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# **Time use and work–life balance in Germany and the UK**

**Frank Bauer, Hermann Groß, Gwen Oliver, Georg Sieglén and Mark Smith**

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## Executive summary

Work–life balance has become one of the most pressing issues facing industrial societies such as Germany and the UK. As the proportion of dual-working households grows with women’s increased participation in the labour market, time pressures increase as families seek to co-ordinate and control their working lives. At the same time, pressures from employers can pull in the opposite direction as organisations try to organise time in order to be more responsive, meet consumer demands, and compete both domestically and internationally. These tensions between employer and household needs can be regarded as incompatible and, as such, result in the difficulties that families face in balancing work and non-work life. At the root of these difficulties are the challenges of organising two separate working lives and one family.

Traditionally, the male-breadwinner model of family organisation provided a relatively simple solution to the tension between work and family, albeit at the expense of gender equality. Furthermore, a ‘normal working day’ secured personal space for individual time allocation, guiding the practical organisation of everyday life: the collective character of this time order facilitating the co-ordination and synchronisation of the time available for family, friends and other activities. However, time regimes based around a ‘normal working day’ are in a process of change from various directions creating tensions at individual, household, organisational and societal levels. Similarly, while the traditional gender-specific division of labour still ‘works’ for some households, it has lost its general acceptance among many couples, particularly those of younger more educated generations. The experience of employment is also undergoing a process of change. Here the change is connected with the development from an industrial society to a ‘service society’ and with growing pressures of national and international competition. The blurring of the boundaries of work creates concerns about the erosion of limits and norms established to delineate work and non-work life. These blurred boundaries have an impact upon the spatial and temporal organisation and distribution of activities of families and individuals.

Our analysis of time use patterns in working households demonstrates how there are both considerable similarities and differences in the allocation of time across households and countries.<sup>1</sup> In both the UK and Germany, time use for formal work (gainful employment) can be seen to increase as childcare responsibilities decrease. These differences in the overall time use distributions are strongly affected by the underlying differences in participation of women and men across different types of household. Although there are important country differences, reflecting the underlying societal differences in the regulation of working time and norms around hours of work, we also show how dual-working couples in both countries face work–life balance difficulties, even those households where the mother only works part-time hours.

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<sup>1</sup> This document presents results drawn from the UK 2000–1 National Time Use Survey and the German Time Budget Survey 2001–2, but the interpretation of the data and other views expressed in this report are those of the authors. The authors bear full responsibility for all errors and omissions in the interpretation of the data.



While all working families face problems in synchronising and organising their work and family lives, it is families where both parents work full-time who face the greatest pressures. We find that childcare intensity is the decisive variable in determining the amount of non-labour market work; as time allocated to childcare activities decreases, the more total time use for informal work decreases and time use for formal work increases. Dual full-time households are more common in the UK and, although there are similarities across countries between households with the same working arrangements, the impact of the long-hours culture in the UK is significant. Families in the UK spend more time at work and less time at home together; on average, dual-earning couples with children under four years in Germany spend 84 minutes more together at home each working day than their UK counterparts.

In the UK, we also found a greater spread of hours across both the day and the week. In Germany, half the working population has started work by 7.00am and, although in the UK this threshold is not reached until 7.40am, more than a half of employees are still working until 5.50pm while in Germany half of them have stopped work by 4.20pm. The share of employees confining their episodes of formal work to core hours in the UK is almost twice as large as in Germany, but core hours are more spread out in the UK. More female employees than male employees confine their working hours to the core period. The long-hours culture in the UK also extends to a greater propensity to work at weekends and bank holidays, for both women and men. However, to mitigate these pressures, families in the UK tend to draw on more paid help than in Germany although, as our results for family time show, this does not necessarily provide for a more synchronised family life.

The results presented here demonstrate the persistence of country differences and, even where we compare households with similar participation patterns, we are able to identify country-specific patterns in both the levels and gendered involvement in different activities. These differences not only represent the different approaches to the organisation of time but also the differential impact of childcare and working-time status on families in the UK and Germany.

