Combining family and full-time work: Finland

This is the Finnish 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.

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.

The Quality of Work Life Survey, carried out by Statistics Finland, is the main national survey on working conditions in Finland. Up to now, there have been five surveys, involving each time between 3,000 and 6,000 employees, in 1977, 1984, 1990, 1997 and 2003. The number of answers received in the latest survey was 4,104, and the response rate was 78%. The surveys have been conducted as personal, face-to-face interviews.

The interview includes questions on the physical, mental and social work environment and the employees’ experiences relating to it, as well as questions on work experience, position in the labour market, conditions of employment, occurrence of physical and psychological symptoms, work motivation, job satisfaction, work orientation, and experiences relating to gender equality and fair treatment.

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/fixed-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)?

How have the questions been formulated? If definitions are used in questions, give them.

In the Finnish Quality of Work Life Survey (FQWLS), the family situation is covered extensively. Firstly, it asks about the family situation, as shown below. The full questionnaire is available on the Internet in pdf format.

D1. ‘Next, I will ask a couple of questions about your family situation. Are you:
Married, cohabiting or in a registered partnership
Separated
Divorced
Widowed
Unmarried? (Choose one)’

The questionnaire then asks:

D2a. ‘Do you have children under 18 living at home? (Yes /No)’
Depending on how the respondent answered questions D1 and D2, the interview continues with the following questions about the ages of children and the labour market status of the spouse/partner.

D2b. ‘How many? (number)’

D3. ‘What age are your children? (Starting from the youngest)’ D4. ‘Is your spouse (cohabiting partner) currently:
Working (for an employer, on a family farm or business, as self-employed)
Unemployed, temporarily dismissed or on unemployment pension
On paternity, maternity or parental leave or on childcare leave
A student/at school
Disabled/on disability pension/chronically ill
On some other pension
Looking after own household
Or doing something else? (Choose one)’

D5. ‘Does your spouse (partner): Work full time or part time?
And is he/she:
In a permanent employment relationship
In a fixed-term employment relationship
Self-employed or an entrepreneur? (Choose one)’

Besides the labour market status, the educational level of the spouse is also considered.

D6. ‘What is your spouse’s (partner’s) education? Has he/she completed:
Primary education or less
Lower secondary or comprehensive school education
Vocational school education
Upper secondary school education
Vocational college education
Polytechnic education
Tertiary level or university education? (Choose the highest level completed)’

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

As an example of this kind of question, see Q20 of the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS): ‘In general, do your working hours fit in with your family or social commitments outside work very well, fairly well, not very well or not at all?’ – Do you have similar question(s) in your national survey? How have the questions been formulated? If definitions are used in questions, give them.

In the FQWLS, the question about work–life balance/reconciliation of work and family life is asked in several ways. There is no one clear question, as in the EWCS, about working hours and family and social commitments, but there are several questions about working hours and several others about reconciliation of work and family life. See the following two questions. It is not possible to show trends on these issues.

B11. ‘When you think about combining your working hours and the rest of your life, how would you describe the following statements on the card?
A. I can use flexible working hours sufficiently for my own needs.
C. I can take all the holidays and days off I have earned.
(Completely true/True to some extent/Untrue to some extent/Completely untrue/Not applicable)’
See also question B11b below.

D8. ‘Have there been conflicts in your family about working hours, household work and personal time?
No, the times are adjusted peaceably.
Conflicts arise from time to time.
There are a lot of conflicts and battles about time.
There were conflicts before but not anymore. (Choose one)’

In addition to these two questions, one more question should be mentioned. The following is not directly about working hours, but, in researching work–life balance/reconciliation work and family life, this question has been very useful. It is also useful when combined (cross-tabulated) with the working time questions. It is possible to show a trend here.

D16. ‘At home and work, people often face conflicting demands. Here are some statements regarding such problems. How do they apply in your case?
A. I often think about my work at home or leisure time.
B. I find it difficult to concentrate on my work because of home matters.
C. I feel that I am neglecting home matters because of my job.
D. When at work, I feel free from the family and its noise.
E. I cope better with my children when I also go to work.
F. Reconciliation of work and family is made easier for me with the help I get from family or friends.
(Totally true/True to some extent/Untrue to some extent/Totally untrue/Not applicable)’

In addition to this, the survey also asks for a general appraisal of the workload of both spouses. It is possible to show a trend here from 1997 to 2003.

