

Unsocial Hours: Unsocial Families?



Working Time and Family Wellbeing

Report by Clare Lyonette and Michael Clark

BIOGRAPHIES

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WORKING TIME AND FAMILY WELLBEING

Executive Summary

This report is an international literature survey, focusing on the impact of long and atypical hours working on family life, but particularly on the effects on couple relationships and the wellbeing of children. It is concentrated mainly on Europe and the UK, but quotes other sources where little relevant European work is available. The Relationships Foundation has had a strong research interest in this area for a number of years and has previously commissioned two studies with the National Centre for Social Research; firstly, the evidence for the extent of weekend working and, secondly, on its impact on family life. The Foundation's sister body in Australia, Relationships Forum, undertook a similar exercise two years ago looking at Australian and Canadian research and found an emerging body of evidence showing that long and atypical working patterns are associated with dysfunctional family environments. This project seeks to examine the European and US evidence for similar associative patterns.

The report benefits from the availability of up-to-date and rich statistical material on working patterns across Europe. It sets out the major social trends bearing on employment policy and practice in the EU, particularly where these specifically relate to working hours. It outlines the policy context both within the EC generally and specifically in the UK, setting out responses of EC and UK Government to major employment trends in the past 10-15 years and particularly those designed to support the family.

The report describes the prevalence of long and atypical working hours, and levels of work intensity, using international comparisons and focusing particularly on the UK. It then goes on to summarise the impact of these specific work patterns on personal health and wellbeing and examines work-life compatibility issues from this standpoint. The following chapters expand the review to include the impact of working patterns on couple relationships and relationships with children and associated child wellbeing. The final chapter summarises the main conclusions and makes key recommendations in the UK context about how the impact of working time on family life might be ameliorated as a basis for further discussion.

It is the expressed hope of the Relationships Foundation that the UK Government, employers and leading policy advisers will engage seriously with the need to address the negative impacts on family life which many employees experience. This can only increase the wellbeing of families, make a positive contribution to reducing couple relationship breakdown and improve the social, emotional and educational wellbeing of children.

Specific Conclusions

Long and atypical working hours in Europe and the UK

- The UK has one of the highest proportions of men working long hours of all EU countries - 41.4 hours per week, against an EU average of 39.5.
- Men with children work longer hours than men without children. Fathers are also more likely than mothers to start work early or finish late, and the vast majority of mothers with long-hours partners would prefer them to work fewer hours.
- 3.3 million people in the UK now work long hours (more than 50 hours per week) – this is the highest level in Europe.
- Managerial and professional men and women are most likely to work long hours, and are also most at risk of high rates of work intensity characterised by less idle time, working harder and faster, greater use of performance appraisals and goals and just-in time processes.
- More men in the UK work at weekends than in any other western European country, with a high proportion of women in the UK also working on Saturday or Sunday.
- In an overall European index of unsocial hours working (combining night, Saturday and Sunday work), the UK had significantly the highest proportion of employees working such hours.
- Those with lower levels of education and lower incomes are more likely to work at weekends. Part-time employees, those working in operative and unskilled occupations, and those with lower incomes are most likely to work shifts.
- Three quarters of mothers working at weekends say that weekend work is a job requirement, not a personal choice, and the vast majority would prefer not to do so.

The impact of working patterns on health outcomes

- Long and atypical hours are associated with poor physical and mental health outcomes for both men and women. Those with higher job demands, and less control of their work methods and working hours suffer most.
- Rising work stress is costing employers an estimated £3.76 billion per year, with around 13 million working days lost for this reason. Almost 40% of people drawing incapacity benefits have a mental health condition, costing around £12 billion pa.
- Experiencing work-life conflict negatively affects an individual's health outcomes and there is some evidence that women's health is affected more than men's. Those working very long hours and in higher level occupations tend to be the most affected, but those working atypical hours also report higher levels of incompatibility between work and family than those who do not work at atypical times.

The impact of working patterns on couple relationships

- Those reporting higher role conflict (i.e. the subjective sense that job and family life interfere with each other) also report poorer relationships with their partners. Those who report high work-to-family conflict are also less likely to interact socially with their families, even when they are at home.
- Around 30% of employed people in the UK report that their job prevents them spending enough time with their partner/family, the third highest figure in Europe. It is perhaps significant that Britain currently also has the third highest divorce rate in Europe, as well as the highest proportion of single parent families of the countries covered.
- We know that working couples prioritise their children's needs above their own, so many spend little time together as a couple. Many engage in shift-parenting to share childcare and minimise costs, which further reduces time spent as a couple. Research finds that shift-parenting has particularly negative effects for women, especially if fathers do not combine childcare with extra domestic work.
- Low-income families may be at special risk of relationship breakdown when working atypical hours, due in part to a lack of affordable childcare and lower control over start and finishing times at work.

Effects on children of long and atypical working hours

- Both mothers and fathers working long hours feel that they do not have enough time to spend with their children, although fathers overall spend less time with children than mothers. Fathers working long hours *and* feeling overloaded report more negative effects than other fathers on their relationships with adolescent children.
- Although professional and managerial employees are more likely to work long hours and so have less time available to spend with children, atypical work schedules have been found to be associated with greater parent stress, which in turn has a negative effect on parenting.
- Those in lower-level occupations are also more vulnerable to psychological distress and lower self-esteem, which can then impact upon children. Children whose parents are in lower occupational groups may therefore be more affected by parents working atypical hours than children whose parents are in other occupational groups.
- Levels of parental satisfaction with working atypical schedules are lower than for those who work standard hours, even when working hours are relatively low. Parents who feel they have little choice over their working arrangements *and* work long atypical hours also view the effects of work on family life as primarily negative.

- Sunday work appears to affect time spent with children more than any other form of atypical work, with reading, playing and homework help being the activities most affected by both long working hours and atypical working schedules.
- Relationships with children may be more negatively affected when fathers work atypical schedules or shift work than when mothers work the same schedules, although mothers who work at atypical times spend less time on key activities with their children than other mothers. Parents do not appear to make up for time lost by atypical working patterns by spending more time with children on another day or at other times.
- According to the 2006 UNICEF study, children in the UK have the lowest levels of wellbeing of all affluent western countries and are among those most likely to engage in early alcohol consumption, early sexual intercourse and other risky behaviours. There is insufficient evidence to be sure as to whether these behaviours vary with the occupational class of their parents, but it would appear very likely from the data that there are negative impacts on children of both long and unsocial working hours, which contribute to the behaviours described.

Recommendations

Our findings suggest that the issue of working time has significant implications for government family policy as well as employment policy. Employment practices have real implications for the lives of ordinary families and the wellbeing of children. Analysis of future employment trends suggests that by 2020, around one in four of the adult population is likely to be working significantly outside what have been regarded as normal working hours.

We deliberately focus on measures to help both individuals, and particularly working families, to achieve a better work-life balance and to spend more time together as a family unit. We believe that the relational benefits of so doing, when set against the negative effects on couple and family relationships of working long and/or atypical hours, are potentially significant. In particular, we consider there are benefits to parental health and wellbeing in having a weekly rest day when time can be spent with the family, as well as for employers in having a workforce that is healthier and more highly motivated.

It is clear from the report that the extent of unsocial hours working in the UK is the highest in Europe. Working unsocial hours has a significant impact on peoples' lives in a number of areas. Firstly, there is clear evidence that working at unsocial hours, particularly at weekends, reduces the amount of time that parents spend with children, both individually and, where there are two parents, as a whole family. Relatively few parents make up that lost time on other days. In aggregate, therefore, children of parents who work at weekends spend significantly less time with their parents than children whose parents do not work at weekends. We know that family time together and activities such as eating, reading and playing together are fundamental to a child's health and educational development. Secondly, the report clearly demonstrates that working unsocial hours also has a detrimental impact on both the physical and mental health of adults and on the couple relationship. All this makes it highly likely that working unsocial hours does have a significant detrimental effect on children.

It is therefore essential in our view that legislation is introduced to allow a shared weekend family day off.¹ Existing working time legislation allows two days off per fortnight, but gives the employer the discretion, as part of the employment contract, as to when those two days can be taken. In principle, therefore, we consider that any parent working over 15 hours should have the right to one day off per week.

We therefore recommend a Family Day Bill which would entitle all parents to one weekend day off per week. Giving parents the right to one weekend day off would mean that more parents can spend time together and with their children. We believe this is logically the next step in the series of measures introduced by the present Government to support family life.

The report also makes clear, as noted, that the UK has one of the highest proportions in Europe of employed men who work very long hours. These are associated with poor physical and mental health outcomes for both men and women, particularly work stress. Those employees working long hours are most likely to report incompatibility between work and family.

The report puts forward evidence that best practice alone will not bring about a substantial change in hours worked. Nor are there any ‘magic bullets’ available. The sensitive political issues associated with wider employment policy questions, particularly in a recession, argue for a major review of working time law and practice.

We further recommend that the Government should sponsor a review of current legislation and practice on working hours on which all interested parties should be representative to explore ways of reducing average UK working hours. The review should take account of

- (a) the costs borne by the taxpayer arising from impacts on mental and physical health and family relationships**
- (b) international experience and research findings**
- (c) relative productivity levels in both Europe and the UK.**

¹ For a fuller statement of the case and the proposed content of the Bill, see the Relationships Foundation pamphlet ‘Unsocial Hours:Unsocial Families’, published in March 2009.

PREFACE

Context

The impact of long and atypical hours on family life has been a focus of significant research across the high income world, particularly over the last 10 to 15 years. There have been a number of key factors fuelling this interest:

The trend towards increases in average working hours across high income economies from the early 1990s onwards, driven by labour market shortages, increased competitiveness, and the associated desire for increased productivity. This trend has been a particular factor in the professional and managerial sectors.

The desire by UK employers for greater labour market productivity and flexibility, combined with the entry of significantly increased numbers of women into the workforce, partly as a result in the UK of Government incentives being applied, has meant that work at atypical times has increasingly become the norm. One result has been that family-friendly policies have been adopted by a number of high income economies, including enhanced maternity and paternity benefits, support/subsidy for childcare and a growth in flexible working (e.g., part-time work, compressed hours, term-time working, job sharing, home-working, amongst others). For example, the UK has partly led the way in introducing the right to ask for flexible working for parents of children under six and parents of disabled children (2003), with employers being given a duty to seriously consider their requests.

The significant rise in service sector jobs in most western economies has meant a marked growth in the number of jobs where low skilled and female workers are employed. These jobs are concentrated in the retail, leisure, hotels and restaurants, and financial service sectors, and are characterised by atypical hours and, in a number of cases, by long working hours.

Increased awareness, based on research, of the health and safety impact of long and atypical working hours on employees. Health and safety problems which arise include a greater propensity to accidents, increased sickness absence and varying levels of stress. These outcomes result either from long working hours, lack of breaks, work intensity, lack of consistency in working hours, and instability and uncertainty in the working environment. Concern about these impacts was the primary driver behind the introduction of the European Working Time Directive in the mid 1990s.

Patterns of commuting to work also contribute significantly to lengthening the working day and increased levels of stress for employees.

Work intensity in a managerial and a professional environment has been accentuated, firstly by advances in new technology, which have resulted in the inclusion of the workplace into the home and leisure environment through the ubiquitous 'Blackberry'; and, secondly, by a culture of 'presenteeism' in many workplaces from which it is difficult to break out (Leighton, 2005).

Greater concern about wellbeing and quality of life issues and the importance of parents spending time with their children. Experts on working trends 20-30 years ago predicted significantly increased amounts of leisure time for most people in the 1990s and 2000 onwards, as work became more automated and productive. This prediction has singularly failed to be the case. Indeed, the opposite is true, in that levels of personal satisfaction and wellbeing have markedly reduced.

Scope of Study

The Relationships Foundation is a think tank whose goal is to research and advocate the need for a relationships-based approach to public policy. It is characterised by detailed research, often employing original ideas and policy proposals, and actively promotes its findings with Government, policy makers and political parties. For a number of years, the Foundation has had a particular interest in the impact of long and atypical working hours on family life. This originally derived from its research and campaigning work in the 1980s and early 1990s on the effects of liberalising Sunday trading hours on the quality of family life for retail and support staff. This led to a growing interest in research in this area and collaboration with the National Centre for Social Research on two significant projects looking at the impact of unsocial hours, particularly at weekends, on family life:

In 2004 a study was published ‘Keep Time for Children: the incidence of weekend working’ which used Labour Force Survey data to investigate the extent of parental working at weekends (Barnes and Bryson, 2004)

In 2006, a follow-up study was published ‘Working atypical hours: what happens to family life?’ This work used data from the Time Use Survey to look at how parents and children used their time, with a particular focus on unsocial working hours (Barnes, Bryson and Smith, 2006)

Findings from these reports have been widely disseminated through the Foundation’s ‘Keep Time for Children’ project, which has campaigned for increasing rights to ask for flexible working for all parents and for employers to be required to grant a weekend day off to all employed parents.

The publication of this work followed the growth of an increasingly rich and diverse literature in the UK on the effects of work on family life, particularly through a programme of research funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and published between 2000 and 2003 (Dex, 2003). However, although these studies synthesised research findings on a wide range of subjects related to work and family life (including childcare, elder care, and flexible working), they did not address factors linking working patterns to family breakdown and other indicators of family dysfunction.

The Relationships Foundation's partner organisation in Australia, Relationships Forum, was interested in using these insights to investigate linkages between working patterns and family life in Australia. These were key political issues during the later years of the Howard government 1996-2007, when existing IR laws and protections for employees were relaxed or modified to allow employers to adopt more flexible and less structured working arrangements. The Forum published a report in March 2007 'An Unexpected Tragedy: evidence for the connection between parental working and family breakdown in Australia'(available on www.relationshipsforum.org.au). This report sought to establish whether there is a link between changes in Australian working patterns and aspects of wellbeing associated with relationships, particularly those in families, but also including friendships and participation in the wider community. It found a significant body of evidence suggesting that those people who work long and unsocial hours spend less quality time with their family and friends and many Australian families are suffering time pressure as a result of their work.

The Forum report further found an emerging body of research evidence, primarily from Australia and Canada, showing that long and atypical working patterns are associated with dysfunctional family environments, including:

- Negative health outcomes for those working at these times, particularly if they are parents;
- Strained family relationships;
- Parenting marked by anger, inconsistency and ineffectiveness and, critically, both long/atypical hours and dysfunctional environments are associated with:
- Reduced child wellbeing.

Aims of Present Study

The aim of this project is to prepare a comprehensive overview of relevant research literature, with a focus on the UK and Europe, on the social impacts of long/atypical working hours and work intensity, particularly on couple relationships and family life, and the wellbeing of children. The research has involved a comprehensive trawl of international research literature embracing the UK and Europe, but also including the USA, especially where European sources were limited. Advice and help was sought from the Project Advisory Panel (see below), and also from key specialists in the fields of developmental psychology, the sociology of work and economics, all of whom have published extensively in these areas. Given the breadth and variety of literature on these issues, the report makes no claims to have fully covered all the research which has been published in these areas. Indeed, there continues to be a constant stream of new research focusing on these issues. However, we believe our report is a comprehensive coverage of available research and data on this theme.

Advisory Panel

The following experts have agreed to serve as members of a Panel to advise on the terms of reference, methodology and conclusions:

Professor Cary Cooper

Pro-Vice-Chancellor (External Relations) and Professor of Organisational Psychology and Health, Lancaster University

Professor Shirley Dex

Professor of Longitudinal Social Research in Education at the Institute of Education, University of London

Dr Ken Ong

Paediatric Endocrinologist, University of Cambridge

Dr Ceridwen Roberts

Senior Research Fellow, Department of Social Policy, University of Oxford

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Dr John Tripp

Clinical Senior Lecturer in Child Health, Peninsula Medical School, Universities of Exeter and Plymouth

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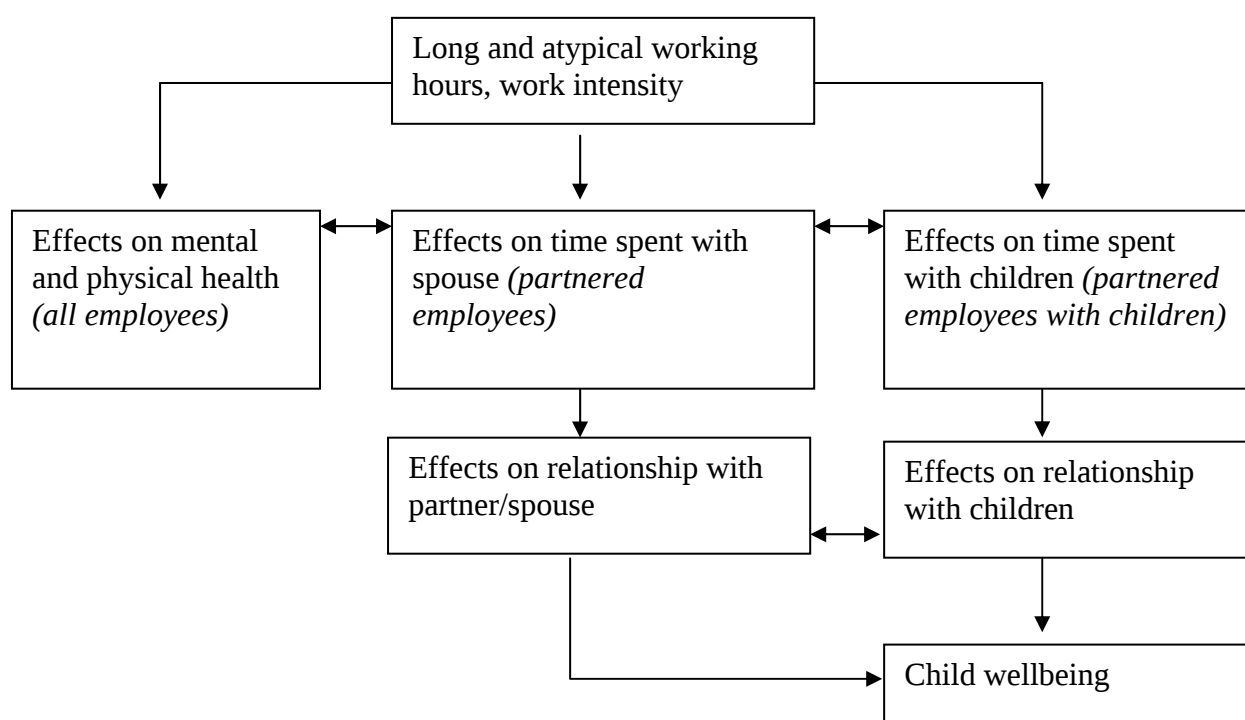
Introduction to the structure of the report

The report aims to raise awareness of the key issues involved by providing a synthesised review of the current literature, including academic journal articles, published books, government documents, as well as reports from various sources, including the EU, UNICEF and the OECD. Chapter 1 is an introduction to key policies implemented within Europe, providing an overview of the responses made by different national governments to parental employment. Chapter 2 then goes on to describe the prevalence of long and atypical working hours, and levels of work intensity, giving evidence of cross-national comparisons, followed by a focus upon the situation in the UK. Chapter 3 provides a summary of the evidence relating to the impact of these specific working patterns on individual health outcomes, both physical and mental, and also includes information about work-life compatibility and conflict. The following two chapters expand the review to include the impact of working patterns on couple relationships (Chapter 4) and relationships with children and associated child wellbeing (Chapter 5). The final chapter (Chapter 6)

summarises the evidence and provides some policy recommendations. Appendices are included at the end of the report to provide more detailed information on specific relevant policies within Europe.

We have set out in Figure 1.1 a guiding hypothesis which provides a framework for this report. It is anticipated that long and atypical working hours, and high work intensity, have the potential to affect all employees in terms of physical and mental health (Chapter 3). However, for those in couple relationships, time spent with spouse/partner may also be negatively affected, and for partnered parents, time spent with children may be even more severely affected (Chapters 4 and 5). The implications of both time deficits and increased work pressures are enormous, therefore, for individual working parents, but also in terms of the impact on couple relationships and, ultimately, children's wellbeing. Other factors are also likely to be important (e.g., specific work characteristics, social class) and these will be outlined and discussed during the course of the report.

Figure 1.1: Links between work schedules, physical and mental health, relationship outcomes and child wellbeing



The focus of this report is on couple relationships, as well as parents' relationships with children. The impact of long working hours and atypical hours on lone parents may vary considerably (see e.g. La Valle et al., 2002), and lone parent families are obviously extremely vulnerable to shortages of both time and money (Burton and Phipps, 2007). However, these important issues will not be covered in detail here because of the limitations of the scope of the report.

Chapter 1: Introduction to key policies within Europe and the UK

This chapter will introduce the reader to particular relevant policies implemented across Europe, in response to debates regarding adult and child wellbeing and work-life balance. Within the scope of this short report, it will not be possible to give a very detailed account of specific European policy debates and recent policy implementation. However, we will draw out the relevant key policy areas within the OECD and EU countries. What follows, therefore, is a summary overview of the broad policy areas within Europe, including where the UK stands in relation to other countries. As well as covering contemporary ongoing debates, this chapter includes evidence which goes back to the nineties. It should be noted that some issues identified here from this earlier period are already the focus of policy initiatives.

1.1 Family-friendly policies:

All western governments report that they wish to give parents more choice in finding their preferred work and family patterns, and have been increasingly investing in family-friendly policies to help achieve this aim. These include: improved access to good, affordable childcare, financial support for children, leave arrangements to care for children, and flexible workplace practices to promote work and family balance (OECD, 2007). In some countries, government-imposed policies have meant that family-friendly working has been granted to many low-income workers who previously had little bargaining power. For example, Sweden, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands allow parents with pre-school children the right to work reduced or part-time hours. However, with the very recent economic downturn, it is likely that the promotion of family-friendly workplaces and flexible working options will be increasingly questioned (see the proposals in the UK, below).

1.2 Maternal employment:

Promoting maternal employment is viewed as an important strategy for preventing child poverty, maintaining economic growth and ensuring the sustainability of pension and social protection systems. Indeed, the EU has set a formal target for each member country of at least 60% female employment by 2010. However, such policies do not always increase positive outcomes for children. For example, in the USA, strict work requirements have been imposed on 'welfare' mothers of young children, and some research suggests that this has resulted in worse school performance (Gennetian et al., 2002) and more troublesome behaviour among children (Brooks-Gunn et al., 2001). The USA also ranks second lowest in the recent analysis of child wellbeing among affluent countries (UNICEF, 2007) and more than one in five children currently live in poverty (OECD, 2007). In other countries, it is not financially worthwhile for many second earners (usually mothers) to engage in paid employment until children are at school. For example, in the UK and Ireland, formal childcare support, especially for very young children, may be unavailable (see Table A1, Appendix) and the costs of private childcare are often prohibitively expensive (OECD, 2007).

1.3 Child development:

The elimination of child poverty to improve child development is now an explicit policy objective in many countries. How such policy objectives are implemented within countries

varies greatly, however. For example, childcare policy in the Nordic countries emphasises the benefits of early learning in pre-school care and public childcare provision is extensive (see Table A1, Appendix). This effectively allows more women to work, so reducing financial dependence and increasing overall household income. Working parents in the Nordic countries (and France) also have average working hours which are below the OECD average. Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland are also among the top seven countries on all measures of child wellbeing, although France ranks only thirteenth (UNICEF, 2007). On the other hand, public childcare provision in the Netherlands is extremely low up until the age of three years (3%) and 60% of women work on a part-time basis. However, more recent childcare support payments to working parents in the Netherlands reflect labour supply concerns: for example, the rate of employment for lone parents is below 60% (OECD, 2007) and few employees work very long hours (see Chapter 2, Table 2.2). Nevertheless, the Netherlands ranks highest in child wellbeing among affluent countries (UNICEF, 2007; see Chapter 5).

1.4 Parental leave:

Parental leave policies have been shown to play an important role in attracting women into the labour force and maintaining their attachment to the labour force (Kamerman, 2000). Several researchers have also suggested that generous leave allowance following childbirth improves child health and cognitive development (Ruhm, 1998, 2000; Galtry, 2000), reduces maternal stress (Galtry, 2000) and provides an alternative to expensive (and/or low-quality) childcare for infants (Kamerman, 2000). Some evidence also suggests that generous parental leave leads to increased father time investment and involvement with children (Gauthier and Jatzius, 1997; Carlsen, 1998; Kamerman and Kahn, 1995). Previous research in the UK has also reported on the benefits for children of fathers' involvement in childcare (Dex and Ward, 2007).

1.5 A continuum of work/family support and the Nordic example:

The OECD (2007) found that systems which provide a continuum of support to families also perform best in helping them to reconcile family and work. Such supports include providing financial support to the parent who stays at home when the child is young, a childcare place at a young age (see Table A1, Appendix), followed by pre-school, school and out-of-school care. However, only a few OECD countries provide such a continuum of support, and not surprisingly, they come at a high price (e.g. around 0.6% of GDP is spent on providing parental leave and over 0.9% on childcare and pre-school education in the Nordic countries).

