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# Time to Work:

## A Comparative Analysis of Preferences for Working Hours

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*The article examines the preferences for working time among men and women in 22 countries. The main question was whether working hours reflect workers' preferences and tastes or whether they were a constraint imposed by the organization of the labor market and economic considerations. The study is based on the ISSP survey on Work Orientation conducted in 1997 and employs hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) to determine individual- and country-level factors affecting the preferences for working time. The findings suggest that a significant number of workers are still constrained by structural factors in their time allocation. Preferences for work were affected by both individual-level and country-level characteristics.*

**Keywords:** *working hours; time preferences; country comparison; ISSP; hierarchical linear modeling*

In recent decades, a major transformation in working time took place in most industrialized countries. The general trend in most countries has been toward a reduction in the number of hours devoted to work (OECD, 1992). Nonetheless, there is considerable variation among countries in the number of weekly working hours and in the trend in working hours over time. For example, working hours in the United States, United Kingdom, and Sweden increased during the 1980s and early 1990s, whereas they continued to decline in Japan, Germany, and other North European countries (OECD, 1998, p. 156). Furthermore, although in most OECD countries the working week amounts to 40 hours on average, this number masks the growing

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diversity in labor market activity. In particular, recent trends show a tendency toward polarization in hours of work: One segment of the population works very long hours and another segment has a short working day (Figart & Golden, 1998; Jacobs & Gerson, 1998, 2001; OECD, 1992, 1998). More workers are working irregular hours or at home, and many more can choose their hour arrangements (Horrell, Rubery, & Burchell, 1994).

In light of these changes and the rising demand for nonstandard working hours, workers' preferences concerning the amount of time allocated to market work becomes an important issue, both for employers and for employees. These preferences for working time are at the center of the current study. In this article, we examine the preferences for working time among men and women in 22 countries. In the next section, we discuss the main theoretical approaches that deal with time devoted to work, followed by a review of country and gender differences in working time. We then use multilevel analysis to identify factors at the individual level and the country level that affect time preferences.

#### **INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL DIFFERENCES IN TIME DEVOTED TO WORK**

The decline in working hours and the changes in their dispersion had been attributed to structural changes in the characteristics of the working population and the organization of work, on one hand, and to workers' preference for working time, on the other hand. Part of the decline in working hours resulted from the growing participation of women in the labor force as many women, especially married women, are employed part-time. Although part-time employment has become a prominent feature of the workforce, especially in Europe, it is important to note that in many countries (e.g., Germany, Denmark, and Portugal) all or most of the decline in working hours is attributable to the decrease in hours of full-timers (OECD, 1998). Firm and government policies have created more flexible arrangements to promote the competitiveness of firms but also to facilitate workers' preferences. In many countries, flexible time arrangements have led to an increase of part-time work, although in others, a substantial part of the workforce is employed full-time and is engaged in (paid and especially unpaid) overtime. In the United States, for example, a sizeable segment of the workforce is working very long hours as a standard requirement in highly skilled, professional positions (Coleman & Pencavel, 1993a, 1993b; Figart & Golden, 1998; Jacobs & Gerson, 1998).

Several theoretical approaches, representing two general lines of argument, attempt to explain variation and changes in working time. From a supply-side point of view, working hours are seen as reflecting workers'

preferences. Workers, based on their tastes, needs, or alternative activities, choose how much time to allocate to market work. In addressing what she viewed as growth in the number of hours Americans were devoting to work, Schor (1998), for example, argued that it was driven by a culture of consumption. Competitive materialism constantly requires additional financial resources, which many Americans try to meet by increasing the number of hours they work for pay. Hochschild (1997), on the other hand, focused her explanation on the conflicting time demands produced by the workplace and the family and the changing perceptions of the rewards they offer. She found that many workers, especially women, experience time pressures and insensitive demands from their families and, as a response, seek refuge at work, where they find support and recognition from coworkers and enhanced career opportunities. Thus, the observed long working hours experienced mainly by the highly educated, white-collar professionals may signify their preferences for time allocation to work activities.

By the same token, although presenting an entirely different context, Hakim (1997, 1999) contended that the growth in part-time employment reflects lower commitment to work on the part of some segments of the population. Accordingly, she argues that the polarization in working hours, which is evident in the labor force as a whole, is also descriptive of the changes taking place in the female workforce. One segment of women is career-oriented and thus interested in allocating more time to market activity, whereas the other segment is less interested in market work and is more concerned with activities outside of the market (i.e. domestic or leisure activities). Thus, part-time workers can be viewed as less committed to market work because they have alternative interests in life. In most cases, these will be married women, who are less dependent on their own salary.

This approach, which views actual working hours as the result of employee preferences, was criticized by some researchers who failed to find support for the "preference" argument. For example, Fagan and Rubery (1996) found that a large proportion of women who work part-time would actually prefer a longer working day. This finding is supported by additional evidence that a substantial portion of part-time employment is involuntary (Cohen, Stier, & Nativ, 2000; Jacobs & Gerson, 2000; OECD, 1995; Tilly, 1991; Walwei, 1998). Similarly, Maume and Bellas (2001) found no support for the claim that work is more rewarding than home and they concluded that "personal choice is unrelated to work schedules" (p. 1148).

At the other extreme are theories that focus on the "demand side," mainly the organization of work by employers. By structuring the workday, employers limit workers' choices regarding the allocation of time to market work. Schor (1991) argued that the increase in working time reflects employers'

interests in increasing their profits. Their interests are buttressed by an organizational culture that uses job insecurity to impose a long working day. In addition, unions, which in the past were able to influence work schedules, are weakening and are thus less able to affect the length of the working day (Maume & Bellas, 2001). As a consequence, working time is imposed on workers and thus many Americans feel "overworked" (Jacobs & Gerson, 2000). Maume and Bellas (2001), indeed, find support for this argument, which is also reflected in the finding that most workers would prefer a reduction in their working hours (Jacobs & Gerson, 2001). Moreover, Jacobs and Gerson (2001) emphasized that the bifurcation of the labor force is reflected also in bifurcated preferences: Those who work longer hours prefer a reduction in their workload, whereas those who allocate relatively few hours to market activity are more likely to want more hours of work (see also Bell & Freeman, 1995). Thus, rather than reflecting workers' preferences for market activity, the actual number of hours worked indicates the nature of employment arrangements in specific segments of the labor market.

