size of public sector (ECS)



# Modelling strategy

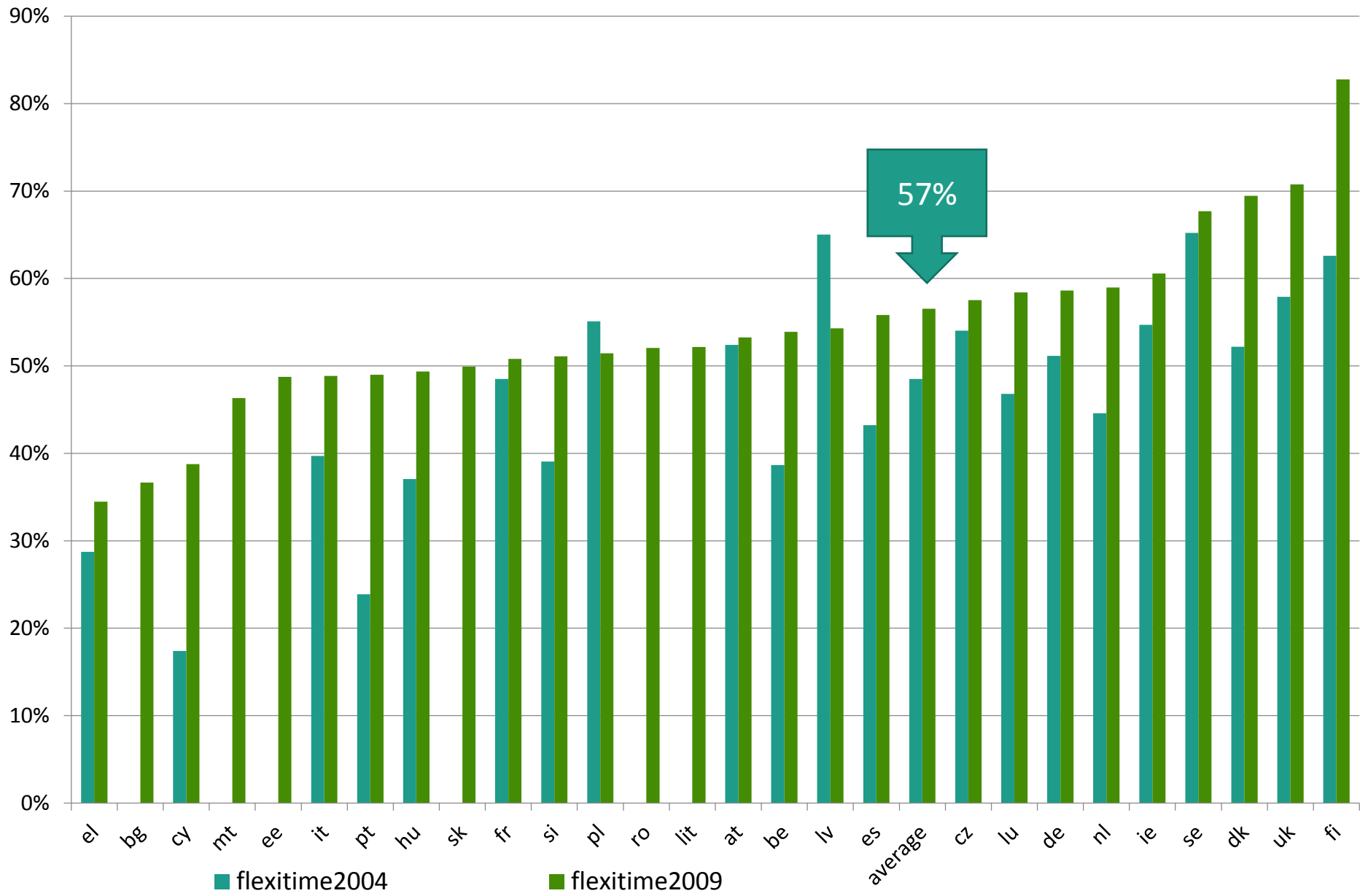
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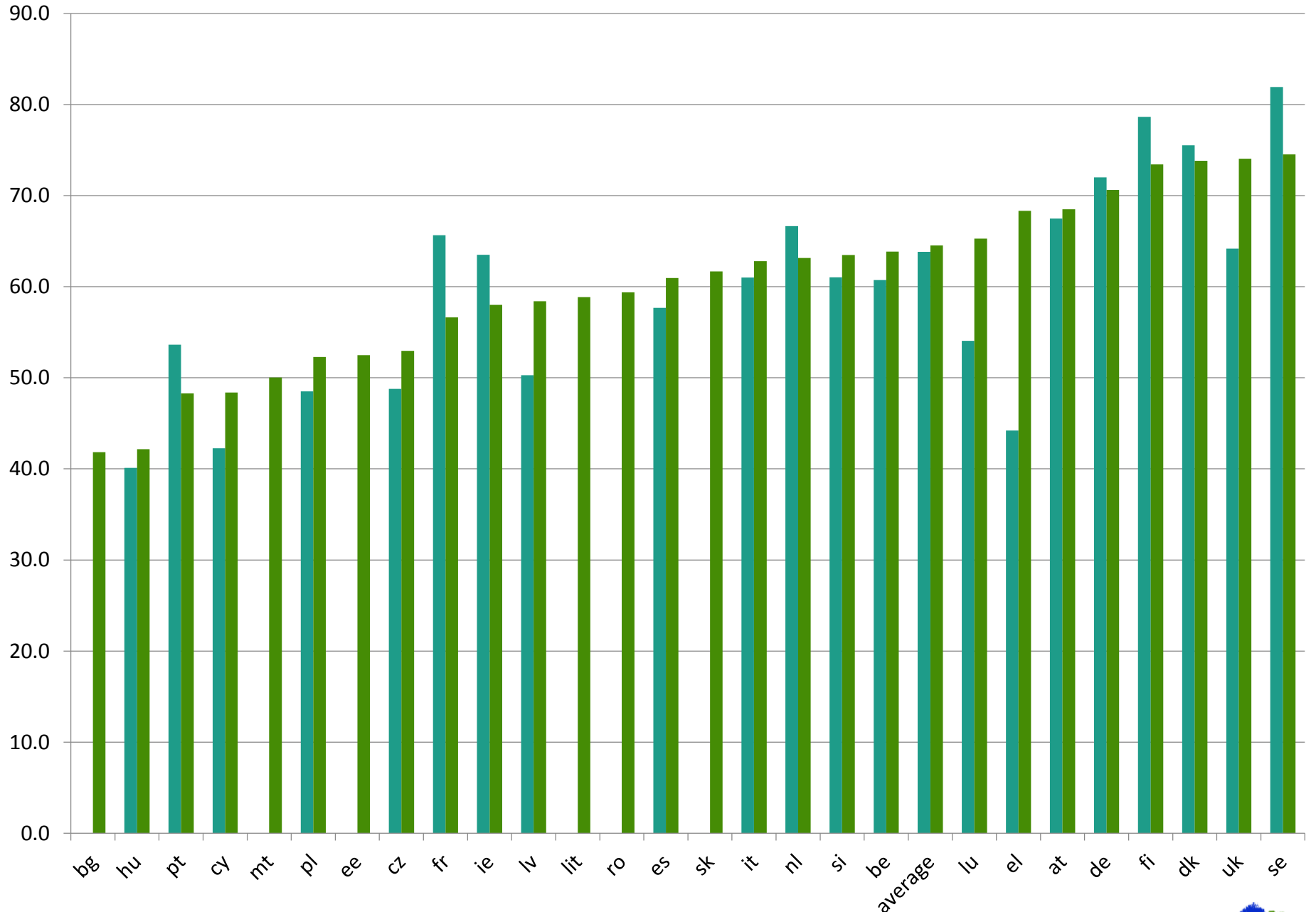
- **Multilevel modelling** technique
  - Companies are embedded in countries
  - Country/contexts effect the way companies behave
  - include determinants from different levels at the same time (company, country)
  - Examine country level determinants after having controlled for company level composition
  - Can only include 2 (maybe 3) at a time due to lack of country level cases