D7. ‘How well do the following statements apply to you personally?
A. In my opinion, my spouse/partner works too hard.
B. In my spouse/partner’s opinion, I work too hard.
(Totally true/True to some extent/Untrue to some extent/Totally untrue/Not applicable)’

c) Overtime (paid, unpaid)

Do you have question(s) about overtime work (paid or unpaid) in your national survey? Frequency? How many hours a week or month?

The FQWLS includes such questions as:

B6. ‘Do you sometimes work overtime for which you receive compensation: a) In money b) In time off c) In both d) In neither.’

B7. If a, b or c: ‘How often do you do such overtime: a) Almost daily b) Every week c) Every second week d) At least once a month e) or less frequently?’

B8 ‘Do you sometimes do overtime for which you receive no compensation: a) Yes b) No.’

B9. If yes: ‘How often do you do such overtime: a) Almost daily b) Every week c) Every second week d) At least once a month e) or less frequently?’

B11. ‘When you think about combining your working hours and the rest of your life, how would you describe the following statements on the card?
b. I have to do more overtime work than I would like to.
(Totally true/True to some extent/Untrue to some extent/Totally untrue/Not applicable)

It is possible to show trends for B6–B9 from 1984, but not for B11.
d) **Possibility of influencing start and finish times**

*For example, in the EWCS, Q 18a_3 asks: ‘Do you work fixing starting and finishing times?’ – Do you have similar question(s) in your national survey? How have the questions been formulated? If definitions are used in questions, give them.*

In the FQWLS, there is the following question concerning flexibility of start and finish times. It is possible to show a trend here.

B4. ‘Do you have strictly set starting and finishing times for your work, or can you personally influence them by at least 30 minutes either way?

Set starting and finishing times
Able to influence starting and finishing times (e.g. flexitime) (Choose one)’

**e) Positive flexibility of working time**

In the FQWLS, there is a question indicating positive flexibility:

B11a. ‘I can use flexible working hours sufficiently for my own needs. (Totally true/True to some extent/Untrue to some extent/Totally untrue/Not applicable)’

B27h. ‘Are you able to influence your working hours a lot, quite a lot, a little or not at all?’

It is not possible to show trends on this issue.

**f) Negative flexibility of working time**

In the FQWLS, the following questions indicate negative flexibility:

B10. ‘How often do you have to be flexible in your working hours, dictated by your tasks or your supervisor? (Daily/Weekly/Monthly/Less often/Never)’

Also, the question on overtime done unwillingly could be used as an indicator of negative flexibility.

B11c. ‘I have to do more overtime work than I would like to. (Totally true/True to some extent/Untrue to some extent/Totally untrue/Not applicable)’

It is not possible to show trends on these issues.

**g) Predictability of working times**

*As an example of this kind of question, see Q19a and Q18a_1 in the EWCS: ‘Usually, how many times a month do your schedule working times change?’ ‘Do you work the same number of hours every day?’ – Do you have similar question(s) in your national survey? How have the questions been formulated? If definitions are used in questions, give them.*

In the FQWLS, there is no similar question to the EWCS concerning predictability of working times. However, this issue can be examined by cross-tabulating between the question concerning the pattern of working time (B1) and that measuring negative flexibility (B10, see above).

B1. ‘Different forms of working hours are listed on the card. What kind of hours do you work?
Regular daywork (between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.)
Regular evening work
Regular night work
Two-shift work without night work
Two-shift work with night work
Three-shift work 
Or other form of working hours?’

It is possible to show a trend on this issue.

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)

In Finland, 84.5% of salary and wage earners were working full time in 2004, according to the Labour Force Survey. Working full time is more prevalent among men than women: 89.2% of the male salary and wage earners were full-time workers, while the same figure for women was 79.9%.

Among wage and salary earners with children aged under 15 years, the proportion of men working full time is very high, at 97.4%, while the same figure for women is 85.5%, according to the LFS 2002. As can be seen in Table 1, the age of the youngest child does not affect the proportion of men working full time. It is clear that men do not work part time because of children. They do so because they are studying or because they are on part-time pensions (see also Part-time work in Europe).