The two approaches yield opposing predictions, especially regarding the relationship between actual hours of work on time preferences. From a supply-side vantage point, actual working hours are expected to reflect preferences, although from a demand-side point of view, hours of work are expected to be negatively correlated to time preferences.

### **COUNTRY DIFFERENCES IN TIME PREFERENCES**

Attitudes toward work are formed in specific social contexts. Even among the fairly homogeneous group of industrialized nations, preferences for work differ across countries. Hence, we view individuals' preferences and decisions as embedded in country-level institutional and cultural peculiarities. Consequently, countries may differ both in the total levels of actual employment and preferences and also in the way in which personal attributes affect preferences and decisions at the individual level. In some countries, preferences for part-time work are growing, not only among persons out of the labor force, but also among those who work full-time (Hakim, 1997). In other countries, a sizeable portion of the adult population would prefer additional working hours. A recent survey of European Community members revealed that one quarter of all full-time employees would accept a reduction in earnings to achieve shorter working hours (an additional one third of both men and women said they would accept shorter hours if their pay would not decrease). The numbers were highest in Denmark and the Netherlands. The

preferences for shorter hours of work were more prevalent among women who work full-time than among men similarly employed (Hakim, 1997).

In contrast to the decline in working hours in North and West European countries and the normative preference of workers to spend less time at work, Schor (1991, 1998) found that Americans were working more hours, and she argued that they were motivated to do so to keep pace with their desire for material consumption. In line with the argument of the overworked American, Bell and Freeman (1995) found that as many as one third of all U.S. employees would like to increase their hours of work and only a minority preferred a shorter working day. Similar findings are reported from Canada (Drolet & Morissette, 1997). Jacobs and Gerson (2001), however, have criticized the studies that found Americans to be working more than in the past on methodological grounds, and they reported that only 17% of U.S. workers prefer to increase their workload compared to almost half who would like to reduce their working hours (Jacobs & Gerson, 2000).

In reporting the results of a comprehensive cross-national study of women's part-time employment, Blossfeld (1997) noted that after the breakdown of socialism in Central and Eastern Europe there was a large reduction of employment of men and women. This was due largely to the declining economic situation and the disintegration of old employment arrangements. Nonetheless, the employment patterns of women from post-socialist states remained quite distinct from those prevalent in Western Europe. Blossfeld and Hakim (1997) concluded that "socialist policies over several decades obviously have changed the attitudes of women toward being a full-time homemaker" (Blossfeld & Hakim, 1997, p. 318).

A common difficulty with such cross-national comparisons is that they often generalize information over entire working populations, although the composition of jobs and employment situations may differ substantially from one country to another. Hence, additional insight can be gleaned from more controlled comparisons that focus on workers in similar jobs. Perlow (2001), for example, found substantial differences in the extent of working hours among software engineers performing essentially the same work in China, India, and Hungary. She concluded that the country-specific organization of work was the most important factor accounting for these differences. Such cross-national differences are not limited to actual working hours and are evident in employees' work preferences as well. In a study of financial professionals from the United States, Great Britain, and Hong Kong who held similar jobs in one division of a multinational company, Wharton and Blair-Loy (2002) found that Hong Kong employees were significantly more likely to express a preference for part-time employment. After rejecting several alternative explanations, the authors adopt a cultural explanation, concluding that

Hong Kong employees “are more likely to resent work as an intrusion onto their lives outside of work” (Wharton & Blair-Loy, 2002, p. 55).

In discussing the fact that there are large cross-national differences in the amount of time devoted to work, Bell and Freeman (1995) pointed out that countries differ significantly in the general level of preferences for working time. This is because they differ in their socioeconomic characteristics and with regard to culture and institutional arrangements that affect not only the patterns of employment but attitudes toward work as well. Among the most important characteristics at the macro level is the extent to which members of the society are dependent on the market for subsistence. It is reasonable to hypothesize that, in countries with extensive decommodification, people would be free to choose to allocate less of their time to work activity because their economic well-being is less dependent on their market wage. High rates of income tax, high wages, and low wage inequality may affect workers' preferences in a similar direction (Bell & Freeman, 1995). On the other hand, we might expect that a relatively low standard of living (or low levels of GNP per capita), high unemployment rates, and low levels of decommodification will increase the demand for long working hours. Thus, preference for working hours will differ, on average, in countries that vary along these dimensions.

#### **GENDER DIFFERENCES IN TIME PREFERENCES**

Although women have been part of the cash economy in industrialized countries for decades and their share of the labor force increased substantially in the past half century, their participation rates remain lower than those of men and employed women work fewer hours than men on average (OECD, 1998; Spain & Bianchi, 1996). In most industrialized countries, women's labor force participation increased substantially, whereas men's participation declined over time. Yet the ratio of women to men participation rate ranges between 0.52 (in Italy) to 0.87 (in Sweden) (Spain & Bianchi, 1996, p. 101). Similarly, men are working longer hours than women in all countries (OECD, 1998). In the United States, for example, where part-time employment is relatively uncommon, women's paid work averages fewer than 40 hours a week compared to 46 hours for men (Gerson & Jacobs, 2000, p. 83). Time differences between men and women are substantially higher in countries with a high proportion of women working part-time such as Sweden, Germany, the United Kingdom, and The Netherlands (Smith, Fagan, & Rubery, 1998). Men are more likely than women, in all countries, to work long hours, whereas women are more likely to work fewer than 20 hours a week (OECD, 1998).

During the past 30 years, part-time employment has grown substantially in most European countries (although not in all), alongside the rise in female labor force participation (Smith et al. 1998). Indeed, part-time work is mainly women's work, attributed largely to women's inability to allocate more time to market work because of their domestic responsibilities (Duffy & Pupo 1992; Fagan & O'reilly, 1998; Hochschild, 1997) or to their lack of interest in market activity (Hakim 1997, 1999; Pfau-Effinger, 1998).