1.6 Reduced working hours and the French example:

Not only do the Nordic countries implement generous work-family policies, but employees also work fewer hours than the OECD average (OECD, 2007). France also offers generous access to child and out-of-school support, as well as having lower than average working hours. In 2000, France adopted a 35-hour work week to reduce unemployment (about 12% at the time) and to help working parents reconcile work and family life (Kamerman et al., 2003). Researchers have found positive effects for families (Estrade, Méda, & Orain, 2001; Méda & Orain, 2002): among those with children under 12, 43% of women and 35% of men report that they have found a better work/family balance since 2000, and 43% of parents report spending more time with their children on various activities. About 30% of parents with school-age children also find that they spend more time with them on their

school work. However, the new Sarkozy government has recently passed a law which effectively ends the compulsory 35-hour working week, arguing that the reduced hours policy was damaging France's economic competitiveness (July 2008, BBC World News). The new law allows companies to strike individual deals with unions or individual staff members on working hours, overtime and time off in lieu.

1.7 European Working Time Directive (EWTd):

The 1993 Working Time Directive was developed across Europe to promote improved health and safety at work, given the evidence that longer working hours can increase the risk of illness and accidents (see Chapter 2). The main provisions of the directive were: to set a maximum of 48 hours of work per week on average; to provide at least 4 weeks paid annual holiday; to allow a minimum rest period of 11 hours in each day and one day per week; to allow a rest break if the working day is over 6 hours; and to set a maximum of 8 hours of night work on average in each day.

Policy within the UK

1.8 The UK and the EWTd opt-out clause:

Various amendments have been made to the EWTd since 1993, but perhaps the most controversial aspect of the directive has been the implementation of the opt-out clause (Article 18) (www.etuc.org). This clause effectively allows employers to ignore the maximum 48-hour working week if workers sign an individual opt-out agreement, and if employers keep records of staff who work over 48 hours and also make these records available to the appropriate authorities. The opt-out clause has been widely misused in the UK over the past 10 years, with most workers unaware of the 48-hour limit. In addition, most long-hours workers have either not signed an opt-out agreement or claim that they were given no opportunity to do so (www.etuc.org). There have been several attempts made by the European Parliament to revise or abandon the opt-out clause, but these have so far been unsuccessful. However, a decision was taken in early November 2008 by the employment Social Affairs Committee of the European Parliament to scrap the Working Time Directive opt-out. This decision was debated and approved by the European Parliament on 17th December. However, the Social Affairs committee had previously voted for the opt-out to remain. This clash of views has triggered a short formal negotiation process, which has to be concluded by February 2009, with any agreed changes not taking effect until February 2012 at the earliest. Peter Mandelson, the UK Secretary of State for Business and Enterprise, has signified the UK's firm intention to protect the opt-out. He argues that it is essential for Britain's labour market flexibility, and that "to lose the ability to opt out will mean workers cannot boost their earning potential when some are already struggling with high food and energy prices" (The Times, November 6th 2008). The Institute of Directors is similarly arguing that the current recession means that employers need more flexibility, not less. The TUC, on the other hand, has welcomed the decision of the European Parliament.

1.9 Overtime work:

The rules within the UK regarding overtime work are already somewhat vague, and, instead of paying for overtime, some employers offer 'time off in lieu' (TOIL). The guidelines claim that this can be 'agreed between you (the employee) and your employer, and any time you

take off will normally be at a time that suits the employer. Some companies have rules on when time off can be taken, but others arrange time off on a case by case basis' (directgov website, 2008). The law does state, however, that an employee only has to work overtime if his/her contract says so, although the guidelines continue: 'even if (the contract) does (say so), you can't *usually* be forced to work more than an average of 48 hours per week. If you're told to work more than this and you don't want to, you should first take it up with your employer' (author's italics). It seems unlikely that many low-status, low-paid employees, especially in companies with little or no union representation, will have the ability, or the courage, to argue for reduced overtime, especially at a time when unemployment is rising rapidly.

1.10 Weekend work:

The requirement to work at atypical times (Saturdays, Sundays or at night) is a feature of the working conditions in many European establishments, including the UK. However, this requirement varies between countries, depending on the structure of the national economy and on the legal framework in relation to shop opening hours and working times, among other things (Eurofound, 2006). The UK clearly stands out amongst its European neighbours: almost 40% of UK establishments require their employees to regularly work on Saturdays, compared with an EU-21 average of 25%, and 27% require their employees to regularly work on Sundays, compared with a 15% EU average (Eurofound, 2007; see Chapter 2, Table 2.4). In the UK, the Sunday Trading Act (1994) regulates the Sunday opening hours of large shops, for six hours only between the hours of 10am and 6pm. Many companies operate a Time off in Lieu policy (TOIL; see also for overtime, above) for employees who work at weekends, allowing them to claim back extra time that they have worked by taking equivalent time off within a set period. However, any such scheme is a matter for individual contracts of employment, so there is often no statutory legal right to the time off. In many cases, individual contracts or staff handbooks include a clause, permitting the employer to expect the employee to work extra days without being able to claim anything back (e.g. "May occasionally be required to work weekends") (TUC website). Even when employees do receive time off in lieu, they are often on days during the week when children are at school, so minimising the time that parents can spend with their children and partners.

Certain rules do apply for those who work in a shop or in the betting industry, who are allowed to opt out of having to work on Sunday, even if their contract specifies that they have to, and the employer must advise the employee of this right within two months of hiring them (directgov, 2008). However, the rules for all workers also vary according to when the employee began work: those already in employment on 26th August 1994 (when the Act was enforced) may refuse to work on Sundays, whether or not their contracts required them to do so at the time, and they retain a continuing unconditional right to opt in or out again. Those recruited after 26th August 1994, whose contract did not require them to work on Sundays, may refuse any request from the employer to work on Sundays. Those recruited after 26th August 1994 must be given a written statement, within eight weeks of starting work, setting out their rights under the Sunday Trading Act 1994; these are that, although they have agreed to work on Sundays, they can opt-out of that agreement by giving three months written notice to the employer. On expiry of that notice, they can lawfully refuse to work on Sundays. These workers can opt-in and out again in the same way as those who started work before the Act's effective date (TUC website).

If the employee does decide to take the opt-out, however, the employer is not compelled to offer extra work on other days instead, resulting in an overall loss of income. Because the majority of those parents working at weekends are from low-income families (Barnes and Bryson, 2004), it seems unlikely that they will be able to afford to take a reduction in income, making the opt-out meaningless for most employees. It has been shown previously that those parents who report a lack of choice in working at atypical times are also those most likely to be dissatisfied with their working hours (Dex, 2003; La Valle et al., 2002; see also Chapter 5).

1.11 Family and employment policies:

Several new policies have been introduced since the 'New' Labour government first came to power in 1997. In 2000 the government introduced the Work Life Balance Challenge Campaign to encourage employers to be more family-friendly. The 1999 Employment Relations Act had already introduced Parental Leave rights, further enhanced by the 2001 Employment Bill. In addition, the main objective of the National Childcare Strategy (1998) was to increase the level and quality of childcare to promote child wellbeing and development, as well as offering parents greater opportunities to work. The Working Families' Tax Credit was also introduced in 1999 to extend financial support to working parents and extended in 2003 to provide help towards childcare expenses. In April 2003, the right to request flexible working for those with children under six was introduced (although it was not a legal requirement for employers to agree, as in many other European countries). The Work and Families Act of 2006 extended maternity and adoption pay from six to nine months from April 2007, towards the goal of offering new parents a year's paid leave by the end of the Parliament; extended the right to request flexible working to carers of adults from April 2007 (but see recent proposals below regarding the extension of this provision to those with children under 16); and has given employed fathers the right to up to 26 weeks Additional Paternity Leave (some of which could be paid, if the mother returns to work):

(www.berr.gov.uk/whatwedo/employment/employment-legislation/workandfamiliesact).

In spite of these new developments, however, the recent economic recession is likely to have a knock-on effect in terms of workplace and governmental policies aimed at relieving conflict between work and family. In the UK, there has been some political wobbling before the Government confirmed the extension of the right to ask for flexible working to parents of children under 16 in December 2008. Unlike many countries, this is not a legal requirement for employers, and parents are not legally entitled to part-time work, even though requests are usually granted (OECD, 2007). The lack of legislation effectively means that UK employers may be more likely to refuse such requests in such an uncertain climate.

These proposals also coincide with a new government programme to examine mental capital and wellbeing (www.foresight.gov.uk). Professor Cary Cooper, chair of the Foresight group's expert panel and an author of the latest report, said employees in the UK already work longer hours than in other European countries (see Chapter 2, section 1) and that workers might feel under pressure to work even longer hours, given the current economic climate. "We want more opportunities to request more flexible working arrangements. This is a business issue, it's not a soft issue. People who work flexibly can have more job satisfaction, be healthier and more productive." Professor John Beddington, the government's Chief Scientific Adviser and Director of the Foresight programme, added:

“Competition from abroad and uncertain economic times will drive people to work harder and smarter. Both will result in increasing demands made on individuals and the state.” The report notes that new forms of flexible working could help employees meet the conflicting demands of work intensity (see Chapter 2, section 2.3) and the increased need for people to look after older relatives.

In summary, there have been a variety of responses to debates regarding adult and child wellbeing and work-life balance within Europe and the OECD countries. In spite of common EU policy objectives relating to many of these issues, the way these policy objectives are implemented within countries varies enormously. In particular, the European Working Time Directive, and the implementation by the UK government of the opt-out clause, continues to provide employers with the right to ignore the basic tenets of the Directive.

Chapter 2: Long working hours, atypical work and levels of work intensity across Europe

Introduction

The increase in employment rates for women (and particularly married mothers) across Europe, North America and Australia since the 1970s, combined with the fact that married men tend to work longer hours than those who are unmarried, means that many couples with dependent children are now spending more time in the workplace than ever before. Not only are many parents working very long hours, but many others are regularly working 'atypical' or 'non-standard' hours such as early mornings and evenings/nights, as well as at weekends. At the same time, high levels of work intensity have been identified in many countries, with some experts arguing that these will increase further, given the recent economic downturn. Researchers have also examined whether or not there are 'compensations' or 'counterweights' for those countries with a high incidence of atypical working schedules (e.g., shorter working hours). For some countries with relatively high levels of atypical work, such as France, Finland, Sweden and Germany, this consideration may be relevant. However, Eurofound data (2007) showed that, for the UK, this was certainly not the case, as will be demonstrated in this chapter. Definitions of atypical working hours vary between studies and between countries. As a general guide, atypical work or non-standard work hours will include regular early mornings, evenings/night work, as well as regular Saturday and/or Sunday work. Similarly, definitions of long working hours vary between studies but in this report will generally be above 48 or 50 hours per week. Definitions of work intensity also vary and it has been described as a construct which is not well-developed in the literature (e.g., Green, 2004a). However, Green (2001) describes it as 'intensive work effort', whereas Burchell and Fagan (2004) focus on the 'speed of work'. Green and McIntosh (2001) described those employees with increased work intensity or effort as having less idle time (time between tasks), having to work harder now, needing more skills, greater use of performance goals or appraisals, use of total quality management and just-in-time processes, needing to work faster, as well as having more deadlines and more responsibility. This chapter will present recent data for Europe, and specifically the UK, on the prevalence of long working hours, atypical working hours and work intensityⁱ.

2.1 Long working hours – cross-national comparisons:

2.1.1 Average weekly hours:

The latest figures produced by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound, September 2008) show that the UK has the third highest average full-time hours in the EU-27 countries, at 41.4 hours per week. Only Bulgaria and Romania (two of the poorest countries which only joined the EU in 2007) are higher at 41.7 hours. In comparison, France has the lowest average at 37.7 hours, followed by Italy. The weekly average for the EU-15 countries is 39.5, almost two hours per week less than the UK average.

These latest figures are not surprising, as OECD data has demonstrated for several years that the UK is one of the countries with the highest full-time average weekly working hours in Europe. Table 2.1 summarises a cross-national comparison of average weekly full-time working hours for men and women, undertaken by the OECD in 2006, and demonstrates large country differences, with average hours ranging from 38.8 per week for all men and

women (Norway), to 44.1 per week (Australia)ⁱⁱ. The UK is third highest for both its average male figures (44.6 hours per week) and for its combined figures for men and women (42.9 hours per week).

Table 2.1: Average number of hours worked per week (employed men and women only in full-time employment)

	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>All</i>
Australia	45.9	41.1	44.1
Austria	44.7	40.9	43.3
UK	44.6	40.1	42.9
Spain	43.1	40.2	42.0
Italy	43.0	39.7	41.9
Portugal	42.3	40.3	41.4
Germany	42.2	39.3	41.1
France	42.4	38.7	40.9
Ireland	42.2	38.6	40.9
Belgium	41.9	38.7	40.8
Finland	41.9	38.8	40.4
Denmark	41.8	37.3	39.9
Sweden	41.3	38.0	39.8
Netherlands	40.4	36.4	39.3
Norway	39.8	37.2	38.8

OECD data sources, 2006

2.1.2 Very long working hours:

A focus on *average* working hours masks the number of individuals working *very* long hours, however. Table 2.2 demonstrates that there is a huge variation by country in the proportion of men and women working very long hours (defined here as over 50 hours per week; OECD 2005), ranging from Australia (28% of men, 9% of women) and the UK (25% of men, 7% of women), to Norway (8% of men, 2% of women) and the Netherlands (9% of men, 1.5% of women). Of the 25% of men in the UK working over 50 hours per week, 16% work between 50 and 59 hours and 9% work over 60 hours per week. For women in the UK, 5% work over 50 hours and 2% work over 60 hours per week (note that those men and women working fewer hours are not shown in the table but are included in overall percentages).

Table 2.2: Percentage of employed people aged 15-64 working long hours by gender and country (OECD 2005 data, Family database: www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database)

Country	45-49 hours		50-59 hours		60 hours or more		Total 50 hours +	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Australia	12	6	15	5	13	4	28	9
UK	16	6	16	5	9	2	25	7
Austria	10	5	12	4	12	4	24	8
France	8	4	10	4	9	3	19	7
Spain	10	5	12	4	6	3	18	7
USA	7	4	11	5	6	2	17	7
Italy	10	5	11	4	6	2	17	6
Canada	5	2	8	2	7	2	15	4
Belgium	5	3	7	3	7	2	14	5
Portugal	9	5	7	4	5	3	12	7
Denmark	10	5	9	2	6	1	15	3
Germany	4	2	7	2	7	2	14	4
Finland	5	3	7	3	6	2	13	5
Ireland	6	2	8	1	7	1	15	2
Sweden	3	4	5	1	4	1	9	2
NL	1	0.4	4	0.5	5	1	9	1.5
Norway	4	2	4	1	4	1	8	2

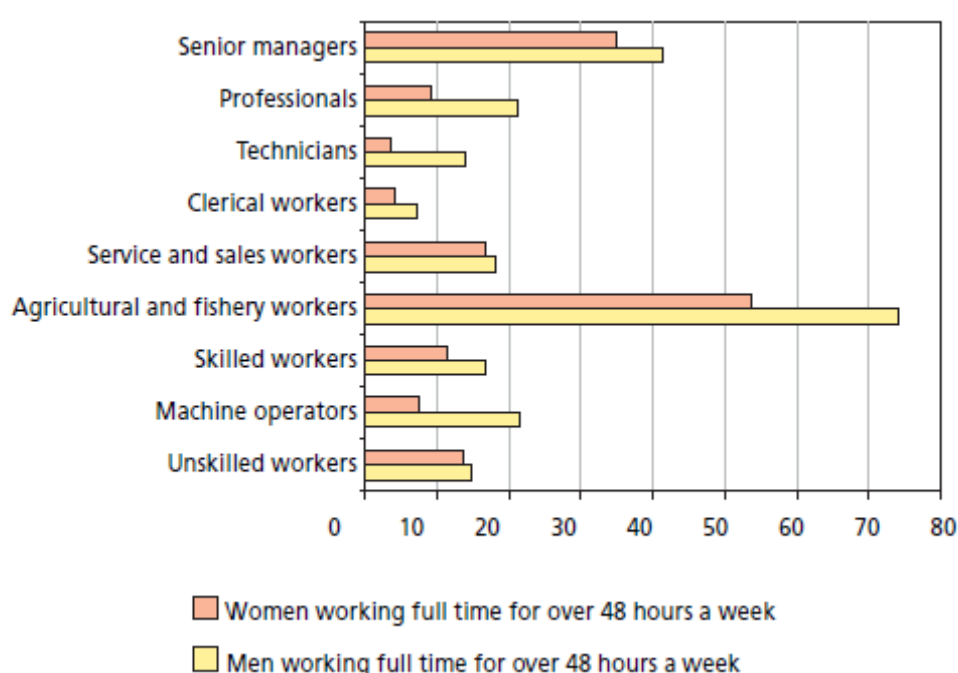
Note: definition of usual weekly working hours. No data available on parents' working hours. M=male; F=female. ⁱⁱⁱ

An in-depth analysis of the Third European Working Conditions Survey (Boisard et al., 2003b) reported similar findings regarding the proportion of employees working long hours^{iv}. When all employees are included (i.e., full-time and part-time), the percentage of those working over 45 hours per week in the UK stands at 20.4% (still the highest amongst the European countries covered). However, when only those working full-time are included, the figures for the UK are even more distinct, with almost 32% of full-time employees working more than 45 hours per week, compared with 19% in Finland, 15% in Sweden and Denmark, and only 11% in Belgium. Further analyses by Boisard et al. (2003b) also demonstrated that the proportion of employees working over 10 hours a day for 15

days or more per month is highest in the UK at 10%, compared with only 2% in Denmark, 3% in Sweden and 4% in Germany and Finland. Boisard et al. (2003b) also demonstrated that those working long hours are more likely to be senior executives (39%), followed by agricultural workers (17%) and industrial workers (17%), compared with 13% of technicians and service/sales employees, and only 5% of those working in offices.

More recent analyses of the 2005 Fourth European Working Conditions Survey (Burchell et al., 2007) show that for full-time workers, men are more likely than women in all occupations to work very long hours. Apart from agricultural and fishery workers, managers (both male and female) are most likely to work very long hours, followed by male professionals and male machine operatives (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Occupational profile of full-time workers working over 48 hours per week by sex, EU-27 (%)



Source: EWCS 2005, as reported in Burchell et al., 2007

2.2 Long working hours - UK focus:

2.2.1 Women working long hours:

Over 43% of women in the 2008 UK Labour Force Survey work part-time (30 hours per week or less). The highest proportion in any European country was the Netherlands at around 62%. However, OECD figures above show that the UK also has one of the highest rates of women working 45 hours per week or more (13%), demonstrating a huge dispersion in working hours amongst UK women (see also Perrons, 2006; Bishop, 2004). La Valle et al. (2002) similarly demonstrated that, in a representative sample of UK working parents in 2001, 13% of mothers worked over 40 hours per week, and of these, 6% worked 49 hours or more. Using the UK Time Use Survey, Barnes et al. (2006) also found that 7% of women in dual-earner families with dependent children work in excess of 48 hours per week. Very recent figures from the Labour Force Survey (2008) show that over 9% of

women in paid employment work more than 45 hours per week (Table 2.3). However, these figures give us only the number of hours worked in the *main job*, and the higher OECD figures suggest that many people are working in more than one job. If we add together the hours worked in *all* jobs, the proportions of men and women working very long hours are expected to be significantly higher. Since men in the UK also work the longest hours in the EU-15, this suggests that many couples with children are working very long *combined* hours.

2.2.2 Increase over time:

Recent evidence cited by the TUC (June, 2008) has demonstrated an upward trend in the number of people working long weekly hours. The 1998 Working Time Regulations steadily reduced the number of employees working long hours from 1998 to 2007, despite the growing workforce^v. However, by spring 2007, this trend had started to reverse and has continued to do so, with the number of long hours workers increasing by 180,000 to a total of 3.3 million, representing an increase of 0.5 per cent of the employee workforce.

2.2.3 Occupational class differences:

Managers and associate professionals account for the biggest increases in those working very long hours in the UK, while smaller increases amongst the skilled trades, elementary occupations and personal services account for the rest of the growth in long hours (TUC, 2008)^{vi}. In an earlier review of research into long working hours in the UK, Kodz et al. (2003) also found that managers and professionals, and operative and assembly workers, are those most likely to work long hours. In other words, workers at opposite ends of the spectrum, in terms of occupational class, are those most affected by long working hours. Managers/professionals are less likely to receive compensation for long working hours than those in lower-level occupations, however. Similar findings were reported in the 1999 IPD report, with managers, professionals and craft workers those most likely to be working more than 48 hours per week, and those in higher level occupations least likely to be paid overtime (IPD, 1999).

Amongst women who work long hours, two thirds also work in managerial and professional occupations, and top managers (both male and female) are the most likely to be working over 60 hours a week. In a comparison of Labour Force Survey data over time, Harkness (1999) found that in 1988, 25% of full-time men worked unpaid overtime, rising to 41% in 1998, and for women, the rise was from 27% in 1988 to 58% in 1998. Kodz et al. (2003) suggest that the large rise in unpaid overtime for women may reflect increasing numbers of women employed in managerial or professional occupations. As professional/managerial women are more likely than other women to work full-time *and* to be married to other professionals (Crompton and Lyonette, 2007), the number of professional couples working very long combined hours may continue to rise.

However, Warren (2003) reports that a focus on predominantly middle-class, long hours workers ignores the fact that working-class couples are often in a less advantageous position overall, and highlights the work of Reisch (2001) to illustrate this fact. Reisch recorded several dimensions of time “wealth” (having the right amount of time; having time at the right time of day; having control over time; and having time that fits with the time rhythms of family and friends). In other words, time wealth is related to having sufficient ‘quality’ non-work time. Workers in higher-level occupations are more able to control when and how they work than manual employees, even though working hours

may be very long. This 'time elasticity' is also increased by the potential to pay for domestic help, so allowing for a certain amount of protection over family time. Warren (2003) summarises this literature by arguing that the ability to synchronise leisure, family and working lives is likely to be class-related, reinforced by the greater resources of those in higher-level occupations.

2.2.4 Self-employment:

The latest figures available from the UK Labour Force Survey 2008 (Table 2.3) show that the self-employed are even more likely to work very long hours than employees, with almost 32% of both men and women working over 45 hours per week, although self-employed men are more likely than women to work very long hours (37% compared with 16%). Bell and La Valle (2003) also found that self-employed parents work longer hours than employee parents: 25% of self-employed mothers and 71% of self-employed fathers (with their own employees) work more than 45 hours per week, and 14% of self-employed mothers and 52% of self-employed fathers without employees do so. In addition to working longer hours, setting boundaries between work and home may be especially difficult for self-employed parents, who often spend at least part of their time working from home.

Table 2.3: Usual weekly hours of work, employed and self-employed (UK only, Labour Force Survey 2008, includes hours in main job plus paid and unpaid overtime, %)

Feb – Apr 2008	All in employment		Employees		Self-employed	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Less than 6 hrs	0.8	2.2	0.6	1.7	1.6	6.2
6-15 hours	3.3	11.0	3.2	10.3	3.7	18.9
16-30 hours	8.0	29.7	6.9	29.7	12.5	30.1
31-45 hours	58.0	47.5	60.8	49.3	44.9	28.5
Over 45 hours	29.9	9.6	28.5	9.1	37.4	16.2
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total (thous.)	15,980	13,574	13,078	12,411	2,790	1,040

M=male; F=female; Source: UK Labour Force Survey 2008

2.2.5 Parents and long hours:

In a previous analysis of employed fathers, Harkness (1999) found that over one-third of men with children in the household worked more than 50 hours per week in 1998, compared with 27% of men without children, representing a six per cent rise over the previous decade (Labour Force Survey data). For women, the figures were somewhat different, with 7% of women with children working more than 50 hours per week in 1998, compared with 12% of women without children. However, this still represented a rise from only 3% of mothers working long hours in the previous decade. Using a representative

sample of working parents in the UK, La Valle et al. (2002) also reported that 50% of fathers worked in excess of 41 hours per week: of these, 18% worked between 49 and 59 hours, and a further 12% worked more than 60 hours per week.

More recently, analyses of the UK Time Use Survey of 2005 also showed that men with children worked longer paid hours than those with no children in the household (an average of 326 minutes a day among men with preschool children, compared with just over 261 minutes per day among men with no children in the household; Lader et al., 2006). For women aged 16-49, those with no dependent children work the most hours.

2.2.6 Preferred hours of work:

The evidence presented here suggests that the EU Working Time Directive has had little effect on the lives of working parents in the UK. Indeed, the implementation of the opt-out clause may well have had the effect of legitimising the long hours worked by employees, and further embedding and perpetuating the long-hours culture so prevalent in the UK. However, working parents frequently express dissatisfaction with long working hours. For example, La Valle et al. (2002) found that 79% of those mothers who work 41-48 hours per week, and 84% of those who work 49 hours or more, would prefer to work fewer hours. Mothers expressed similar preferences for their partners who work such long hours. The latest TUC report into long working hours also states that 62% of all workers would like to cut their working time. While the majority of these (71%) are not receiving overtime pay (and are more likely to be white-collar workers), the desire to reduce excessive working time also applies to more than half of those earning paid overtime (TUC, June 2008).

