Measuring the distribution work of couples with household survey data

New approaches and findings from the German Microcensus

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Overview

» Distribution of (paid and unpaid) work in couples – a key indicator for gender equality

» Conceptual considerations
  » Employment
  » Full/part-time job
  » Family and household

» Indicators and findings
  » Average difference of hours usually worked in couples
  » Employment constellations in couples
  » Cross-classifying the hours usually worked in (employed) couples
Distribution of (paid and unpaid) work in couples

A key indicator for gender equality

Impacts of (paid and unpaid) working time distribution in couples, e.g.

» Access to managerial positions
» Pay gap
» Pension gap

Issues particularly striking in couples with children (40-50% earnings “child penalty” for women; Bönke et al. 2020)

Distribution of paid work as a proxy for the distribution of unpaid work

“The unequal sharing of unpaid work, with women bearing the brunt of housework and childcare, is one of the main drivers of gender inequality” (Gimenez-Nadal/Molina 2022)
Conceptual issues – employment (1)

Labour Force Concept of the International Labour Organization (ILO 2013)

» Extensive definition of employment, one hour criterion
» Persons absent from their job are considered employed provided they have a job attachment
» Persons on annual leave, sick leave, partental leave, maternity leave often continue to be counted as employed

Risk of over-estimating the employment of mothers (in particular of young children)

Concept of “realised employment” developed by the FSO Germany (Hochgürtel 2018)

» Persons employed according to the Labour Force Concept of the ILO
» Provided that they were not absent form their job due to maternity leave or parental leave
Conceptual issues – employment (2)

Employment vs. realised employment of mothers and fathers (Germany, 2021)

Employment - mothers
Realised employment - mothers
Employment - fathers
Realised employment - fathers

Age of the youngest child
below 1 year 1 to below 2 years 2 to below 3 years 3 to below 6 years 6 to below 10 years 10 to below 15 years 15 to below 18 years

Employment vs. realised employment of mothers and fathers (Germany, 2021)
Conceptual issues – part-time jobs

Definition of the ILO (2008)

» Part-time job: Hours worked less than those of comparable full-time job

» Depending on national labour markets part-time jobs are a highly heterogeneous group

» Part-time jobs held by women may systematically differ from those held by men

» Further differences in operationalisation

Relying solely on the full-time/part-time distinction risks to over-estimate female employment participation

Hours usually worked should be analysed in addition

Federal Statistical Office (Destatis)
Conceptual issues – households and families

Housekeeping vs. household dwelling concept both limit household members to the dwelling

» In most surveys, also families are restricted to the persons living in one dwelling
» Not in line with family constellations beyond the traditional core family
  » „Single“ parents
  » Blended families including biological as well as foster children
» Frequently incomplete data regarding the actual split of care responsibilities

Age boundary for children

» Children living in a household with their parents might be over 18 years old
» Breakdown by the age of the youngest child is highly useful for analysis
Proposed indicators – Working time difference

Indicator definition

» Difference weekly hours usually worked
» Population: couples, whose youngest child is less than three years old
» Partners not in realised employment count for „0“ hours

Pros & cons

» Simplicity, reduction of complexity
» Covers all couples, whether employed or not
» Suitable as a performance indicator, but not for differentiated analysis

Difference of hours usually worked in couples (Germany)
Proposed indicators – Employment constellations

Indicator definition
» Cross-tabulation of (realised) employment status of both partners of a couple
» Population: couples, whose youngest child is less than three years old
» Possible extension to full-time/part-time work

Pros & cons
» Covers all couples, whether employed or not
» Included in UNECE Gender Statistics questionnaire
» Differentiation of employment situation of the mother and the father
Proposed indicators – Employment constellations (2)

Employment constellations of couples (Germany, 2021)

- Both employed: 37%
- Man employed / woman maternity or parental leave: 21%
- Woman employed / man parental leave: 1%
- Man employed / woman not employed: 30%
- Woman employed / man not employed: 2%
- None employed: 9%

FT/PT-Employment constellations of couples (Germany, 2021)

- Both full time: 25%
- Man full time / woman part time: 66%
- Both part time: 6%
- Woman full time / man part time: 3%
Proposed indicators – Hours worked (1)

Indicator definition
» Cross-tabulation of hours usually worked of couples in (realised) employment
» Population: employed couples, whose youngest child is less than three years old

Pros & cons
» Focus on employed couples (37% of the population)
» Needs to be combined with employment constellations
» Very differentiated picture
» Definition of hour bands may affect the results
Proposed indicators – Hours worked (2)

Couples with children below 3 years

Couples without children

Hours usually worked of the father

Hours usually worked of the mother

below 10 11 to 20 21 to 30 31 to 40 41 to 50 51 or more

below 10 11 to 20 21 to 30 31 to 40 41 to 50 51 or more
Conclusions

Indicators on paid work of couples can be used as a proxy for the distribution of unpaid work

- No perfect correlation of paid / unpaid work: time use survey data still need
- Labour Force Surveys based on household samples provide a rich and frequently available data source

Conceptual decisions need to be taken with care

- Employment vs. realised employment
- Pros & cons of working with breakdowns by full-time or part-time work
- Issues of analyses of „single“ parents and blended families

Different indicators complement one another

- No indicator alone shows the full picture
- Selection of indicator(s) depends on the specific reasearch context
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