In the normative sphere, it is still the case that men are supposed to consider work as their primary time priority, whereas women are expected to make the family their first priority. A recent report based on a large-scale survey of working conditions in Europe concluded that gender roles—women's position as secondary earners and holders of prime responsibility for family-related activities—are the major explanatory factors of women's part-time work (Tijdens, 2002). Consequently, family and work responsibilities are seen as a source of conflict for women but not for men (Epstein & Kalleberg, 2000). These normative expectations have significant implications for understanding gender differences in work-time preferences. Even among professional workers, women are more likely than men to express a preference for part-time work and the gender difference is especially large among married workers (Wharton & Blair-Loy, 2002).

Both the normative expectations and the actual employment patterns of men and women require that their preferences regarding hours of work be discussed and evaluated separately. First, the preference for adding or reducing working hours takes on a different meaning for men as compared to women because they work longer hours on average. Second, the factors that affect work time preferences may be quite different for the two gender groups. For example, women might be expected to prefer a reduction in hours of employment to cope with household responsibilities and child care. Likewise, women, especially if married, might be less reluctant than men to give up part of their salaries in exchange for a shorter working day because the earnings of most women provide a smaller contribution to the household economy. Although gender differences in the likelihood of employment and amount of time devoted to market work are found in most countries, women's employment is more likely to be affected by the country's specific cultural and institutional context. To date, however, only a few studies have attempted to systematically address the social and cultural embeddedness of women's (and men's) employment decisions (for recent exceptions, see Charles, Buchmann, Halebsky, Powers, & Smith, 2001; Diprete & McManus, 2000). The present study joins this line of research and hopes to expand our understanding of the individual- and macro-level factors that are associated with work preferences.



## DATA AND MEASUREMENTS

The study is based on the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) Survey on Work Orientation conducted in 1997 in 27 countries. A unified data file was prepared by JD Systems, Madrid, and the Zentralarchiv fuer Empirische Sozialforschung (ISSP, 1999), with a total of about 30,000 cases (adults age 18 to 65). To this survey we added information at the country level that was collected from World Development Indicators (World Bank, 1998) and International Labour Statistics (ILO, 1999).

The analysis focuses on two aspects of preferences for working time. First, we refer to the general question that was posed to all respondents: "Would you like to spend more time in a paid job?" Second, we analyze a question posed to workers only: "Which of the following choices would you prefer: 1. work longer hours and earn more money; 2. work the same number of hours and earn the same money; 3. work fewer hours and earn less money."

The two questions pertain to different aspects of the preferences for working time. The former is more general in nature and makes no direct reference to the economic consequences of one's choice to increase or reduce working hours. It taps a general orientation to work. The latter establishes a direct relationship between working hours and remuneration and is directed to respondents who already hold a paid job.

For the purposes of the present study, we analyze a pooled file that includes data from most ISSP countries. Included in our analyses are Canada, the United States, United Kingdom, Germany (East and West), France, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Israel, New Zealand, Japan, Russia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Slovenia.<sup>1</sup> All analyses are conducted separately for men and women. Our general expectation is that women will show a weaker interest than men do in increasing their market time and that their time preferences are affected by different factors due to their distinct market prospects and domestic responsibilities.

We introduce two types of explanatory variables: individual-level variables and macro-level country characteristics. The variables at the individual level include marital status (1 = married, 0 = otherwise), age (ranges between 18 and 65), education (an eight-category ordinal measure of the highest education attained), employment status (full-time, part-time, unemployed, not in the labor force), and a measure of family income. To achieve comparability and overcome the differences in the unit of measurement, we standardized the income using a measure of relative family income. Accordingly, we calculated the relative distance of the respondent's family income from the maximum income level reported in the country-specific sample (for a discussion

of this procedure, see Gornick & Jacobs, 1996).<sup>2</sup> For the analyses that pertain to the working population, we also include measures of satisfaction with present job (an answer to the question, "How satisfied are you in your job?" Answers range from 1 (*high job satisfaction*) to 7 (*low job satisfaction*) and concern of losing the job (answers to the question, "To what extent do you worry about losing your job?" ranging from 1 (*high insecurity*) to 4 (*low insecurity*)).

The effect of employment status on preferences for working hours is not straightforward. Based on Schor (1991) and Jacobs and Gerson (2001), full-time workers (who may feel overworked) are expected to have the lowest preferences for an increase in working hours. The unemployed are expected to have the highest preferences. It is not clear to what extent part-time workers would prefer longer or shorter hours of work. According to Jacobs and Gerson, they will show higher preferences for working hours than full-time workers. According to Hakim's contention, however, part-time workers, especially women, are less committed to market work and thus will be less likely to prefer an increase in market time.

Marital status is expected to affect differently the preferences of men and women. Being married is expected to increase market-time preferences for men and to affect negatively the preferences of women due to the differences in their domestic responsibilities. We expect education to be negatively correlated with preferences for more work (that is, the more educated are expected to prefer to invest less of their time in market activity). This is mainly because their jobs more often entail higher levels of earnings and security (see also Drolet & Morissette, 1997). Similarly, we expect a negative correlation between family income and preferences for working hours. This effect should be particularly strong in our second measure, which pertains to preferences for hours in exchange for money. Those with lower levels of income may have high preferences for leisure but cannot afford cutting their working hours and thus their salaries. Older respondents are expected to prefer a reduction in working time. Workers with higher job satisfaction and those with higher levels of job insecurity are expected to prefer an increase in working hours.

