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WOLIWEB The socio-economic determinants of citizens' work life attitudes, preferences and perceptions, using data from the continuous web-based European WageIndicator Survey

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EMPLOYEES' WORKING HOURS PREFERENCES IN BELGIUM, GERMANY, NETHERLANDS, SPAIN AND UNITED KINGDOM

The Effects of Contractual Working Time, Family Phase and Household Characteristics, and Job Characteristics

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1. INTRODUCTION

WOLIWEB addresses the impact of the socio-economic framework on attitudes, preferences, and perceptions. Attitudes, preferences, and perceptions are inherently subjective in nature. They are potentially influenced by a host of factors related to an individual's socio-economic framework, referring to concepts such as occupation; labour market status; earnings; working, household and leisure time; marital status and family phase; socio-economic status; gender and ethnical background. WOLIWEB aims for quantitative analyses, and the data needed are gathered through the international, volunteer *WageIndicator* web-survey. A national website has content about wages, working conditions, labor standards or other work-related topics. It has a crowd-pulling *Salary Check* providing free information on occupation-specific wages, controlled for individual factors. After having explored the pages with wage information, web-visitors are encouraged to complete the continuous, international comparable web-survey on work and wages with a prize incentive. This paper is WOLIWEB's Deliverable D10b, which is part of Work Package 2 Research on perceptions of pay and working time preferences (p. 27 Annex 1).¹

Working time preferences have been investigated recently. In the United States, such research was stimulated by Juliet Schor's (1991) study on the 'Overworked American'. In their study of the 1992 CPS data, Jacobs and Gerson (1998) ask what the overworked Americans want. According to their data nearly half of the American workers indicated that their usual working week was longer than their ideal hours. Approximately one third was satisfied with their hours and the remaining group preferred longer hours. The overworked European does not seem to exist. Nevertheless, the percentages of workers in the European Union preferring other hours are almost similar to those in the US, according to the 1998 Employment Options of the Future Survey, covering 15 EU member states plus Norway (Bielenski, Bosch and Wagner, 2002, 43). Exactly half of the workforce surveyed preferred fewer hours, slightly over one third was satisfied with their current hours, and the remaining group preferred longer hours.

A number of studies have addressed the macro-economic aspects of working time preferences. If these preferences would be realized, how would they affect employment or unemployment rates and would labor volume have to be reduced, increased or just redistributed? What would be the implications for employment policies? Bielenski *et al* (2002, 28) conclude that, since most employees desire shorter working hours, the preference in Europe is for a combination of high labor market participation and short individual working hours rather than the American combination of high employment rates and long working hours. Working time preferences and the obstacles to realize these preferences therefore need to be addressed. Although a study of employer-side restrictions to fulfil working time preferences would be equally important, this report only addresses the employee-side determinants of working time preferences.

Regardless the high percentages of workers in the industrialized countries whose ideal working hours do not match their usual hours, few studies have addressed the factors that may determine individual working time preferences. This study aims to expand this knowledge by modelling individual working time preferences from the

¹ This report builds on earlier work performed by the author by extending the initial analyses for the Netherlands to five EU member states (Tijdens, 2004).

current working hours, the household and family characteristics, and the job characteristics, using *WageIndicator* employee survey data. Sections 2 and 3 provide the reader with a brief overview of working hours in the EU, particularly in the Netherlands. This section details the definitions of working time and presents a description of previous research results in relation to the explanatory model used in this chapter. The model is detailed in section 4, describing the hypotheses, the operationalization and measurement of indicators, the methodology, and the data. Section5 presents the results of the analysis, aiming to identify which workers are satisfied with their working hours. In section 6, the focus moves towards the workers preferring longer or fewer hours, testing hypotheses for three clusters of explanatory variables. Conclusions are drawn in section 7.

2. INTRODUCING THE CONCEPTS OF WORKING TIME

2.1 **DEFINITIONS OF WORKING HOURS**

In their paper, Evans, Lippoldt & Marianna (2001) distinguish four definitions of hours of work. The first one refers to the actual hours of work in productive activities, whether paid or unpaid. This definition is particularly important for macroeconomic analyses. The second definition refers to the usual hours of work, whereby the reported hours are not influenced by unusual or irregular events, such as a short period of overtime working, or short-hours working, holidays and sicknesses. This definition is mostly used in questionnaires. Third, in countries where the working week is primarily regulated by law, it is common to refer to the concept of *legal* hours. This applies for example to France, where recently the 35-hour week has been introduced by law. Fourth, in countries where the working week is regulated in collective bargaining agreements, it is common to refer to the standard hours or the standard working week². This is for example the case in the Netherlands, where the standard working week is agreed upon in collective bargaining and excessive working hours are limited by legislation. In this chapter, a fifth definition is used. The number of hours laid down in the individual labor contract is referred to as the contractual hours of work. As a consequence, overtime is defined as the difference between the usual hours of work minus the contractual hours. Finally, measuring hours of work on an annual basis implies control for holidays and for unemployment or out-of-work periods. This requires questions about the number of holidays and periods out of work in a given reference period, which is mostly last year. For an extended overview how information on working hours is collected, see Stevenson (2002).

Measuring working time preferences may be even more difficult than measuring working time. Employees' working time preferences may address the *standard working week*, the *usual hours of work*, or the *contractual hours of work*. Preferences with regard to the reduction of the standard working week are realized in collective bargaining or in legal settings, and may lead to an increase in hourly wages. Preferences with regard to the usual hours of work probably primarily refer to overtime work and may or may not affect wages, depending whether the overtime is paid or unpaid. Preferences with regard to the contractual hours of work full-time and where the full-time working week is equal to the standard working week. In countries with high rates of part-time employment or with variation in the contractual full-time working week, a preference for individual reduction of the contractual hours may be a realistic option. In those cases, this reduction will affect the weekly or monthly wages but not the hourly wages.