2.3 Atypical working hours: cross-national comparisons

Unsociable or atypical working hours were previously considered a minor issue while the male breadwinner model was predominant throughout Europe, as one parent (usually the mother) was generally available to care for children. However, with the continued increase in women's employment (and particularly mothers), the issue of atypical working hours has become more prominent in public debates (Eurofound, 2007).

Analyses of the 2005 European Working Conditions Survey which examined the occupations of those working atypical schedules found that, across Europe, male managers are most likely to work regular Saturdays, as well as working long days and being contacted outside normal working hours (Burchell et al., 2007). Blue-collar unskilled workers and white-collar clerical and service workers are those men most likely to work shifts. Male professionals and those working in unskilled blue-collar jobs are least likely to work Sundays. For women, managers are also those most likely to work regularly on Saturdays, work long days and be contacted outside their normal work hours, although to a lesser extent than men. The few women who work in skilled blue-collar jobs are more likely to work long days and weekends than other women.

Those sectors within the EU-27 requiring the highest levels of atypical work are outlined in an index, represented in Table 2.4 (Eurofound, 2007). Hotels and restaurants are those establishments most likely to require at least 20% of their employees to work regularly at weekends, with a high incidence of night work in addition. Health and social work employers are similarly likely to require regular night and weekend work from at least a fifth

of their employees. The utilities sector is most likely to require employees to work at night. At the other end of the scale, employers in construction and education are much less likely to require employees to work at atypical times.

Table 2.4: Ranking of unusual working hours (required from at least 20% of employees) by sector.

	Night work	Saturday work	Sunday work	Index
Hotels and restaurants	3	1	1	5
Health and social work	2	2	2	6
Electricity, gas and water supply	1	6	4	11
Other community, social, personal services	5	3	3	11
Transport, storage and communication	4	4	5	13
Retail, repair	10	5	6	21
Mining and quarrying	6	8	9	23
Public administration	9	7	7	23
Real estate, renting and business activities	8	9	8	25
Manufacturing industries	7	10	10	27
Financial intermediation	12	11	11	34
Construction	11	12	13	36
Education	13	13	12	38

Source: ESWT 2004-2005, as reported in Eurofound, 2007.

Not only are there huge sector differences, however, but also large variations by country in the proportion of employers requiring regular atypical work from their employees. In cross-national comparisons, the Eurofound report found that almost 40% of UK establishments require their employees to work regularly on Saturdays, most particularly in hotels and restaurants, followed by personal and social service establishments. This compares with an EU-21 average of 25%. Similarly, the UK also has the highest proportion of establishments which require their employees to work regularly on Sundays (27%), again most likely in hotels and restaurants. The EU-21 average for the incidence of Sunday working is much lower at 15%. Larger establishments (employing over 300 employees) are the most likely to require regular weekend work.

The 2005 EU Labour Force Survey also collated evidence from across Europe on the prevalence of Saturday and Sunday working (at least once a month) for both male and female employees (Table 2.5)^{vii}. Just over 23% of all female employees in the EU (including countries not represented in the table) usually work on Saturdays (i.e. two or more during a four-week reference period before the interview), compared with just over 20% of men in 2005. A significantly higher percentage of men (25%) than women (17%) work at least one Saturday per month. A smaller percentage of employees usually work on Sundays than on Saturdays (just under 11% for both men and women), although a slightly higher percentage of men than women work at least one Sunday (15%, compared with 12%).

Further analyses of the 2005 Labour Force Survey data also showed that self-employed respondents are much more likely than employees to work atypical hours, but no specific pattern by country or by gender was evident.

Table 2.5: Share of employees ‘usually’ or ‘sometimes’ working Saturdays and Sundays, 2005 (Eurostat data, 2008 Report)

	<i>Saturdays</i>		<i>Sundays</i>		<i>Both days</i>	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
UK	60	44	40	30	32	22
Denmark	40	38	33	32	29	29
Ireland	53	41	28	28	25	25
France	50	48	28	25	23	20
Belgium	33	35	23	24	21	21
Portugal	46	34	22	19	20	17
Sweden	22	31	20	29	18	26
Austria	17	41	24	22	19	19
Italy	45	41	19	15	16	12
Finland	29	33	20	24	15	19
Spain	25	32	13	17	12	15

No data available for Germany, Norway or NL; M=male; F=female. Source: Eurostat data

2.3.1 Saturday working:

Almost 44% of female employees in the UK work at least one Saturday a month (31% in Sweden; 33% in Finland; 34% in Portugal). Only French female employees are more likely to work on Saturdays (48%). Employed men in the UK are more likely to work at least one Saturday a month than men in all other countries (over 60% work at least one Saturday a month, compared with 22% in Sweden, 29% in Finland and 46% in Portugal).

2.3.2 Sunday working:

Just under 30% of female employees in the UK work at least one Sunday a month (29% in Sweden; 24% in Finland; 25% in France). Only Danish women are (slightly) more likely to work on Sundays (32%), of the countries covered. Men in the UK are more likely to work at least one Sunday a month than men in all other countries (40% work at least one Sunday a month, compared with 20% in Sweden, 20% in Finland and 33% in Denmark). Boisard et al. (2003b) reported on the Third European Survey of Working Conditions, and results similarly showed that the UK ranked highest (apart from Greece) in the proportion of employees working every Sunday (8%).

2.3.3 Both Saturday and Sunday working:

Over 22% of female employees in the UK work Saturday and Sunday at least once a month (26% in Sweden; 29% in Denmark; 25% in Ireland). Apart from these three countries, women employees in all other countries are less likely than women in the UK to work both days. Men in the UK are more likely to work both Saturday and Sunday at least once a month than men in all other countries (over 32%, compared with 18% in Sweden, 15% in Finland and 29% in Denmark).

2.3.4 Parents and weekend work:

Although the Eurostat data does not routinely identify parental working patterns, Presser and Gornick (2005) recorded data for parents undertaking atypical work in seven European countries, again using the 2005 Labour Force Surveys. No significant differences were found between employed male parents and non-parents working at weekends. However, there are slightly *higher* rates of non-day employment for fathers, relative to non-fathers, in all seven countries. Similarly, any differences between mothers and non-mothers in non-day and weekend employment are very small. With this in mind, one can assume that the Eurostat data reported above would show similar findings in the prevalence of weekend work for both UK parents and non-parents.

2.3.5 Night and evening work:

The recent report published by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound, 2007) also examined the proportion of establishments requiring employees to work regular nights. The UK ranked highest with 13%, compared with 9% for the EU-21 as a whole. Overall, the utilities sector (electricity, gas and water suppliers) were those most likely to require regular night work, followed by health and social work, hotels and restaurants. Again, night work was more prevalent in larger establishments (at least 300 employees).

Boisard et al. (2003b) reported on the proportion of employees by number of nights worked in a month, using the Third European Working Conditions Survey (Table 2.6)^{viii}. Of all countries included, only four countries ranked higher than the UK in the proportion of those working 10 or more nights, as well as 15 or more nights, per month (Ireland, Spain, France and Portugal). Night work is mainly carried out by industrial workers, and employee women appear to be less affected by atypical schedules than employee men^{ix}. Boisard's results also show that respondents in Spain, France, Ireland, Italy and Finland are all more likely than those in the UK to work 10 or more evenings per month. However, almost 17% of employees in the UK work over 10 evenings a month.

Table 2.6: Percentage of employees by number of nights worked in a month (all men and women), Third European Working Conditions Survey (2000)

	<i>None</i>	<i>10-14 nights</i>	<i>15 or more nights</i>	<i>10+ nights</i>
Ireland	80.7	3.1	4.5	7.6
Spain	80.3	2.8	4.7	7.5
France	82.2	2.8	3.7	6.5
Portugal	83.8	2.1	4.2	6.3
UK	77.9	3.3	2.8	6.1
Sweden	82.3	2.5	2.7	5.2
Belgium	80.0	2.6	2.2	4.8
Germany	82.7	2.6	1.7	4.3
Finland	75.1	2.6	1.7	4.3
Austria	81.2	2.9	1.2	4.1
Denmark	83.6	1.8	2.2	4.0
Italy	83.9	1.0	2.3	3.3
Netherlands	80.0	2.2	1.1	3.3

Source: Third European Survey on Working Conditions (2000)

A further Eurofound study (2007), where both personnel managers and formal employee representatives across 21 countries were interviewed, demonstrated that the UK clearly stands out with its particularly high proportion of establishments reporting the regular deployment of at least 20% of staff at atypical hours (Eurofound, 2007; see Table 2.7)^x. An index was developed by Eurofound, based on the accumulated rankings of each country for three forms of unusual working hours (required by at least 20% of employees): night work, Saturday work and Sunday work. Not surprisingly, the UK ranks highest on all three, with the Netherlands, Spain and Portugal at the bottom of the list.

Table 2.7: Ranking of atypical working hours (required from at least 20% of employees) within EU-21:

	Night work	Saturday work	Sunday work	Index
UK	1	1	1	3
Sweden	3	7	2	12
France	4	3	8	15
Finland	5	8	3	16
Germany	7	5	5	17
Czech Republic	2	13	10	25
Luxembourg	10	6	11	27
Cyprus	16	2	9	27
Denmark	8	14	6	28
Latvia	15	9	4	28
Ireland	18	4	7	29
Austria	11	11	12	34
Belgium	13	10	13	36
Slovenia	9	15	14	38
Poland	6	19	17	42
Italy	14	12	16	42
Hungary	12	17	18	47
Netherlands	17	18	15	50
Greece	21	16	20	57
Spain	19	20	19	58
Portugal	20	21	21	62

Base: All establishments (management interviews)

Source: ESWT data, 2004–2005

The UK, therefore, ranks highest in the incidence of both Saturday and Sunday work for men (and also for the proportion of establishments regularly requiring employees to work at weekends and at night). Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, the UK has also been shown to have the longest average operating hours in all establishments among the EU-21 countries (58.8 hours per week, compared with 51.2 in the Netherlands), with other countries showing similar correlations between operating hours and the proportion of establishments requiring atypical working hours (Eurofound, 2007).

The report authors performed a series of logistic regressions in order to determine the relative importance of country and sector on the prevalence of atypical working requirements. Sector, rather than country, proved initially to be of primary importance. As individual industries are distributed differently across countries, this was perhaps unsurprising (Eurofound, 2007). However, once interactions between sector and country were taken into account, it was found that working regulations and work culture affect time organisation in employment sectors. Thus interactions between sector and country were found to be the single most important factor in explaining differences between the incidence of atypical working hours. The UK has a lower than average manufacturing sector, with a relatively high retail and wholesale sector, as well as those employed in ‘other services’ (Eurofound, 2007). Other countries with high levels of atypical working, e.g.,

France, Germany, Sweden and Finland also had fairly similar distributions of employment, with lower levels of manufacturing and agriculture than many of the other countries. However, in spite of the statutory regulation of British employment being relatively weak, in contrast to other European countries such as France and Germany, as well as its focus on labour market flexibility, it is still unclear why the UK stands out in terms of atypical working schedules.

2.4 Atypical work - UK focus:

2.4.1 Weekend work:

In 2004, the Equal Opportunities Commission (now the EHRC) reported that 21% of female employees and 28% of men with dependent children in the UK usually work at weekends. Barnes and Bryson (2004) reported on the incidence of weekend working within families, using the Labour Force Survey data. In 2003, 2.41 million families with dependent children and at least one parent in work had one or both parents regularly working at least one day at the weekend. Furthermore, 1.34 million families with children had at least one parent working on both of the weekend days (Table 2.8).^{xi}

2.4.1.1 Occupational class differences: Barnes and Bryson (2004) also found that weekend working was more common among the self-employed and those in lower-skilled jobs than other workers. Those who regularly work weekends are more likely to have no qualifications (38%, compared with 15% educated to degree level), and to be on a lower income (38%, compared with 28% not claiming housing or council tax benefits).

Table 2.8: Proportion and number of UK families where at least one adult works in which one adult regularly working weekends (Saturday, Sunday or both)

	Saturdays		Sundays		Both days	
	%	Gross population numbers	%	Gross population numbers	%	Gross population numbers
All families with dependent child(ren)	38	2.32m	24	1.49m	22	1.34m
Two-parent families with dependent child(ren)	40	2.09m	26	1.34m	23	1.21m
Lone parent families with dependent child(ren)	25	223,000	17	151,000	14	128,000

Source: Labour Force Survey data 2003; reported in Barnes and Bryson (2004).

2.4.2 Shift work:

A study conducted by the DTI in 2004 focused specifically on shift work in the UK (Stevens et al., 2004). Of all employees included, 22% said that they work shifts in their main job, a finding which was consistent with the findings from the Work-Life Balance (WLB) survey from 2000 (21%); 25% of male employees work shifts, compared with 19% of employed

women. Men *without* dependent children are more likely to work shifts (27%). However, 26% of employed lone mothers also work shifts, compared with 16% of employed coupled mothers. Part-time employees are more likely to work shifts than full-time workers (27% compared with 21%).

2.4.2.1 Occupational class differences: Forty per cent of employees working in operative and unskilled occupations work shifts, and 33% of those working in service and sales occupations (compared with 16% of those in managerial and professional occupations and 13% of those in clerical and skilled manual occupations). These findings correspond with the higher level of shift working among employees with a gross annual household income of less than £24,000 (30% compared with 18% of employees with an annual household income of £24,000 and over; Stevens et al., 2004).

2.4.3 Other atypical work:

La Valle et al. (2002) also undertook an in-depth study of atypical working in the UK, using information from over 5000 randomly selected households with children aged 0-14 (Table 2.9). Although the figures for parents reported here are lower than the 2008 Eurostat figures for *all* employees, there is still a high percentage of employed parents working at atypical times: 53% of employed mothers in the sample frequently work atypical hours, compared with 20% who do occasional atypical hours and only 27% who never work such hours. For employed fathers, 79% frequently work atypical hours, 14% occasionally work atypical hours and only 7% never do so^{xii}. These results are not surprising, given that 30% of the employed fathers reported working over 48 hours per week, with very long hours particularly prevalent amongst professional and managerial employees (40%, compared with 14% of other non-manual workers and 26% of manual workers).

Table 2.9: Work schedules of working mothers and fathers in the UK, 1999 data (%)

Work schedules:		Working mothers	Working fathers
Early mornings (6 – 8.30am)	Several times a week/month	29	58
Late afternoons (5.30 – 8.30pm)	Several times a week/month	39	65
Evenings/nights (8.30pm–6am)	Several times a week/month	21	34
Saturdays	At least once every 2-3 weeks	29	41
Sundays	At least once every 2-3 weeks	19	22
Shift working	Usually/often	19	23
On-call outside normal work hrs	Usually/often	7	16
Weighted base		1165	966

Source: data from La Valle et al. (2002); base: all mothers.

2.4.3.1 Couples' work schedules: Further analyses of the combined working patterns of couples showed that in 43% of dual-earner households both parents frequently work atypical hours; in 36% of households only the father does so, and in 9% of households, only the mother works atypical hours. In just 12% of dual-earner households, neither parent works atypical hours (La Valle et al., 2002). In a study reporting on the UK 2000 Time Use Survey, Barnes, Bryson and Smith (2006) reported that approximately 90% of dual working couple families have at least one parent (usually the father) working atypical hours. Working fathers are more likely than mothers to work in the early mornings, evenings and Sundays, and to start work early or finish late during the week, but mothers and fathers are equally likely to work shifts or on Saturdays.

2.4.3.2 Preferred work schedules: La Valle et al. (2002) found that 47% of women who usually work shifts would prefer different or regular hours, 67% of those who work every Saturday would prefer not to, and 78% who work every Sunday would prefer not to. Mothers expressed similar preferences for their partners who worked such atypical hours. In fact, 75% of mothers who regularly worked at atypical times (73% of partnered mothers and 83% of lone mothers) reported that working atypical hours was a job requirement, rather than a deliberate choice. Eurostat figures from 2004 show that only 52% of women in the UK and 48% of men (of all ages) who worked at least some weekends said that they found it convenient to do so for their personal lives, contrasting sharply with an EU-25 average of 69% of women and 67% of men. Similarly, only 42% of both men and women in the UK who work nights reported that they found it convenient to do so for their personal lives, compared with an EU-25 average of 63% of women and 64% of men (Eurostat, 2007a)^{xiii}.

These figures, combined with those relating to preferred working hours, support the argument that the majority of employees, and especially employed parents, are not working extended and atypical hours out of choice, but because of the demands and requirements of their employers.

2.5 Work intensity: cross-national and UK evidence:

Alongside the overwhelming evidence that a high percentage of parents in the UK are working very long hours, as well as atypical hours, several studies have suggested that the intensity of work is increasing in many workplaces across Europe as a result of the implementation of new information technologies and production methods, 'leaner' workforces and increasing workloads (Gallie et al., 1998; Dex, 2003; Green, 2004a; 2006). For some employers, one response to increasing competition has been to increase pressure on their employees to work longer and harder, leading to increases in working early mornings, evenings and at weekends (Dex, 2003). For many employees, these new times of working are now specified as standard, whereas others are paid overtime or special rates. However, in many other cases, employees work beyond their contracted hours in order to get the job done without being compensated, especially those in higher-level occupations. In such cases, the EU Working Time Directive seems little more than a 'paper exercise', repeatedly undermined by employers who fail to implement its basic provisions. Furthermore, the current economic downturn is increasing the pressure upon already hard-pressed workers, creating more anxiety about job security (TUC, October, 2008).

Further findings from the Third European Working Conditions Survey in 2000 (Fagan and Burchell, 2002) reported that approximately a quarter of both employed men and women

consider that they work at very high speed almost *all* the time they are doing their jobs, and 44% spend about half of their work-time or more doing so. Over half of employed men and 42% of women say that their jobs also involve working to tight deadlines for half or more of their work-time. One in five say that their workloads are such that they do not have enough time to get their job done, with very little difference between men and women. More recent data from the Fourth European Working Conditions Survey (Burchell et al., 2007) show that in the EU-12 countries, the perceived intensity of work has been increasing steadily for both men and women, although since 2005, men have shown the greatest increase in those reporting working at high speed more than 50% of the time.

Interestingly, the Fourth European Working Conditions Survey (Eurofound, 2007) reports a slight decrease in levels of work intensity in the UK between 1995 and 2005, using an index derived from two items to measure 'working at very high speed' and 'working to tight deadlines'. However, in 2004, analyses of the UK Workplace Employment Relations Survey (WERS) found that 76% of employees in the survey agreed with the statement that their job required them to work hard, around 40% agreed with the statement that they never seemed to have enough time to get work done, and around 27% agreed that they worried a lot about work outside work hours (ONS, 2008). An earlier report by the IPD (1999) found that, of those employees surveyed, 68% worked public holidays, such as Christmas, more than a third did not take their full holiday allowance, 69% worked when they felt ill and 42% felt that they had so much to do, they often did not have time to get a drink or a sandwich. Health sector workers appeared to be especially stretched, with 51% claiming that they were 'working flat out'.

2.5.1 Occupational class and gender differences:

Fagan and Burchell also assessed levels of work intensity by occupational class and gender, using data from the Third European Survey on Working Conditions (Table 2.10), and found that, as expected, workers in professional/managerial jobs report greater levels of work intensity than workers in routine and manual occupations. Men in general report higher levels of intensity than women. However, increased work intensity, combined with other occupational-related factors, can lead to negative health outcomes for different groups of employees.

Boisard et al. (2003a) identified autonomy at work and social support as two such important factors linked to work stress. An analysis of the configurations of time pressures at work on the one hand (work intensity) and autonomy and social support on the other by occupational groups indicated that those most exposed to risk of work stress were industrial workers, and to a lesser extent, craft workers, who combine heavy pressures, low autonomy and low social support. Although subjected to very severe time pressures, senior executives partially escape the risk of stress at work, as they have greater autonomy and substantial social support.

Table 2.10: Work intensity by gender and occupational status (%)

%	Men			Women		
	None	Some	High	None	Some	High
White-collar managerial jobs	29	50	21	38	43	19
White-collar professional jobs	36	45	19	38	42	20
White-collar clerical and service jobs	43	44	13	42	45	13
Blue-collar craft and related manual jobs	28	56	16	39	51	10
Blue-collar operating and labouring manual jobs	33	51	16	38	49	13
All	34	50	16	40	45	15

Source: Third European Working Conditions Survey, 2000

Note: the work intensity scale was derived from three questions which asked people how much of their work-time is spent working at very high speed; to tight deadlines; and if they have enough time to get their job done.

Increasing levels of work intensity and demand, as well as long working hours and atypical work, have been linked to negative health outcomes, both physical and mental, for men and women (see e.g. de Bell, 2000), which will be covered in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Chapter 2 summary:

- **The UK has one of the highest proportions of employed men who work very long hours. Latest figures (June 2008) show that the number of long hours workers in the UK has increased to 3.3 million in total, and is likely to increase even further.**
- **Employed men with children work longer hours than men without children; fathers are also more likely than mothers to start work early or finish late. The vast majority of mothers with long-hours partners would prefer their partners to work fewer hours.**
- **More men in the UK work at weekends than in any other western European country. A high proportion of employed women in the UK also work on Saturday or Sunday.**
- **The UK ranks highest in the EU-21 in the incidence of both Saturday and Sunday work for men and the proportion of establishments requiring at least 20% of their employees to work at night, on Saturdays and on Sundays. Unlike many other countries, there is no evidence in the UK of ‘compensations’ or ‘counterweights’ (e.g. shorter working hours) to offset the effects of atypical working schedules.**

- **Those employees with lower levels of education and lower incomes are more likely to work at weekends, and the majority of mothers regularly working at weekends would prefer not to.**
- **Part-time employees, employees working in operative and unskilled occupations, and those with lower incomes are most likely to work shifts.**
- **Work intensity is increasing in many countries across Europe: over half of employed men and just under half of employed women say that their jobs involve working to tight deadlines for half or more of their work-time. 20% say that their workloads mean that they do not have enough time to get their job done.**
- **Managerial and professional men and women are most likely to work long hours, and are also most at risk of high rates of work intensity. There is some evidence that men report higher levels of intensity than women in almost all occupations.**
- **Lower work autonomy and lack of social support, combined with increased work intensity, is more likely to lead to work stress for industrial workers and craft workers.**

Chapter 3: The impact of working patterns on health outcomes for men and women

Introduction

The evidence presented in Chapter 2 has demonstrated clearly that many employees in the UK work very long hours, with many others working atypical hours. It has been well-documented that particular working patterns, such as shift work, have an adverse effect on physical health, in terms of a reduction in quality and quantity of sleep, and widespread complaints of fatigue (Akerstedt, 2003), cardiovascular effects and gastrointestinal disorders (e.g. Costa, 1996), and also a potential increase in the risk of spontaneous abortion, low birth weight and prematurity (Nurminen, 1998). Longer working hours have also been associated with backache, headaches, stomach pain, muscular pain and work-related injuries (e.g. Boisard et al., 2003b).

The impact of long and atypical working patterns on mental health is also of growing concern, with many research studies showing increases in work-related stress, anxiety and depression. Indeed, mental illness has recently been identified as the second largest category of occupational ill-health after musculoskeletal problems (OECD, 2008). Across all European countries, those employees with difficult working conditions are more likely to suffer from mental health problems (OECD, 2008). Of course, the impact of particular working patterns are only one of many factors related to poorer employee health e.g. workplace changes, fear of redundancy and general job insecurity, relationships with managers/supervisors, etc. (see Dewe and Kompier, 2008: Chapter 2).

Not only are many people working long and atypical hours, but a large proportion are also suffering from increased levels of work intensity^{xiv}. It has been suggested that work-related stress may have become more prevalent due to changes in the structure of employment associated with a greater use of IT and “just-in-time” delivery, more service-oriented jobs and the increased use of “non-standard” employment contracts, and that some of these trends could explain why 22% of European workers report suffering from stress and fatigue due to their jobs, representing an increase over the past decade (Parent-Thirion et al., 2007). In addition, the recent economic downturn has meant that many employees are fearing for the long-term future of their jobs. In a recent survey, TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber said: ‘Stress casts a gloomy shadow over far too many UK workplaces. And as the current economic crisis creates more anxiety about job security, stress is likely to increase’ (TUC, October, 2008).

Work-related physical and mental health problems have potentially severe consequences, not only for individuals and their families, but also for employers, insurance companies and government: in the UK, the economic cost of mental health problems alone has been estimated at over 2% of GDP (Layard, 2005). Stress from work is estimated to cost UK employers an estimated £3.7 billion, and around 13 million working days are lost. Almost 40% of people drawing incapacity benefits have a mental health condition, with the annual cost of these benefits at around £12 billion (Dewe and Kompier, 2008). Latest figures from the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound, 2007) also report that those establishments with unusual working hours in the 21 countries surveyed report problems with sickness and absenteeism more frequently than companies with no such working hours. Retention of staff working at atypical times is also

a European-wide problem. Staff retention problems are most likely to be reported by managers of establishments where at least 20% of staff have to work Saturdays or Sundays, where the likelihood of encountering difficulties are 1.7 times greater than in those companies with no weekend work (Eurofound, 2007).