At the macro level, we introduce measures of economic conditions and inequality (GNP per capita, Gini coefficient, inflation rate) for which data were taken from the World Development Indicators (World Bank, 1998); characteristics of the labor force taken from the International Labor Statistics (ILO, 1999) (percentage unemployed, percentage of women in the labor force, the gender wage gap<sup>3</sup>); country's average level of education; the level of decommodification (level of expenditures for public assistance as a percentage of total public expenditures); and a measure of the country's level of

orientation to work. The latter variable was derived from the ISSP file, based on the country's mean response to the statement, "work is a person's most important activity." Responses ranged from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). We expect a higher level of preference for working time in countries with a less stable economy and lower rate of economic development. We also expect a greater preference for work in countries with higher rates of inequality, as dependency on work to maintain an acceptable standard of living is high (Bell & Freeman, 1995, 2000). The level of decommodification should be inversely related to preference of working hours. It is not clear how female labor force participation rates will affect the preference for work. On one hand, higher rates of female participation increase the economic well-being of families and may thus reduce the preference for work. On the other hand, high female participation rates indicate greater similarity of women and men's roles, in which case women's preferences for work would be higher. The gender wage gap is expected to affect women's preferences for work—in countries where women are treated more equally to men, women will prefer to invest more of their time in market activity. This indicator, however, is not expected to affect men's preferences for market work.

Aside from the effects of country characteristics on the level of preferences for work, we also expect certain macro-level factors to affect the relationship between education (at the individual level) and time preferences within countries. We hypothesize that as the level of inequality increases, education will have a stronger effect on the preferences for working hours. That is, although in general we expect a negative relationship between the preferences for working time and education, the magnitude of this relationship will increase when inequality is high. One reason for this is that the rates of return for education are high and highly educated people may more willingly substitute work for leisure. A second reason is that, in situations of high inequality, the weaker segments of the population may feel greater deprivation and will view additional work as a means of attaining a higher standard of living. We also expect that, in societies with a strong normative orientation to work, the relationship between education (at the individual level) and time preferences will be weaker.

## METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Because we are interested in the distribution of preferences within countries as well as among them, we employ hierarchical linear modeling (HLM), in which the dependent variable is the preferences for working time and both individual and structural variables serve as independent variables. Using HLM, we are able to model the two components simultaneously and to

differentiate between the effects of individual characteristics and country-level characteristics on time preferences. This method allows us to identify the factors that affect country differences in time preference for work and also to test whether important correlates of time preferences such as employment status, education, or family status have a similar effect on time preferences across countries. The two-level model can be represented by a set of equations. The first is a within-country equation that models time preference as a function of the independent variables described earlier. The general form of this equation is illustrated by the following example:

$$(\text{Time preferences})_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}(\text{Education})_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ij} \quad (1)$$

Another set of equations models the between-country variation:

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}(\text{inflation rate})_j + v_{0j} \quad (2)$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11}(\text{GINI Coefficient}) + v_{1j} \quad (3)$$

Here, the  $\beta$  coefficients derived from Equation 1 constitute the dependent variables in Equations 2 and 3. In this example, the equations respectively model the variation in the average level of time preference across countries (i.e., effects on the intercept) by the inflation rate and country differences in the effect of education on time preferences by the level of inequality within the country. The other variables that we include in the model are interpreted in a similar way.

## FINDINGS

### PREFERENCES FOR WORKING TIME

Figures 1a through 2b present the distribution of the two preference questions across all countries separately for men and women. Turning first to the general preferences for working time (Figure 1a for men and 1b for women), we see substantial country differences. A clear preference for increasing time spent on work is evident in former socialist countries (especially Russia and Bulgaria), and Mediterranean countries such as Spain and Israel. The proportion preferring to devote more time to work activity is lowest in developed countries such as Sweden, Japan, the United Kingdom, and France. As a general pattern, we find that in the majority of countries, the proportion of those who would prefer to decrease their market time is higher than the proportion of those who want an increase it.

