

WORK AND LIFE BALANCE IN SPAIN

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Introduction

In Spain employed men and specially women report having problems balancing work and family life, according to data from the First European Quality of Life Survey, 2003. The percentage is higher than the average of EU-15 (see tables 1 and 2 in annex).

In this presentation we will address two types of topics.

First of all, we will discuss –using data from different national and international surveys— the factors that may explain the tensions reported in balancing work and family life such as:

- 1) Participation in the labour market and working time patterns (the organisation of paid work by couples, the number of hours worked, the amount of overtime, and the distribution of those hours).
- 2) Shortcomings of social policies which aim to reconcile work and family life (maternity and parental leave).
- 3) The extent to which there are childcare facilities and services to look after dependent people.
- 4) The share of unpaid work (domestic) between men and women.

We will finish this first part with a table that shows the problems that working mothers find more important when trying to balance work and family life.

Secondly, we will look at the strategies used by couples to balance work and family life. We will use the results of a Spanish survey that asked women about those topics. Although the answers reflect women's opinion, there are references to the role of men (fathers and grandfathers).

Organisation of paid work by couples

1) According to Eurostat, **the most common model of organisation of paid work between couples is one in which both partners work**, either full-time or part-time¹ (see table 3 in annex). In 2003, within couples in which at least one partner worked, in 54% of them both partners were in paid work.

Although the figure is below the EU-25 average (66%), the important fact is that in the last fifteen years there has been an increase in the proportion of couples in which both partners work². This is the case even when there are children. Hence, most women do not leave the labour market when they have a child.

2) **In couples where both partners are in paid work, the main form of working arrangement is to work full-time**, even when there are children³. Hence, most women do not reduce the amount of paid work when they have a child.

3) In relation to the number of hours worked, **the most prevalent pattern is for both partners to work 40 hours or more a week**, in both households with children and those without⁴.

One possible explanation may be that Spanish couples are in great pressure to maximise household earnings. In this sense, a recent qualitative research

¹ Eurostat, 2005. *Gender gaps in the reconciliation between work and family life*, Statistics in focus, 4/2005. Author: Christel Aliaga.

² Eurostat, 2002. *Women and men reconciling work and family life*. Fig. 2 and 3. Statistics in focus, 9/2002. Author: Ana Franco and Karin Winqvist.

³ Eurostat, 2002. *Women and men reconciling work and family life*. Table 2. op. cit.

showed that people (especially those from lower income groups) justify the long hours they work and the fact that both partners work because they have to pay for the mortgage⁵. In the last five years the price of flats has doubled in Spain.

We also know that 46% of salaried persons work overtime on a regular basis, half of them without any compensation. The main reason for doing overtime is the excessive workload (see table 4 in annex).

- 4) Another peculiarity of the Spanish situation is the way working time is distributed along the day. **More than half of the salaried population work split shift (“jornada partida”)**, which means starting work around 9 o'clock and finishing at the soonest around 6 or 7 in the evening, with a two hour break for lunch. This type of arrangement is the most common in industry, services and building sector, though in the building sector it increases up to 94% (see table 5 in annex).

Putting all this information together: long working days, doing overtime on a regular basis and with split shift, we can understand why in a recent qualitative research men and women did not speak about the number of paid hours worked during the day but about at what time they can leave work to go home⁶.

There is now a political debate around the distribution of working hours. Male ministers and other male politicians are leading this debate.

⁴ Eurostat, 2002. *Women and men reconciling work and family life*. Fig. 4a and 4 b. op. Cid.

⁵ Callejo, J. (2005:4). *Percepción de cambios en los tiempos sociales*, paper presented at the conference “Tiempos, Actividades, Sujetos. Una mirada desde la perspectiva de género”, organised in Madrid, 18 February, Escuela de Relaciones Laborales.

⁶ Callejo, J. (2005). *Percepción de cambios en los tiempos sociales*. op. cit.