# Analysis results







# Provision of flexitime

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- Northern European countries + UK
  - – larger number of companies provide it, provide it to a larger group of workers within the company & use it flexibly(*not uk*)
- Southern European + some Eastern European (bg, ee, hu)
  - Smaller number of companies provide it, provide it to a smaller group of workers & not able to use it to accumulate hours/take days off



# Country level determinants

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- Flexitime
  - ICC (variance attributed to the country level)– 7% in 2009, 9% in 2004 – 8% when company characteristics are taken into account
  - In 2009, Female labour market participation + GDP per capita + Work Centrality most relevant (58% of total variance) (also for 21 countries) – (but also family policy expenditure)
  - In 2004, family policy expenditure + size of the public sector (42% of total variance) , (but also Female labour market participation rate, GDP capita)





# Country level determinants cont.

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- Flexitime proportion
  - ICC (variance attributed to the country level) – 6% in 2009, 8% in 2004 – 8% and 9% (withcomp)
  - In 2009 **Female labour market participation** + GDP per capita most relevant (59% of total variance)
  - In 2004 also Female labour market participation + **GDP per capita** (61%) ,but also collective bargaining coverage (71%) // Fem lab participation + GDP growth (66%)



# Conclusion

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- Flexitime provision can be largely explained by the national level demand for such arrangements (reverse causality?), the work centrality culture of the country, and the resources countries have to address it
- Via Mincer's theory affluence indicate individual's preferences for leisure and changes in the orientation of work
- However, even when work centrality is controlled for, impact of GDP exists



# Conclusions cont.

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- The provision of flexitime was more driven by national policy efforts/institutional factors & public sector sizes in 2004... but more demand and resources structures in 2009. why?
- Industrial relations, economic cycles, gender norms, economic structure not as relevant
- Family policies important as well, but (fully?) mediated by female labour market participation



# Thank you!

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For comments & questions  
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