The proportion of full-time working women varies according to the age of the youngest child (Table 1), but the difference is fairly minor. In the case of Finland, it is reasonable to take into account only those women who are not on maternity or parental leave. In the Labour Force Survey, those men and women on maternity, parental or paternity leave with employment contracts are counted as employed. In Finland, maternity and parental leave last 263 working days. However, to give a more accurate image of working mothers with children under one year, the figures excluding women on maternity or parental leave should be used. Among women whose youngest child is under one year old, only 0.6% were actually working (n=18).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Proportion of full- and part-time workers among salary and wage earners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source: Labour Force Survey 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of the youngest child</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of the youngest child</th>
<th>Full time</th>
<th>Part time</th>
<th>Full time</th>
<th>Part time</th>
<th>Full time</th>
<th>Part time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0–2 yrs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3–5 yrs</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6–14 yrs</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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

Please see the questions shown above.

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

Yes.

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

Work-life balance / reconciliation of work and family life

The FQWLS gives interesting results. In Finland, 79% of fathers and 76% of mothers report that they can influence their working hours, at least to some extent. This is slightly more than among childless employees (76% of fathers and 72% of mothers). According to the FQWLS, men can also use flexible working hours sufficiently for their own needs more than women can. Some 77% of all men agreed with the statement, ‘I can use flexible working hours sufficiently for my own needs’ (answering: totally true, or true to some extent). For women, the same figure was 69%.

Women with children aged under 15 years have slightly better opportunities for flexible working hours than women without children; among mothers, 72% agreed with the statement ‘at least to some extent’, compared with 68% of women without children.

The age of the youngest child does not much influence flexibility of working time. Among men, there is no difference, according to the age of the youngest child. Among women, the difference is quite small (see Tables 2 and 3). This indicates that other issues than family status have an effect on working time flexibility.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0-2 years</th>
<th>3-5 years</th>
<th>6-14 years</th>
<th>all under 15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>97.1</td>
<td>97.7</td>
<td>97.5</td>
<td>97.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>85.1</td>
<td>82.4</td>
<td>86.8</td>
<td>85.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>80.9</td>
<td>82.1</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>84.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: ‘I can use flexible working hours sufficiently for my own needs’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>full-time working fathers</th>
<th>Totally true</th>
<th>True to some extent</th>
<th>Untrue to some extent</th>
<th>Totally untrue</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youngest child under 3 years old</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngest child 3-5 years old</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngest child 6-14 years old</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: ‘I can use flexible working hours sufficiently for my own needs’ full-time working mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngest child under 3 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngest child 3-5 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngest child 6-14 years old</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be said that the majority of full-time working men and women have good possibilities of using flexible working hours for their own needs, but there are no great differences between parents and non-parents. In addition, the age of the youngest child does not significantly affect the possibilities. Overall, the difference between wage and salary earners with children and without children is relatively small. This is a rather surprising result, since it could be assumed that parents have more needs for working time flexibility than non-parents. However, this could also be a matter of other dynamics. Women tend to move from shift work towards day work when they become mothers (Hulkko, 2003). Thus, it seems that women with children seek ‘better’ jobs in the sense that the job includes more family-friendly working times.

While parents and non-parents do not differ according to working time flexibility, they do differ when examining the number of conflicts between spouses. Families with children have more conflicts about working hours, household work and personal time than families without children. Over 60% of mothers and fathers say that there are conflicts from time to time, while among non-parents the same figure is around 40%. Fortunately, the proportion of mothers and fathers experiencing a lot of conflicts is very small (3–5%).

Interestingly, fathers with children under three years old report conflicts more often between spouses than do mothers with children under three years. The proportion of fathers saying that they have conflicts either from time to time or a lot decreases by the age of the youngest child, from 72% with a child under three years, to 53% with a child between six and 14 years. For mothers, the conflicts appear most when there are children aged three to five in the family (71%).

Nearly half of the spouses of working fathers with children under three years are on family leave (only 32% are working). However, among working mothers, only 3% of the spouses are at home and 88% are working. In general, a large majority of both parents with children over three years are working, and a large majority of mothers with a child under three years old are at home. Surprisingly, the proportion of fathers reporting conflicts between spouses with children under three years old does not differ whether the wife is at home or at work. Perhaps the reason for the difference between men and women with children under three years reporting conflicts is either that working mothers do not want to emphasise conflicts between spouses as they feel more responsible for the well-being of the family; or perhaps the threshold at which a person has a feeling of conflict is lower for fathers with small children than for mothers (i.e. what is a ‘negotiation’ for a woman, is a ‘conflict’ for a man).