In times with the reduction of the standard working week high on the political agenda, surveys measuring the preferences for a collective working time reduction were very sensitive to the precise wording of the question regarding a reduction of hours with or without full wage compensation (Nätti, 1995). Similarly, survey questions that refer to individual working hours are sensitive. Kahn and Lang (1995) describe how Statistics Canada in a supplement of its 1985 Labor Force Survey used a long introduction to the questions on desired hours to ensure that respondents

² These *standard hours* are also referred to as the *normal hours* or the *agreed hours*.

understood that hypothetical hours reductions would imply prorated salary changes. Survey questions that just ask for ideal hours lead to higher percentages of individuals preferring fewer hours than specified questions do. At least, that has to be concluded when comparing percentages in various studies. In the 1998 EU plus Norway Survey, 50% of the workforce preferred fewer hours. Yet, in the 1994 labor market surveys of the European Commission reports only 29% of the workforce preferred fewer hours (Contensou and Vranceanu, 2000). The 1994 survey question included explicitly that wage rates would remain unchanged. In conclusion, statistics on working time preferences have to be taken with caution.

2.2 WORKING TIME PREFERENCES IN THE EU AND THE NETHERLANDS

The standard working week in the EU mostly varies from 35 to 40 hours, depending on country and industry. Special interest groups may even have a shorter standard working week, such as employees in shift work. With its 35-hour week France has one of the shortest standard working weeks. In the Netherlands, the standard working week varies from 32 hours in shift work to 40 hours in branches with either low profit margins, such as transport, or labor shortages, such as the IT industry. The vast majority of the Dutch employees, however, are employed in a branch or company with a standard working week of 36 to 38 hours.

According to the 1998 EU plus Norway Survey, four-fifths of the European employees in paid employment work full-time at a 35-hours threshold. Only 62 percent of women do so, compared with 91 percent of men (Bielenski *et al*, 2002). The Netherlands is known for its high rates of part-time employment, particularly in the female workforce, but also in the male work force. Indeed, the *WageIndicator* Survey - which will be discussed in section 3 - reveal that only 53 percent of the female workforce and 88 percent of the male workforce is in full-time employment and has a labor contract for 35 hours or more.

In the EU plus Norway, the majority of full-time workers would prefer to reduce their working hours, although only one third felt their employer would view such a request favorably (Bielenski et al, 2002). Only one-third of part-timers would choose to work less. In the Netherlands, these percentages are lower. Here, 42 percent of full-timers and 22 percent of part-timers would prefer to reduce their working hours. 56 percent of the employees that filled in the WageIndicator survey are satisfied with their working hours, 37 percent prefer to work fewer hours and only 7 percent prefer to work longer hours. These figures are in accordance with findings in another large Dutch survey (Otten and Smulders, 2002). Probably, the Dutch part-time economy facilitates a good fit between employers' demands and employees' preferences with regard to working hours. In the EU plus Norway, fulfilment of the general time preferences would reduce the average working week to 34.5 hours. The WageIndicator Survey has no data on the preferred number of hours, but when for example an average preference of 2 hours more or less is assumed, the average contractual working week would be reduced to 33.9 hours, and to 37.5 hours when usual working hours are counted. In this respect, the Dutch pattern do not deviate much from that of other EU member states.

3. EXPLAINING WORKING TIME PREFERENCES

3.1 WORKING TIME PREFERENCES AND THE STANDARD WORKING WEEK

For over two decades, reduction of the standard working week has been a major issue in collective bargaining and employment policies in many European countries, primarily as a means of reducing unemployment. At the end of the 1970s and in the early 1980s, standard working hours per week were reduced in a wide range of industries in countries such as Belgium, the UK, France, Germany and the Netherlands (Bosch and Lehndorff, 2001). During the 1990s, reduction of working time has been on the policy agenda in many EU member states (Tergeist, 1995; Taddei, 1998). In 1998, France took the lead and, for the sake of job creation, the French government agreed upon new legislation for a 35-hour standard working week, known as the Law Aubry (Cette, 2000; Heyer and Timbeau, 2000). In the Guidelines for Member States Employment Policies 2000, the European Commission urged social partners to agree and implement a process of modernizing the organization of work, including issues such as the annualization of working time, the reduction of working hours, the reduction of overtime, and the development of part-time work.

Many studies have addressed macro-economic consequences of working time preferences, such as the redistribution of the volume of work and the reduction of unemployment (e.g. Bluestone and Rose, 1998). If the redistribution of the volume of work would be large, the consequences for the economy in general and for employment policies in particular would be far-reaching. Other studies have addressed the macro-economic consequences of working time reduction. In an analysis of aggregate data of 11 OECD countries, Kapteijn, Kalwij and Zaidi (2002) find a small positive direct effect of the reduction of working hours on employment, but this is reduced to a small negative long-term effect on employment due to an increase in wages. In a study of the reduction of a weekly working time in West-German industries, Dreger, Fuchs and Kolb (2001) find no impact on the level of employment, rather a rise in the firm's demand for overtime hours.

Since the 1970s, the preferences of employees to work fewer hours rather than earn more have been studied extensively (e.g. OECD 1998: 166-7). In 1985, in European Union member states many more people expressed a preference for higher earnings over fewer hours, except for Denmark and the Netherlands. In 1994, an increased preference for a reduction of hours was apparent in all EU countries, except for Greece, Italy and Spain. Again, the highest percentages in favor of fewer hours were found in Denmark and the Netherlands: 66 and 52 percent respectively. In other EU countries, the percentages of workers preferring higher earnings still outnumbered those preferring fewer hours. In the United Kingdom, for example, nearly twice as many workers preferred higher earnings to fewer hours.

Differences in working hours across countries must be understood in the context of country-specific institutional arrangements (OECD, 1998; Bielenski *et al*, 2002). According to the OECD (1998), countries with a more developed collective bargaining system have shown a faster decline in working hours. A correlation exists between the level of average annual working hours per person and the desire for fewer hours: countries with relatively low annual hours tend to be those in which the average preference for reduced hours is relatively strong and that for higher earnings relatively weak.

3.2 WORKING TIME PREFERENCES AND THE USUAL WORKING HOURS

According to the 1998 EU plus Norway Survey, the general preference of both men and women is discontinue to the extremes of very short part-time and long full-time hours (Bielenski *et al*, 2002). Others studies also reveal a similar large impact of actual hours on preferred hours (Otten and Smulders, 2002; Euwals and Van Soest, 1999). The longer the working week, the higher is the preference for fewer working hours, and the shorter the working week, the higher the preference for longer hours. According to Bielenski *et al* (2002), for the male workforce current working time exerts the greatest influence on the preference of other working hours.