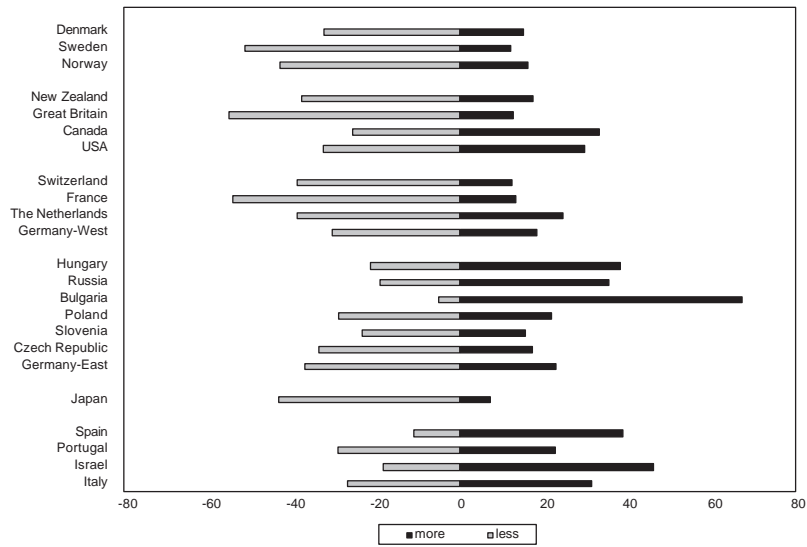


Figure 1a: Preferences for Working Time, Males Age 18 to 65

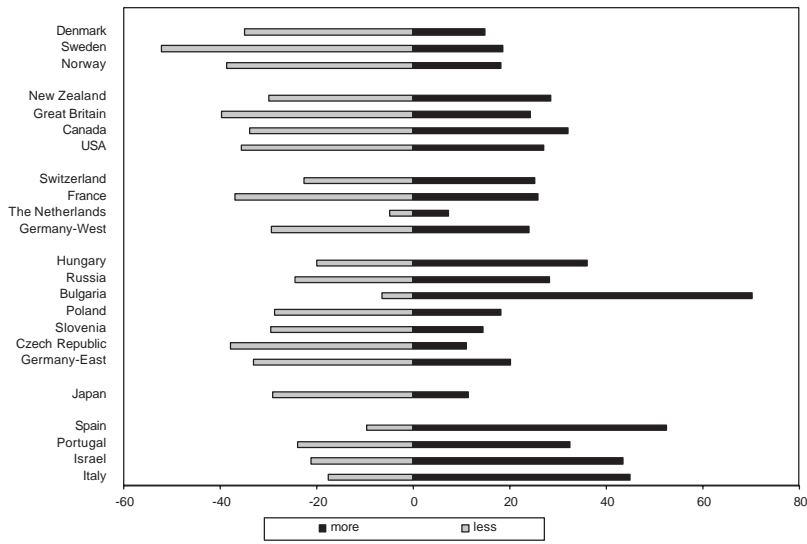


Figure 1b: Preferences for Working Time, Females Age 18 to 65

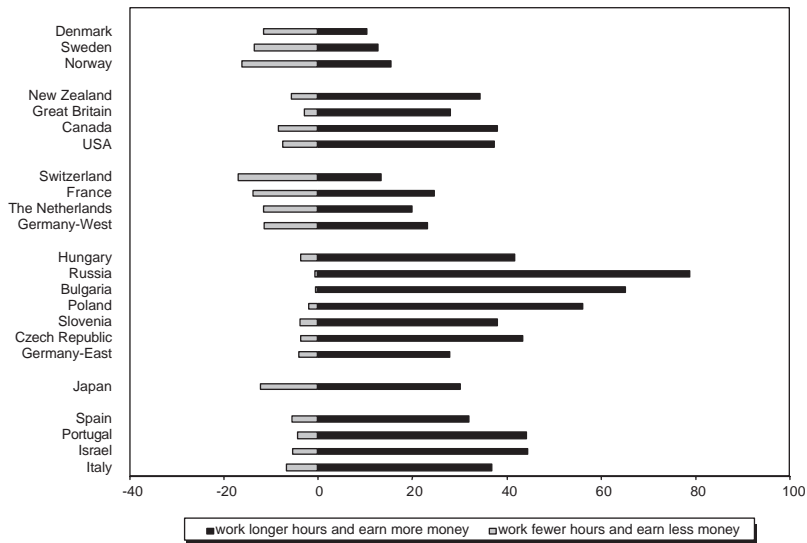


Figure 2a: Preferences for Working Hours in Exchange for Money, Males Age 18 to 65

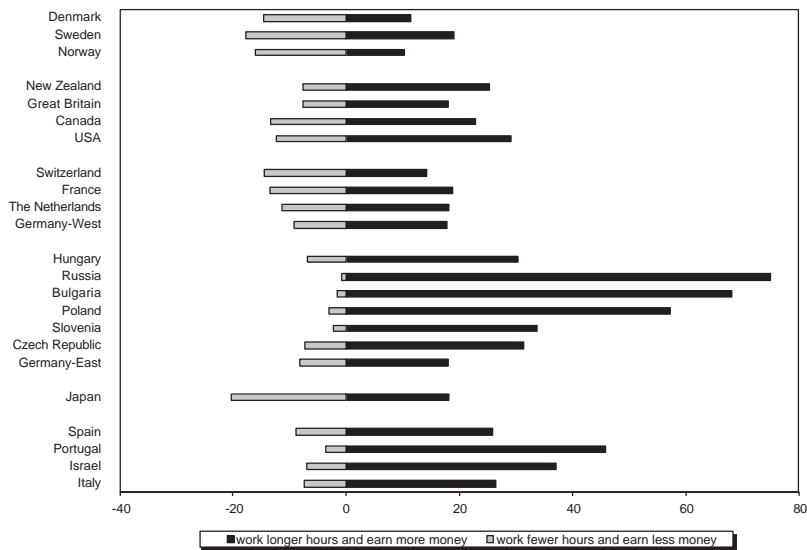


Figure 2b: Preferences for Working Hours in Exchange for Money, Females Age 18 to 65

Women have a higher preference for market time than men in several countries (Italy, Portugal, Spain, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, France, The Netherlands, and West Germany) and a lower preference in market time in the postcommunist countries, Scandinavia, Canada, and the United States. One general conclusion is that women more than men are dissatisfied with their current time-allocation situation. It is important to note that this question was addressed to those who participate as well as those who do not participate in the labor force. Many more women than men are out of the labor force or work part-time, and would like to increase their involvement in the market. It is not clear, however, whether among those who work, women still have higher preferences than men for increasing working hours.

The distribution of responses discussed above can be viewed as representing a general orientation to work activity in the society. The next question addresses more specifically the relationship of work and leisure in view of income constraints. The question was posed to the working population and underscored the trade-off between income and leisure. The distribution of preferences for more hours (in exchange for more money) and for fewer hours (for less money) is presented in Figures 2a and 2b, for men and women, respectively. Among men and women alike, there are two clearly defined groups of countries: those in which workers want to increase their workload (to earn more) and those in which workers prefer a decrease in working hours even at the expense of lower earnings. In the former group, most noticeable are the postcommunist countries in which almost all men and women prefer longer hours of work, accompanied with higher income. Only a minority in these countries would prefer to keep the current situation as it is or to reduce their workload for a reduction in money. A similar picture can be seen among the Mediterranean countries. Quite surprisingly, English-speaking countries who generally enjoy the highest standard of living exhibit the same pattern as in postcommunist countries; namely, a substantial proportion of workers would prefer to increase the time devoted to work. We will address this issue in the concluding section.

At the other extreme, several countries exhibit a pattern whereby workers prefer a reduction in their workload and are willing to incur lower earnings. This is clearly the case in the Scandinavian countries and, for men, also in Switzerland. The preference for a reduced workload in these countries is more pronounced among men than among women, probably reflecting men's higher workload to begin with. On balance, these figures suggest that in countries with higher levels of decommodification (Esping-Andersen, 1999), workers are willing to settle on lower earnings in exchange for a lighter workload. A better understanding of these patterns would require

considerations of other country- and individual-level characteristics that might affect the divergent patterns we observed.