The impact on those individuals experiencing work-related injuries and illnesses, including stress, can also have multiple and far-reaching effects on family members. Amick and Mustard (2005: 428) argue that “work, and how it is structured, can affect the interconnectedness of parents and children and both parent and child health”....and that “the intergenerational transmission of work’s negative consequences” can have negative effects upon other family members. Researchers in the US have begun to document the many pathways through which work-related illness can affect families (see e.g. Dembe, 2005). These effects will be covered in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5, but include changes to emotional and affective states and impaired relationships (Dembe, 2005: 399). The evidence of links between specific work patterns (long hours, atypical hours, increased work intensity) and both physical and mental health outcomes will be outlined in detail in this chapter. While many studies report on specific working patterns for *all* employees, the chapter will also focus on the links between working patterns, work-life conflict and health problems specifically for working parents.

3.1 Long working hours and effects on health:

Much research has been carried out, both in the US and in Europe, on the effects of long working hours and health, particularly in relation to stress and other mental health problems. In a recent book, Golden and Altman describe the potential adverse effects of overwork (“the point at which working hours begin to entail escalating risks or harms beyond those associated with normal, standard, agreed-upon hours” (2008: 65). Over ten years ago, a review of the existing literature on working hours and health, using 21 study samples, was carried out by Sparks et al. (1997). Results indicated small but significant positive correlations between overall health symptoms, physiological and psychological health symptoms, and hours of work. Qualitative analysis of a further twelve studies supported these findings. In a recent US review of the overall evidence, Dembe (2008) reported on several studies which have indicated an increased risk of physical health effects due to long working hours, e.g. hypertension and cardiovascular disease (Hayashi et al., 1996; Liu et al., 2002; Nakanishi et al., 2001; Yang et al., 2006); musculoskeletal injuries (Lipscomb et al., 2002; Trinkoff et al., 2006); diabetes (Kawakami et al., 1999); and chronic infections (Mohren et al., 2001). A recent book reports that long working hours tend also to be associated with unhealthy lifestyle choices such as smoking, coffee intake and alcohol consumption, lack of exercise and poor diet (Burke and Cooper, 2008). These behaviours then produce physiological changes which lead to higher risk of coronary heart disease and poorer health overall. The authors suggest that one reason for the link between long hours and poorer wellbeing is that workers have insufficient recovery time to offset negative effects, which has also been found in other research (van der Hulst, 2003).

Evidence regarding the health impact of long working hours is also accumulating in European-wide research. Reporting on an analysis of the Third European Working Conditions Survey, Boisard et al. (2003b) found that the frequency of many of the problems reported was significantly correlated with working time (see Table 3.1 for the main findings). A total of 68% of employees across Europe who work 45 hours per week or more report that their health is affected in some way (compared with 55% of those working 30-

34 hours), 39% report stress (compared with 27%), and 33% report overall fatigue (compared with 19%).

Table 3.1: Proportion of employees reporting health effects according to *hours of work* (%), European employees, both men and women

	30-35 hours	36-39 hours	40 hours	41-44 hours	45 hours or more
Health affected overall	54.5	58.4	62.6	62.6	68.3
Backache	30.0	32.2	35.4	31.3	38.1
Headaches	13.1	14.7	15.8	18.1	18.3
Muscular pain (neck/shoulders)	19.7	22.0	25.4	27.0	26.4
Muscular pain (lower limbs)	9.9	9.1	12.8	16.2	13.7
Muscular pain (upper limbs)	10.0	12.4	14.3	14.7	15.0
Injury	4.8	7.6	8.9	11.6	9.1
Stress	27.4	27.4	26.6	35.3	39.0
Overall fatigue	19.0	20.0	22.9	24.7	33.3
Insomnia	7.6	7.7	8.0	12.8	12.5

Source: Third European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS), 2000, reported in Boisard et al., 2003.

3.1.1 Gender differences:

Several researchers have examined gender differences in the health impact of longer working hours, whereas others have focused either on men or women. In almost all countries, men work longer hours than women, although it is also well known that women continue to bear the major responsibility for housework and childcare, irrespective of their working status (Bianchi et al., 2000). In a study of men and women in the USA, Glass and Fujimoto (1994) found that paid employment was associated with *reduced* depression, until working hours reached an upper limit. For men, even the most dissatisfied workers reported a positive effect of work on depressive symptomatology when working up to 54 hours per week, whereas for the most satisfied male workers, depressive symptoms only started to increase after 100 hours per week. Time spent in housework, however, was universally associated with increased depression, suggesting that women who also work long hours in paid employment may be at risk of overload from a “double shift”. In a later Canadian study, Shields (1999) found that women who worked long hours had increased odds of subsequently experiencing depression, compared with those women working standard hours. Her results also showed that moving from standard to long hours was associated with unhealthy weight gain for men, an increase in smoking for both men and women, and an increase in drinking alcohol for women. No associations were detected with physical activity, however.

A survey carried out by the IPD in the UK (1999) asked those working over 48 hours per week to report any health problems experienced in the last 12 months (Table 3.2):

Table 3.2: See overleaf

Table 3.2: Proportion of men and women working long hours reporting health problems (%)^{xv}

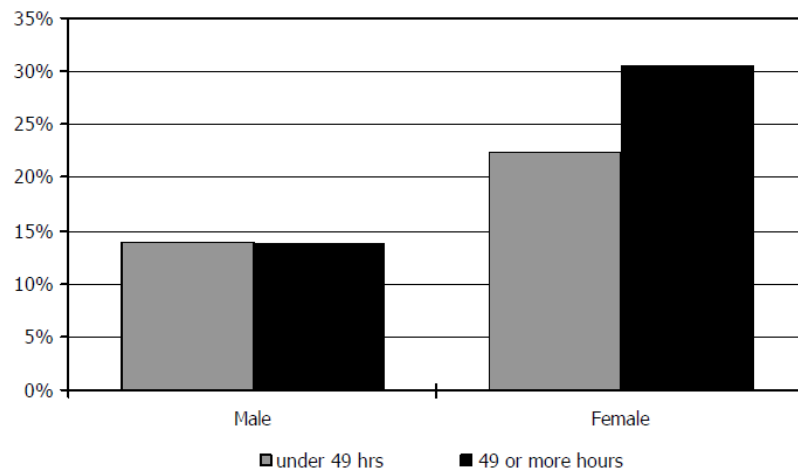
	<i>Men working 48 hours+</i>	<i>Women working 48 hours+</i>
Difficulty sleeping	44	58
Mental exhaustion or always feeling drained	44	56
Unpleasant feeling of being unable to cope with work; of being under too much pressure	31	46
Chronic headaches	19	36
Emotional numbness	12	22
High blood pressure	9	11
Irritable bowel syndrome	6	12
Ulcers	7	7
Bladder infection	3	8
Blackouts at work or while driving/elsewhere	2	2
None of these	30	16
Base	607	216

Source: 823 UK workers; IPD/Harris Research telephone interview

In almost all cases, a greater proportion of women were likely to report health problems than men, especially for difficulty sleeping and mental exhaustion. Only 16% of female long hours workers reported that they had not experienced any of these problems in the previous year. A further study undertaken by Kodz et al. (2003) in the UK, using data from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), demonstrated that for women only, an association was also demonstrated between longer working hours (over 49 hours per week) and poorer mental health, as measured by the General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg, 1992). Interestingly, for men, there was no difference between those working less than 49 hours and those working 49 hours or more reporting high GHQ scores. The authors suggest that this could be that either working long hours has no effect on men's health, or that men adjust their working hours to accommodate health problems, but add that this is very difficult to substantiate (Kodz et al., 2003).

Figure 3.1: See overleaf

Figure 3.1: High GHQ scores (over 3) by working hours and gender



Source: BHPS Wave 7

However, a study of male and female nurses in the Netherlands found that, for both men and women, emotional exhaustion had a significant positive effect on sickness absence, and childcare investment and number of work hours contributed to both outcomes. Contrary to expectations, however, women did not have higher sickness absence rates than men, and although a gender difference appeared in emotional exhaustion, it was actually men who reported higher levels than women, which was in the opposite direction from that predicted (Bekker et al., 2005).

Galambos & Walters (1992) found that husbands with wives who worked longer hours were more prone to depression and anxiety compared with husbands whose wives worked fewer hours. The authors suggest that wives often play an emotionally supportive role for the husband. When wives work long hours they may be unavailable to provide a buffer against the stresses of work for the husband, which in turn, may result in the husband experiencing more stress. This argument was supported when no relationship was found between husbands' work hours and wives' stress levels.

3.1.2 Occupational class differences:

In the recent Norwegian Hordaland Health Study, Kleppa and colleagues (2008) were unable to confirm previous findings that mental health status among people working overtime may be worse among female workers due to the “double burden” of work both outside and inside the home (e.g. Ezoe et al., 1994). However, they did find that working overtime was associated with increased levels of anxiety and depression. In addition, men working 49 to 100 hours per week had the highest levels of anxiety and depression, although even a moderate amount of overtime seemed to be associated with an increased risk of mental distress. Those men reporting the most overtime had a significantly lower level of education, did more heavy manual labour, worked more shifts, and were more likely to have a low income, compared with the group working moderate overtime. Dembe (2005) reported on a large-scale study in the US, which also demonstrated that overtime schedules had the greatest incremental risk of injury, with overtime workers being 61%

more likely to report an occupational injury or illness than workers in jobs with no overtime, after controlling for age, gender, occupation, industry, and region.

In a UK study using data from the BHPS, Bardasi and Francesconi (2000) found limited effects of non-standard working hours on mental health for all employees. However, *starting* to work long hours led to a deterioration in mental health for those women with ‘O’ level education. A significant reduction in psychological distress was also shown when higher-educated women *stopped* working more than 48 hours per week.

In a study from the Netherlands, Van der Hulst and Geurts (2001) reported on a sample of full-time postal workers in the Dutch Postal Service, with a specific focus on the effects of external pressure to work overtime. For these employees, low rewards were associated with an elevated risk of health complaints, emotional exhaustion and home-work interference. Those who reported overtime and a high pressure to work overtime, in combination with low rewards, had elevated risks of poor recovery,^{xvi} cynicism, and negative work-home interference. The authors suggest that even a limited number of hours of involuntary overtime is associated with adverse mental health, but only in low reward situations. These findings suggest that those in lower status occupations and with lower incomes (i.e., those with less control at work and lower rewards) may be more at risk of the negative effects of long working hours, even though those in higher-status occupations tend to be the employees most likely to work long hours (see Kodz et al., 2003; Boisard et al., 2003, in Chapter 2), and least likely to receive financial compensation for doing so.

Fagan and Burchell (2002) reported on the amount of autonomy available to European employees of different occupational classes, using data from the Third European Working Conditions Survey:

Table 3.3: Degree of autonomy in men’s and women’s jobs by occupational status (%)

Jobs:	<i>Men’s autonomy</i>			<i>Women’s autonomy</i>		
	Low	Some	High	Low	Some	High
White-collar managerial	7	20	73	8	25	68
White-collar professional	10	37	53	14	50	36
White-collar clerical/service	24	38	39	30	37	33
Blue-collar craft and related manual	28	33	40	25	28	47
Blue-collar operating and labouring manual	45	31	23	40	34	27
All	25	33	42	25	39	36

Source: Third European Working Conditions Survey (2000)

Note: The sample size was approximately 1,500 in each of the 15 EU countries included (500 in Luxembourg).

Clearly, those in white-collar professional and managerial occupations report greater autonomy in their jobs, with only 7% of managerial men and 8% of managerial women recording low autonomy, compared with 45% of blue-collar operating and labouring manual men and 40% of similar women. Men in higher occupational positions report slightly higher autonomy than similar women (for example, 73% of managerial men

compared with 68% of women), whereas women in blue-collar operating and labouring manual occupations record slightly higher levels of autonomy than similar men (27% of women, compared with 23% of men). Latest figures from the Fourth European Working Conditions Survey (Burchell et al., 2007) suggest a broadly similar trend in degree of autonomy by occupational class, although there is a slight decline in those reporting high autonomy for all groups except those in the lowest occupational group (women only), who report a slight increase in autonomy. The overall figures do suggest, however, that work autonomy differs by both class and gender, with significant implications for health outcomes. However, the recent economic crisis has meant that those in higher occupational positions are also at increasing risk of stress and related mental disorders. The government Foresight programme, set up to examine mental capital and wellbeing (www.foresight.gov.uk), is warning that competition from abroad and uncertain economic times will drive people to work even harder than before, resulting in increasing demands made on individuals (TUC, Changing Times, October 31st 2008). A mental health hospital located near London's banking district has recently recorded a startling 33% increase in what is being called "square mile syndrome", a term used to describe stress-related mental health problems faced by City workers as the credit crunch develops, leaving a trail of redundancies in its wake. There has also been a 30% rise in patients seeking help for drugs and alcohol addiction and a 27% rise in enquiries about its eating disorders programmes. The hospital's Medical Director recently reported that there is a reluctance for workers in high-flying positions to admit that they have a problem, but without help, "square mile syndrome could be a timebomb" (The Guardian, October 8th 2008).

3.1.3 Moderating factors:

In spite of this evidence, however, long working hours do not always negatively affect the health of individuals. A study of "extreme workers" in the USA and large multinational organisations (i.e., those working over 70 hours per week in high-earning, high-responsibility jobs) found that 48% said that they were working an average of 17 hours a week longer than they did five years ago, 42% took 10 or fewer days' holiday a year and 55% said that they had to cancel holiday plans regularly. However, 66% of the "extreme workers" in the USA, and 76% globally, said that they loved their job and 85% said their job was interesting and challenging (Hewlett and Luce, 2006). Overall, more men than women were likely to be working in such "extreme" jobs (17% compared with 4% in the USA sample, and 30% of men versus 15% of women globally).

In an Australian study, Weston et al. (2004) reported on the links between long working hours and the wellbeing of full-time fathers with a partner and dependent children. Overall, satisfaction with work hours decreased as the number of working hours increased. Interestingly, however, long work hours were not necessarily associated with lower wellbeing. For fathers working very long hours (over 60 hours per week), their satisfaction with their work hours was found to be very important to the relationship between work hours and wellbeing, in that those with greater satisfaction with their working hours, even when long, had significantly higher wellbeing (or lower "ill-being") than those who were dissatisfied with their working hours. This suggests once again that the ability to choose and control one's working hours is a crucial factor in health outcomes.

Spurgeon et al. (1997) referred to moderating factors in the relationship between long hours and health outcomes, which include: individual attitudes and motivations and the prevailing organisational culture. The amount of compensation available to counterbalance

long working hours may also affect the influence of working hours on health (BMA, 2000). Steptoe et al. (1998) found that social support acted as a moderating factor for men working long hours in retail, and those with low support increased their alcohol intake when their working hours increased. Similarly, Tucker and Rutherford (2005) found that social support and work schedule autonomy moderated the effects of long working hours among train drivers in the UK.

Personal preferences are also important in moderating the effects of long hours on health: in a study using the BHPS, Scase et al. (1998) found that the self-employed tended to work longer hours but had fewer health problems than those who were employed, and the authors suggest that this could be linked with the extent of choice and control involved. This echoes the research above which shows that those in lower-status occupations, and therefore with lower control, have poorer health outcomes. Other research has also found links between lack of control and work autonomy and poorer health (e.g., Dhont, 1997; see overview in Burke and Cooper, 2008: Chapter 3).

3.2 Atypical work and effects on health:

There is a large body of research into the effects of shift work on health (see summarised review below). However, working at weekends or evenings/early mornings is an area which has not attracted as much research, perhaps due to the difficulties in defining 'atypical' or 'non-standard' working hours (see Chapter 1). Many people who work atypical hours are actually working extended hours in their main job (e.g. arriving at work early, working late at night or working at weekends to catch up on work), rather than working a regular early morning or evening shift. For this reason, the research findings relating to those working long hours may also be applied to many of those working atypical hours.

3.2.1 Weekend work:

A Canadian study (Jamal, 2004) found that full-time employees working at weekends reported significantly higher emotional exhaustion, job stress and psychosomatic health problems than employees not involved with weekend work. In Boisard et al.'s European-wide research (2003b), respondents were asked about health problems, according to whether or not they worked at weekends (Table 3.4). Results were highly consistent in that those working Saturdays were more likely to report health effects than those not working Saturdays, and those working Sundays were more likely to report problems than those not. However, Sunday working appeared to have the greatest impact. These results support findings from Chapter 2 regarding employee preferences, in which La Valle et al. (2002) reported that 67% of those mothers in the UK who work every Saturday would prefer not to, and a higher proportion (78%) of those who work every Sunday would also prefer not to. Furthermore, mothers expressed similar preferences for their partners who worked such atypical hours. Not only do the great majority of employees prefer not to work at weekends, but their health appears to be adversely affected when they do. In fact, one may expect the health impact to be even greater for those employees working every Saturday or Sunday, as the results reported here include all employees working "at least one Saturday/Sunday a month".

Table 3.4: Proportion of male and female employees reporting health effects according to whether working on Saturdays or Sundays (%), European employees, both men and women

	No Saturdays	At least one Sat/month	No Sundays	At least one Sun/month
Health affected overall	55.8	63.4	57.0	66.9
Backache	29.4	36.7	30.7	39.4
Muscular pain (shoulders/neck)	20.4	25.3	21.3	27.0
Muscular pain (upper limbs)	11.0	14.2	11.7	14.9
Muscular pain (lower limbs)	8.6	13.3	9.8	14.3
Injury	5.7	9.0	6.5	9.8
Stress	24.5	32.4	25.5	36.9
Overall fatigue	19.2	25.8	20.2	29.0
Insomnia	6.0	10.6	6.0	15.1

Source: Third European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS), 2000.

Note: The sample size was approximately 1,500 in each of the 15 EU countries included (500 in Luxembourg).

3.2.2 Evening/night work and health outcomes:

Boisard et al. (2003b) also assessed the self-reported health impact of working evenings or nights, compared with those not working at such times (Table 3.5). Again, those who reported working at least one evening a month were more likely to report health problems than those not working evenings (66% v 54%). Similarly, those working at least one night a month were more likely to report health problems than those not working nights (68% v 57%). However, working nights appeared to have a greater negative impact on health than working evenings. It should be noted that in this case, respondents may have been only occasionally working evenings or nights (i.e., once a month), and so the overall impact on health may be slightly different than for those who work regular shifts.

Table 3.5: Proportion of male and female employees reporting health effects according to whether working evenings or nights (%)^{xvii}

	No evenings	At least one evening/month	No nights	At least one night/month
Health affected overall	54.1	66.3	57.4	68.3
Backache	30.0	36.5	31.3	39.6
Stress	22.6	35.7	26.4	36.0
Overall fatigue	18.4	27.5	20.8	28.8
Insomnia	4.7	12.8	5.9	18.2

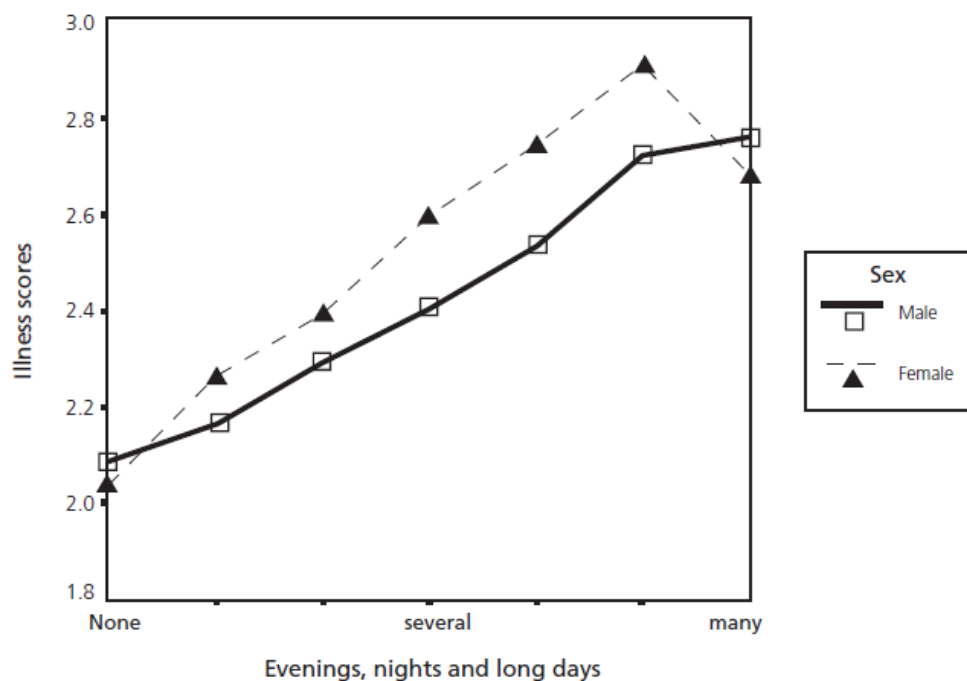
Source: Third European Conditions Survey (EWCS), 2000.

Note: The sample size was approximately 1,500 in each of the 15 EU countries included (500 in Luxembourg).

3.2.3 Gender differences:

Fagan and Burchell (2002) examined gender differences in health outcomes for those working evenings/nights, and long days (Figure 3.2). Results showed that women have more to gain from working improvements than men but the authors stress that there is little evidence to explain why women's health appears to be more affected than men's health.

Figure 3.2: The effect of evening/night work and long days on health for men and women:



Source: Third European Working Conditions Survey (2000)

In their overall analysis of the 2000 European Working Conditions Survey, Fagan and Burchell (2002) used regression analyses to estimate the most important predictors of work-related illness, and found that the following working conditions (in order of the strength of the relationship) each increased the risk of illness: exposure to poor ergonomic conditions, work involving disruptive interruptions, exposure to physical or material hazards, unsocial hours, long hours, and a high degree of work intensity. Having some autonomy slightly reduced the risk of illness. When these working conditions were controlled for, an additional risk of work-related illness remained for those in managerial or professional occupations and, to a lesser degree, skilled manual workers. Interestingly, task autonomy was not related to illness scores. Other variables not included in the model because they did not show any significant relationships with illness scores included hours variability and weekend working. Fagan and Burchell (2002) report that in initial bivariate analyses, no relationships were found between gender and the number of work-related illnesses, but after differences in work-related conditions were controlled for, women tended to report more illness. In separate analyses, significant associations were found for women between

higher illness scores and unsociable hours, as well as with variable hours. In later analyses of the Fourth European Working Conditions Survey, Burchell and colleagues (2007) examined whether having personal autonomy to vary work hours offered any relief from the negative impact of working long and atypical hours for men and women. They found that autonomy does have a positive impact on the compatibility of working hours with non-working life but this impact is insufficient to offset the much larger negative effect of working atypical hours.

3.3 Shift work and effects on health

Many researchers have examined the links between shift work and health, so this report will provide only a brief overview of the more relevant issues in relation to the focus on particular working patterns and health outcomes for men and women. The most commonly-identified effects of shift work on health include disturbed sleep. This effect often continues into the shift worker's days off (e.g., Akerstedt, 2003). Shift work negatively affects work performance and efficiency, with consequent errors and accidents; and also disturbs eating habits, with the potential for more severe disorders relating to gastrointestinal, neuro-psychic and cardiovascular functions (e.g., Costa, 1996). Other recent studies have shown that industrial accidents and injuries are also more likely to occur on night and evening shifts than on day shifts (Brogmus and Maynard, 2006; Dembe et al., 2006; Folkard et al., 2005). Jamal (2004) found that Canadian employees on non-standard work shifts reported significantly higher overall burnout, emotional exhaustion, job stress and health problems than employees on a fixed day shift (9am – 5pm).

3.3.1 Cultural differences:

The relationships between shift work and health outcomes appear to be consistent cross-culturally, with studies of female nurses in the United States (Kawachi et al., 1995) and male workers in a Swedish paper mill (Knuttsen, Akerstedt, Jonsson, & Orth-Gomer, 1986) producing very similar results regarding the relationship between shift work and coronary heart disease. In both studies, workers who had ever worked shifts were 40% more likely to have had incidents of coronary heart disease than those who had never done shift work.

3.3.2 Gender differences:

Although shiftwork has been found to be disruptive for both men and women, some researchers have found that shift work creates greater work-family role conflict for women (Staines and Pleck, 1984) because it interferes with their more involved family roles (Kinnunen and Mauno, 1998). Furthermore, attempts to balance work-family role demands can lead to higher rates of job absenteeism for female workers (Vandenheuvel and Wooden, 1995). In a US study, Glass and Fujimoto (1994) also found that rotating shifts increased depression in wives only. Other studies have examined the effects of shift work on women's reproductive health. In a review of the literature, Nurminen (1998) concluded that, although the evidence remains ambiguous in several areas, partly because of inexact definitions of what kind of shiftwork is involved, it would be prudent to consider shiftwork as a potential risk to reproduction.