Shortcomings of social policies which aim to reconcile work and family life

In line with the provisions of the European Directives dealing with maternity leave and parental leave in Spain⁷:

- 1) Working mothers are entitled to 16 weeks of **maternity leave**, two more weeks than what the directive of 1992 sets out. The mother must use six of those weeks after giving birth. The ten remaining weeks can be enjoyed by the working father if the mother decides so. If the mother dies, the father can enjoy up to the maximum time allowed (16 weeks).

During that time the National Social Security System covers the wages of the mother or father.

The only time off that fathers are entitled on their own –that is, not subject to mothers' rights— is two days (four if travel is necessary) when the partner gives birth⁸.

This may change as the national government suggested two weeks ago the possibility of granting working fathers with a paid leave lasting ten days.

At the moment, only male employees from some areas of the public sector enjoy a paternity leave of ten days. This is the case, for example, of male employees from central public administration who can take up paternity leave for 10 days since January 2006⁹.

⁷ Council Directive 96/34/EC of 3 June 1996 on the framework agreement on parental leave concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC. Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding.

⁸ Article 37.3 of Workers' Statute.

⁹ Plan Concilia, www.map.es

2) Spanish legislation regulates two different types of **parental leave**:

- a) A maximum period of three years' unpaid parental leave may be taken by either the mother or the father. A right to reinstatement after taking leave applies to the first year. Thereafter, the worker is entitled to a post in the same professional category or an equivalent one.
- b) Parents with children who are under six or disabled are entitled to a reduction in their working hours of a minimum of one third and up to 50%. In the new measures approved in public central administration the possibility of reducing working hours is extended until children are twelve¹⁰.

These provisions may be improved by collective bargaining.

In relation to actual use of these rights:

- Only 1.5% of men took up paternity leave (up to 10 weeks after the child birth) (see table 6 in annex).
- Again, within those persons that work part time due to family reasons between 1% and 2% are men (see table 7 in annex). It is important to note that statistics do not show the extent to which this part time work corresponds to reduction of working hours as a result of the law on paternity leave or pure part time work. There is an important difference between both types of arrangement as the reduction of working hours because of paternity leave allows workers to return to full-time work and it does not have the negative effect that part time work has in social security contributions (and hence in pension and unemployment rights).

¹⁰ Plan Concilia, www.map.es

- In relation to the take up of parental leave (that is, up to three years of unpaid leave), only 3.6% are men. It is noteworthy the small number of people enjoying such a right, 13.879 (see table 8 in annex).

Why so very few men take up parental leave? A recent Eurobarometer gives information on the factors that, according to European men, could increase the take-up of parental leave by men¹¹. The factors identify by male respondents include (in order of importance):

- Better financial compensation (38%).
- Improved guarantees regarding jobs and career during and after parental leave (30%).
- Better information about parental leave (27%).
- A more open-minded attitude on the part of superiors and colleagues (23%).
- The possibility of splitting leave or taking leave on a part-time basis (18%).

Childcare facilities and services to look after dependent people

Another factor that may improve the balance between work and family life is the extent to which there are childcare facilities funded by the public sector.

In Spain only 2% of children between 0 and 3 attend a public funded nursery. This proportion increases up to 84% for children between 3 and 5. Therefore the state school system covers children from 3 onwards, but very rarely children below 3¹².

¹¹ *Europeans' attitudes to parental leave*, May 2004, Special Eurobarometer 189 / Wave 59.1, European Commission, page 18. The survey considers as parental leave taking up to 3 months when children are young, as deducted from the English questionnaire, included at the end of the report.

¹² Zárte Marco, A. (2003:69) *Incentivos fiscales y sociales a la incorporación de la mujer al trabajo*, Instituto de Estudios Fiscales, Madrid, www.ief.es

Regarding public services for the elderly, in Spain a very small proportion of elderly people (between 1 and 3%) are being cared in an institution or receive care at home funded by the public sector¹³.

Unpaid work

Last, but not least, we need to speak about the division of unpaid work between men and women. Information from the Third European Survey on Working Conditions shows that household duties are a female domain.