**Overtime (paid, unpaid)**

In the FQWLS, the question concerning overtime work is divided into compensated and uncompensated overtime (see above, Q1c).
In general, 24% of full-time employees working overtime receive compensation in money, 25% in time off and 21% have received compensation in both kinds. Overtime is compensated differently for men and women. Most of the women receive compensation in time off while most of the men receive overtime compensation in money (Table 4). The difference is explained by gender segregation in the labour market; approximately half of female employees are working in the public sector and around 70% of the men are working in the private sector. In the former, overtime work is generally compensated by time off because of the need to save in labour costs. Private sector firms are more willing to pay overtime in money. There is no clear connection between the form of overtime compensation and the age of the youngest child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All wage and salary earners</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
<th>Men without children under 15 years</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>Women without children under 15 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In money</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In time off</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In both</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In neither</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only 4% of employees work compensated overtime each day, and 14% every week. The frequency of compensated overtime does not change much by sex or by parenthood. The majority of mothers and fathers with children work compensated overtime quite seldom; around 40% of mothers and fathers work overtime either once a month or less frequently and around one third do not work overtime at all. The age of the youngest child does not much affect the frequency of compensated overtime.

Almost one third of employees have worked overtime without compensation either in money or in time off. In addition, it is surprising that nearly half of mothers with children under three years old have worked overtime without compensation. Reasons for this need to be examined more carefully. Does it indicate working at home in the evenings when the children are sleeping because the workload is too heavy to be managed in eight hours’ working time during the day? For mothers, this solution might be preferred than prolonging children’s time in day-care. However, it would be preferable to decrease the workload to match the eight-hour daily working time.

For women, the age of the youngest child influences the amount of overtime so that, when the youngest child is under three years, more women work overtime without compensation than when the children are older. This is explained by the fact that the proportion of upper white collar employees is higher (42%) among full-time employed women with children aged under three years than among women with children over three years old (the proportion is 29% when the age of the youngest child is 3–5 years, 27% when 6–14 years, and 26% when the youngest child is over 15 years). In general, upper white collar employees do more uncompensated overtime work than other socio-economic groups. In Finland, women with high education and higher income return to work earlier than those with lower education and lower income (Sutela 2005, Lammi-Taskula 2004). The high proportion of upper white collar employees among mothers with the youngest child aged under three years is because mothers with lower education and occupational level tend to stay at home until the child is three years old.
In Finland, the age of three years for the child is significant. The Act on Home Care Allowance was passed in 1985. This system allows parents (after the parental leave period when the child is approximately nine to 10 months old) to take childcare leave with full employment security to look after a child under the age of three years while receiving a state home care allowance (minimum amount of €294.28 a month, with extra for siblings). This means that, at the point when the child reaches the age of three, the parent must make the decision whether to return to the job or give it up. By this point, women normally return to employment (the average age of the child is 18 months when the mother returns to employment). For more information, see Sutela, 2004 (60Kb pdf).

The frequency of uncompensated overtime should also be examined; 5% of all full-time employees work uncompensated overtime each day, and 10% every week. The age of the youngest child does not much affect the frequency of men working overtime daily or every week, but it does influence such frequency for women (see Table 5). The proportion of women, with children under three years old, working uncompensated overtime every week is higher than the proportion of women with older children. This is again explained by the fact that the proportion of upper white collar employees is higher among women working full time when a child is under three years, and that white upper collar employees work more uncompensated overtime. The difference is due to the fact that, when children grow older, more lower white-collar and blue-collar mothers return to full-time employment. Employees in these latter socio-economic groups work less overtime overall.

| Table 5: Frequency of uncompensated overtime work, women (among all full-time workers) |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------|--------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|---------|
|                                               | Almost daily | Every week | Every second week | At least once a month | Less frequently | Never  |
| Youngest child under three years old          | 6       | 17      | 2               | 14              | 10             | 51      |
| Youngest child 3-5 years old                   | 2       | 14      | 6               | 4               | 3              | 70      |
| Youngest child 6-14 years old                  | 4       | 8       | 6               | 6               | 9              | 67      |

Is this overtime work unwanted or wanted? Approximately 15% of the men and women, as well as fathers and mothers, work more overtime than they would like to. The proportion of those working overtime unwillingly is the highest among mothers with children aged under 15 years (17%). This does not indicate that they work overtime most of all; even a small amount of overtime is probably unwelcome among this group. The figures do not differ much according to the age of the youngest child.