Some employees are paid on a salaried basis, thus per month or other period, rather than on an hourly basis. According to Ehrenberg and Smith (1997), "the term is used this way merely for convenience and is of no consequences for most purposes". Yet, the distinction between salaried and hourly paid employees is not meaningless when it comes to analyzing working hours' preferences. Salaried employees may express more often preferences for fewer working hours, whereas the reverse may hold for hourly paid employees. Yet, by working long hours, salaried employees may invest in their career, thus in future higher earnings. Even when they are not paid, long hours may convince a superior of the employee's willingness for a career.

When working time preferences are influenced by current working hours, the factors affecting current working hours need to be taken into account. In this respect education is a major factor. Higher levels of education go along with longer working hours, as Bluestone and Rose (1998) indicate in their study of the upward trend in working hours in the US. According to the authors, higher wages can induce longer hours or better-educated workers may enjoy their job more. The latter group is also probably more likely to fall in the category of salaried workers. The authors argue that individuals may have a long-run income objective, and if they fear a future lay-off, they might attempt to increase their current working hours. Thus, it is likely that current working hours will be influenced by education and by job insecurity, or at least by the expectation of job insecurity.

In conclusion, for the current study, it has to be assumed that the contractual working hours will influence the individual working hours' preferences. It is also important to identify the salaried workers and the hourly paid workers, assuming that their preferences differ. For the salaried employees, it may be important to take into account the employee's career orientation. Finally, both the employees' educational levels and job insecurity have to be taken into account.

3.3 WORKING TIME PREFERENCES AND HOUSEHOLD TIME

Weekly working hours reveal highly gendered patterns. In nearly all industrialized countries, women work on average fewer hours than men do, and this is mostly contributed to the domestic tasks performed by women. Based on the 1998 EU plus Norway Survey, Bielenski *et al* (2002, 40-42) show that men would like to reduce their working time by about twice as much as women, but men's preferred times are on average still around 6.5 hours longer than those of women. By realizing these preferences, the working time differences between the genders would remain, but at a significant lower level. Men's preferences are clustered within the 30-40 hours range, while women's preferences are clustered around the 20-, 25-, 30-, 35- and 40-hours marks.

The presence of children has a significant influence on either or on both women's actual and preferred working time, except for Belgium. For the Netherlands, children of any age have a significant negative influence on the actual working hours, but not on the preferred hours. Presumably, this is caused by the availability of part-time jobs and the possibility to reduce hours in the job, as regulated in many Dutch collective agreements. In contrast, in seven of the sixteen countries children positively influence the actual working hours of men and in two countries children positively influence their preferred hours. Norway is an exception. Here, men with children up to age 5 prefer shorter hours. Bielenski et al (2002) conclude that for women household- related factors have the largest influence on working time preferences. According to analyses of the same dataset by Väisänen and Nätti (2002), children under age 10 positively influence the likelihood that a woman in a dual-earning household prefers fewer working hours for the household in total, whereas a man is more likely to prefer longer hours for the household. The effect of the life cycle may intervene with the effect of age. In their study of the Canadian Survey of Work Reduction, Kahn and Lang (1996) find that the desire for overtime hours declines with seniority.

The Netherlands is known for its high part-time rates. Studying desired and actual hours of work for unmarried individuals based on the Dutch Socio-Economic Panel, Euwals and Van Soest (1998) find larger wage elasticities of desired hours for women than for men. Both involuntary unemployment and lack of part-time jobs appear to be important sources of hours' restrictions. Individuals with (potential) wages below the minimum wage have a significantly larger probability of involuntary unemployment than others. This study reveals that women easily adapt their working time to their preferences. Compared to other EU member states, in the Netherlands the gender roles regime is the best predictor of the likelihood for a woman to hold a part-time job (Tijdens, 2002). Moreover, her wage rate is the best predictor that she considers outsourcing her domestic tasks to increase working hours while holding leisure time constant (Tijdens, Van der Lippe and De Ruijter, 2001). Therefore, this report takes into account the impact of the life cycle and the wage rate in determining working time preferences, but this effect is expected to be reverse for women and for men in the child-rearing phase.

3.4 WORKING TIME PREFERENCES AND JOB-RELATED FACTORS

Job-related factors may influence employees' preferences. According to Otten and Smulders (2002), job commitment increases significantly the preference for longer hours, while a high workload and an orientation towards leisure time increase the preference for fewer hours. Bielenski *et al* (2002) also included job-related characteristics in their analyses, but only in a limited number of countries these variables turned out to be significant. (Note that their study aimed at predicting the preferred hours and not the preference for fewer or longer hours). In eight of the sixteen countries, higher job satisfaction increases the number of preferred working hours. In three counties, good job prospects influence the preferred hours: employees perceiving good prospects prefer to work less hours than employees not perceiving these prospects. Finally, surprisingly, the attitude 'working to earn money' influences the preferred hours only in two countries. In France the employees showing this attitude prefer longer hours, and in Denmark these employees prefer fewer hours compared to their counterparts.

In conclusion, job-related characteristics as perceived by the employee are assumed to have an impact on the preferences for working hours. These characteristics relate to factors such as job challenge and workload.

4. MODEL AND DATASET

4.1 HYPOTHESES AND METHODOLOGY

This study aims to investigate the determinants of employees' working time preferences. Some employees will have unmet preferences for a longer period of time than others, and thus, the group that is unsatisfied will be biased. In the current study, however, the duration of the unmet preferences is not known, and the analyses thus cannot be controlled for this bias. Therefore, the first hypothesis will test for satisfaction with working hours:

(1) Employees with recent changes in employment status are more likely to be satisfied with working hours.

In a next step, employees' preferences for more or for fewer working hours will be modelled. It follows from the overview in the previous section that current working time is assumed to be influential, leading to the second hypothesis:

(2) Preferences for fewer working hours are expected for employees with long working hours and for salaried employees, whereas preferences for more working hours are expected for employees with short working hours and for hourly paid employees. These analyses need to be controlled for education and job security.