At an aggregate level, the differences in the participation of women in formal employment clearly play an important role, but societal and policy differences also have an impact. In the UK, the extent of long-hours working and the wider daily distribution of working times create labour market level barriers to the balance of work and family life. On the other hand, in Germany, the greater reliance on household organisation based around a non-working or part-time working partner creates a household level barrier to a more equal balance of labour market and care work. Furthermore, the larger service sector in the UK creates a double-edged sword providing services to help working families but also creating jobs that do not necessarily fit with the needs of individuals trying to balance work and family life. Families in Germany do not necessarily have access to these services but the demands of employers to create jobs with working times that deviate from the norm still exist. In fact, pressures to increase the flexibility of working time in Germany may reinforce the gender divisions highlighted in this report.

The trajectory of women's employment makes a return to the traditional model of household organisation impossible as well as undesirable from a social, equality and economic point of view. There are constant demands from employers for flexibility and willingness to adjust to operational requirements in the name of competitiveness. Thus, while the expansion of jobs within the service sector can provide work opportunities as

well as services for working families, the potential to erode working-time norms is a risk. The challenge for policy makers and organisations alike is to navigate a way through the demands of working families and organisations. What our study shows is that simple limits on hours provide only a partial solution and, when we consider working time at the household level, the scheduling of time is as important for families seeking to balance work and family life. Thus, the timing of family and work life needs to be considered together with limits on working time if families are to avoid problems in the synchronisation and balancing of work and family life, with their potential negative impacts on children, families and society as a whole.

# 1 Introduction

Industrial societies like the UK and Germany can be characterised by the division of societal work between the spheres of waged work and the firm on the one hand and those of family work and the private household on the other. This division produces varied problems of co-ordination and synchronisation that are fundamental to the work–life balance of working households. These problems have increased as a result of the growing feminisation of employment, but also as a result of changing patterns of work that require greater flexibility and blur the boundaries between work and family. However, trends in work patterns not only vary across countries and between women and men but also between households within countries. This project report explores work–life balance in Germany and the UK using comparable time use data, and analyses both the volume and composition of time spent on gainful employment and family work. These surveys can show how gainful employment (formal work) and family work (informal work) are divided within the household and how individuals within households cope with their different temporal requirements.

## 1.1 Working patterns in Germany and the UK

In the UK and Germany, work–life balance issues show similarities in spite of clear differences in welfare regimes, the regulation of working times and forms of employment. In both countries, the traditional model of housewife marriage – a division of labour within the family, which assigns gainful employment exclusively to the husband and reproduction work only to the wife – has increasingly been replaced. The participation of women, and particularly of mothers, in gainful employment continues to grow across the EU (Rubery et al., 1999) and, as a result, the share of couples with children and both partners in employment has also increased in both Germany and the UK (Eurostat, 2002). This has meant full-time employment for many women for the time outside active motherhood, as well as half-time employment for mothers of young children. In both countries, part-time work has developed into a typical form of employment used by women with children, and can be regarded as an important element of the returner model of employment (Smith et al., 1998).

One of the key causes of work–life balance problems is the fact that the increasing participation of women in gainful employment has not been accompanied by a respective increase in men’s participation in informal work. In international comparisons, the stability of the division of labour within the family is high with only limited increases in male participation in housework (Künzler, 1995). Also with regards to public support in the field of childcare, Western Germany and the UK lie at the bottom in international comparisons (Rubery et al., 1999), although recent policies in the UK have led to some change. In EU comparisons, both countries come off badly with regard to the supply of childcare institutions supported by government for children up to three years old and of school age (Deven et al., 1998). Accordingly, arranging waged work and childcare can be

difficult. In this context, declining birth rates must also be located in the incompatibility of waged work with the demands of childcare in some countries (Esping-Andersen, 2002).

