Combining family and full-time work: Denmark

This is the Danish contribution to the topic report on combining family and full-time work, coordinated via questionnaire by Statistics Finland and Oxford Research, Denmark, for the European Working Conditions Observatory (EWCO).

1. Methodological part

Please describe briefly the surveys – dates, coverage, size and response rates – used in answering the questions. By national surveys is meant nationally representative surveys.

This contribution is primarily based on the Danish Work Environment Cohort Study (DWECS). However, other study results are included to support and broaden the perspective of the data results. For instance, data from the Danish Labour Force Survey (LFS) are added in the second part of the contribution on ‘national context’.

DWECS is the national working conditions survey in Denmark, and is conducted by the National Institute of Occupational Health. It describes working conditions, health and lifestyle among Danish employees and self-employed people. DWECS is an extension of the Danish Employee Study (WEC), which was conducted in 1990 and 1995. The change of name is due to the fact that the 2000 study covers the total labour market, not only employees (Burr et al, 2002).

The purpose of the study is to monitor the working population in relation to the prevalence of occupational risk factors, as well as the prevalence and incidence of health symptoms. Furthermore, the study aims at estimating changes of health and labour market status as possible consequences of occupational risk factors (Burr et al, 2002).

For further information, see the EWCO Danish survey data report, and survey’s technical datasheet.

<table>
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<th>Table 1: Coverage, size and response rates of DWECS 2000</th>
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<td><strong>Survey name</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
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Q1. In this part, the aim is to show how national surveys cover work–life balance of working parents in full-time work, from the aspect of certain working time arrangements. Thus, the national correspondents are asked to describe what questions are included in the national working conditions surveys on the following themes.

a) Family situation/Household

What kind of information is available about the family situation/household: civil status of the respondent (whether the employee is living alone or with the partner); labour market status of the spouse/partner (employed/unemployed/student...work full time/part time...in permanent/fix-term employment/self-employed); number and age of children living at home (is it possible to break down age groups by the age of the youngest child, e.g. 0-2 yrs, 3-5 yrs, 6-14)?

In the Danish national working conditions survey, the family and household situation is covered by the following questions:

Civil status of the respondent

DWECS A7: ‘Are you living with a partner? (Yes/No)’

Labour market status of the partner

DWECS A8: ‘What is your partner/spouse’s primary occupation? (Self-employed farmer/Self-employed (other)/Assisting spouse/Manager/Officer or civil servant/Skilled worker/Non-skilled worker/Trainee/Student/Not at work/Unemployed/Long-term sick/On social benefits/Disability pensioner/Old age pensioner/Early retired pensioner)’

Number and age of children living at home

DWECS A5: ‘Do you have children living at home? (No/Yes, one child/Yes, two children/Yes, three or more children)’

Children are defined by the biological relation and not by an age limit. The next question DWECS A6 deals with the age of the youngest child living at home

DWECS A6: ‘How old is the youngest child living at home? (Age in years)’

It is possible to break down the age groups by the age of the youngest child.

b) Work–life balance / reconciliation of work and family life

In the Danish national working conditions survey, the issue of work–life balance is covered by the following questions:

DWECS B108: ‘Generally, how do you think your work life affects your private life? (In a very good way/In a good way/Not at all/In a bad way/In a very bad way)’

DWECS B109: ‘Generally, how do you think your private life affects your working life? (In a very good way/In a good way/Not at all/In a bad way/In a very bad way)’
c) **Overtime (paid, unpaid)**

In the Danish national working conditions survey, overtime is dealt with in the following question:

DWECS B65: ‘Is it necessary to work overtime? (Always/Often/Sometimes/Seldom/Never or almost never)’

d) **Possibility of influencing start and finish times**

In the Danish national working conditions survey, influence on start and finish times is covered by the following question:

DWECS B20: ‘Are you able to change your working hours from day to day e.g. starting work later or finishing work earlier? (Yes, up to 15 minutes/Yes, up to half an hour/Yes, up to an hour/Yes, more than an hour/No)’

e) **Positive flexibility of working time**

There are no specific questions in the Danish national working conditions survey concerning positive working time flexibility.

f) **Negative flexibility of working times**

There are no specific questions in the Danish national working conditions survey concerning positive working time flexibility.

g) **Predictability of working times**

In the Danish national working conditions survey, predictability is dealt with by the following questions:

DWECS B19: ‘How is your normal working time structured? (Regular day work/Work alternating between two shifts/Work alternating between three shifts/Irregular working hours during the day/week due to a rota system/Regular evening work/Regular night work/Regular morning work/Other – what?)’

DWECS B22: ‘Where does your work take place? (One answer for each category)

- At the working place (Almost all the time, three quarters of the time, half of the time, one quarter of the time, seldom, never)
- In my home (Almost all the time, three quarters of the time, half of the time, one quarter of the time, seldom, never)
- Other places e.g. at the costumer’s place, on a construction site, etc. (Almost all the time, three quarters of the time, half of the time, one quarter of the time, seldom, never)

The following guidelines are laid down:

- Almost all the time = 7-8 hours a day
- Three quarters of the time = 6-7 hours a day
- Half of the time = 3-5 hours a day
- One quarter of the time = 2-3 hours a week
- Seldom = 1 hour a day or less
The normal working hours a week in Denmark is 37 hours for a full-time employed person.