#### INDIVIDUAL AND COUNTRY DETERMINANTS OF WORK PREFERENCES

The second stage of the analysis focuses on the individual- and country-level factors that affect the preferences for work. The analyses are based on HLM models for ordinal dependent variables. The ordered logit model assumes an ordinal outcome variable with categories that can be ranked, but the distance between them cannot be determined (Long, 1997). The model calculates the probability that an estimated linear function, plus an error, is within a range of cut-off points estimated for that outcome, and can be expressed as follows:

$$\Pr(\text{outcome}_j = i) = \Pr(k_{i-1} < \beta_1 x_{1j} + \beta_2 x_{2j} + \dots + \beta_k x_{kj} + v_j < k_i) \quad (4)$$

The model estimates then, the  $\beta$  coefficients as well as the  $ki-1$  cut-off points, where  $i$  is the number of outcomes. The two dependent variables were coded into three categories: preferences for an increase in time, same time schedule, and time reduction. The individual-level characteristics incorporated in the models include education, age, marital status, family income, and whether the respondent was employed full-time, part-time, or unemployed (out of the labor force is the reference category). For the analysis of time preferences in exchange for money that was conducted on those participating in the labor force, the employment status variable differentiates between those working full-time and those working part-time (the reference category). We also add to this model indicators for one's job insecurity and work satisfaction.

At the country level, the models include several economic indicators (GNP per capita, Gini coefficient, inflation rate),<sup>4</sup> characteristics of the labor market (female labor force participation rate; the gender wage gap), the level of public assistance, and the country's average level of education.<sup>5</sup> We allow a random effect of education and explain the variation in education effect by the Gini coefficient, and, in the women's model of the general time preferences, by the country's level of work orientation. Summary statistics for the variables included in the analysis are presented in Appendix A (for individual-level variables) and B (for country-level characteristics).

The results of the analyses are presented in Table 1 (general time preferences) and Table 2 (working time in exchange for earnings). Turning first to the analysis of the general time preferences, the data in Table 1 support many



**TABLE 1: Individual- and Country-Level Effects on Preferences for Market Time—Men and Women Age 18 to 65 (Standard Error)**

<i>Individual-Level Variables</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Employment status		
Full-time worker	−1.165* (0.065)	−1.654* (0.056)
Part-time worker	−0.185** (0.100)	−0.496* (0.062)
Unemployed	0.773* (0.108)	0.640* (0.104)
Education	−0.064* (0.022)	−0.063* (0.025)
Family income	−0.844* (0.116)	−0.924* (0.116)
Age	−0.014* (0.002)	−0.015* (0.002)
Marital status	−0.190* (0.049)	−0.014 (0.044)
<i>d</i> (2)	2.273* (0.032)	2.264* (0.032)
Country level-intercept	−0.361* (0.113)	−0.213* (0.082)
Inflation rate	0.023* (0.004)	0.019* (0.003)
Female labor force participation rate	−0.127* (0.036)	−0.117* (0.024)
Public assistance	−0.022 (0.014)	−0.027* (0.010)
Education level	0.420** (0.220)	0.113 (0.146)
Gender wage ratio	2.374* (1.030)	1.889* (0.685)
Education effect—GINI coefficient	−0.007* (0.003)	— <sup>a</sup>
Importance of work <sup>a</sup>	—	−0.126* (0.057)
Number of cases	9,399	9,362
Number of countries	22	22

a. Not included in the model.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .10$ .

of the expectations put forward at the outset. For men and women alike, employment status at the time of the survey affects time preferences in the same direction. Those who work full-time are more likely to favor a reduction in the amount of time they would like to spend in market work ( $b = -1.165$  for men and  $b = -1.654$  for women), compared to those who do not work (or work only part-time).

For men, those who work part-time are not significantly different in their time preferences from those who do not participate in market activity, probably indicating the uniqueness of this group of workers. Among women, however, the preference for market time decreases also for those with a limited involvement in market activity ( $b = -0.496$ ), although not as much as in the case of women who work full-time. Unemployed men and women express strong preferences for an increase in their market time, as could be expected. Higher levels of education are associated with a reduction in preference for market time for both men and women. These findings grant only partial support to Jacobs and Gerson's (2001) and Schor's (1991) arguments. Those who work long hours (the overworked) indeed prefer to shorten their time in the labor market. Part-time workers, however, do not prefer an increase in

**TABLE 2: Individual and Country-Level Effects on Preferences for Hours of Work in Exchange for Money—Employed Men and Women Age 18 to 65 (Standard Error)**

<i>Individual-Level Variables</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Employment status		
Full-time worker	−0.368* (0.089)	−0.679* (0.063)
Work satisfaction (1 = high)	−0.042 (0.022)	−0.109* (0.024)
Job insecurity (1 = high)	−0.170* (0.027)	−0.198* (0.029)
Education	−0.110* (0.030)	−0.077* (0.038)
Family wage	−0.815* (0.139)	−1.027* (0.158)
Age	−0.024* (0.002)	−0.014* (0.002)
Marital status	0.029 (0.059)	−0.450* (0.060)
<i>d</i> (2)	3.576 (0.051)	3.646* (0.054)
Country level-intercept	−0.434* (0.125)	−0.259* (0.122)
GNP per capita (−103)	−0.042* (0.009)	−0.033* (0.011)
Gini coefficient	0.032* (0.015)	0.038* (0.018)
Female labor force participation rate	−0.020 (0.034)	0.074 (0.040)
Public assistance	−0.038* (0.014)	−0.039* (0.017)
Education level	0.108 (0.236)	−0.533* (0.275)
Education effect—Gini coefficient	−0.009** (0.005)	−0.002 (0.006)
Number of cases	7,379	6,381
Number of countries	22	22

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .10$ .

their market time (as the bifurcation theory would predict). It may be the fact that part-time workers are indeed less committed to market work and thus prefer to decrease their involvement in paid employment, as Hakim (1997) suggested. The effect of the economic position of the household (measured by family income) is in the expected direction—as the economic position is higher, the preferences for investing more time in the labor market declines. This is true for men and even more so for women ( $b = -0.844$  and  $-0.924$ , respectively). Time preference for market work decreases with age, and is also lower for married men ( $b = -0.190$ ) but not for married women.