3.3.3 Occupational class differences:

Perry-Jenkins and colleagues (2007) found, for a sample of dual earner, working-class new parents in the USA, that working evening or night shifts was related to higher levels of depressive symptoms, and, for mothers only, working rotating shifts predicted relationship conflict. Dembe and colleagues (2008) found that construction workers were particularly at risk of injury on evening shifts, as opposed to either night or day shifts.

3.3.4 Control over hours:

Barton and Folkard (1991) found that freedom to choose particular hours of work had implications for the degree to which shiftworkers experienced subsequent problems. Fenwick and Tausig (2001) also found that control over scheduling was found to have a highly significant effect for all workers, including those on standard shifts, as well as those on nonstandard shifts. Of the eight family and health outcomes examined, control over scheduling had highly significant ($p = 0.001$) positive effects on six. These findings, as well as those reported earlier in the chapter, suggest that the psychological effects of having more autonomy and control over one's working hours and work schedules appear to alleviate some of the negative effects of specific working conditions.

3.4 Work intensity and effects on health:

It has already been clearly demonstrated that employees in the UK work longer hours overall and are more likely to be working at atypical times than other employees in Europe (Chapter 2). Employers across Europe also appear to have devised new ways of extracting more effort and higher performance (work intensity) from their employees in recent years, generating a knock-on effect on employees' families (McGovern et al., 2008). Even in 1999, Worrall and Cooper found that UK managers saw their jobs as being more complex than previously. They had to deal with more information, acquire a wider range of skills, and manage more staff. Overall, 76% felt that the number of hours worked had adversely affected their health. A recent TUC report based on responses from almost 3000 employed people in the UK showed that the biggest complaint is of an increased workload (46%), with 39% complaining of increased stress and 23% reporting an increase in work hours (TUC, "What Workers Want", September 2008). In addition to these findings, the most recent UK survey of safety representatives identified that 60% reported stress and overwork as a concern in their workplaces, with the highest instances in central government (81%), education (74%) and health services (69%) (TUC, October 2008). Regional analyses showed that employees in London were most concerned about stress (68%), while those in Yorkshire and East Anglia were most worried about working alone (38%). These figures are somewhat at odds with the findings reported by Eurofound (2007) which showed a slight decrease in levels of work intensity in the UK between 1995 and 2005, however.

A recent report published by the government programme into mental capital and wellbeing argues that 'globalisation and the "vertical disaggregation of organisations", where non-core functions are outsourced, has seen the downsizing and restructuring of organisations, and the redefinition of working arrangements and relationships' (Dewe and Kompier, 2008: 19). These developments have led to increased perceptions of insecurity among workers, with 34% of respondents to a recent survey ranking 'organisational change/restructuring' as one of their top three causes of stress, and 12% ranking it highest (CIPD, 2006). Job insecurity was also identified as a cause of stress, with 10% of respondents ranking it among their top three causes and 2% ranking it as their most

important. The CIPD 2006 annual survey report also noted that workload/work volume was ranked in the top three causes of stress at work by 57% of respondents (33% ranked it as their number one cause of stress). Furthermore, almost 40% of respondents in the Work Foundation survey, in which a thousand working people were surveyed, indicated that they were working long hours because they feared losing their jobs (Isles, 2005).

The links between work stress and coronary heart disease have been widely debated, and a recent UK article based on longitudinal evidence from the Whitehall II study of primarily office-based employees has shown that work stress is also associated with higher levels of smoking, lack of exercise and fatty food intake (Chandola et al., 2008). The authors also refer to supporting evidence from the INTERHEART study of respondents in 52 countries, which showed that “permanent” stress at work was associated with over twice the odds of a heart attack, when compared with those reporting no stress.

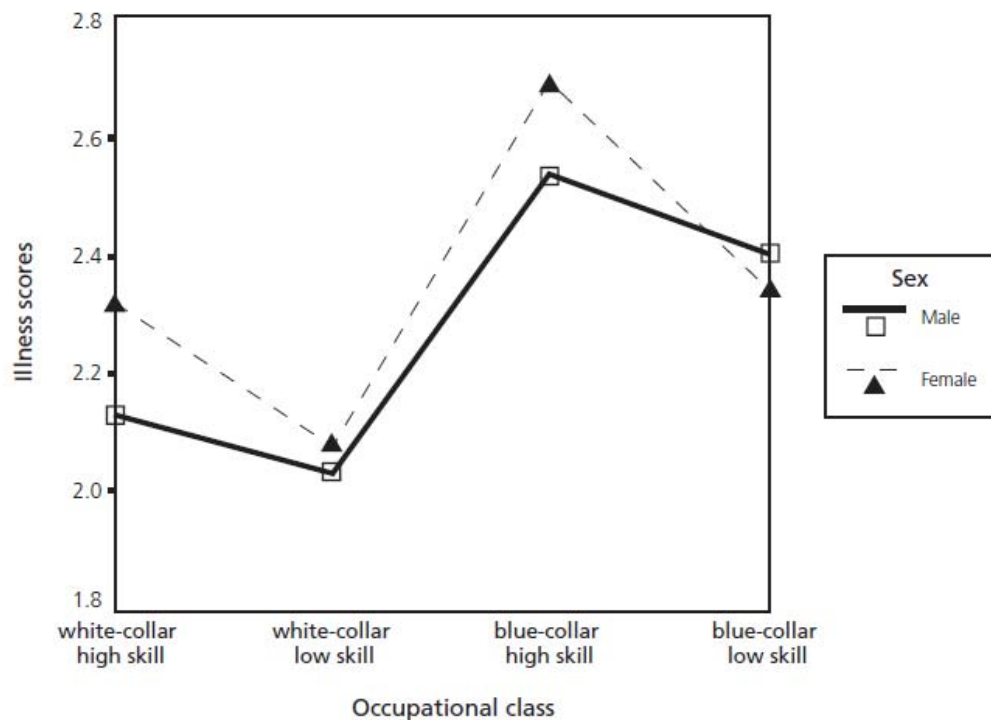
3.4.1 Occupational class differences and control:

There has been an overall 7.5% rise in work strain (reflected by feelings of exhaustion, anxiety and work-related worry) among employees whose work is checked by ICT systems, and this is experienced especially by administrative and white-collar staff in places such as call centres (McGovern et al., 2008). In US studies, researchers argue that manual and non-manual labour classes have unique exposures to different job-related hazards (Johnson and Hall, 1995). As an example, psychosocial job strain in men (high psychological job demands combined with low job control) was found to be a risk factor in non-fatal myocardial infarction for manual workers only (Hallquist et al., 1998). Earlier analyses of the UK Whitehall study (Marmot et al., 1997) found that for both men and women, those with higher job control (those in higher social classes) had lower incidence of coronary heart disease, and that this effect could not be explained by other biological and behavioural risk factors, such as smoking.

3.4.2 Gender differences:

It appears that women's family relationships are more adversely affected by changes in management employment practices than men's. However, both women *and* men are more likely to become anxious about childcare arrangements when placed under pressure by workplace practices (McGovern et al., 2008). Fagan and Burchell (2002) found, in their European-wide analyses, that although the same predictors of work-related illness existed for both employed men and women, the effects of certain working conditions for women were more severe than for men. For example, the healthiest group were those women who worked in jobs with the least time pressures, whereas the unhealthiest was the group of women with the greatest work-related time pressures. However, the authors acknowledge that the findings relating to class and gender are difficult to unravel. Women were much more likely to work in clerical positions (with the lowest levels of work-related illness) and men were much more likely to be working in skilled manual occupations (with the highest levels of illness). However, within each of the occupational class groups, apart from the lower-skilled blue-collar occupations, men were healthier than women (see Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3: The effects of occupational class and gender on health:



Source: Third European Working Conditions Survey (2000)

Green (2008) studied changes over time in levels of work effort and worker wellbeing and also suggests that the proportion of women in “high-strain” jobs (defined as those jobs requiring high effort but low task discretion) has continued to rise in the UK in recent years. Furthermore, this combination of factors is most conducive to stress.

As we have seen, the proportion of employed men working very long hours, as well as the proportion working at weekends, is higher in the UK than anywhere else in Europe. In addition, a high proportion of UK employed men are regularly working nights, and levels of work intensity continue to cause concern. Many employed women, too, are increasingly working longer and/or atypical hours. The evidence presented so far in the chapter regarding the impact of such types of work on both mental and physical health is therefore of particular importance to male and female workers in the UK, and, as a consequence, to their partners and children.

3.5 Incompatibility between work and family:

While all workers are vulnerable to increased time pressures, especially those working long hours and atypical working hours, it is anticipated that parents experience even greater pressures due to work and family demands, and may therefore be more at risk of negative health outcomes (see Chapter 2, Figure 2.1). In the Third European Working Conditions Survey (2000), parents across Europe were asked whether or not the time demands of their job were compatible with family life (Fagan and Burchell, 2002). Women working part-time

were most likely to report compatibility (even when compared with women and men *without* dependent children). There was no difference between fathers (most of whom work full-time) and mothers who work full-time, with a quarter of both saying that their working hours were incompatible with family life.

Table 3.6: Compatibility of working hours (full-time/part-time) with family and other commitments among employed parents (%)

	<i>Fathers</i>	<i>Men without children</i>	<i>Mothers, employed full-time</i>	<i>Mothers, employed part-time</i>	<i>All employed mothers</i>	<i>Women without children</i>
Very well	27	31	27	50	38	40
Fairly well	48	49	48	41	45	45
Not very well, not at all	25	20	25	8	17	15
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Third European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS)

Note: The sample size was approximately 1,500 in each of the 15 EU countries included (500 in Luxembourg).

‘Full-time’ and ‘part-time’ classifications tell us little about the actual number of hours carried out by individuals and the impact this has on their perceptions of compatibility with family life.

3.5.1 Gender differences:

Further analyses by Fagan and Burchell (2002) divided respondents according to how many hours they worked (Table 3.7). The table presents figures for the percentage of respondents saying that there was ‘little’ or ‘no’ compatibility between their working hours and family life and other commitments.

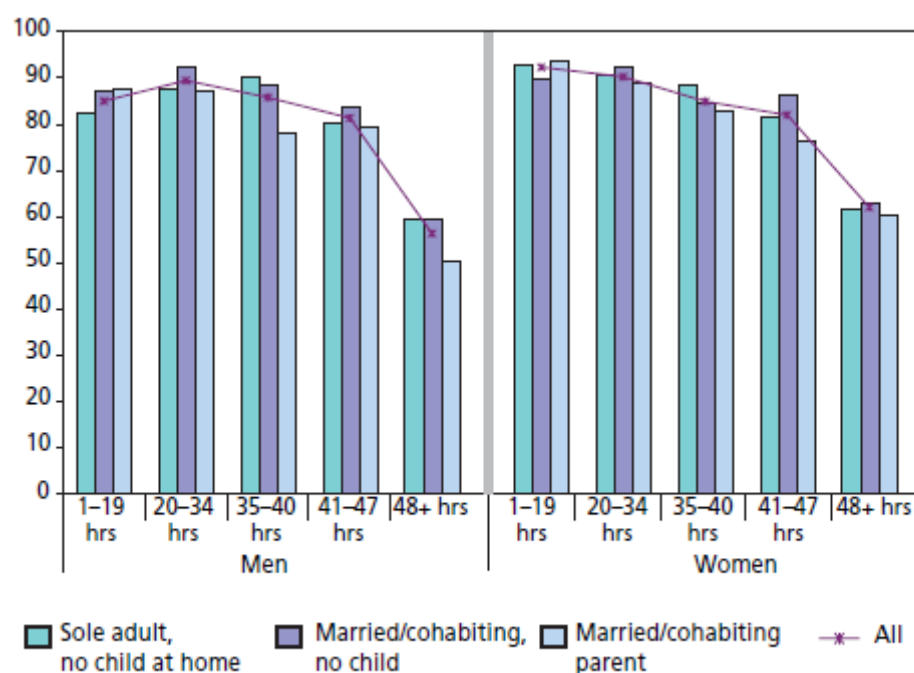
Table 3.7: Lack of compatibility of working hours with family and other commitments for working parents (%)

<i>Hours per week</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>All</i>
Less than 20 hours	17	9	11
20-29 hours	14	7	8
30-34 hours	23	12	16
35-39 hours	15	17	16
40-47 hours	22	23	23
48 hours and more	42	36	40
<i>Total</i>	22	16	19

Source: Third European Working Conditions Survey (2000). Not surprisingly, perhaps, in the EWCS analyses, there is a steep increase in the percentage of both men and women who work over 48 hours per week reporting incompatibility between working hours and family life. Interestingly, more men appear to report incompatibility overall than women (Fagan and Burchell, 2002). Later analyses undertaken on the 2005 EWCS show similar trends,

with a sharp decrease in the proportion of parents working over 48 hours per week reporting a good fit between work and family life (Figure 3.4). Those without children also showed a significant drop in reported work-life balance when working more than 48 hours per week, but men who were married/cohabiting and also had children reported the lowest work-life balance if working such long hours.

Figure 3.4: Extent of work-life balance, by household status and weekly working hours (%)



Source: EWCS 2005, as reported in Burchell et al., 2007.

Percentages are respondents reporting a good fit between work and family life.

A recent Australian report (Pocock et al., 2007) also showed that men reported more spillover from work to life and less satisfaction with their work-life interaction than women, reflecting their longer hours (Australian men report even higher average full-time hours than men in the UK; see Chapter 2, Table 2.1). However, the authors add that women feel much more pressed for time, reflecting their greater unpaid work (73% of women with children often or always feel that there are not enough hours in the day).

In their analyses of the 2000 Third European Survey on Working Conditions, Fagan and Burchell (2002) also divided respondents according to the type of work schedule undertaken (Table 3.8). The table shows the percentage of male and female employees saying that there was little or no compatibility between their working hours and family life and other commitments.

Table 3.8: Lack of compatibility of working schedule with family and other commitments (%), male and female employees in Europe

Schedule	Men	Women	All
Daytime only	20	14	17
Evenings and/or nights	37	28	33
Does not work shifts	19	13	16
Works shifts	34	27	31
Same number of days per week	18	14	16
Variable number of days per week	33	23	29
No Saturdays	12	9	10
Regular Saturdays	35	25	31
No Sundays	16	12	14
Regular Sundays	45	30	39

Source: Third European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS)

For both men and women, there was almost double the proportion reporting incompatibility if they a) worked evenings/nights, compared with days; and b) worked shifts, compared with those not working shifts. An even greater difference was found between those working Saturdays or Sundays, compared with those not working these days (almost three times as many male and female respondents working these days reported incompatibility, when compared with those not working weekends). Men, however, reported more incompatibility than women on all types of atypical work schedules. Regression analyses demonstrated that, in order of importance, those variables significantly associated with men's and women's dissatisfaction with work-life balance were: working long days/evenings/nights; working weekends; having some influence over working time (negative association); number of hours worked; high work intensity; poor ergonomic conditions; hours of work variability; disruptive interruptions; and having some autonomy in work methods, order and breaks (negative association). In their recent European-wide analysis of the Fourth European Working Conditions Survey, Parent-Thirion et al. (2007) also found that satisfaction with work-life balance is higher for those working full time than for people working unsocial or long hours, doing shift work, or working irregular days and work schedules.

3.5.2 Occupational class differences:

In further analyses, Fagan and Burchell (2002) found that work-life incompatibility was reported most by male managers (30%), while for women it was also reported most by those in management (21%) as well as those in blue-collar craft occupations (21%) (Fagan and Burchell, 2002). Analyses of the 2005 EWCS also found that male and female professionals, along with women in clerical or blue-collar labouring jobs, reported higher levels of work-life compatibility, while managers (male and female) recorded lower levels overall. Men reported lower compatibility than women in all occupations.

A report by the IPD (1999) found that over half of those employees working more than 48 hours per week reported that they had a good balance between work and home. However, these were most likely: to be working fewer hours (55% of those working 48-59 hours per week compared with 44% of those working over 60 hours per week); to be working in

clerical/secretarial positions; to have fewer qualifications; to receive overtime pay; and less likely to be in debt.

The Australian study by Pocock et al. (2007) found that, overall, those most at risk of poor work-life outcomes were: long hours workers; workers who do not have a good match between their actual and preferred hours of work; workers in jobs that are insecure, with high demands, or little say over working time; managers, professionals, community and personal service and technical and trades workers; workers aged between 35 and 55; and people commuting to work for 10 hours or more a week.

3.6 Work-life conflict and effects on health:

The evidence suggests, therefore, that those men and women working long hours and/or atypical working hours are more likely to report incompatibility between work and family life. There is a growing literature on the subject of work to family conflict, which represents a source of stress due to the lack of overall fit between work and family (Frone, Russell and Barnes, 1996; Frone, Russell, and Cooper, 1992a). In an overview of the literature, Frone (2000) found only two studies which did not identify a link between work-life conflict and poorer employee health (Klitzman et al., 1990; Wiley, 1987), whereas several other studies did find positive links (e.g., Hughes and Galinsky, 1994; MacEwen and Barling, 1994; O'Driscoll et al., 1992; Frone et al., 1996). Frone's own study (2000) showed that both work-to-family and family-to-work conflict were positively related to clinically significant diagnoses of mood, anxiety, and substance dependence disorders. Individuals who often experienced work-to-family conflict were over three times more likely to have a mood disorder, more than twice as likely to have an anxiety disorder, and almost twice as likely to have a substance dependence disorder than were individuals with no work-to-family conflict. However, Frone found no differences between men and women in levels of work-to-family conflict. Another US study (Grant-Vallone et al., 2001) found that greater work-life conflict predicted poorer wellbeing among a sample of non-professional, predominantly lower-educated employees, both male and female. In a more recent Norwegian study, Hammer and colleagues (2004) also found that work-to-family conflict was significantly related to health symptoms, but family-to-work conflict and organizational norms were not.

An in-depth study of work-family conflict in Denmark (Kristensen et al., 2005) found that both men and women with children under 7 were more likely to experience energy conflict^{xviii} and general conflict than any other groups (singles, couples without children, couples with older children)^{xix}. Those with children under 7 were also slightly more likely to experience both types of conflict than singles with any children (see Table 3.9), although the authors suggest that this may be explained by the higher prevalence of part-time workers in this latter group.

Table 3.9 See overleaf

Table 3.9: Proportion of Danish employees reporting work-family conflict among those in different family structures (%)

Family structure	Energy conflict (%)	General conflict (%)
Single without children	31.7	9.2
Couple without children	38.9	13.8
Couple with older children (7 plus years)	46.2	20.8
Couple with younger children (0-6 years)	53.2	31.8
Single with any children	51.9	27.0
Total	43.2	19.3

Source: the SARA study of 3010 employees

The strongest predictor of work-family conflict for men and women combined was quantitative job demands (i.e., higher number of demands), which was also clearly related to poorer mental health and vitality or fatigue (those with low quantitative demands scored 81.4 on the mental health scale, compared with 73.7 for those with high quantitative demands; those with low quantitative demands scored 68.6 on the vitality scale, compared with 57.8 for those with high quantitative demands).

3.6.1 Gender differences:

When men and women were analysed separately in the Danish study (Kristensen et al., 2005), the association between work-life conflict and vitality was most pronounced in women. Men who reported no work-life conflict had an average vitality score of 71, compared with a score of 59 for those men reporting high conflict; women who reported no conflict had an average vitality score of 68, compared with 49 for those women with high conflict. A Dutch study using different measures (Jansen et al., 2003) found that those with high work-life conflict were more likely to have reduced their working hours at follow-up (one year later) than those not experiencing conflict, and that this tendency was strongest in women.

3.6.2 Control over working hours:

The same Dutch study (Jansen et al., 2003) also found that for both men and women, low levels of influence at work and low predictability (not knowing one's schedule in advance) were risk factors for work-life conflict. Other factors which increased the risk of conflict were psychological demands, physical demands, overtime work, shift work and long commutes, echoing much of the earlier research outlined above. The authors sum up the findings from these two studies based in Denmark and the Netherlands, suggesting that "overtime takes more of the person's time and...results in more fatigue. Shift work interferes directly with the rhythm of the family, and emotional demands may drain the worker of the mental resources needed to cope with the problems of children and marriage" (Kristensen et al., 2005: 448).

In a UK study of female employees in two UK public sector organizations, Hughes and Parkes (2007) also found that higher control over working time buffered the effect of longer hours on work-family interference. The authors conclude that longer work hours are not necessarily associated with higher work-family interference, and hence with poor recovery

and impaired wellbeing. Instead, having a degree of control over work hours moderates the first link in this process. In a study of US call-centre workers (Valcour, 2007), similar results were reported: as work hours rose, male and female workers with low control experienced a decline in work–family balance satisfaction, while workers with high control did not.

An earlier study of married US physicians carried out by Barnett and colleagues (1999) found that employees who work more or fewer hours than they and their partner prefer, and whose work hours are distributed differently than they and their partner prefer, had more negative outcomes than their counterparts who worked their preferred schedules. Thus, the authors conclude that the relationship between number of hours worked and burnout depends on the extent to which work schedules meet the needs of the worker, her or his partner, and their children, if any. Fagan and Burchell (2002) found, however, that while both control and unsociable hours have an effect on satisfaction with work-life balance, the effect of control over working hours is relatively weak, compared with the impact of working unsociable hours. In other words, employees tend to be able to cope much better with a low level of working unsociable hours that they cannot control, than with a higher level of working unsociable hours that they *can* control.

The evidence strongly suggests that working patterns have a significant impact on individuals' mental and physical health. However, in Chapters 4 and 5, we will expand the review to consider the impacts of long and atypical working hours on couple relationships and relationships with children.

Chapter 3 summary:

- **Long working hours are associated with poor physical and mental health outcomes for both men and women, although there is some evidence that the effects are greater for women than men.**
- **Those in lower level occupations and lower social classes are less able to control their working hours and have less autonomy at work, both crucial factors for having positive health outcomes.**
- **Working at atypical times (weekends, evenings and nights), as well as working shifts, have negative impacts on health.**
- **Work stress is rising in the UK and has been shown to be a risk factor in coronary heart disease.**
- **Work stress has also been shown to have severe consequences for employers and government, costing employers an estimated £3.7 billion every year, with around 13 million working days lost per year. Almost 40% of people drawing incapacity benefits have a mental health condition, with the annual cost of these benefits at around £12 billion.**
- **Men and women with children, employed full-time, are most likely to report incompatibility between work and family, and those working**

longer hours and in higher-level occupations tend to be the most affected.

- **Employed men report more work-life incompatibility than women.**
- **Those working atypical hours report higher work-life incompatibility than those not working at atypical times.**
- **Work-life conflict negatively affects individual health outcomes, and there is some evidence that women are more affected than men.**
- **Lower control at work and quantitative job demands lead to higher work-life conflict for both men and women, with job demands also related to poorer mental health and vitality or fatigue.**

Chapter 4: The impact of working patterns on couple relationships

Introduction

Previous chapters have outlined both the prevalence of atypical and long working hours in the UK and Europe, as well as the physical and mental health impact of such working patterns on individual employees. However, these impacts also have the potential to spill over into relationships with both partners and children, as we shall see in the following two chapters.

Long and atypical working hours invariably reduce the amount of time available for other activities and relationships. Research has shown that working couples are more likely to prioritise their time with children than with each other (Dex, 2003), which can lead to relationship dissatisfaction and conflict. Other UK research has shown that in couples where both partners work atypical hours, extreme dissatisfaction with time spent together as a couple was significantly higher than in couples where neither worked atypical hours (La Valle et al., 2002). Although it is not possible to attribute divorce and marital dissolution to specific working patterns alone^{xx}, the divorce rates in the UK are amongst the highest in Europe, and the UK also has one of the highest proportions of men who work very long hours. More men in the UK also work at weekends than in any other western European country, with a high proportion of women also working on Saturday or Sunday (see Chapter 2).

This chapter will outline the impact of particular working patterns on couple relationships and the following chapter (Chapter 5) will go on to describe the effects of particular types of work on relationships with children and child wellbeing.

4.1 Long working hours:

4.1.1 Lack of time with partner:

Recent analyses conducted by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (www.eurofound.europa.eu) show that around 30% of both working men and women in the UK reported in 2003 that they do not have enough time to give to partners and family due to the amount of time they spend on their jobs, representing a significant increase from 1996. Only Portugal and Spain had higher proportions of employees reporting problems. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those countries at the bottom of the table (the Netherlands, Denmark and Finland) also had much lower percentages of employees working very long hours than in the UK (see Chapter 2, Table 2.2). It should be noted, however, that in all countries except France^{xxi}, working women in 2003 were more likely to report that their job prevented them spending enough time with partner/family than in 1996.