2. National context

The focus group is working parents working full-time with children under 15 years old. Please give figures concerning working parents with children under 15 years old, in line with Q1 and the LFS convention. If this information is not available, please describe what kind of age limits in children’s ages have been used while answering the questions.

Q2. Please give the proportions of full-time workers in the following categories (you can use the Labour Force Survey)

a) all wage and salary earners (NOTE: no self-employed people);

b) men;

c) women;

d) fathers (with children under 15 years old);

(If possible, break down in age groups 0–2 yrs, 3–5 yrs, 6–14 yrs by the age of youngest child)

e) mothers (with children under 15 years old).

(If possible, break down in age groups 0–2 yrs, 3–5 yrs, 6–14 yrs by the age of youngest child)

Generally, the participation rate in Denmark is high, compared with other European countries. As much as 82.2% of men and 73.0% of women were in the workforce in 2003. Though the participation rate among Danish women is high, women are still under-represented in the workforce, according to the Danish national Labour Force Survey. In 2003, 2,850,020 people aged 15–66 years were part of the workforce; of those, 1,523,575 (53.5%) were men and 1,326,445 (46.5%) were women. These figures should be considered in the light of female total population of 49.5% (Andersen et al, 2004).

Table 2: Proportion of full-time workers out of all employed*, 2003 (%)

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full time</th>
<th>Part time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All wage earners</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>88.8</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Age group 15-66 years old

Source: Andersen et al, 2004

Q3. Give figures for Q1b–Q1g in your country according to what is available in national working conditions surveys.

a) all wage and salary earners working full time (NOTE: no self-employed people);

b) men working full time;

c) women working full time;

d) fathers (with children under 15 years old) working full time;

(If possible, break down in age groups 0–2 yrs, 3–5 yrs, 6–14 yrs by the age of youngest child)

e) mothers (with children under 15 years old) working full time.

(If possible, break down in age groups 0–2 yrs, 3–5 yrs, 6–14 yrs by the age of youngest child)
Is it possible to provide information on trends? (For each question: Yes/No)

Is it possible to link this information with the family situation / household? (For each question: Yes/No)

For each question: Can you highlight the main sectoral/occupational differences about mentioned working time issues. Please summarise as briefly as possible.

Q4. Give a short description about what issues seem to be the most relevant and/or problematic concerning work–life balance and working times among working parents currently in your country, according to major national surveys or qualitative research.

An ongoing discussion in Denmark, for the past number of years, is the opportunity, or lack of, for highly trained women with children to have a work–life balance. In Denmark, about 75% of all women have jobs, and there is a clear tendency towards women staying at work after they have children. The proportion of women with part-time jobs (under 25 hours a week) has decreased from more than 35% in 1975 to 5% in 1996. This has created major problems for women, and surveys (Bjerring et al, 2000) have concluded that it is difficult for women to relax after a hard day at work. Women with managerial positions are particularly prone to stress. The survey also concluded that women still bear the primary responsibility for housework, and that men have an easier time relaxing after work than women.

In recent decades, the Danish labour market has undergone major reform in an attempt to consider and protect the employee’s family life. In 2002, the government, for instance, passed a law, giving parents a maternity leave of 52 weeks to divide between them, i.e. 20 weeks longer than previous legislation. Another law, passed in 2001, offers parents the opportunity of home childcare, meaning that parents can get subsidies from the Danish government to take care of their children themselves instead of using public childcare services. The subsidy is available from when the child is 24 weeks old until he/she reaches the age of six years and starts preschool.

Another issue attracting social and political debate is increasing public economic support for childcare fees and improving childcare facilities.

3. Best practices

Q5. Give an example of best practice of good working time arrangements from the aspect of work–life balance among working parents, preferably in small and medium-sized companies in your country. Are best practices collected as part of a governmental policy programme?

The Danish company, Novozymes, with approximately 2,000 employees, is the biotech-based world leader in enzymes and micro-organisms. Novozymes is also known and acknowledged globally as a company that focuses considerable energy on ‘soft values’. The company is a world leader in running a sustainable business in accordance with international standards.

In 2002, Novozymes focused on the balance between employees’ working and family lives, partly because it emerged that stress was a problem among its employees. The company introduced new regulations to facilitate the balance between work and family life, including new maternity leave ‘laws’. Today, employees are offered longer maternity leave than is required by Danish legislation. Furthermore, employees of Novozymes are first in line for childcare services in the area where the Novozymes plant is located. In addition, Novozymes established a washing and grocery shopping scheme whereby the company offered to do the employees’ washing and grocery shopping; however, this service has recently been abandoned due to lack of interest among employees. Finally, the company has a flexible working hours scheme through which
employees are able to plan their own working hours, to a large extent (www.novozymes.dk; Grosen and Knudsen, 2003).

References