The country variation in time preferences is only partly explained by the variables introduced at the macro level. Table 1 shows that in countries with higher levels of inflation, the preference for market work in the entire population increases. The preferences for market work among men and women decrease with higher rates of female labor force participation ( $b = -0.127$  and  $-0.117$ , respectively). The fact that the extent of female participation in the labor force affects the preferences of men as well as that of women suggests that women's employment enhances the economic well-being of families, which in turn permits a substitution of work for leisure. The gender wage ratio affects positively the time preferences of both men and women ( $b =$

2.374 and 1.889, respectively). Although this result is expected for women, it is not clear why the effect is also positive for men. The gender wage ratio may indicate other (unmeasured) labor force characteristics that make it worthwhile for men and women alike to invest more of their time in paid employment.

The level of public assistance provided by a country has no significant effect on the work attitude of men, but it reduces significantly women's preferences for hours of work. This effect may indicate that women's work is substituted by state support that enhances the household economic well-being, thus allowing women to reduce their involvement in paid employment.

Last, among men, the effect of education on time preferences varies by the level of inequality in the country. As inequality increases, the effect of education becomes more pronounced. This is expected because greater inequality raises the motivation to devote more time to market activity among those with lower levels of education (and thus with low market wages). At the same time, the more educated already have high earnings and are more likely to prefer more leisure time. Among women, this effect was insignificant (and therefore was not included in the final model<sup>6</sup>), but the level of work orientation did interact with the effect of education, indicating that as the importance of work declines, the (negative) effect of education on time preference intensifies. That is, in countries where work is normatively viewed as very important, the effect of education on time preferences is weaker.

The analysis thus far pertains to a normative view of preferences for working time, as it includes both those who participate in paid employment and those who do not. Table 2 presents a similar analysis that limits the sample to those who actively participate in paid employment. Moreover, respondents were asked to consider not only their time preferences but also the economic consequences of a reduction or an increase in their working time. Thus, we expect that these time preferences will be more strongly affected by demographic, family, and country indicators.

The findings in Table 2 suggest that men, and especially women, who work full-time are more likely than those working part-time to favor a decrease in their workload ( $b = -0.368$  for men and  $b = -0.679$  for women). The stronger effect for women probably results from the higher workload they have because of their familial responsibilities. Similarly, marital status does not affect employed men's time preferences, but married women prefer to work fewer hours ( $b = -0.450$ ), even when this entails a reduction in pay. Earlier we found that marital status affected men's but not women's preferences for market time (see Table 1). This suggests that married men view long working hours as interfering with family life. Yet economic needs, as perceived by respondents, dictate that men maintain a high workload. When the

economic consequences of time reduction (or increase) are taken into account and the analysis is limited to the employed population only, there is no effect of marital status on work preferences of men. These patterns point to the existing gender differences in the division of labor, with women more constrained than men by their home responsibilities and men more concerned with their role as providers. It may also indicate that although married men prefer in general to reduce their working hours, they cannot afford doing it because of the economic needs of the family. In addition to employment status and marital status, more educated and older men and women and those with higher family wages prefer a reduction in their workload.

The findings regarding the effect of the macro level variables on preferences for hours of work in exchange for money present stronger support for our hypotheses than the previous analysis. The economic indicators play an important role in determining the level of preferences for both men and women, as expected. Workers are more likely to favor a reduction in working hours in countries with higher GNP ( $b = -0.042$  and  $-0.033$  for men and women, respectively), but they would prefer to work longer hours for more money when the level of inequality is higher, as can be seen in the effect of the Gini coefficient ( $b = 0.032$  for men and  $0.038$  for women). Female labor force participation has no effect on the preferences of men, but the effect was positive (and near significance) on women's preferences. It should be noted that the model presented in Table 2 does not include the gender wage ratio because it had no significant effect on either employed men or women's work preferences. That is, in countries with a higher rate of female labor force participation, women are more likely than men to prefer an increase in their working hours in exchange for a higher income. This finding supports our interpretation that as women's involvement in market activity grows and becomes the dominant norm, their work behavior becomes more similar to that of men.

The country's level of education has no effect on men's preferences for working time, but it affects negatively women's preferences. Last, the rate of public assistance affects significantly men and women's preferences for working time. In countries with a high rate of decommodification, working men and women prefer to reduce their hours of work in exchange for a reduction in payment. We expected the effect of education on time preference to vary in accordance with the country's level of inequality. The effect of the Gini coefficient on the education slope is negative (and near significance) for men, indicating that higher inequality intensifies the negative effect of education on time preferences. The inequality level is insignificant in explaining the variation in the educational effect for women. The normative orientation to work is not presented in Table 2 because it had no significant effect on the

relationship between education and work preferences of neither men nor women.

## DISCUSSION

Preferences for working time are an important aspect of labor market relations, especially in a period of transition to more flexible work arrangements and varied time schedules. In the current article, we addressed the issue of how much time men and women would like to invest in market work, and examined the macro-level and individual-level determinants of these preferences. From a theoretical point of view, our analysis was framed as an examination of supply- and demand-side explanations of working hours. Supply-side explanations view working hours as reflecting workers' preferences and tastes, whereas demand-side explanations view work arrangements as constraints imposed by employing organizations to maximize profits.

Although there are indications that the actual hours of work are changing (Jacobs & Gerson, 1998; OECD, 1998), we found that large numbers of individuals (workers and nonworkers) are dissatisfied with their workload. Many would prefer either to increase or decrease the time they invest in market work. We interpret these findings as an indication of the dissatisfaction of many employees with their work arrangements. Higher rates of dissatisfaction with working hours are particularly evident in countries that experience economic hardships: low rates of economic growth, high rates of inequality and inflation, and low levels of decommodifications. The more that individuals are dependent on the market for subsistence, the more they want to invest more of their time in the work activity. Yet the fact that a sizeable number of workers in highly developed countries would prefer a different workload suggests that although flexibility in time schedules and work patterns is growing, a significant number of workers are still constrained by organizational schedules or economic necessities in their time allocation.