According to the overview in the previous section, a second cluster of explanatory variables relates to household and family characteristics. This leads to the third hypothesis:

(3) Preferences for fewer working hours are expected for female employees with children at home, for employees with a partner with long working hours, and for employees with low wage rates. Preferences for more working hours are expected for male employees with children at home, for employees with no children at home, for employees with a partner with short working hours, and for employees with high wage rates.

A third cluster of explanatory variables relates to job characteristics:

(4) Preferences for fewer working hours are expected for employees that aim at minimizing working hours because they perceive their job as a burden, and preferences for more working hours are expected for employees that aim at maximizing working hours because they perceive their job as a challenge

In a first step, the hours satisfaction hypothesis 1 will be tested using a logit model. Two types of changes in employment status as well as all other indicators mentioned in the hypotheses 2 – 4 will be included. A logit analysis tests the likelihood that an employee with a certain characteristic is satisfied with the current working time in comparison to an employee lacking this characteristic, controlled for all other characteristics that are assumed to affect working time satisfaction. Based on this analysis, the conclusion may be reached to exclude either certain observations or certain variables from the analyses in the second step.

In a second step, employees' preferences for more or for fewer working hours will be modelled, using multinomial logit analyses to test the hypotheses 2 - 4. This

analysis tests the likelihood of being in either category of working time preferences. Its odds ratios tell us - for a particular characteristic - how many times greater or smaller the chance is that the employee falls into the preference category 'longer hours', in contrast of falling into the preference category 'less hours', holding all other variables constant.

4.2 THE DATA

The data used in the analyses stem from the *WageIndicator* web-survey, which is part of the national *WageIndicator* websites (see for a detailed methodological exploration, Tijdens, 2004).³

It is based on the data gathered between September 2004 and December 2006 for five EU member states: Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, Spain and United Kingdom. Italy is not included in the analysis, due to insufficient data. Poland, Denmark and Finland are not included because the survey question about working hours satisfactcion was not asked in these countries. All analyses have been restricted to employees with an employment contract in which working hours are agreed. For other groups, the concept of a preference for longer or fewer working hours is troublesome, and therefore these individuals are not included in the analyses. The dataset used in this study has been collected from September 2004 to December 2006, and counts almost 100,000 valid observations.

The *WageIndicator* web-survey has seven questions that address the employee's working time. These questions include the standard weekly working hours in the firm, the working weekly hours agreed in the labor contract, the usual working hours per week, whether overtime hours are paid, a self-classification as full-timer or part-timer⁴, a question whether one would prefer to work longer or fewer hours. The last question had no explanation about prorated wage changes, as reduction of the standard working week with full wage compensation has not been discussed in recent years other EU member states than France with the 35 hours working week, and because it is assumed to be well known that working fewer hours imply a prorated decrease in income. Overtime hours are defined as the difference between usual and contractual hours, under the condition that the usual hours exceed the contractual hours. The dependent variable in the initial analysis is satisfaction with working hours, defined as the absence of a preference for fewer and for longer hours. The dependent variable in the following analyses is the preference for fewer hours.

4.3 **OPERATIONALIZATION AND MEASUREMENT**

For hypothesis 1 the dataset provides information about the years when two types of changes in employment status took place, notably entering the labor market and employer mobility. Recent changes have been defined as changes that took place in the year in which the employees completed the questionnaire, or in the year before they did so.

³ Details about the *WageIndicator* website can be found on www.wageindicator.org.

⁴ The answers to this question are primarily used in the data-cleaning process.

For hypothesis 2, two indicators measure the employee's working time characteristics, notably the contractual working hours, and a dichotomous variable identifying whether the employee is salaried or hourly paid. A salaried employee is defined as an employee whose overtime hours are neither paid nor timecompensated. All other employees are classified as hourly paid. Because education and job insecurity are assumed to influence the employee's current working hours, the analysis of the hours preferences will be controlled for these two variables.

For hypothesis 3, three indicators are used, notably a variable indicating the three phases of family formation and gender, a variable indicating the preesnce of a partner, and a variable indicating the employee's wage rate $\leq = \text{ or } \geq 10$ or its equivalent \leq or > GBP 6.66. The partner's working hours are used as a proxy for household income and the employee's wage rate as a proxy for substitution of market and household time. The borderline of $\langle = \text{ or } \rangle \in 10$ seemed to be appropriate, because after investigating several earnings categories, it captured the differences in working time preferences most optimally. The survey includes guestions on gross and net wages and the payment period in order to calculate hourly wages. These wages have been converted into hourly wages, excluding allowances, variable income elements, holiday allowances, expense allowances or paid overtime hours. For this reason, the number of working hours on which the wage is based must be accurate. The data reveal gender-based differences: additional or overtime hours worked by part-timers are paid out more regularly than those worked by full-timers, but an overtime allowance hardly ever applies for the part-timers. Therefore, the calculation of the hourly wages is based on the contractual hours, although for small part-timers it is based on their usual hours. In this way, the hourly wages can be as accurately as possible.

For hypothesis 4, the current study initially aimed to include job satisfaction as a predictor of working time satisfaction. However, the dataset lacks such a variable. Therefore, it is assumed that a job that is perceived as a burden or a challenge will influence the preference for working hours. Two indicators are used to measure the job being a challenge. Both are dichotomous variables indicating whether the employee's job became more interesting last year, and whether staffing levels are sufficient. A few other indicators have also been tried, such as good career perspectives at the workplace, or a supervisory position, but these do not appear to have any impact. There is also not a single variable to indicate the job being a burden. Two dichotomous indicators have been used, notably 'I can do work largely routinely' and 'conflicts occur regularly at work'. Here too, a few other indicators have been tried but these did not reveal any significant findings.

4.4 DESCRIPTIVE FINDINGS

Table 6.1 shows that with 68% the Belgians are most satisfied with their working hours, followed by Netherlands with 66%. In Spain only 45% of the respondents are satisfied with their current working hours. The respondents in Spain particularly have a preference for less working hours. The respondents in Netherlands have the highest preference for more working hours, almost 9% of them would prefer more working hours.

	prefers less hrs	prefers more hrs	satisfied with current hrs	total
Belgium	26,7	4,9	68,4	100
Germany	31,0	6,4	62,5	100
Netherlands	25,2	8,9	65,9	100
United Kingdom	33,8	5,3	60,8	100
Spain	51,1	4,3	44,7	100

Table 4.1 Distribution of working hours preference categories per country

Source: WageIndicator data Sept2004-Dec2006

Figure 6.1 details the working hours preferences by current working hours category. It shows clearly that in all five countries compared to full-timers, part-timers have a much higher preference for more working hours. Full-timers, at least those with an employment contract of 40 hours or more, to a very little extent prefer more working hours, whereas large groups prefer fewer working hours. In almost all countries, the group with an employment contract between 30 and 39 hours per week is the most satisfied.