Table 4.1: Percentage of employed people reporting that their job prevents them spending enough time with partner/family*

	1996		2003	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Portugal	26.4	26.3	36.8	38.7
Spain	32.2	33.0	28.9	35.4
UK	23.9	17.6	30.8	29.6
Italy	23.3	16.5	25.5	30.0
Belgium	12.8	11.6	25.8	26.9
Germany	20.1	17.2	30.4	21.3
Sweden	23.4	21.9	22.9	27.8
Ireland	20.9	23.0	22.0	23.6
France	29.7	23.0	25.6	18.9
Austria	30.6	16.9	20.7	19.9
Netherlands	14.7	8.2	18.0	20.6
Denmark	19.8	13.8	15.2	21.6
Finland	24.3	12.6	14.3	14.7
EU-15	24.4	19.5	27.3	25.8

Source:

(<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/qualityoflife/eurlife/index.php?template=3&radioindic=26&idDomain=2&firstDifferentiator=61>)

* EB: Percentage of employed people who often or always find that their job prevents them giving time to their partner/family, measured on a four item scale. EQLS: Share of people for whom it has been difficult to fulfil their family responsibilities because of the amount of time spent on the job "several times a week" or "several times a month". (% of employed people, men and women)^{xxii}

Analyses of the UK 2000 Time Use Survey (Gatenby, 2004) found that, on average, couples without children spend about 2½ hours a day doing the same activity together, falling to around 1¼ hours on a weekday for couples with children, but that the time spent on activities together during the week is much lower than at weekends. The most common shared activity for most groups is TV watching, accounting for about a third of all shared time together (about an hour per day), followed by eating together (about half an hour per day) and housework (24 minutes per day). Social activities and entertainment together average only about a quarter of an hour per day. As Gatenby argues, "in terms of the quality of the shared time together, we note that television watching can be regarded as a passive rather than an active way of sharing time together" (2004: 12). Even more worryingly, perhaps, the average of 150 minutes shared by couples hides a substantial number of people who share very little time with their partners. In fact, for a quarter of the sampled days included in the study, couples shared activities for 10 minutes or less. Gatenby then examined the amount of time couples spent together, according to their employment status, occupational class, education and age (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: See overleaf

Table 4.2: Time spent together by couples on activities, by household type (all adult couples)

Variable	All adult couples	Shared time per day (mins)
Age	Both 25-34	126
	Both 35-44	99
	Both 45-64	153
	Both 65 or over	250
Occupational class*	Both managerial/professional	142
	Both intermediate	135
	Both routine/manual	147
Education*	Both 'A' level or above	130
	Both 'O' level or below	143
	Both no qualifications	162
Employment	Both full-time	120
	Man full-time, woman part-time	117
	Man full-time, woman not working	113
	Both retired	260
Working hours (usual weekly)	Men: up to 29 hours	160
	Men: 30-39 hours	135
	Men: 40-49 hours	118
	Men: 50-59 hours	120
	Men: 60 hours and over	121
	Men: not working	222
	Women: up to 29 hours	127
	Women: 30-39 hours	122
	Women: 40-49 hours	120
	Women: 50 hours and over	124
	Women: not working	188

Source: Time Use Survey, 2000.

Base: 4996 shared diary days; *only couples with same occupational class /education categories compared

An examination of working hours showed that, for men working under 40 hours per week, as their working hours increase, they spend less time with their partners. However, after 40 hours per week, the amount of shared time barely changes (about 2 hours per day), even for men working over 60 hours per week. Working women, however, average about 2 hours shared time per day, irrespective of the number of hours they work. Gatenby (2004) also found that, unsurprisingly, couples in full-time work spent less time together than retired couples. Interestingly, however, couples where the man was in full-time work and the woman was either in part-time work or not working spent even less time together. It may be that in these couples, the man is working even *longer* hours to compensate for

reduced household income. In turn, this means that such couples are spending even less time together (although presumably the mothers in these couples are spending more time with children). The individual weekly working hours data shows us, on the other hand, that when either men or women were not working, they spent more time together, although this could be due to the presence of couples where neither partner worked. Those couples in the 35-44 age bracket, however (the time when couples are most likely to have young children), spent less time together than couples in other age brackets. Couples with higher education also spent less time together than those with lower education, perhaps reflecting longer working hours and higher work demands (see Chapter 2).

A UK study by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2001) found that 40% of respondents felt that their long working hours had caused arguments with their spouse, and 40% also felt guilty about not having enough time to help with household chores in the previous two months. An earlier IPD survey (1999) found that although only 3% of respondents felt that long working hours were responsible for them getting divorced, 27% felt that their hours of work had put a strain on their relationship, and for those who were not married, 11% reported that long hours had been responsible for their break-up with a partner in the past few years (IPD, 1999).

4.1.2 Importance of role conflict:

In 1999, Cooper and colleagues reported on the IM-UMIST Quality of Working Life Survey and suggested a link between long working hours and the breakdown of the family, primarily because the majority of UK families now comprise two earners (although, as we have seen above, men with non-working spouses may work longer hours and so spend even less time with their families). In this study, 59% of managers claimed that long hours adversely affected their health and 56% their morale at work, and, importantly, 72% of the managers surveyed also indicated that long hours negatively affected their relationship with their spouse/partner. However, having a limited amount of time with one's partner/spouse may not necessarily lead to marital conflict and increase the risk of separation or divorce. In an overview of the literature, primarily from the US, Crouter and colleagues (2001) found that for many, working hours were associated with *positive* marital outcomes (e.g., Coverman, 1989). For some couples, long hours may in fact be viewed positively, e.g., allowing the husband to get ahead in an organization, earning overtime wages, or having a second job to bring in extra income. Crouter et al. (2001) conclude that, in marital relationships, subjective interpretations of work demands appear to be far more important than work hours, per se.

In the Australian study also discussed in Chapter 3, Weston et al. (2004) found no evidence that fathers who were working very long hours had poorer relationships with their partners than those men working standard hours, if they were satisfied with their working hours. The authors suggest that this may reflect personality differences among those who enjoy hard work (for an overview of this literature, see Burke and Cooper, 2008), or that some of the benefits of long working hours may accrue to partners, e.g., interesting work stories, work events and reflected glory from partners' achievements.

Other studies also showed no associations between long hours and relationship quality, although role conflict for men was shown to be associated with negative marital outcomes (Hughes et al., 1992; Coverman, 1989). However, Crouter et al. (2001) suggest that these results may reflect selection effects (e.g., couples who regard men's long work hours as

problematic may reduce their hours or may even have already separated or divorced, which would disqualify them from being sampled). This would in turn reduce the association between long hours and marital quality.

In their own research into long working hours and marital quality in the US, Crouter et al. (2001) found similar results to those outlined above: although husbands who spent more than 60 hours a week in work-related activities spent less time in shared activities with their wives than husbands who put less time into work, these long-hours couples did not evaluate their relationships less positively. However, there were consistent associations between husbands' role overload and subjective reports of marital quality: when husbands experienced higher overload, partners felt less loving, saw themselves as less able to take the spouse's perspective, saw the spouse as less able to take their perspective, and reported more conflict. As Galinsky (1999) argues, relationships require "face time" to give and receive support, to build intimacy and to repair relationships when conflict arises. For those working very long hours or at atypical times, this "face time" is drastically reduced.

4.1.3 Individual effects and the impact on other family members:

Interestingly, earlier work by Crouter et al. (1999) found that husbands' work pressure predicted their own overload and also that of their wives, but for wives, work pressures only predicted their own overload. Various suggestions are given to explain these findings: one is that men still earn more and therefore retain the "provider" label in many households, even when the wife works full-time, giving their work role more importance; another possible explanation is that men tend to respond to stress more readily, and recover more slowly, than women (although, as shown in Chapter 3, women tend to report more work-related illness than men); a third explanation is that women also retain the primary responsibility for housework and childcare, even when working (e.g., Bianchi et al., 2000) and therefore have little time to stay focused on the pressures of the working day.

Ilies et al. (2007) studied US employees who responded to daily surveys both at work and at home, and whose spouses were also interviewed daily via telephone for two weeks. The authors found that perceptions of work-to-family conflict affected employees' engagement in social activities with spouses and children. Those who reported high amounts of work-to-family conflict on particular days were less likely to interact socially with their families, even when the amount of time the employee spent at home was controlled for. Previous work has also shown that depressed parents are less spontaneous and are more withdrawn, angry and sad (e.g., Downey and Coyne, 1990; Lovejoy et al., 2000), with obvious implications for other family members. These studies, along with other recent work, demonstrate the many direct and indirect ways in which work-related illness can affect families (see e.g. Dembe, 2005).

4.1.4 Mothers' employment and risk of divorce:

An earlier US survey (Johnson, 2004) found that, as women work more hours, the probability of divorce increases. Men's hours, on the other hand, matter only when both spouses are working long hours or when children are present. When one spouse is not employed outside the home, the probability of divorce is much lower, although the authors suggest that these people may in fact be constrained by their economic situation to obtain a divorce. Johnson also notes that these findings cannot imply a causal relationship between long work hours and divorce. Bardasi and Francesconi (2000) also found no association between long hours and divorce. Recent UK findings based on analysis of the 1970 British

Cohort Study (Sigle-Rushton, 2007) found that, like previous research, working mothers are more likely to divorce. However, couples in families where men engage in more domestic work and childcare are less likely to divorce. Sigle-Rushton suggests that the active involvement of men in housework can largely offset the effect that women's employment may have on the likelihood of divorce.

In an overview of UK research funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Dex (2003) found that for most working families, priority was given to children's needs first, followed by spouse and self, and wider family and friends third (although time pressures meant that many parents never got beyond their first priority). Dex goes on to argue that this prioritising of children also uncovers the sort of thinking and processes that lie behind statistical correlations of mothers' full-time employment with divorce rates among couples. Putting the needs of children before couples' needs for each other can leave relationships starved of (time) investment, and in the case of couples where long hours are worked or there are two atypical working schedules, this is even more pronounced. This may also explain why a growing number of couples, perhaps in wanting to give priority to their relationship with their partner and to work, decide not to have children at all (McAllister and Clarke, 1998, cited in Dex, 2003). Indeed, over the last 35 years, birth rates have fallen in most OECD countries (in 1980, there was a clear negative correlation between female employment and fertility rates), although interestingly, those countries in 2005 with high female employment rates also had relatively high fertility rates (OECD, *Babies and Bosses*, 2007). Although this is not fundamental to the present study, it is nonetheless an interesting development which could be explored in further research.

4.2 Shift work/atypical work patterns

4.2.1 Lack of time with partner:

Long working hours are not the only cause of role conflict for both men and women, however. Many parents choose to work shifts (either during the week or at weekends) in order to share childcare and so minimise costs (see, for example, Robson and Wedderburn, 1990; Barton, 1994), and/or to maintain values regarding the importance of parental care (Deutsch, 1999). However, this also means that time-pressed couples spend even less time together. As Gatenby (2004) outlines in his analyses of the 2000 UK Time Use Survey, couples do more of everything together at weekends than they do during the week. Although the most popular shared activity at weekends, as during the week, is watching television, the greatest increase in shared time at weekends is in social activities and entertainment, when couples spend an extra 19 minutes together. In addition, more time is also spent at weekends doing housework together (an extra 20 minutes) and eating together (14 minutes more). Although Gatenby did not gauge the extent of weekend working on couples' shared activities, it is inevitable that for those couples working regularly at weekends, this shared activity time will be severely constrained.

4.2.2 Cross-cultural similarities:

An early study carried out in the British iron and steel industry reported that 40% of shift-workers complained of not having enough time to spend with their wives (Wedderburn, 1975). A later French study of 800 nurses reported that 60% of those on fixed day shifts/fixed night shifts, and 85% of those on alternating morning/afternoon or night/day shifts, also felt that they had insufficient time to spend with their partners (Estryn-Behar et

al., 1990). Similarly, an Austrian survey which questioned refinery shift-workers twice over a period of five years reported a decrease in compatibility in the couple (Koller et al., 1990). However, a study by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2000) was unsure as to whether or not shift work leads to a greater frequency of relational break-ups. La Valle and colleagues (2002) assessed the impact of UK couples' atypical working patterns on couple relationships by asking all partnered mothers how satisfied they were with the time they spent together as a couple (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Couples' working patterns and satisfaction with time as a couple (%)

	<i>Mother only frequent atypical work</i>	<i>Father only frequent atypical work</i>	<i>Both frequent atypical work</i>	<i>Both occasional / no atypical work</i>
Extremely satisfied	9	11	8	22
Fairly satisfied	64	55	51	61
Fairly dissatisfied	23	27	27	14
Extremely dissatisfied	4	7	14	3
Weighted base	91	344	417	113

Base: all partnered mothers; source: La Valle et al. (2002)

Satisfaction levels were much lower among those frequently working atypical hours: 41% of those in couples where both partners frequently worked atypical hours said that they were dissatisfied with the amount of time spent together as a couple, compared with 17% of those in couples where neither regularly worked at atypical times. When only one parent worked atypical hours, dissatisfaction was higher than those where neither partner worked such hours, but lower than couples where both worked atypical hours.

4.2.3 Risk of relationship problems and divorce:

Non-day work schedules have previously been associated with relationship stress and work-family conflict (Kingston and Nock, 1987; Mellor, 1986; Rubin, 1994; Simon, 1990; Staines and Pleck, 1983). However, as Perry-Jenkins and colleagues (2007) point out, much of this research is cross-sectional; thus, it is not clear whether non-day shiftwork schedules lead to troubled relationships or if more negative relationships lead individuals to work opposite shifts.

White and Keith (1990) examined the effects of shift work on relationship quality over a longer period of time, however. Non-day shift schedules were shown to have a modest, but consistently negative effect on relationship quality, and significantly increased the likelihood of divorce from 7% to 11% over a 3-year period. More recently in the US, Presser (2000) also found that non-day shift schedules had negative effects on relationship stability, especially for those with children. Among men married fewer than five years and with at least one child, working fixed nights made separation or divorce six times more likely than working days. Mothers married for longer than five years and who worked fixed night shifts were three times more likely than day shift workers to experience separation or divorce.

Furthermore, analyses did not support the alternative hypothesis that couples with troubled relationships may be more likely to select non-day shift work. Gareis et al. (2003) focused on the perception of “fit” between work schedules and personal and family needs. For women and men, better partner/family schedule fit predicted higher relationship-role quality. However, the more fathers felt that their own schedule met their *own* needs, the lower their partners’ relationship quality.

4.2.4 Importance of occupational class:

Using a sample of dual-earner, working-class couples in the US, Perry-Jenkins et al. (2007) found that working evening or night shifts, as opposed to day shifts, was related to higher levels of depressive symptoms and, for mothers only, working rotating shifts predicted relationship conflict. Strazdins et al. (2006) argue that low-income families may be especially vulnerable to the strains arising from atypical work schedules. Low income has previously been identified as a risk factor for parent depression and less effective parenting (Mistry et al., 2002), and could be particularly problematic when combined with atypical schedules which place more pressure on parental mental health and parenting (Strazdins et al., 2006). Other factors which may exacerbate such strains for low-income families include lack of affordable childcare, as well as lower work control which has already been shown to be important in health outcomes for working parents (see Chapter 3).

In a series of case studies undertaken by Kodz et al. (2003), manual employees reported that the main benefit of working extra hours was increased pay, but they also noted the negative impact longer hours had on personal relationships, children, social life and leisure activities. Some even blamed their relationship breakdown or the high incidence of divorce among co-workers on long working hours. However, the overall blame was placed not so much on long hours, but on the nature of particular shift patterns, such as working at weekends.

4.2.5 Importance of children’s age:

Parents with young children who work atypical hours may also be at risk of increased pressure, especially as younger children require more care and supervision, and may also be more sensitive to changed routines and parents’ moods caused by distress (Lovejoy et al., 2000). Evening, night and weekend working could also limit parents’ opportunities for social interaction, closeness and support from others (Strazdins et al., 2006), as well as from each other.

4.2.6 Importance of gender:

Strazdins et al. (2006) also demonstrated that the timing of fathers’ (as well as mothers’) work is important, in spite of the fact that most previous work has focused on the effects of maternal employment only. Similar effects were shown when mothers or fathers worked at atypical times. However, the authors go on to suggest that shift parenting, while possibly increasing fathers’ involvement with children, may also mean reduced time for companionship and support. Furthermore, if fathers do not combine childcare with extra domestic work while the mother is at work, this could exacerbate any feelings of pressure and stress in mothers (associations were found between work schedules and parental, especially mothers’, depression).

4.3 European divorce rates

While there are many reasons for marriage dissolution (which varies by factors such as religiosity and age), long and atypical working hours must be considered as potential risk factors, given the evidence outlined earlier in this chapter. Marriage rates have been declining across all countries over the last 30 years, which does not necessarily represent a reduction in partnerships, but an increase in cohabitation. Divorce rates over the last 18 years demonstrate that for some countries, figures have remained more or less the same or have actually decreased (e.g., Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and France), whereas for others, the rates have increased dramatically (e.g., Belgium, Germany and Portugal). The UK stands at third highest, with a steady increase from 44% in 1990 to 55% in 2002 (Table 4.4). Recent OECD analyses of the increases in divorce rates between 1970 and 2004 demonstrate that the UK is again third highest, with a rate of 2.8%. Only Belgium and Portugal have maintained higher increases since 1970. Predominantly Catholic countries such as Italy and Spain are not surprisingly at the bottom of the list (although both have increased), but the Netherlands, with its low proportion of employees working very long hours, is third from the bottom. France is also close to the bottom of the table, although its 35-hour week policy is soon set to change (and a relatively high proportion of employees still work very long hours). Australia and Austria, both countries with high proportions of long hours workers, are also close to the top of the divorce table.

In addition, recent OECD figures (Babies and Bosses, 2007) show that sole parent families now constitute over 20% of all households with children in Australia, Canada, Iceland, Ireland, New Zealand, the UK and the USA, and that the UK is highest among those countries covered with a rate of 24% (Table 3.4 for abridged European version)^{xxiii}.

Table 4.4: Demonstrated rates of divorce (no. per 100 marriages) and sole parent families in OECD countries:

	<i>Divorces per 100 marriages</i>			<i>Sole parent families with children (% of all families in Europe)</i>
	<i>1990</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2005</i>
Belgium	31.5	68.1	75.7	18
Sweden	47.8	67.0	56.1	n/a
UK	44.1	52.8	55.0	24
Austria	36.0	42.4	53.6	12
Australia	36.4	45.4	53.6*	n/a
Germany	30.0	39.4	50.7*	16
Finland	52.6	59.1	49.4	10
USA	48.4	50.0	47.6*	n/a
Portugal	12.9	18.7	47.4	7
Norway	46.4	47.8	44.9*	17
Denmark	43.6	37.4	41.1	16
Netherlands	29.7	41.9	40.1	13
France	36.9	46.8	39.1*	14
Spain	10.5	16.5	18.2*	6
Italy	8.7	9.3	15.4*	6

Source: OECD indicators, 2006; EC bookshop 2006

*Data not available for 2002; 2001 figures included here

In this chapter, we have demonstrated that both long and atypical working hours have the capacity to negatively affect couple relationships, especially when perceived role conflict is high. The next chapter will demonstrate that such working patterns can also affect the quality of relationships with children, with a corresponding impact on child wellbeing.

Chapter 4 summary:

- **Around 30% of employed people in the UK report that their job prevents them spending enough time with partner/family, the third highest figure in Europe.**
- **For women and men, better partner/family schedule “fit” appears to predict better relationship quality.**
- **Those reporting higher role conflict also report poorer relationships with their partners. Those who report high work-to-family conflict are also less likely to interact socially with their families, even when they are at home.**
- **The presence of children decreases the amount of time couples spend together, as hard-pressed couples prioritise their children’s needs above their own.**
- **Although many parents choose to work shifts to share childcare and minimise costs, this also means that couples spend less time together. Shift parenting may have particularly negative effects for women, especially if fathers do not combine childcare with extra domestic work.**
- **Non-day shift schedules appear to have a negative effect on relationship quality, especially for those couples with children, and also increase the likelihood of divorce.**
- **Low-income families may be at greater risk of relationship breakdown when working atypical hours, due in part to a lack of affordable childcare and lower control at work.**
- **Britain currently has the third highest divorce rate in Europe, as well as the highest proportion of single parent families of the countries covered.**

Chapter 5: The effects on children of long and atypical working hours

Introduction

The previous chapter demonstrated that long and atypical working hours have an adverse effect on couple relationships overall, with couples tending to place greater priority upon the amount of time they spend with children than with partners (La Valle et al., 2002; Dex, 2003). However, adverse marital outcomes appear to be related to the amount of conflict parents perceive between work and family and the lack of “fit” between work and family schedules, indicating that it is not simply a lack of time which is important. Greater conflict and poorer marital relationships are of course potentially bi-directional, in that those with higher conflict may have poorer relationships, but those with poorer relationships could also experience higher conflict between work and family (see Preface, Figure 1.1 for potential links). Those with higher conflict also interact less with other family members, often becoming withdrawn and depressed (Ilies et al., 2007), so creating the potential for poorer relationships with children, as well as with partners.

A proliferation of research has been undertaken on the effects of maternal employment on child outcomes (e.g., Perry-Jenkins et al., 2000; Wen Han, 2001) and have shown different results (e.g., Ermisch and Francesconi, 2002; Deding et al., 2007). In a review of the literature, Russell and Bowman (2000) concluded that there were no significant developmental problems for children as a consequence of maternal employment. However, they did note that workplace variables affect job satisfaction and tensions, which then impact on parenting behaviour and in turn affect children’s behaviour (Stewart and Barling, 1996, cited in OECD, 2002: 48). Russell and Bowman (2000) concluded that the quality of childcare is the most important factor in determining positive development of the children of working mothers.

Furthermore, when examining overall child wellbeing, it should be noted that child mental health problems are highest among the small group of children where neither parent has ever worked (ONS, 2004). Developmental problems in 3-year-old children from the Millennium Cohort Study were also associated with the parent not working, and especially never working (Dex and Ward, 2007). However, Dex and Joshi (2005) found that never working was connected to a range of other characteristics such as being a teenage mother, having few or no qualifications, and living in a low income family, factors which were significantly associated on their own with worse child outcomes. However, the focus of this chapter is not on maternal employment per se, nor on the effects of parental unemployment or under-employment on children, but on the effects on children of particular types of work schedules undertaken by *both* male and female partners in couple relationships.

5.1 Long working hours

5.1.1 Long working hours and time spent with children:

In a UK study, La Valle et al. (2002) found that both mothers’ and fathers’ working hours affected the time that they had to spend on specific activities with children. Mothers were asked if they and their partners’ working hours affected their time with children (Table 5.1). Figures in bold show partners’ details, according to the mothers’ responses.

Table 5.1: Parents' working hours and disruption to family activities (%)

% of partnered mothers who said that they and their partner's working hours limited each of the listed activities every week									
Activities:	1-29	1-29	30-40	30-40	41-48	41-48	49+ mothers	49-59 fathers	60+ Fathers
Reading, playing, helping with homework	20	13	22	28	29	45	42	51	68
Involvement in child's recreation/sport	17	8	23	32	24	43	40	47	55
Outdoor activities with children ¹	13	10	21	23	39	36	46	40	53
Family visits to friends/relatives	11	13	18	17	20	25	32	23	36
Going shopping with the family	10	4	14	18	18	26	24	32	38
Family outings	10	9	12	12	18	17	18	22	32
Weighted base	498	24	346	459	66	193	55	173	113

Source: NatCen survey (2001)

Base: all partnered mothers

¹ This question only asked if youngest child in household was 14 or under

Both mothers' and fathers' working hours affect the time that parents spend with their children on certain activities. Although even a small percentage of those women working under 30 hours a week reported that they had less time to spend on family activities, the proportion increased dramatically for those working longer hours, rising to 46% of mothers working over 49 hours a week who reported that their work limited outdoor activities with children. The figures for their partners were even more striking, with over two-thirds (68%) of mothers whose partners worked over 60 hours a week saying that his work had prevented him from spending time reading, playing and helping children with homework. Other activities were also adversely affected, especially involvement in children's recreational and sport activities, and outdoor activities with children.

Another UK study (CIPD, 2001) found that 42% of long hours workers felt that their working hours had damaged their friendships and 19% of those with children felt that it had also damaged their parent-child relationships. However, 83% of the partners of these workers felt that the long hours worked had a negative impact upon their partner's relationships with their child(ren). An earlier report also undertaken by the CIPD (1999) found that 44% of long hours workers with school age children felt that their work had damaged their relationships with their children, 41% said that they had missed a child's birthday or school event because of their working hours, and 27% said that they had sacrificed seeing their children growing up because of long hours (30% of men compared with 19% of women working long hours). In an analysis of the BHPS, Scase et al. (1998) also reported that those parents working long hours were less likely to monitor children's

homework, found it harder to manage their children and were less likely to talk to them on a daily basis. Indeed, 42% of fathers working standard hours talked to their children on most days, compared with only 26% of fathers working more than 48 hours per week.