Possibility of influencing start and finish times

Around 40% of Finnish wage and salary earners have set start and finish working times. The majority (59%) are able to influence these times, more so for men than women – and more so for fathers than mothers (Table 6). The age of the children does not much affect the ability to have flexible working times.

| Table 6: Do you have strictly set start and finish times for your work, or can you personally influence them by at least 30 minutes either way? |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|---------|

Positive flexibility of working time

See above under ‘Work–life balance/reconciliation of work and family life’ and below under ‘Negative flexibility’.

Negative flexibility of working times

Nearly one third of all employees have to be flexible in their working hours on a daily or weekly basis, because of the tasks they are doing or dictated by the supervisor. There is almost no difference between men and women. However, there is a small difference between mothers and women without children under 15 years, meaning that mothers have be flexible slightly less often.

Mothers with children under three years old experience less negative flexibility than mothers with older children. The proportion of those having to be flexible each day or week is 20% when the child is under three years old, 29% when the child is 3–5 years old and 28% with children aged 6–14 years old. The same figures for fathers are 30%, 26% and 37%. It seems that mothers with children under three years have better possibilities of controlling negative flexibility than other groups have. The other explanation for this is that mothers with awkward working hours (from a childcare perspective) do not return to work as soon as those with more family-friendly working hours (Hulkko, 2003).

Predictability of working times

Predictability of working times is highest among full-time workers who are in regular day work, and lowest among employees having forms of working time other than regular day work or shift work (see Table 7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full-time employees</th>
<th>Form of working time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All full-time employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every day</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than monthly</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time working men</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every day</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For fathers and mothers (with children under 15 years old), unpredictability of working hours is most common among those having some form of working hours other than regular day work or shift work. For mothers, regular day work protects them best from unpredictability of working time. For men, shift work is the best form of working time in this sense; 26% of fathers working in shifts state that they never have to be flexible in the negative sense, compared with 10% in other working time forms. For mothers, the proportion of those responding that they never have to be flexible is highest among those in regular day work.

However, the age of children also has an effect (albeit not as much as the form of working time). Table 8 should be analysed so that the figures concerning mothers and fathers are examined in relation to each other, even if they are not households as such. In this way, there is a greater chance of trying to explain what the figures tell about the daily life of families.

### Table 8: How often do you have to be flexible in your working hours, dictated by your tasks or your supervisor?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of working time</th>
<th>Full-time working men with children under 15 years</th>
<th>Full-time working women with children under 15 years</th>
<th>Fathers, youngest child under 3 years old</th>
<th>Fathers, youngest child 3-5 years old</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regular day work</td>
<td>Shift work</td>
<td>Other working time</td>
<td>Regular day work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than monthly</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For fathers, unpredictability of working times is highest in every working time form when the youngest child is already over six years old. The proportion of fathers answering ‘daily’ who are working regular day work increases slightly (from 5% to 8%); in shift work, the increase is clearer (from 2% to 5% to 10%). Among fathers with another form of working time, the figures make a curve so that those with children aged 3–5 experience the least working time unpredictability (13% to 7% to 22%).

With mothers, the figures differ. Firstly, none of the mothers with children under three years, working either in shifts or in another working time form, report that they have to be flexible on a daily basis. As the children grow older, the prevalence of unpredictability of working time is highest among those having another form of working time (19% of women with children aged six to 14 years, having another working time form, have to be flexible daily). The difference between those having regular day work or working in shifts is significant (5% – 4% – 19%). How to explain the differences between women and between the sexes?

Firstly, Table 8 seems to confirm the argument that women with awkward working hours – in the sense that working hours are unpredictable – return to work after having children later than those with regular day work. Regular day work and working in shifts is more predictable and thus makes combining family and work life easier. The age of the youngest child is crucial here; it is possible to maintain one’s job until the child is three years old; after that, one has to return to work, give up the job or have more children. The proportion of women needing to be flexible
each day in the group ‘other working time’ increases by the age of the youngest child (0% – 13% – 19%).