Women spend more time than men cooking, doing housework, taking care of children and the elderly. Nonetheless, there is one task in which men's participation is a bit higher and that is taking care of children. In the EU 24% of men and 25% in Spain report that they spend more than one hour a day taking care of children. This compares with a proportion of between 14 and 15% of men that report spending more than one hour cooking or doing housework (see table 9 in annex).

Before moving to the strategies used by couples to balance work and family like, we will finish this first part by giving some information on which are the main problems that Spanish working mothers face when trying to reconcile work and family life.

According to a recent survey¹⁴:

- The first problem is what to do with children when they are ill (37% of working mothers reported this problem).
- The second problem is the lack of coordination between school time and work time (24%).

¹³ Zárte Marco, A. (2003:69) *Incentivos fiscales y sociales a la incorporación de la mujer al trabajo*, op. cit.

¹⁴ Tobío, C. (2003) "Dilemas y estrategias de las madres que trabajan" paper presented at the conference "Empleo y Mujer: nuevas alternativas de la vida familiar y profesional", organised by

- The third problem is what to do with children during school holidays (21%).
- The fourth problem is the lack of help from partner in doing the household duties (6%).

Therefore, although the division of unpaid work between men and women is a problem for Spanish working mothers, there are other problems related to the field of social policy and the fact that Spanish society has not yet assumed her responsibility towards the future generations.

Strategies

In relation to the strategies used by Spanish working mothers, we would offer some information from the survey mentioned before¹⁵.

When working mothers are asked about the most helpful factor that makes balancing work and family life easier, they answer:

- In the first place, their mothers' help.
- In the second place, the partners' help.
- In the third place, living near work.
- In the fourth place, help from other family members.

If we focus on the role of grandmothers and grandfathers, they are the ones taking care of children under 12 when they are ill. Hence, grandparents usually solve the main problem that working mothers face when balancing work and family life.

As it will be expected, there are differences between the tasks done by grandmothers and those of grandfathers.

Concejalía de Empleo del Ayuntamiento de Alcobendas, Madrid. Answers refer to working mothers that live with at least a child of below 18 years old.

¹⁵ Tobío, C. (2003) "Dilemas y estrategias de las madres que trabajan" op. cit.

Grandmothers (especially women's mothers):

- look after children under 3 (as we have mentioned the coverage of public funded nurseries is very small);
- take care of children after school;
- take children to school and pick them up;
- cook for their grandchildren, daughters and their daughters' partners.
- and do household tasks such as cleaning and ironing.

Grandfathers (especially women's father) also help with the tasks related to children, though in a smaller proportion than grandmothers.

The main difference between grandmothers and grandfathers is that men very rarely:

- cook for their grandchildren, daughters and their daughters' partners;
- do household tasks such as cleaning, ironing or washing;
- nor do they take children to the doctor.

We can finish this section by adding to comments:

- Having a daughter in Spain could mean a lot of work in old age.
- It is not surprising that in the same survey mentioned before most working mothers consider the help they obtain from their family as very important.

Conclusions

We have spoken about the situation of Spanish working couples, but two important groups have been left out: lone parents (which usually means lone mothers) and migrant population. Their problems need to be addressed separately

If we focus on the situation of Spanish working couples, we could say that there is a large social change going on. The increase participation of women in the labour market has made obsolete the model in which the husband is in paid work and the wife is at home looking after the children and the elderly.

So far the problems generated by this social change have been solved using a variety of private and informal strategies, in which a key component is the solidarity of the previous generation¹⁶.

But this is a social problem, not an individual one.

¹⁶ Tobío, C. (2003) "Dilemas y estrategias de las madres que trabajan", op. cit.

ANNEX

Table 1. Proportion of employed persons that report that they have come home from work too tired to do some of the household jobs which need to be done, several times a week (%) (*)			
	Women	Men	Total
Spain	47%	36%	39%
Highest in EU-15	Spain	Spain	Spain
Lowest in EU-15	11% (Germany)	11% (Austria)	12% (Netherlands and Austria)
Average EU-15	24%	20%	22%
Average NMS-10	29%	29%	29%
Average CC3	47%	31%	38%
(*) Categories for the question are: several times a week, several times a month, several times a year, less often, never.			
NMS-10: 10 New Member States which joined the EU in May 2004.			
CC3: candidate countries (Bulgaria, Rumania and Turkey).			
Source: First European Survey of Quality of Life (2003). European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.			