Source: WageIndicator data Sept2004-Dec2006

Table 9.1 in the Appendix shows the distribution of the explanatory variables over the preference categories as well as their frequencies.

5. PREDICTING SATISFACTION WITH WORKING HOURS

In hypothesis 1 it is assumed that satisfaction with working hours will be higher for employees whose employment status has recently changed. Two types of recent changes in employment status – labour market entry and employer mobility - are investigated. Table 7.1 shows that in all countries working hours satisfaction is slightly higher for those who experienced a recent change than for those who did not, apart from those experiencing recent employer mobility in the Netherlands. Ttests reveal however that these differences are only in a few cases significant, for example for recent labour market entrants in the Netherlands and for recent employer mobiles in Germany and Spain. It may be the case that in countries with relatively high unemployment levels working hours are not a critical factor in recent labour market entry, but that it is for recent employer mobility.

Table 5.1 Means for working hours satisfaction (1=satisfied, 0=not satisfied) for two types of recent changes in year surveyed or year before surveyed (Ttests), five countries

	Recent labour market entry			Recent employer mobility			N
	No	Yes	Sig	No	Yes	Sig	
Belgium	0,681	0,737	*	0,680	0,691		17215
Germany	0,625	0,635		0,629	0,610	* * *	73980
Netherlands	0,654	0,706	* * *	0,661	0,621	* * *	81388
Spain	0,449	0,494		0,442	0,473	* *	9999
United Kingdom	0,608	0,612		0,606	0,613		21861

Source Data WageIndicator Sept2004-Dec2006, unweighted data, * p=10%, ** p=5%, ***p=1%

In order to analyze satisfaction with working hours in greater detail, a logit analysis has been performed. The dependent variable is the dichotomous variable 'satisfaction with working hours' (yes/no). The independent variables are the two types of recent changes and all variables proposed in the hypotheses 2 - 4. The analysis is controlled for the employee's education level and job insecurity. According to hypothesis 3, different preferences are expected for male and female employees during the life cycle. Therefore, the analyses are performed for family cycle. The results are shown in Table 6.2.

WOLIWEB D10b Working time preferences

	BE		DE		NL		ES		UK	
	В	sign	В	sign	В	sign	В	sign	В	sign
labour market entry last year [0,1]	0,307		0,119		0,284	* * *	-0,089		0,092	
employer mobility last year [0,1]	-0,098		0,065		-0,046		0,083		0,097	*
salaried employee-overtime not compensated [0,1]	-0,209	***	-0,186	* * *	-0,342	* * *	-0,401	* * *	-0,268	* * *
contractual working hours REF >= 40 hrs										
contractual working hours <= 20 hrs	0,443	***	0,131		-0,019		0,212		0,374	
contractual working hours 20-29 hrs	0,524	* * *	0,199	*	0,177	* * *	0,271		0,500	* * *
contractual working hours 30-39 hrs	0,155	***	0,331	* * *	0,286	* * *	0,682	***	0,530	* * *
living with partner [0,1]	0,017		0,021		0,007		-0,103		-0,040	
childphase REF male>44 + no child at home										
female <45 + no child yet	-0,034		-0,141	*	-0,419	* * *	0,364		-0,027	
male <45 + no child yet	0,196		-0,007		0,145	**	0,341		0,013	
female + child at home	-0,321	**	-0,357	* * *	-0,364	* * *	0,194		-0,313	* *
male + child at home	0,145		-0,030		0,077		0,296		-0,038	
female>44 + no child at home	-0,450	**	-0,405	* * *	-0,455	* * *	-0,092		-0,249	*
hourly gross wage <= 10 euro or <=6.6 GBP [0,1]	-0,035		-0,152	* * *	0,047		0,177	*	0,047	
job has become more interesting in the past year	0,111	***	0,086	* * *	0,114	* * *	0,073	* * *		
in workplace staffing levels sufficient [0,1]	0,184	* * *			0,123	* * *	0,137	* * *		
job involves monotonous tasks [0,1]	-0,065	***	-0,121	* * *	-0,054	* * *	-0,035			
in workplace conflicts regularly occur [0,1]	-0,114	* * *			-0,080	* * *	-0,059	*		
education REF tertiary education										
basic education	-0,014		0,073	*	-0,010		0,015		0,029	
secondary education	0,037		0,027		-0,029		0,033		0,096	*
job will become redundant in next years [0,1]	-0,108				-0,132	* * *	0,101		-0,380	* * *
Constant	0,218		0,493	* * *	0,341	* * *	-1,032	* *	0,260	* *
Ν	11929		23866		45210		4914		13824	
Chi-square	482,582		537,6303		1735,545		263,6953		324,6094	
df	20		17		20		20		16	
Sig.	0,000		0,000		0,000		0,000		0,000	

Table 5.2 Coefficients for predicting satisfaction with current working hours (yes, no), logit analyses for five countries.

Source: WageIndicator data, September 2004-December 2006 (unweighted data)

As regards the impact of the two types of recent changes in employment status, significant findings are only found in the Netherlands. Here, as expected, the recent entrants are more satisfied, suggesting that the working hours preference is part of the employer-employee match. As times go by, satisfaction may change.

As regards the impact of current working time characteristics, the results show that – as expected - particularly this cluster of indicators has a large impact on working time satisfaction. The Table shows that in all five countries the salaried employees, here defined as those employees whose overtime hours are not compensated in money or time, are severely dissatisfied with their working hours, compared to employees who receive overtime compensation. Regarding the working week as agreed in the employment contract, the Table shows that particularly the employees with an employment contract between 30 and 39 hours per week are more often satisfied compared to the employees with a contract of 40 hours and more. This particularly holds for Germany, Netherlands, Spain and UK, whereas in Belgium the employees with a contract between 20 and 29 hours per week are more satisfied. In addition, in Belgium, even the employees working less than 20 hours a week are more satisfied than the employees who work 40 hours or more. This effect is not significant in the other four countries.