For men, the logic seems to be different: fathers with children at the age of three to six years (when the children are mainly in day-care; school starts at the age of seven) need to be flexible less often. Perhaps these fathers can prevent unpredictability of working times by arguing that they have to pick up the children from day-care. In each working time group, unpredictability increases by the age of the youngest children.

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.

Is the most prominent problem, for example:
- Availability of childcare facilities;
- No warm lunch at school;
- Opening hours of schools, kindergartens, shops, etc;
- Lack of flexible working time arrangements;
- Unpaid overtime work;
- Other?

In Finland, the problems with combining work and family do not lie in arranging childcare facilities. Families have the right to municipal childcare until the child starts school at the age of seven years. The quality of the care is considered to be good and this right is used extensively. Thus, in Finland, lack of childcare facilities is not a barrier for women to enter the labour market. Nor is there a problem with the opening hours of kindergartens or other childcare facilities. Children also receive a warm lunch at schools each day (see Sutela, 2004 – 60Kb pdf).

Working time flexibility is most desired among parents. There is a desire to match working hours better with family needs (Salmi and Lammi-Taskula, 2004). Another issue is the lack of childcare facilities after school hours. This is a problem mostly during the first two school years when the school day is relatively short (concerning children aged seven to nine years). The parents might like to be at home themselves in the afternoons. For example, shift work is seen as one solution to this problem. There is also an institutional solution; parents are able to shorten their working hours until the child reaches third grade (partial home care leave). The loss of income is compensated with an allowance of €70 per month. This has been available to parents since 2004. Before this, it was available only for the first term of the first school year.

Another problem raised is increased time pressure at work and increased workload. With work demanding more time, people are making do with less time at home. Overtime work is most common among upper white-collar workers; around 70% of these work overtime. However, between 1997 and 2003, there has been a significant decrease in overtime work among fathers with under three-year-old children. This is not just the opinion of the men; spouses also agree with the statement, D7. A. ‘In my opinion, my spouse (partner) works too hard’ (see above). This decrease in overtime among fathers seems to be relevant to the well-being of the whole family. Interestingly, long working times for men result in increased conflict in families with children, but long working hours for women do not (Sutela, 2005). Perhaps women have already arranged work and family life in a way that things go well in spite of the long working times, e.g. the practice of working in the evenings at home while the children are sleeping.
Likewise, it is interesting that most of the full-time working mothers and fathers feel that they can cope better with the children when they work. Work also has an energising effect that should not be forgotten.

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?

Two examples of good working time arrangements are presented here. The first one is a public sector hospital, with around 20,000 employees, and the second is a company in the information technology (IT) sector, employing about 180 employees. The first example illustrates how flexibility can be introduced into shift work, while the second shows how small differences in working time can make the difference.

The Finnish municipal hospital, Jorvi, has launched a programme of working time autonomy in order to introduce flexibility to an otherwise rather strictly organised shift work schedule. In the new autonomy model, work shifts are planned together with all employees, aiming to take into account individual needs for different working times. Previously, the management was solely in charge of the working time schedules.

Employees’ working time options have been expanded from the previously fixed eight a.m. to four p.m. schedule, to a possible start time of seven a.m. and a possible finish time of six p.m. This has helped customer service and enabled more individualised working hours. The working times are negotiated within these limits so that the employee’s needs are taken into account.

Legislation on working time set the boundaries for the possibilities, but employees are able to influence their working times, while also ensuring that the work is done and that patients do not suffer as a result of the new time model. The aim is to improve the well-being of the employees and to help in the recruitment of skilled employees in the future. In addition, the project is expected to have a positive influence on the work organisation and the availability of services offered. So far, the results have been promising and the experiment has been adopted. Both employees and customers are more satisfied now than they were under the previous working time model. Employees are more committed to their work and productivity has risen. The project received an award by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work.

The second example of good practices comes from the IT firm ESY Ltd. There is a custom of flexible working hours so that employees can come to work between six and nine a.m. in the mornings and leave between three and 10 p.m. in the evenings. Overtime can be used as a full day off. Part-time work is also a possible option for personal reasons, for example, when needing to take care of children or older relatives, or for study, or taking care of personal health or well-being. The firm received an award from the Family Federation of Finland in 2003.