The multilevel analysis we performed revealed that preferences for work were affected by both individual-level and country-level characteristics. At the micro level, our findings underscore the importance of economic factors in determining the preference for working hours. Those whose standard of living is better secured—that is, persons with higher education, those residing in households with a high level of income, and the older—would prefer to reduce their workload, and the opposite is true for the less educated with low family earnings. In terms of the meaning of work and the debate surrounding its inherent virtues and motivating sources (Castillo, 1997; Wolf, 1997), it appears that external factors associated with the economic rewards are central at least in determining the amount of time people would like to spend on work.

Interestingly, the findings revealed similar patterns of variation across countries in men's and women's preferences for working time. Although women in general have a stronger preference than men for shorter working hours, in countries where a large proportion of women would prefer longer working hours this is true of men as well, and the opposite is true where many women would prefer to reduce their workload. These similarities attest to the macro-level forces (economic as well as cultural) that shape the time preferences of individuals. Indeed, from a comparative perspective, the effects of macro-level attributes are most interesting because they reveal the societal context within which individuals make their employment choices. In particular, we found that in countries with high levels of economic development (as measured by GNP per capita) and low economic inequality employees (both male and female) prefer to reduce the time spent in paid work.

In line with these effects, we also found that in societies with highly developed policies that aim to mitigate market risks, there is a greater tendency to reduce working hours. Evidently, social and economic inequalities among countries translate into substantial differences in labor supply, in attitudes toward work, and in satisfaction with work arrangements. Thus, the polarization in actual and preferred working time, which characterizes many national labor markets (e.g., Hakim, 1997) becomes a global characteristic of the workforce that differentiates among countries.

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, our study extends the body of research on individual-level determinants of work supply, by pointing attention to factors at the country level that affect the preference for working time. Quite a few comparative studies have revealed cross-national differences in employment behavior. Some limited themselves to two or three countries and aimed to provide country-specific explanations for the observed differences (e.g., Bell & Freeman, 1995; Charles et al., 2001; Diprete & McManus, 2000; Wharton & Blair-Loy, 2002). Others included a rather large number of countries and usually settled for highlighting the existing differences or grouping countries into broad categories based on the observed patterns (e.g., Blossfeld & Hakim, 1997; Tijdens, 2002). Although the findings of the former are rather difficult to generalize, the latter often share a limitation in that they do not identify the country-level factors that are actually responsible for the observed country differences. Our aim was to enhance the comparative analysis of work by combining detailed individual-level data with macro-level data for a substantial number of countries. This strategy yielded several insights regarding the impact of societal characteristics such as economic

inequality and stability, decommodification, and female labor force participation on work preferences. We believe that future research will benefit from further elaborating the comparative model by introducing additional country-level features and specifying their impact on work-related phenomena and on the relationship between individual-level characteristics and labor market behavior.

**APPENDIX A Means (SD) of Individual Variables Included in the Analysis, by Sex and Employment Status**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>All Men</i>	<i>All Women</i>	<i>Working Men</i>	<i>Working Women</i>
Hour preference (1 = shorter hours)	2.10 (0.75)	2.97 (1.04)	1.78 (0.60)	1.84 (0.59)
Employment status				
Full-time	0.75 (0.43)	0.48 (0.50)	0.91 (0.28)	0.66 (0.47)
Part-time	0.06 (0.24)	0.23 (0.42)		
Unemployed	0.06 (0.24)	0.06 (0.23)		
Education	4.86 (1.39)	4.84 (1.38)	4.96 (1.36)	5.02 (1.33)
Family income	0.28 (0.26)	0.27 (0.25)	0.31 (0.27)	0.29 (0.26)
Married	0.64 (0.48)	0.62 (0.49)	0.67 (0.47)	0.62 (0.49)
Age	40.2 (12.4)	39.56 (11.9)	39.9 (11.3)	39.0 (10.8)
Work satisfaction (1 = high, 7 = low)			2.78 (1.14)	2.75 (1.14)
Job insecurity (1 = high, 4 = low)			3.06 (0.99)	3.10 (1.00)
<i>N</i>	9,399	9,362	7,379	6,381

**APPENDIX B Means (SD) of Country Characteristics Included in the Analysis**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Definition/Source</i>	<i>Mean Value</i>
GNP (in dollars)		19,394.1 (12604.5)
Inflation rate		12.74 (27.11)
Gini coefficient		32.04 (6.35)
Percentage of females in labor force		44.32 (3.20)
Percentage of public assistance	Welfare transfers as percentage of government expenditure	19.78 (7.02)
Mean education	Country's mean level of education (on a scale of 1-8), ISSP 1997	4.88 (0.47)
Importance of work	Country's mean response to statement "work is person's most important activity" (ISSP, 1997)	2.63 (0.43)
Gender income ratio	Wage ratio of women employed full-time to men employed full-time (ISSP, 1997)	0.75 (0.10)
<i>N</i>		22

## NOTES

1. Bangladesh, Cyprus, and the Philippines were excluded due to missing information on important variables. The final sample included 25,722 men and women.

2. The only country that did not provide information on family income was Israel. We used, instead, the personal income as an indicator for family income.

3. This measure was derived from the data. It indicates the wage ratio of women employed full-time to men employed full-time. The results we report in Tables 1 and 2 remained unchanged when alternative measures of the gender wage ratio, derived from official data sources (United Nations, 2002), were employed. We prefer to use our measure because it pertains to full-time salaries, which theoretically are more likely to affect individuals' labor supply decisions.

4. Because of the limited degrees of freedom (only 22 countries were included in the analysis—West and East Germany are treated as one country), we limited the number of macro-level indicators. Consequently, the model that analyzes the general preferences for market time includes country's inflation rate as the main economic indicator, and the model that pertains to the working population includes the GNP and the Gini coefficient.

5. Mean education is included mainly because the education variable at the individual level was centered at the country mean. In such a case, the sample average value of education has to be included at the macro level (Kreft & De Leeuw, 1998).

6. The exclusion of insignificant variables (e.g., the Gini coefficient in the women's model and the importance of work in the men's model) did not change the effect of other variables that were included in the models.

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