As regards the impact of family and household characteristics, the Table reveals that particularly the females with one or more children living at home are significantly more often dissatisfied with their working hours compared to the reference group, the older males whose children are out home. This is the case in all countries, except for Spain. Here the effect is not found. In addition, the females whose children are out home are also less satisfied with their working hours, compared to the reference group. Again, this is the case in all countries, except for Spain. No impact is found from living with a partner.

Finally, a low hourly wage (\in 10 and less) decreases working hours satisfaction in Germany. This is not the case in other countries. In Spain, low income earners are on the contrary more often satisfied with their working hours.

As regards the impact of the job being a challenge or a burden, as expected, employees who indicate that their job became more interesting and employees who are eager to have a career are more often satisfied with their working time. This is very clearly the case in all countries, except for the UK, where this variable was not measured. The judgement that one's job becomes more interesting is obviously a proxy for a good match between job and employee, and working hours are part of the match. Similarly, the employees who perceive the staffing levels at their department as sufficient are more often satisfied with their working hours. This applies to Belgium, Netherlands and Spain. In the other two countries, the variable was not measured.

In contrast, the individuals performing a job that involves monotonous tasks are far less often satisfied with their working hours. This is evident in Belgium, Germany and Netherlands, whereas the effect is found in Spain too, but here it is not significant. Again, this variable is not measured in the UK. Similarly, as expected, conflicts at the workplace contribute to higher working time dissatisfaction. This is the case in Belgium, Netherlands and Spain. The variable was not measured in the other two countries. For job insecurity, the Table shows that in Netherlands and UK the employees, who judge that their job will become redundant, are far less often satisfied with their working hours. A negative effect is also found in Belgium, but here it is not significant. In Spain, a positive, but insignificant effect is found. Finally, the analysis is controlled for education. The findings, however, indicate that hardly significant differences exist for educational levels, when it comes to predicting hour's satisfaction.

In the next section, the focus of the analysis will be on the preference for fewer or more working hours. From this section, it can be concluded that recent changes in labour market status do not contribute to the explanation. In addition, it is shown that when it comes to household and family characteristics, female employees are more often not satisfied with their working hours. Good working conditions increase the likelihood of being satisfied with the working hours, whereas poor working conditions go along with dissatisfaction with working hours. This holds for almost all five countries under study. Finally, education levels have no impact on working hours satisfaction.

6. PREDICTING A PREFERENCE FOR MORE OR FEWER WORKING HOURS

6.1 THE ANALYSIS

To analyze the preference for more or fewer working hours in greater detail, a multinomial logit analysis has been performed to predict the likelihood that an employee has either a preference for longer or for fewer hours, when taking satisfaction with working hours as the reference category. Three clusters of explanatory variables are used, as proposed in the hypotheses 2 - 4. The variable 'family cycle' has been split into male and female dummies. The results are shown in Table 6.1.

6.2 THE IMPACT OF WORKING TIME CHARACTERISTICS

Working time characteristics affect working time satisfaction, as has been shown in the previous section. In hypothesis 2 it is assumed that the working time characteristics also will influence the likelihood of an employee's preference for fewer or more working hours. The bivariate results in Table 8.1 in the Appendix reveal that employees with short contractual working hours are more frequently found in the category that prefers longer hours, while the reverse holds for employees with long contractual hours. A similar pattern occurs for employees in workplaces with a short respectively a long standard working week. Table 8.1 also shows that employees with long overtime hours more frequently prefer fewer working hours, and so do salaried employees.

Table 6.1 reveals that the bivariate findings from Table 8.1 in the Appendix are confirmed in the multinomial logit analysis. The longer the contractual working week, the more likely the employee will prefer fewer hours, and the less likely the employee will prefer longer hours. This clearly holds for all five countries. Not surprisingly, the part-timers in jobs of less than 20 hours per week have significantly less preferences for fewer working hours, whereas they do have significantly more often a preference for longer hours, particularly in Spain.

6.3 THE IMPACT OF GENDER, LIFE CYCLE, HOUSEHOLD AND WAGES

Table 6.1 shows that the family cycle does affect the working hours preferences. In Netherlands, UK and Germany females with a child at home have more often a preference for fewer working hours. This however is not the case in Spain and for Belgium, where no significant findings were found. Older female workers, no children at home any more or never having had children, also express more often a preference for fewer working hours. This is the case in Netherlands, Germany, UK and Belgium. In all countries, males with a child at home express less often a preference for fewer working hours. In Netherlands, Germany and Belgium, this finding is significant. Similarly, male employees, who not yet have children, express less often a preference for fewer working hours. In the Netherlands, Germany and particularly Belgium, this group reveals much more often a preference for longer working hours.