5.1.1.1 Gender differences: Lader et al. (2006) examined the 2005 UK Time Use Survey and found that, somewhat surprisingly, the amount of time spent with children has increased for both men and women since 2000 (although women's increase was not statistically significant, their time with children had risen from 28 to 32 minutes per day as a primary activity, and 20 to 32 minutes as a secondary activity). Even though men's time with children appears to have risen, they spent on average only 15 minutes a day in caring for their children as a primary activity, and 10 minutes per day as a secondary activity. However, as has already been shown in Chapter 2, men with children spend more time at work per day than men without children (326 minutes on average for those aged between 16 and 49 with pre-school children, compared with 261 minutes for those without children). Women without children, however, work longer hours than women with children. Both men and women appeared to spend less time per day doing domestic work than in 2000, although women still spend significantly longer than men on housework (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2: Time spent on housework and childcare by sex, 2000 and 2005 (UK figures)

Activity	Main activity		Secondary activity	
	2000	2005	2000	2005
Average minutes per person per day % of people participating in activity				
Housework:				
Men	128 86%	101 77%	5 19%	6 12%
Women	215 96%	180 92%	13 34%	12 19%
Childcare:				
Men	11 14%	15 11%	8 11%	10 6%
Women	28 24%	32 21%	20 19%	32 13%

Source: UK Time Use Survey 2005

Total number of persons in sample (weighted): 2000 = 8150 men and 8906 women; 2005 = 2385 men and 2556 women (housework questions); 2000 = 7535 men and 9031 women; 2005 = 2238 men and 2703 women (childcare questions).

¹ Participation rate is proportion of people who spent any time on the activity during their diary day.

² It should be noted that the main and secondary activity time should not be added together as this implies more than 24 hours being available.

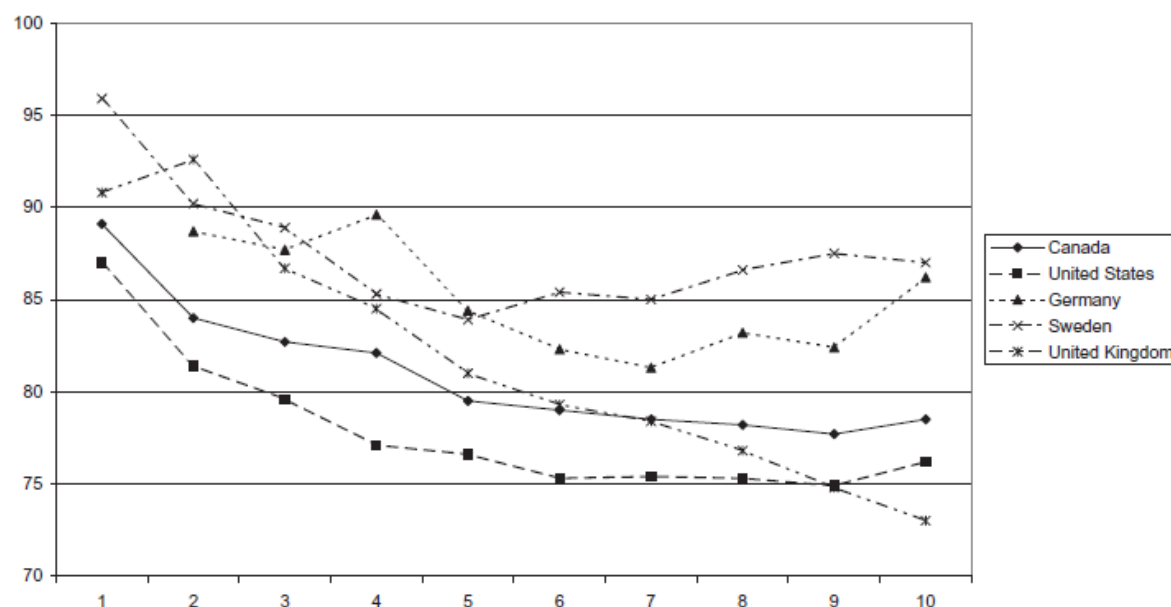
In the US, Milkie et al. (2004) found that almost half of all mothers and fathers felt that they did not spend enough time with their co-resident children. However, fathers whose youngest child was an adolescent were more likely than mothers (and parents of children of

other ages) to think that they spent too little time with their children. In similar US research, Crouter et al. (2001) examined fathers' interactions with their adolescent children and found that they were seen as less accepting by adolescent first-borns (aged around 15), and the father-adolescent relationship was characterised by less effective perspective-taking, when fathers worked long hours *and* felt overloaded. However, those working low hours but with high overload also reported relatively high conflict levels. Relationships between fathers and younger adolescents showed a similar, but less pronounced, pattern. When fathers worked long hours but reported low overload, relationships with children were as positive as those of fathers working fewer hours. The authors conclude that long hours in themselves are not associated with lower-quality relationships between fathers and adolescent children, which echoes the research into long hours and marital conflict (Chapter 4). However, long hours are important, and Crouter et al. (2001) also suggest that those fathers working long hours *and* feeling overloaded may focus inward on their own fatigue or stress, meaning that they may be less in tune with their children than other fathers (see also Ilies et al., 2007). Although we have no data available, it would be interesting to find out children's views of their parents' working hours, which could perhaps be the focus for future research.

5.1.1.2 Occupational class differences: In a recent study which examined the amount of "available" time which couples have to spend with children across five countries (Burton and Phipps, 2007), the US reported the lowest available time overall. However, those in the highest income bracket in the UK have the lowest amount of time of all countries. The UK also showed the largest differences between the top and bottom of the income distribution, with Sweden reporting the most available time in deciles 6 to 10, followed by Germany (see Figure 5.1). These figures tally with the findings from Chapter 2, which show that managerial/professional employees are the most likely to work very long hours, and that a higher proportion of UK employees work very long hours than elsewhere in Europe.

Figure 5.1 See overleaf

Figure 5.1: Total weekly “available” adult hours by income decile



Source: Luxembourg Income Study

Although longer working hours appear most likely to affect those in higher-level occupations, so reducing the amount of time available to spend with children, work-stress research has previously demonstrated that the *conditions* of work that are often found in lower-status jobs (e.g. routine work, low autonomy, heavy supervision and little opportunity for complex work) exacerbate psychological distress and reduce self-esteem and personal control in adults (reported in Cooksey and Jekielek, 1997). When such work experiences leave parents distressed, they are therefore less able to interact positively with children and provide them with responsive and stimulating environments (Belsky and Eggebean, 1991; Menaghan, 1991). Greater self-esteem among mothers leads them to believe in the positive value of their input into children’s development and increases their efforts to enhance their environments (e.g. Gecas, 1989; Menaghan and Parcel, 1991).

In their own US research, Cooksey and Jekielek (1997) found that greater occupational complexity for mothers predicted lower levels of child behavioural problems, and suggest that “the economic resources that accrue from employment, and opportunities for workplace autonomy that benefit parenting skills, appear to outweigh any disadvantages that stem from decreased time that working mothers have to spend with their children when compared with non-working mothers” (1997: 658).

5.2 Atypical working hours/shift work

5.2.1 Atypical/shift work and time spent with children:

Long parental working hours are not the only potential work-related risk factor for negative effects on children. Indeed, in France, Fagnagni and Letablier (2004) examined whether or not the 35-hour working week had made it easier for parents to manage work-life balance (Table 5.3). For those working non-standard / atypical hours (i.e., before 8 am; after 6pm

or nights; weekend working), almost half reported that the 35-hour week had *not* made it easier, compared with 36% of those working standard hours. In other words, simply working shorter hours is not enough to resolve work-life conflict issues for those on atypical working schedules. The complex childcare arrangements which parents working at atypical times often need to manage, combined with the reduction of traditional “family” time at weekends and in the evenings, appear to reduce parental satisfaction with atypical working schedules, even when working hours are relatively low. However, the combination of atypical working hours *and* long hours are likely to exacerbate any feelings of conflict between work and family time.

Table 5.3: Parents’ satisfaction with 35-hour week and non-standard working hours (%)

	Yes (has made it easier)	No (has not made it easier)	Total
Employees with non-standard working hours	50.4	49.6	100% (n=274)
Employees with standard working hours	64.1	35.9	100% (n=340)

Source: Survey on Reconciliation of Family and Working Life, CNAF 2000

In the UK, La Valle et al. (2002) found that 32% of mothers who frequently worked atypical hours said that their work limited the time they could spend reading with, playing with or helping children with their homework every week, compared with 12% of mothers with more standard working hours. Almost half (46%) of mothers whose partners frequently worked atypical hours also said that work limited the time partners spent on reading, playing and homework help every week, compared with 18% of women whose partners worked standard hours. For those women who worked Sundays every 2-3 weeks, 49% said that their work limited the time they spent on these activities, and 47% whose partners worked the same number of Sundays said the same. Although other activities were also badly affected, it appears that these particular activities (reading, playing and homework help) are those most affected by atypical working schedules. Furthermore, working mothers expressed greater dissatisfaction with the time spent with children when they or their partners worked frequent atypical hours than those who worked only occasional or no atypical hours.

Table 5.4 See overleaf

Table 5.4: Satisfaction with time employed mothers and fathers spend with children (%)

	Mothers		Fathers	
	Frequent atypical work	Occasional or none	Frequent atypical work	Occasional or none
Extremely satisfied	21	30	14	23
Fairly satisfied	55	56	54	64
Fairly dissatisfied	19	12	26	11
Extremely dissatisfied	5	2	7	3
Total %	100	100	100	100
Weighted base	508	458	761	209

Source: NatCen survey (La Valle et al., 2002)

It should be emphasised that those families in which one or both parents work atypical hours tend to be lower skilled and lower paid than families where parents work standard hours. For example, Barnes and Bryson (2004) found that 38% of those usually working at weekends had no qualifications, compared with only 15% of those with a degree or equivalent. Similarly, 38% of those claiming Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit usually worked at weekends, compared with 28% of those claiming no benefits.

La Valle et al. (2002) demonstrated that 73% of partnered mothers working at atypical times reported having no choice in their working hours, and that “a high level of choice in the labour market tended to be associated with high qualifications and skill levels” (2002: 14). Dex (2003) argues that whether parents perceive themselves to have a choice in working at atypical times makes a big difference to the perceived effects of this type of work on their family life. When parents have made a deliberate choice to work at atypical times and the hours of atypical work are relatively short, it tends to be perceived as beneficial, allowing them more time with children. However, where parents feel they have little choice over their working arrangements and also work *long* atypical hours, the effects on family life are seen as primarily negative.

5.2.1.1 Gender differences: Using data from the 2000 UK Time Use Survey, Barnes, Bryson and Smith (2006) analysed the time that children with parents working atypical hours spent on various activities. For 14-18 year olds, those with parents working on Saturdays spent less time on homework and more time on social activities than other children. Barnes et al. (2006:6) suggest that this is “the likely result of the lack of parental encouragement to teenagers to engage in their studies”. Overall, mothers’ work at atypical times meant less time on key activities with their children than fathers who worked at atypical times. There was also very little evidence that parents made up for time lost, either because of their own working hours or their partners’ atypical working patterns, by spending more time with their children when not working. Fathers spent relatively little time alone with children, although this could increase if the mother was at work and especially if the mother worked at atypical times. Spending time together as a family, however, appears more likely to be affected if the mother worked atypical hours. Echoing the research undertaken by La Valle et al. (2002), Sunday working appears to encroach most on family time.

Davis et al. (2006) found, in a US study of parental involvement with adolescent children, that mothers' relationships with their adolescents were not adversely affected by their working shifts, but that fathers' relationships were. Adolescents whose mothers worked shifts actually reported more relationship intimacy than adolescents whose mothers worked during the day only. However, fathers with non-standard shifts knew significantly less about their adolescents' daily activities than fathers with daytime work only. Furthermore, fathers with non-standard working schedules *and* a marriage with high conflict reported less intimacy with their adolescents.

5.2.1.2 Occupational class differences: In the USA, some other research has shown that maternal shift work may contribute to more behavioural problems in children. The strongest associations were shown for children who lived in single-mother or low-income families, those who had mothers working in cashier or service occupations, and those whose mothers worked full-time, non-day shifts (Wen Han, 2005; 2008). However, work by Joshi and Bogen (2007) reported that, although some researchers in this area found positive associations between maternal nonstandard working schedules and poorer child outcomes (e.g. Heymann, 2000; Wen Han, 2005), others found no such associations (e.g. Phillips, 2000; Dunifon et al., 2005). Their own research found an association between low-income mothers' nonstandard work schedules and poorer behaviour among children, and that mothers themselves reported more parenting stress. Another US study found that for every hour a parent works between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m., his or her child is 16% more likely to score in the bottom quartile on maths tests. Children whose parents work at night are almost three times as likely as other children to be suspended from school, even after controlling for parents' income and education (Heymann, 2000). Wen Han (2002) also found that children whose mothers have *ever* worked nonstandard hours have lower cognitive scores at 15, 24 and 36 months than children whose mothers only worked standard hours.

Further work in the USA (Heymann and Earle, 2001) found that having at least one parent working in the evening had a significantly negative effect on the home environment, both for families living in poverty and those not living in poverty. There was an 11% decrease in positive home environment scores when mothers worked evenings and an 8% decrease when fathers worked such schedules. The authors note, however, that those families living in poverty have the least choice about working conditions and the least resources available for finding quality childcare when they are working during the evening. These findings echo those reported by Strazdins et al. (2006) in Chapter 4, who argue that low-income families may be especially vulnerable to the strains arising from atypical work schedules. An earlier study by Strazdins et al. (2004) found that children in dual-earner households were more likely to have emotional or behavioural problems when either one or both parents worked regular evenings, nights or weekends, irrespective of which parent worked the nonstandard hours. The effect was stronger for pre-school than for school-age children. The authors argue that higher skilled parents may be more able to move into better jobs which are also more likely to have standard work times (although professional and managerial employees are those most likely to work long hours; see Chapter 2). The combination of low pay and nonstandard work hours, both of which are important for child health and wellbeing, is likely to compound any difficulties experienced by lower-educated parents (Strazdins et al., 2004).

5.2.2 Atypical work hours and quality of parenting:

As we have already seen, atypical work schedules constrain the time that parents have with their children (e.g. La Valle et al., 2002), particularly in activities such as eating together, reading, playing and helping with homework. However, child wellbeing is affected not only by the time spent with parents ('quantity' of parenting), but also by the quality of parenting (Repetti et al., 2002). The stress involved in working atypical hours may alter parents' mood and energy levels, which in turn may lead to more irritability and poor interactions with children (Menaghan, 1991; Repetti, 1994).

Strazdins et al. (2006; 2007) focused on dual-earner families in Canada and found associations between nonstandard work schedules and children's emotional and behavioural problems, which were partially mediated by poorer family functioning, parent depressive symptoms and more hostile and ineffective parenting. These associations were shown when either or both parents were working atypical hours.

5.2.2.1 Occupational class differences: Chapter 3 already outlined the links between atypical and shift working patterns and work stress, as well as other negative health outcomes for individuals. Previous work has also examined the links between parental work stress and effective parenting: high levels of maternal stress among those families living in poverty in the USA have been related to internalising behaviour problems (being withdrawn and depressed) and externalising problems (being aggressive and impulsive) (Conger et al., 2002; McLoyd, 1990). As Hsueh and colleagues argue: "parental employment on nonstandard or variable schedules will have problematic consequences for children through associations with parental stress" (2007: 621). However, in their own research into nonstandard work schedules among low-income families, Hsueh et al. (2007) found no evidence for substantial negative effects of such schedules on child wellbeing. Fixed nonstandard schedules were associated with decreases in school performance over time, as reported by parents, suggesting a potential for longer-term negative effects, however. No associations were found between nonstandard schedules and parental psychological wellbeing or family functioning.

5.3 Work intensity

There appears to be very little work to date on the effects of work intensity on child wellbeing. However, Crouter and colleagues (1999) examined mothers' and fathers' interactions with adolescent children and found that when occupational prestige is held constant, high work pressure may heighten parents' feelings of overload, which in turn may make them more likely to engage in conflict with their adolescent children. Conflict, in turn, is linked with lower feelings of psychological wellbeing in adolescents. These findings, and those from previous chapters, indicate that employees at all occupational levels are vulnerable to feelings of overload and are therefore similarly vulnerable to relationship problems with children, especially adolescents.

5.4 Child wellbeing in Europe and North America

A recent report used various indicators of health and wellbeing amongst adolescents across Europe and North America^{xxiv} (WHO, 2008). Although in this survey, England, Scotland and Wales were analysed separately, these three countries score relatively low on self-reported

life satisfaction, and only 72% of 15-year-old girls in Wales report high life satisfaction, the lowest of all countries included.

In 2007, UNICEF also produced a well-publicised report which showed that the UK had the lowest levels of child wellbeing of all western, relatively affluent countries. On the other hand, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark and Finland were the top four countries in the combined analysis of wellbeing. In this study, six measures of child wellbeing were assessed: material wellbeing; health and safety; educational wellbeing; family and peer relationships; behaviours and risks; and subjective wellbeing (see Table 5.6 for a summary). The UK ranked in the bottom third on all measures apart from health and safety, and was at the very bottom of the table for peer and family relationships and subjective wellbeing.

Table 5.6: Child wellbeing in rich countries – a summary

Dimensions of child well-being	Average ranking position (for all 6 dimensions)	Dimension 1 Material well-being	Dimension 2 Health and safety	Dimension 3 Educational well-being	Dimension 4 Family and peer relationships	Dimension 5 Behaviours and risks	Dimension 6 Subjective well-being
Netherlands	4.2	10	2	6	3	3	1
Sweden	5.0	1	1	5	15	1	7
Denmark	7.2	4	4	8	9	6	12
Finland	7.5	3	3	4	17	7	11
Spain	8.0	12	6	15	8	5	2
Switzerland	8.3	5	9	14	4	12	6
Norway	8.7	2	8	11	10	13	8
Italy	10.0	14	5	20	1	10	10
Ireland	10.2	19	19	7	7	4	5
Belgium	10.7	7	16	1	5	19	16
Germany	11.2	13	11	10	13	11	9
Canada	11.8	6	13	2	18	17	15
Greece	11.8	15	18	16	11	8	3
Poland	12.3	21	15	3	14	2	19
Czech Republic	12.5	11	10	9	19	9	17
France	13.0	9	7	18	12	14	18
Portugal	13.7	16	14	21	2	15	14
Austria	13.8	8	20	19	16	16	4
Hungary	14.5	20	17	13	6	18	13
United States	18.0	17	21	12	20	20	20
United Kingdom	18.2	18	12	17	21	21	20

Source: UNICEF, Innocenti Report Card 7, 2007.

The chart presents the findings of the Report Card in summary form. Countries are listed in order of their average ranking for the six dimensions of child wellbeing that have been assessed. A light blue background indicates a place in the top third of the table, mid-blue the middle third and dark blue the bottom third.

OECD countries with insufficient data to be included in the overview were: Australia, Iceland, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, New Zealand, the Slovak Republic, South Korea and Turkey.

5.4.1 Quality of family relationships and communication:

In terms of family relationships (our focus in this report), less than 70% of 15-year old children in the UK reported eating their main meal with their parents “several times a week”, the fourth lowest of the OECD countries (only the US, New Zealand and Finland were lower). However, the UK was in the top half of the table when children were asked if parents spent time “just talking to you” several times a week. In both US and UK studies, researchers have found that home discussion has a major impact on children’s school achievement (Sui-Chu and Willms, 1996; Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). In fact, parental involvement has a significant effect on children’s achievement and adjustment even after all other factors (social class, maternal education and poverty) have been taken out of the equation between children’s aptitudes and their achievement (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). Given the results from previous chapters, we would also suggest that, while time spent with children is crucial, the *quality* of family time and communication is of the utmost importance. As we saw earlier in this chapter, when specific working experiences leave parents distressed, they are less able to interact positively with children and provide them with responsive and stimulating environments (Belsky and Eggebean, 1991; Menaghan, 1991). Furthermore, the stress involved in working atypical hours has the potential to alter parents’ mood and energy levels, which in turn may lead to more irritability and poor interactions with children (Menaghan, 1991; Repetti, 1994; Strazdins et al., 2006, 2007).

While there are many reasons for poor communication with parents, including cultural factors, the WHO report (2008) demonstrates that those countries where 15-year old children report poorer communication with fathers are also the countries where higher proportions of fathers (and to a lesser extent, mothers) work very long hours, here defined as over 50 hours per week (see Chapter 2, Table 2.2). In a similar way, those countries where children report *better* communication with fathers tend to be those countries where a much lower proportion of fathers (and mothers) work very long hours. The importance of fathers’ interactions with adolescents has previously been demonstrated by US researchers (e.g., Crouter et al., 2001; Milkie et al., 2004), and in the WHO report (2008). As reported earlier in the chapter, only around a quarter of those men in the UK working over 48 hours a week also talked to their children on most days of the week (Scase et al., 1998). As we already know from Chapter 2, over a quarter of all employed men in the UK work such long hours (here defined as more than 50 hours per week).

5.4.2 Risky behaviours:

Other health indicators were included in the 2008 WHO analysis, including tobacco and alcohol use among adolescents. The UK was not especially high in its tobacco use, in relation to other countries, but the use of alcohol, even among young children, showed a very different trend. The proportion of even very young children drinking in England, Scotland and Wales is alarming (e.g. 12% of 11-year old boys in England report drinking alcohol every week and this did not vary by family affluence). Girls aged 13 in the UK were more than twice as likely as girls in any other country apart from Italy to drink alcohol. In addition to these findings, the countries with the highest proportion of children reporting early sexual experiences were, in order, Denmark, Wales, Scotland and England, with girls in all cases significantly more likely to have had intercourse than boys. Girls in Wales report an extremely high rate of early sexual intercourse (41%). This did not vary by family affluence in any of the countries covered here.

In further assessments of risky behaviours in children, recent UK research also shows that a high proportion of Year 9 children (aged 13-14) had had an alcoholic drink, and over a fifth of Year 10 children (aged 14-15) had tried cannabis (DCSF report, 2008).

Table 5.10: Prevalence of risky behaviours in UK children (%)

	Year 9 (2004)	Year 10 (2005)	Year 11 (2006)	Post-16 (2007)
Ever smoke cigarettes	12	22	28	n/a
Ever tried cannabis	10	21	28	39
Ever had proper alcoholic drink	55	69	77	86
	Ever done this:	Done this in the last 12 months:		
Graffitied on walls	6	6	5	3
Vandalised public property	10	9	7	3
Shoplifted	12	8	7	10
Been in a fight	18	18	16	n/a

Source: LSYPE, Waves 1-4

It is not possible to make any definitive statement regarding the links between alcohol abuse, early sexual experiences, communication with parents and long or atypical working hours of parents, as there are many other factors involved which were not examined in the analyses presented above (e.g. cultural factors, religiosity, etc.), and no information was given about the working patterns of parents. For these reasons, only tentative conclusions can be drawn which should be tested in further research. However, when one combines the findings from the earlier part of this chapter regarding long working hours and lack of time with children, one might infer that those countries in which parents work very long hours are also more susceptible to problem behaviour in children (the results did not show a distinct trend in terms of men and women working atypical hours and shifts, however). In addition to these findings, the IPPR (2006) found that children in the UK are spending much more time in the company of peers, and less time with adults and parents, than young people from culturally similar backgrounds in Europe. Overall, however, those from lower socio-economic groups are those most likely to commit antisocial acts, become teenage parents, take drugs and drink alcohol, and the IPPR report authors argue that the future of the UK's youth is more strongly determined by background and upbringing than ever before (2006).

However, the DCSF (2008) report authors also examined the prevalence of risky behaviours according to the background of the child and found, on the whole, that there was very little difference between children's engagement in such behaviours according to their background. A total of 58% of the children of parents in higher professional occupations, compared with 56% of the children of parents in routine and manual occupations, engaged in risky behaviours. As we know, those in professional and managerial occupations are most likely to work very long hours, and atypical work is predominantly carried out by those in lower-status occupations. This may in effect confound any differences between negative outcomes in children from different backgrounds, and may help to explain why so

many children in the UK are engaging in risky behaviours, compared with many of their peers across Europe and North America.

Chapter 5 summary:

- **Both mothers and fathers working long hours feel that they do not have enough time to spend with their children, although fathers overall spend less time with children than mothers.**
- **Fathers working long hours *and* feeling overloaded report more negative effects on their relationships with adolescent children than mothers.**
- **Although professional and managerial employees are more likely to have less time available to spend with children, those working at atypical times are more vulnerable to psychological distress and lower self-esteem, which can then impact upon children.**
- **Parental satisfaction with atypical working schedules is lower than for those with standard hours, even when working hours are relatively low. Parents who feel they have little choice over their working arrangements *and* work long atypical hours also view the effects on family life as primarily negative.**
- **Sunday work appears to affect time spent with children more than any other atypical work, and reading, playing and homework help is the activity most affected by both long working hours and atypical working schedules.**
- **Relationships with children may be more negatively affected when fathers work atypical schedules or shift work than when mothers do so, although mothers' work at atypical times meant less time on key activities with their children. Parents do not appear to make up for time lost by spending more time with their children at other times.**
- **Children in the UK have the lowest levels of wellbeing of all western countries, and are among those most likely to engage in early alcohol consumption, early sexual intercourse and other risky behaviours. This does not appear to vary by occupational class.**

Chapter 6: Conclusions

Introduction

The following main conclusions have emerged from our research. Some of them are already well-known and understood. Others have suggested associations between long and atypical hours and family and child wellbeing that break new ground. This final chapter seeks to summarise those conclusions, sets out some implications for current employment legislation and suggests some new directions of possible travel.