Table 2. Proportion of employed persons that report that it has been difficult to fulfil their family responsibilities because of the amount of time they spent on the job, several times a week (%) (*)			
	Women	Men	Total
Spain	21%	14%	17%
Highest in EU-15	Spain	Spain and UK (both 14%)	Spain
Lowest in EU-15	3% (Finland and Austria)	4% (Denmark)	4% (Austria)
Average EU-15	10	9	9
Average NMS-10	14	15	15
Average CC3	26	22	23
(*) Categories for the question are: several times a week, several times a month, several times a year, less often, never.			
NMS-10: 10 New Member States which joined the EU in May 2004.			
CC3: candidate countries (Bulgaria, Rumania and Turkey).			
Source: First European Survey of Quality of Life (2003). European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.			

Table 3. Organisation of paid work by couples aged 20-49 where at least one partner has a job (%)				
	Both partners working	Only man works	Only woman works	Total
Spain	54	43	3	100
Average EU-25	66	29	5	100
Source: Eurostat, 2005. Table 3. Based on data from European Labour Force Survey, 2003.				

Table 4. Employed persons that work overtime on a regular basis (%)			
	Men	Women	Total
No	29,8	13,4	23,7
Yes, with compensation either in cash or free time	19,4	27,8	22,4
Yes, without compensation	50,7	58,4	53,6
No answer	0,2	0,4	0,3
Total	100	100	100
Source: Fifth National Survey of Working Conditions, 2003, table 66 (www.mtas.es).			

Table 5. Distribution of working time along the day, 2003 (%)				
	Total	Industry	Services	Building sector
Split shift (morning and late afternoon)	52,2	56,6	45,7	93,5
Continuous shift (in the morning)	21,9	14,3	26,8	3,5
Continuous shift (either morning or night)	5,5	4,0	6,3	1,3
Shift work	16,0	22	16	1,7
Others	1,8	1,0	2,2	0,3
Total	97	98	97	100
Source: Fifth National Survey of Working Conditions, 2003, table 64 (www.mtas.es).				

Table 6. Maternity/paternity leave		
	Total (men and women)	% of mothers
2000	192.422	99,03
2001	208.695	98,69
2002	224.419	98,52
2003	239.858	98,46
Source: Instituto de la Mujer (www.mtas.es) based on data from National Institute of Social Security.		

Table 7. Men and women with reduced working hours due to family responsibilities (in thousands) (2004)		
	Total (men and women)	% of women
Total (salaried and self-employed)	18.288,10	39,43
Salaried workers	15.022,40	41,15
Full time	13.654,50	37,06
Part time	1.367,90	82,03
Part time due to family responsibilities (*)	126,30	99,05
Self-employed	3.246,90	31,36
Full time	3.023,50	28,70
Part time	223,30	67,35
Part time due to family responsibilities (*)	30,70	98,05
Other situations	18,80	52,66
(*) Looking after children, sick adults or disabled persons		
Source: Instituto de la Mujer (www.mtas.es) based on data from Labour Force Survey (Encuesta de Población Activa).		

Table 8. Parental leave (up to three years of unpaid parental leave)		
	Total (men and women)	% of mothers
2000	8.339	96,02
2001	10.163	96,43
2002	12.694	96,16
2003	13.879	96,38
Source: Instituto de la Mujer (www.mtas.es) based on data from National Institute of Social Security.		

Table 9. Household tasks.				
“Are you involved in any of the following activities outside work?” % of those who declared ‘yes’ in the category every day one hour or more’ (by sex)				
	EU average		Spain	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Cooking	13	64	14	68
Housework	12	63	15	70
Care for children	24	41	25	43
Care for elderly/disabled relatives	2	6	2	8
Source: Third European Survey of Working Conditions, 2000. European Agency for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.				