WOLIWEB D10b Working time preferences

	(satisiie	a wit	n noui s	IS UP	ereieren	Le cai	legory).													
	Netherlan	ids, pr	efers		Spain, pre	fers			United Kin	igdom	, prefers		Germany,	prefe	rs		Belgium	, prefe	rs	
	less hrs		more hr	s	less hrs		more hrs		less hrs		more hrs		less hrs		more hrs		less hrs		more hr	s
	В	Sig.	В	Sig.	В	Sig.	В	Sig.	В	Sig.	В	Sig.	В	Sig.	В	Sig.	В	Sig.	В	Sig.
Intercept	-0,266	* * *	-3,537	* * *	0,809	* * *	-3,986	***	0,436	* * *	-2,546	* * *	0,017		-3,388	* * *	-0,049		-4,356	* * *
salaried empl.	-0,479	* * *	0,487	* * *	-0,495	* * *	0,105		-0,362	* * *	0,543	* * *	-0,298	* * *	0,356	* * *	-0,261	* * *	0,374	**
contract work ing hrs <20	-1,912	***	2,316	***	-1,588	* * *	3,063	***	-1,748	***	1,943	***	-1,550	* * *	2,495	***	-1,808	***	2,296	***
contract work ing hrs 20-29	-1,383	***	2,108	***	-1,923	***	2,908	***	-1,453	***	1,831	***	-1,333	***	2,462	***	-1,362	***	1,965	***
contract work ing hrs 30-39	-0,489	* * *	0,795	* * *	-0,716	* * *	0,665	***	-0,592	* * *	-0,030		-0,578	* * *	1,020	* * *	-0,246	***	0,428	* * *
contrct working hrs >= 40 REF																				
Partner	-0,156	* * *	0,457	* * *	-0,140	*	0,148	<u> </u>	-0,092	*	0,329	* * *	0,017		0,113	**	-0,047		0,381	* * *
female <45 + no child yet	0,383	* * *	0,525	* * *	-0,293		1,145		-0,191		-0,372	*	0,043		0,209	*	-0,230	*	1,266	* * *
male <45 + no child yet	-0,317	* * *	0,480	* * *	-0,249		1,135		-0,318	* * *	0,112		-0,261	***	0,668	* * *	-0,599	* * *	1,525	* * *
female + child at home	0,478	* * *	0,293	**	-0,159		1,341		0,263	* *	-0,481	*	0,202	* * *	0,385	* * *	0,164		0,740	**
male + child at home	-0,200	* * *	0,255	*	-0,219		1,222		-0,149		0,039		-0,153	***	0,417	***	-0,335	* * *	0,767	**
female>44+ no child at home	0,516	***	0,238		0,235		0,926		0,325	**	-0,716	**	0,341	***	-0,011		0,337	**	0,800	*
male>44 + no child home REF																				
hourly wage <€10/<6.6 GBP	0,220	***	-0,323	***	0,197	**	-0,715	***	0,162	**	-0,342	**	-0,186	***	-0,417	***	-0,011		-0,361	***
basic education	-0,026		0,366	* * *	0,031		0,294		-0,104		0,210		-0,075	* * *	-0,105	*	-0,015		0,556	* * *
secondary education	0,044		0,224	***	-0,056		0,262		-0,114	**	-0,033		-0,002		-0,161	***	-0,087		0,373	***
tertiary education REF																				
job will become redundant	-0,245	* * *	-0,468	* * *	0,131		-0,472	*	-0,377	* * *	-0,350	*					-0,192	*	-0,331	*

 Table 6.1 Coefficients and significance levels of multinomial logit analyses predicting preferences for fewer or for longer working hours (satisfied with hours is the reference category).

Source: WageIndicator data, September 2004-December 2006

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7. CONCLUSION

This study seeks explanations for working time preferences, using cross-sectional multinomial logits for the 2004/2006 *WageIndicator* dataset (99,743 observations). Four hypotheses have been investigated. It is firstly assumed that the match between employers' and employees' preferences is better for employees who have recently experienced changes in employment status. The former category is expected to be more satisfied with their working hours. This hypothesis is only supported for a few countries.

The second hypothesis assumes that working hours characteristics determine the working time preferences. It turns out that the longer the contractual working hours, the more likely the employee expresses a preference for fewer hours and the less likely a preference for longer hours. This pattern is seen in all countries under study. The analyses also show that hourly paid employees are less likely to express a preference for fewer hours, when compared to salaried employees.

The third hypothesis assumes that family and household characteristics influence the working hours' preferences. This hypothesis however is supported. As expected, male employees who have no children yet or who have children at home are less likely to prefer fewer hours than employees with children out home. Female employees show more often a preference for fewer hours, particularly when they have children at home, or when their children have left home or when they never have had any children. Obviously, these women do not succeed in adapting their working time to their preferences. Finally, wage rate has an impact on the working time preferences. Employees with an hourly gross wage of at least \in 10 prefer far more often fewer hours and far less often longer hours than employees whose earnings fall below \in 10.

By the fourth hypothesis the impact of job characteristics is studied, assuming that employees who perceive their job as a burden will prefer less hours and employees perceiving their job as a challenge will prefer longer hours. This hypothesis is only studied with regard to the working hours satisfaction, not with regard to a preference for fewer or longer working hours. It indeed turns out for most countries that employees who perceive their job as becoming more interesting and who state that staffing levels are sufficient are more satisfied with their working hours than employees who do not perceive their job as such. In contrast, employees whose job involves monotonous tasks or who report regular conflicts at the workplace are less often satisfied with their working hours.

In conclusion, working hours' preferences are predominately influenced by working hours' characteristics. This tendency was also found in previous studies. New is the finding that salaried employees want to reduce hours whereas hourly paid employees prefer to work longer hours. The study further shows that wage rates have a large impact on working hours' preferences, as the low earnings category prefers far more often longer hours. New is that employees in a challenging job more often are satisfied, and vice versa employees who perceive their job as a burden are less often satisfied with their working hours.

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APPENDIX

Table 8.1Distribution of the explanatory clusters over the three working timepreference categories, five countries

BELGIUM	-	prefers less hrs	prefers more hrs	satisfied with current hrs	total
salaried employee- overtime not compensated	0 no	25,8	5,6	68,6	100
	1 yes	31,0	3,3	65,7	100
contractual working hrs	1 <=20 hrs	7,2	25,3	67,5	100
	2 20-29	11,8	16,8	71,4	100
	3 30-39	27,0	3,9	69,1	100
	4 >=40	31,1	2,9	66,0	100
partner	0 No	24,5	7,2	68,2	100
	1 Yes	27,5	4,4	68,1	100
childfase and gender	1 female <45 + no child yet	26,8	6,7	66,5	100
	2 male <45 + no child yet	20,5	6,8	72,7	100
	3 female + child at home	30,7	6,3	63,0	100
	4 male + child at home	26,3	3,0	70,7	100
	5 female>44 + no child at home	34,3	5,5	60,1	100
	6 male>44 + no child at home	31,5	1,8	66,6	100
hourly gross wage <= 10 euro or <=6.6 GBP	mployee- not tted 0 no 25,8 5,6 1 yes 31,0 3,3 al working hrs 1 <=20 hrs	4,3	68,7	100	
	1 yes	24,1	10,1	65,8	100
education	1 basic education	26,2	7,0	66,8	100
	2 secondary education	25,1	6,1	68,8	100
	3 tertiary education	27,8	4,0	68,2	100
job will become redundant	t0 No	26,5	4,8	68,8	100
	1 Yes	29,6	6,8	63,6	100
Total		26,7	4,9	68,4	100