By any standard, the issue of working time has significant implications for social and family policy as well as employment policy. It is an area that has been addressed in a piecemeal manner by successive UK Governments. One in seven UK adults (approx 7 million people) now work significant atypical hours and by 2020, these figures are expected to have increased to one in four (13 million adults) (Future Foundation survey) If this prediction is correct or even indicative of an inevitable movement in working patterns, then there is a strong argument for a concerted appraisal of the adequacy and effectiveness of UK employment policies relating to working time. This is arguably primarily a matter for Government, because, as this report has shown, employment practices have a deep and significant impact on family life. There is evidence that lack of time spent with children and other factors, such as parental mental health that may stem in some cases wholly or largely from work-driven causes, are key factors in child health and wellbeing, educational outcomes and incidence of dysfunctional behaviour by children and young people. (For instance, Desforges and Abouchaar 2003)

6.1 Parenting

The Government has recognised, in its 'Every Child Matters' green paper, that parents, carers and families are the most important influence on outcomes for children and young people, and one prime consequence has been the implementation of a parenting strategy to provide support and training for parents, particularly in areas of disadvantage. Good parenting has been described by a variety of research as, amongst other factors, providing a secure and stable environment; intellectual stimulation; parent-child discussion; good models of constructive social and educational values; high aspirations relating to personal fulfilment and good citizenship; contact with schools to share information; participation in school events and the work of schools. Clearly, all this involves spending quality and quantity time with the child. Parental support of learning within the home environment has been shown to make the maximum difference to achievement (Harris and Goodall, 2007). A further study has found that higher levels of parental supervision, involvement and trust lessen crime and youth delinquency (Smith Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime, 2001) .

However, it is not enough to provide more support for parents when the one key component lacking is the ability of the parent to spend sufficient quality time with their children. Around 72% of parents feel that they do not have enough time to get involved in their child's education because of work commitments, childcare difficulties and lack of time in general. This report underlines that if such a regime is maintained over a prolonged period, both family time and a couple's relationship can suffer. For instance, nearly half of

all parents say that work has stopped them being home to put their children to bed and over half said that it affected their availability to help with homework or take children to after-school activities.

There is also a responsibility on employers, which many now recognise, to help their staff, and especially parents, maintain a reasonable work-life balance. This may be achieved through various flexible working options, addressing a long hours culture, particularly in professional and business environments and other family friendly policies, including extended maternity and paternity provisions.

6.2 Long Working Hours and Atypical Hours

Long working hours and high levels of atypical work are endemic in the UK and their incidence is increasing, particularly given the current recession where it is expected that many employers, particularly perhaps in SMEs, will fall back on forms of work intensity, seeking to obtain similar levels of overall output or productivity from reduced staffing levels. Evidence on long working hours is well known and widely available, and trends are closely monitored by the TUC and others. What is perhaps less well-known is that the UK comes out top of a recently constructed index of atypical working hours (combining night work, Saturday work and Sunday work – see Chapter 2, Table 2.6) and of workplaces regularly requiring employees to work at weekends and at night. There is also no evidence in the UK of ‘compensations’ or ‘counterweights’ (e.g., shorter working hours) to offset the negative effects of such a high incidence of atypical working schedules, unlike in other countries such as France, Finland, Sweden and Germany. Parents are well represented in the group of those engaged in atypical work – 40% of parents regularly work at weekends, with the obvious knock-on effects on children.

Managers and associate professionals account for the biggest increase in those working very long hours in the UK. For a limited number of people in this group, who have a high degree of autonomy and motivation, high levels of pressure, intensity of work and long hours are viewed as energising and rewarding. For other employment sectors, however, particularly in lower social/economic and occupational groups, there is a perceived lack of control over their working conditions, which is largely unwelcome, leading to poor physical and mental health. A large proportion report an adverse effect on their family life (both couple relationships and time with children). The phenomenon of shift-parenting is a particular outcome of this syndrome, where parents continually feel squeezed by inflexible work schedules, which often involve regular atypical working, and the lack of affordability (and at weekends, also the availability) of professional childcare. Sometimes, grandparents or other extended family members are able to offer childcare; however, only around half of the population live within half an hour’s journey of their mother, father or eldest child (Grundy, Murphy and Shelton, 1999). A recent survey undertaken by BT shows that 60% of staff have moved or live 100 miles or more from where they originated (Working Families Conference, 2006, presentation). It is reasonable to assume that only around half the population have ready access to their extended families. Where the extended family are unwilling or unable to help, shift-parenting may be the only answer. The recession is only likely to accentuate these pressures on what the Government has been pleased to call “hard-working families”.

Within this general analysis, there is significant evidence that working regularly on Sundays creates particular pressures on couple and family relationships. It is considered to be the

most disruptive to, and incompatible with, domestic life and also causes the greatest dissatisfaction. A significant majority of mothers report that they would rather not work on a Sunday (again, this disproportionately affects lower social groupings and particular occupation groups).

6.3 Health Outcomes

Long working hours are associated with poor physical and mental health outcomes for both men and women. Working at atypical times, as well as working shifts, has also been shown to have a negative impact on health; and not only are many people working long and atypical hours, but a large proportion are also suffering from work intensity or increasing levels of work intensity and demand. These are the strong conclusions of a variety of studies across the US, Europe and the UK. This part of the report sets out some of the public policy implications.

The report outlines the impact of long and atypical working hours on mental health as of growing concern, with many research studies showing increases in work-related stress and anxiety conditions. This has a major cost to the economy, to employers and to the Exchequer. Work-related injuries and illness, including stress in particular, also have multiple and far-reaching effects on family members, as set out in more detail below.

Another key finding is that where there is a perceived work-life conflict, there is a negative impact on both physical and mental health outcomes. Indeed, the perception itself may well be a key factor in accentuating the impact of stress; for instance, 50-70% of the UK workforce who are regularly working more than 5 days a week say that it is damaging their health (BBC/OU)

Again, as set out above, those in lower level occupations and lower social groupings are less able to control their working hours and have less autonomy at work, both crucial factors in health outcomes. It is in these groups that lower levels of physical and mental health, and reduced life expectancy, are generally found and where incapacity benefits are most likely to be received. It may well be that higher levels of workplace stress contribute to these negative health outcomes.

There is thus strong evidence in the report that if the long working hours culture was systematically addressed by both Government and employers, there would be:

- Major benefits to public expenditure through fewer demands on NHS resources.
- Greater flexibility for employees to support both children and relatives who depend upon them, with reductions in anti-social behaviour, improvements in educational performance and reduced expenditure on social care in the community.
- Markedly improved sickness absence rates, improvements in efficiency and productivity.
- More positive attitudes towards work and employers.
- A contribution to reduced levels of couple breakdown (see below).

6.4 Couple Relationships

Long and atypical working hours invariably reduce the amount of time available for other activities and relationships. Around 30% of employed people in the UK report that their job

prevents them from spending enough time with their partner or family, the third highest in Europe. Chapter 4 chronicles studies which show that many couples are dissatisfied with the amount of time they spend together and believe that long or atypical hours are primarily responsible. Although it is difficult to attribute divorce and marital dissolution to specific working patterns alone, divorce rates in the UK are among the highest in Europe and the UK also has one of the highest proportions of men who work very long hours. More men in the UK also work at weekends than in any other Western European country, with a high proportion of women also working on Saturday or Sunday.

As pointed out above, although many parents choose to work shifts to share childcare and minimise costs, this also means that couples spend less time together. This may have particularly negative effects for women, especially if fathers do not combine childcare with extra domestic work. Low-income families may be at greater risk of relationship breakdown when working atypical hours, due in part to a lack of affordable childcare and less control at work.

A UK study by the Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development found that 11% had experienced a non-marital relationship break-up because of the effect of hours worked, 27% of long hours workers had strained relationships with a partner, and 3% had divorced because of long hours (CIPD Study 2001)

High levels of divorce and relationship breakdown have a variety of impacts on public policy and Government expenditure. These include the following:

- Increased levels of mental and physical ill-health resulting from stress and unhappiness.
- Direct impacts on child mental health and wellbeing and the indirect social costs of anti-social behaviour.
- Increased pressures and costs on the benefit system and cost of operating the Family Courts and (parental contribution) system.
- Increased demand for housing units.

Couple relationships break down for many reasons: working long or atypical hours is only one of them. However, given the pain and distress created for those involved and any children they have, as well as the public policy impacts set out above, any steps which can be taken to prevent relationship breakdown deserve attention.

6.5 Child Outcomes

The impact on children of long working and atypical hours flow directly from the effects on the couple relationship. A number of studies have charted the effects of long and atypical hours on the ability of parents to spend time with their children, and, even where they are physically present, their ability to focus on positive interactions may be impaired by stress or tiredness.

Parents who work unsocial hours are reported to be considerably less satisfied with the time they can spend with their partner and their children, and with the kinds of activities they can do together. Detailed time use studies show that, for instance, the average couple-mother who works at unsocial times spends approximately eight hours less with her children over a whole week. Fathers in sole-earner families who work at unsocial times

spend approximately ten and a half hours less with their children over a whole week (if this data is not mentioned earlier in the report, it needs to be referenced here). Sunday work appears to affect time spent with children more than any other atypical work; and children from lower occupational groups may be more affected by parents working atypical hours than children from other occupational groups.

Other studies have found associations between non-standard work schedules and children's emotional and behavioural problems, which were partially mediated by parent depressive symptoms and more hostile and ineffective parenting. These associations were shown when either or both parents were working atypical hours.

6.6 Main Recommendations

This report is essentially concerned with the impact of long and atypical working hours on family wellbeing. The recommendations made below in response to the report's findings, therefore, focus on measures that can be implemented to help working families achieve a better work-life balance and to spend more time together as a family unit. We believe that the relational benefits of so doing, when set against the negative effects on couple and family relationships of working long and/or unsocial hours, are potentially significant. In particular, there are benefits to parental health and wellbeing in having a weekly rest day when time can be spent with the family, as well as for employers to have a workforce that is healthier and more highly motivated.

Under current working time legislation in the UK, workers are entitled to:

- A rest period of 11 uninterrupted hours (12 for young workers) between each working day.
- One whole day off a week (two days for young workers). Days off can be averaged over a two-week period by the employer, so that workers can take two days off a fortnight but do not have the right to one day off in every seven.
- Only work a maximum 48-hour week (averaged over 17 weeks). Employees can sign an opt-out from this part of the legislation.

Working time legislation therefore ostensibly gives the right to one day a week off; although, in practice, the employer may determine under the contract (as is often the case) how those two days a fortnight can be taken.

(a) Working Time –Atypical Hours

It is clear from the report that the extent of unsocial hours working in the UK is very significant. As noted above, the UK ranks highest in Europe in the incidence of both Saturday and Sunday work for men and also in the proportion of workplaces regularly requiring employees to work weekends and at night. Working atypical hours has a significant impact on peoples' lives in a number of areas (Chapter 2). Firstly, there is clear evidence that working such hours reduces the amount of time that parents spend with children, both as individually and, where there are two parents, as a whole family. Relatively few parents make up for that lost time on another day. In aggregate, therefore, children of parents who work regularly at weekends spend less time with their parents than children

whose parents do not work at weekends. We know that family time together and activities such as eating, reading and playing together are fundamental to a child's health and educational development. Secondly, the report clearly demonstrates in Chapters 3 and 4 that working atypical hours also has a detrimental impact on both the physical and mental health of adults and on the parental relationship. All this makes it highly likely that working atypical hours does have a significant detrimental effect on children.

It is therefore essential in our view that legislation is introduced to allow a shared weekly family day off. In principle, employees working over 15 hours should have the right to one day off per week.

There are clearly substantial potential benefits to all employees in being able to enjoy a weekly day off, particularly where that day can be shared with family and friends for rest, recreation and sustaining relationships. Our evidence shows that this would have a wide range of benefits, including:-

- A better work-life balance could help improve health standards and in particular to reduce the incidence of cardiovascular and gastro-intestinal diseases;
- A regular day off could increase time for family and help to reduce the incidence of relationship and family breakdown. More parents regularly spending quality time with their children could lead to less anti-social behaviour by teenagers;
- Families would also be freer to support elderly relatives and neighbours;
- More people would also have time for team sports, volunteering and community activities;
- Society would benefit from such developments where they led to reduced public expenditure on the health services, reduced demands for housing and benefit support for impoverished lone-parent households; and
- Employers would benefit from a healthier and motivated workforce, free from excessive stress, tiredness, absenteeism and sickness.

There is, we consider, a very good case for allowing a shared family day off for all employees. However, our report sets out key evidence that the greatest benefit would be to families and children. **We therefore recommend a Family Day Bill which would entitle all parents to one weekend day off per week. Giving parents the right to one weekend day off would mean that more parents can spend time together and with their children. We believe this is logically the next step in the series of measures introduced by the present Government to support family life.**

The Family Day Bill seeks to make the weekend different from the rest of the week. As parents can choose to have **either** weekend day off it should not affect those services which must function seven

days a week such as the emergency, utility, transport and health care services. Shifts must simply be arranged to ensure parents do not have to work both weekend days. Those industries that operate on a continuous process basis that cannot be stopped without incurring huge start-up costs, are also protected by the Bill in that they can refuse the parent employee's requested day for business reasons. However, the employee is also protected because employers must give parents one weekend day off.

(b) Working Time – long hours

The report clearly shows that the UK continues to have among the highest working hours in Europe, with the third highest average full-time hours in the EU-27 countries at 41.4 hours per week. An OECD survey in 2006 found that the UK is third highest for both its average male figures (44.6 hours per week) and for its combined figures for men and women (42.9 hours per week). The UK has the highest proportion of employees working very long hours (16% work 50-59 hours a week and 9% work over 60 hours per week; see Chapter 2 Paragraph 2.1.2). Whilst such evidence is cited to support the contention that the opt-out clause in the EU Working Time Directive is systematically abused, we believe it is regrettable that a preoccupation with the opt-out has captured debate in the UK about the effects of long working hours to the detriment of the broader context. We consider that adequate consideration needs to be given to the impacts set out in this report of a sustained long working hours culture and the wider case for the business benefits of shorter hours for a workforce that could enjoy better physical and mental health, and is more committed to its family relationships.

Indeed, an authoritative study of the EWTD (Barnard, Deakin and Hobbs, 2003) argued that the opt-out has had little impact on the ingrained culture of long working hours in the UK. It concludes that although a phasing out of the opt-out would make a significant contribution, it will not in itself address the fundamental issue. What is also needed, according to the study, “is a wider review of working time policy and real incentives on both employers and trade unions, where collective bargaining exists to negotiate towards working hours reduction”. The large part of the workforce is reliant on amendments in the law to bring about change, best practice alone being shown to be insufficient. Employers argue for flexibility of labour in responding to competition, but “sacrifice the kind of flexibility in the use and deployment of labour which could flow from the modernisation of working time arrangements”. In a piece of research on long hours working commissioned by the Government, the authors say that “there was no sign that the extent of sustained long hours working was systematically associated with the business and financial needs of workplaces Workplaces have organisational choice and are able to reduce the need for sustained long hours should they choose to do so” (Hogarth, Daniel, Dickerson, Campbell, Wintherbotham and Vivian, 2003).

We therefore recommend that the Government should sponsor a review of current legislation and practice on working hours, on which all interested parties should be represented, to explore ways of reducing average UK working hours. The review should take account of

- (a) the costs borne by the taxpayer arising from the impact of long working hours on mental and physical health and family relationships**
- (b) international experience and research findings**
- (c) relative productivity levels in both Europe and the UK.**

APPENDIX Table A1: Employment, gender models of working time, levels of childcare provision and relevant policy across Europe

Country	Dominant gender model: Male FT/ female FT; M FT/ F PT; M FT/ F inactive)	Public childcare provision (%): child<3; child 3-school	Maternity/ paternity leave (max.)	Emergency care and care of elderly	Training, leisure, career breaks	Flexible distribution of working time, working time accounts (WTA)
Sweden	43% M FT / F FT 27% M FT / F PT 17% M FT / F In	48% <3 80% 3-sch.	12 weeks + 18 m. parental leave (2m. for fathers)	Up to 60 days for ill/dying relative	Right to unlimited educational leave	60% workers with fixed start and end; WTA widespread.
Denmark	55% M FT / F FT 22% M FT / F PT 13% M FT / F In	64% <3 91% 3-sch.	52 weeks	Up to 6 m. for ill relative	Leave schemes introduced, but partly abolished	WTA widespread
Finland	55% M FT / F FT 9% M FT / F PT 18% M FT / F In	22% <3 66% 3-sch.	105 days mother, 18 days father + 158 days	Some rights to time off	Study leave for employed adults (up to 2 yrs) and leave for those changing jobs	60% workers with fixed start and end; WTA widespread
NL	16% M FT / F FT 38% M FT / F PT 36% M FT / F In	6% <3 98% 3-sch.	16 weeks + 13 weeks FT or 6m. PT	Regulated in collective agreements	System of career breaks can be used for training (2-6 m. up to 3 times)	Plans concerning more flexible distribution of working time over lifecycle
Germany	26% M FT / F FT 26% M FT / F PT 36% M FT / F In	10% <3 78% 3-sch.	14 weeks + 3 yrs parental leave (+ PT options)	None	Short-term educational leave schemes; sabbaticals regulated in collective/company agreements; job rotation.	Flexible working time arrangements widespread; WTA common (about 40%).

Country	Dominant gender model: Male FT/ female FT; M FT/ F PT; M FT/ F inactive)	Public childcare provision (%): child<3; child 3-school	Maternity/ paternity leave (max.)	Emergency care and care of elderly	Training, leisure, career breaks	Flexible distribution of working time, working time accounts (WTA)
France	38% M FT / F FT 19% M FT / F PT 31% M FT / F In	29% <3 99% 3-sch.	16 weeks + 3 yrs parental leave (flexible) (+ PT options)	Right to take leave or claim PT to care for ill/dying relative	Right to take up to 1 yr off for training	Flexible working time arrangements widespread
Belgium	40% M FT / F FT 25% M FT / F PT 25% M FT / F In	30% <3 97% 3-sch.	15 weeks + 3 m. parental leave	Right to take leave to care for ill/dying relative	Time credit system for career breaks up to 1 yr.	Less flexible arrangements
Austria	36% M FT / F FT 21% M FT / F PT 33% M FT / F In	4% <3 68% 3-sch.	16 weeks + 3 yrs parental leave (+ PT options arranged with employer)	Right to take leave or claim PT to care for ill/dying relative	Right to claim 6-12 m. off and use for education.	Less flexible arrangements
Ireland	25% M FT / F FT 21% M FT / F PT 45% M FT / F In	38% <3 56% 3-sch.	18 weeks	None	None legally (some possible via company)	Share of workers with fixed daily working time low; many workers have mutually agreed on self-determined work times

From Eurofound report 'Working time options over the life course', 2005

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Notes:

ⁱ Comparing evidence from different surveys can present significant problems, as there are often differences in how working hours are defined (e.g., actual or usual hours worked, main job only or other jobs included, etc.). In addition, information is often collected in different ways (e.g. based on recall or on time diaries). These factors, as well as others, can present difficulties in drawing comparisons, especially when divergent findings are demonstrated (Kodz et al., 2003). However, in drawing together a body of evidence from several different sources for this report, the overall findings demonstrate a high degree of consistency.

ⁱⁱ See previous work undertaken by Relationships Forum in Australia (2007).

ⁱⁱⁱ Usual weekly working hours per week defined as the most normal weekly working schedule during a typical week. This definition is applicable to all workers in their main job with regular schedules, including self-employed workers. Usual hours of work differ from normal hours of work (normal hours are fixed by or in pursuance of laws or regulations, collective agreements or arbitral awards). The definition of usual hours includes overtime occurring systematically every day or week and does not include time not worked on a regular basis. Irregular or unusual overtime, whether worked for a premium pay, regular pay or not compensated at all, are excluded from this measure, similarly unusual periods of rest are not included. Data are taken from both National Labour Force Surveys and the European Labour Force Survey (ELFS). In the ELFS, only hours worked in the *main* job are reported in the usual weekly working hours database. However, some countries (Australia, Finland, Norway) report hours worked in all jobs. Countries who present data hours worked only in the main job will have generally lower hours worked over the distribution.

^{iv} Employees' data means that the self-employed are not included here. It should be noted (see later) that the self-employed work even longer hours than employees.

^v In all, the number of long hours employees fell from 3,803,000 in winter (January-March) 1998 to 3,096,000 in winter 2007, which had the effect of reducing the excessive working time problem by about one fifth. Although this was less than the TUC would have hoped for, as it still left the UK with the highest incidence of long hours workers in the EU, it was undoubtedly solid progress (TUC Report, June 2008 *'Return of the Long Hours Culture'*).

^{vi} The figures in this report were calculated by the TUC using unpublished data from the National Statistics Labour Force Survey (winter quarters). All figures are for employees in *main* job only. Adding second jobs would increase the long hours totals by about 100,000 in each case.

^{vii} The concept of Saturday or Sunday working is interpreted strictly on the basis of formal agreements concluded with the employer. Employees taking office work home and/or occasionally working at the workplace on Saturday or Sunday are not generally included.

^{viii} The third European Working Conditions Survey in the 15 EU member states was carried out in March and April 2000. The sample included over 21,500 employees and self-employed people (1,500 in each Member State, except Luxembourg: 500). The European surveys on working conditions use the *random walk* procedure, a method of selecting a random sample in door to door surveys. The respondents (employees and self-employed people) were interviewed face-to-face in their own homes outside normal working hours.

^{ix} Other countries were also included in combined country analyses but not included in the table (e.g. Greece, Luxembourg).

^x In 2004, the Foundation launched its first Establishment Survey on Working Time (ESWT) in 21 European countries: the 15 'old' Member States of the European Union and six of the New Member

States – the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Slovenia. The survey was a questionnaire-based, representative sample survey in more than 21,000 establishments, which aimed to analyse working time arrangements and work–life balance issues at the workplace by interviewing personnel managers and, where available, formal employee representatives.

^{xi} The LFS does not allow for a distinction between weekend work as part of contracted hours or not, whether it is paid or not, and where the weekend work is carried out. For this reason, all types are included in this analysis.

^{xii} Respondents were further classified as frequently working atypical hours if they worked either: early mornings or late afternoons several times a week; or evenings/nights several times a month or more; or Saturdays every 3 weeks or more; or Sundays every 3 weeks or more. The occasional atypical group included those who worked early mornings or late afternoons less often than several times a week; or evenings/nights less often than several times a month; or Saturdays/Sundays less often than every 3 weekends.

^{xiii} It should be noted, however, that these figures include young people without children, many of whom will be working atypical hours in combination with other activities, eg. studying.

^{xiv} increasing levels of work intensity and demand.

^{xv} It should be noted that the survey was divided into two parts: a face-to-face interview and a telephone interview with different respondents. Those respondents in the telephone interview reported much higher incidence of health complaints than those in the face-to-face interviews. The authors note that the different interview methods may account for the variance in self-reported illness scores, even though the same question was asked in both. However, women in all cases (apart from IBS and blackouts) were still much more likely than men to report health complaints.

^{xvi} when the exposure to workload and the accompanying investment ceases, psychobiological systems will stabilize within a certain period of time.

^{xvii} Other complaints were also included but not reported here; in all cases, those working evenings reported fewer complaints than those working nights, and those working Saturdays reported fewer complaints than those working Sundays.

^{xviii} Measured by a single item: “Do you feel that your work demands so much of your energy that it affects your private life?” (Yes, definitely; yes, to a certain degree; yes, but not much; no, not at all).

^{xix} General conflict was measured by the single item: “is there sometimes a conflict between your work and your private life, which makes you want to be both places at the same time?” (Yes, often; yes, regularly; seldom; no, never).

^{xx} There are of course many other factors involved in the likelihood of marriage dissolution, such as levels of religiosity.

^{xxi} The French 35-hour week was introduced in 2000, which is likely to have had a significant effect on parents’ time with children (see Chapter 1).

^{xxii} EB: Every survey is carried out on national representative samples of around 1,000 respondents aged 15 and over in each country, except Luxembourg, Malta and Cyprus, where the samples are of 500 respondents, using face to face interviewing at the respondents' home. The national samples reflect the structure of population aged 15+ in terms of gender, age, regions of a country, settlement size, education level, and marital status. EQLS: Around 1,000 respondents (600 in Cyprus, Estonia, Luxembourg, Malta and Slovenia) in each country were selected using a multistage random sample.

The overall response rate was 58% with large variation in national response rates, ranging from 30% in Spain to 91% in Germany.

^{xxiii} It should be noted, however, that these figures do not necessarily reflect the proportion of families where couples have separated or divorced, as now at least 40% of children are born outside of marriage in Denmark, Finland, France, New Zealand and the UK, and the rate is even higher in Norway, Sweden and Iceland (Babies and Bosses, 2007).

^{xxiv} Not all countries are included in the tables due to lack of space.

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