GERMANY		prefers less hrs	prefers more hrs	satisfied with current hrs	total
salaried employee- overtime not compensated	0 no	28,5	7,3	64,2	100
	1 yes	38,8	3,9	57,3	100
contractual working hrs	1 <=20 hrs	9,6	32,9	57,5	100
	2 20-29	11,9	30,0	58,0	100
	3 30-39	23,8	8,4	67,8	100
	4 >=40	38,1	2,7	59,2	100
partner	0 No	31,5	7,0	61,5	100
·	1 Yes	30,9	6,1	63,0	100
childfase and gender	1 female <45 + no child yet	34,6	5,2	60,1	100
	2 male <45 + no child yet	28,3	7,3	64,4	100
	3 female + child at home	29,8	12,4	57,8	100
	4 male + child at home	30,1	5,1	64,8	100
	5 female>44 + no child at home	37,1	5,2	57,7	100
	6 male>44 + no child at home	33,1	4,1	62,8	100
hourly gross wage <= 10 euro or <=6.6 GBP	0 no	30,2	6,1	63,7	100
	1 yes	34,3	8,6	57,1	100
education	1 basic education	29,5	7,0	63,5	100
	2 secondary education	31,2	6,3	62,5	100
	3 tertiary education	32,4	6,0	61,7	100
Total		31,0	6,4	62,5	100

NETHERLANDS		prefers less	prefers more	satisfied with	total
		hrs	hrs	current hrs	
salaried employee-	0 no	22,5	10,2	67,3	100
overtime not					
compensated	4	04.0	0.1	(0.0	100
<u> </u>	1 yes	36,9	3,1	60,0	100
contractual working hrs	1 <=20 hrs	6,2	35,3	58,6	100
	2 20-29	11,3	25,8	62,9	100
	3 30-39	24,0	7,3	68,6	100
	4 >=40	32,9	3,4	63,7	100
partner	0 No	23,4	12,2	64,4	100
	1 Yes	26,9	7,0	66,1	100
childfase and gender	1 female <45 + no	28,8	11,0	60,2	100
	child yet				
	2 male <45 + no	21,6	7,5	70,9	100
	child yet				
	3 female + child at	22,8	14,9	62,3	100
	home				
	4 male + child at	26,2	4,1	69,7	100
	home				
	5 female>44 + no	30,0	9,7	60,4	100
	child at home				
	6 male>44 + no	28,0	4,1	67,8	100
	child at home				
hourly gross wage <= 10	0 no	27,0	7,0	66,0	100
euro or <=6.6 GBP					
	1 yes	20,0	16,2	63,8	100
education	1 basic education	21,8	11,2	67,0	100
	2 secondary	24.7	10,1	65,2	100
	education		- 1	,	
	3 tertiary education	28,3	6,4	65,3	100
iob will become redundant	to No	24,9	8,4	66,8	100
	1 Yes	28,0	13,3	58,7	100
Total	-	25,2	8,9	65,9	100

SPAIN		prefers less	prefers more	satisfied with	total
		hrs	hrs	current hrs	
salaried employee-	0 no	44,2	6,1	49,8	100
overtime not					
compensated					
	1 yes	60,3	3,2	36,5	100
contractual working hrs	1 <=20 hrs	17,2	43,8	39,1	100
	2 20-29	11,4	41,9	46,8	100
	3 30-39	40,6	4,0	55,4	100
	4 >=40	58,1	1,4	40,6	100
partner	0 No	47,9	5,8	46,3	100
	1 Yes	52,6	3,5	44,0	100
childfase and gender	1 female <45 + no	48,7	6,4	44,9	100
C	child yet				
	2 male <45 + no	50,9	3,7	45,4	100
	child yet				
	3 female + child at	49,8	5,9	44,3	100
	home				
	4 male + child at	53,0	2,3	44,7	100
	home				
	5 female>44 + no	55,7	3,0	41,3	100
	child at home				
	6 male>44 + no	51,8	1,8	46,5	100
	child at home				
hourly gross wage <= 10	0 no	53,8	2,4	43,8	100
euro or <=6.6 GBP					
	1 yes	48,8	5,5	45,7	100
education	1 basic education	50,3	5,1	44,6	100
	2 secondary	48,8	4,7	46,5	100
	education				
	3 tertiary education	51,7	4,0	44,3	100
job will become redundant	t0 No	51,4	4,0	44,7	100
	1 Yes	49,1	6,3	44,7	100
Total		51,1	4,3	44,7	100

UNITED KINGDOM		prefers less	prefers more	satisfied with	total
		hrs	hrs	current hrs	
salaried employee- overtime not compensated	0 no	30,1	6,8	63,1	100
	1 yes	41,6	2,9	55,5	100
contractual working hrs	1 <=20 hrs	9,8	28,5	61,7	100
	2 20-29	14,8	22,0	63,2	100
	3 30-39	31,1	4,1	64,9	100
	4 >=40	42,3	3,8	53,9	100
partner	0 No	31,3	6,9	61,9	100
	1 Yes	35,2	4,7	60,1	100
childfase and gender	1 female <45 + no child yet	32,2	4,7	63,1	100
	2 male <45 + no child yet	29,9	7,1	63,0	100
	3 female + child at home	34,6	6,7	58,7	100
	4 male + child at home	35,4	4,5	60,1	100
	5 female>44 + no child at home	42,1	3,2	54,8	100
	6 male>44 + no child at home	38,9	4,9	56,2	100
hourly gross wage <= 10 euro or <=6.6 GBP	0 no	34,5	4,4	61,0	100
	1 yes	27,8	10,6	61,6	100
education	1 basic education	35,6	7,0	57,4	100
	2 secondary education	32,0	6,0	62,0	100
	3 tertiary education	34,9	4,7	60,5	100
job will become redundant	to No	33,3	5,2	61,5	100
<u> </u>	1 Yes	39,8	6,6	53,6	100
Total		33,8	5,3	60,8	100

Source: *WageIndicator* data, September 2004-December 2006 (unweighted data) * Percentages may not count to 100 because of missing values