Germany and the UK represent two different welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1999). Germany can be taken as the historical model case of the conservative type of regime (Arthur, 2002: 15). The welfare state takes on the role of a subordinate securing institution and family ties, caring society and state-run welfare services remain central in social security (transfer payments and social services). Income from employment is designed to be a family income and is also insured through the employee with the partner, who tends to do no waged work. In Germany, this model is supported and stabilised by means of the societal arrangement of the normal employment relationship, which is intended for the family's male breadwinner, and by means of tax incentives. By comparison, the UK is seen as a prominent representative of the liberal socio-political regime that can also be called residual. The state tends to leave the arrangements of security essentially to self-responsibility and to the market, only taking on responsibility and securing societal risks in a reactive and minimal way. To have children has historically been regarded as a private matter for parents. Where the labour market is concerned, the government's approach, particularly during the 1980s, has focused on limited regulation of work and employment. This approach was clear in not only limiting intervention but also transfer payments, thereby actively weakening the trade unions and forcing those wanting to work to adjust and integrate (Lessenich, 1995: 82). Nevertheless it is important to note that these models of welfare are subject to pressures for change and to a greater or lesser extent have responded to changing social and economic trends. For example in Germany, lengthy maternity leave provides a break from the labour market to mothers (O'Reilly and Bothfeld, 2003), and in the UK recent policies have expanded state involvement in childcare provision (Smith, 2003).

Each of these welfare regimes shapes the specific trajectory in the development of the service sector (Häußermann and Siebel, 1995) and also creates specific processes of change in the time regime and time-allocation patterns. In the German conservative welfare regime, the service industry has developed more hesitantly as many consumer- and person-oriented services are performed in the private sphere. This is accompanied by a relatively low participation of women in employment, as well as by relatively high unemployment generally (Anxo and Fagan, 2001). In the UK, the development of the service sector has taken the form of an expanding private sector for services with a high female participation in employment. A strong polarisation of working conditions is found between sectors, as is a polarisation of the opportunities for the general public to actually use private services (Häußermann and Siebel, 1995).

The share of employees with flexible working times, as well as the polarisation of working times, has also increased in Germany. However, in Germany, this flexibilisation underlies different conditions from those in the UK because collective regulation of working-time flexibilisation is much more widespread. The state's framing and supporting activities characterise the German model of industrial relations. Legal regulations constitute the framework in which conditions can be negotiated above company level, while at company level employee representation in the works council has far-reaching rights of participation. In Germany, the regulation of working times by law and collective bargaining is still relevant for the great majority of employees. However, increasing opportunities for the flexibilisation of working time, the growing influence of enterprise-level arrangement of working times (*Verbetrieblichung*) and the decreasing validity of collective agreements all place pressure on the system (Bauer et al., 2002: 101). By

contrast, the relative lack of regulation of working time in the UK distinguishes it from the rest of Europe and places it closer to the USA at the *laissez faire* end of the regulation spectrum (Smith, 2003). Following the ‘voluntaristic’ tradition, working time is mostly bargained at the company level or individually, and collective regulation (by law or collective agreements) is comparatively weak. The UK approach to working time owes as much to trade union resistance to working-hour limits as to the weakening of collective structures in the ‘Thatcher era’. The post-1997 Labour government did initiate a cautious change of direction in working-time regulation, but it remains limited (Smith, 2003). Thus the EU working-time directive, which provides for a maximum working time of 48 hours, was implemented, but the UK is the only European country with an ‘opt-out’ clause making it possible to work longer hours if an employee ‘agrees’ to do so.

One of the outcomes of these different institutional frameworks is a much wider dispersion of working time in the UK. In fact, a polarised pattern between many short-hour and long-hour jobs can be observed; there is also a strong gender dimension to the distribution of these jobs. In Germany on the other hand, the distribution of working hours is less diverse, although gender obviously plays an important role in allocating full- and part-time work. To illustrate this point, we find that the share both of employees who work more than 45 hours and those who work fewer than 19 hours is higher in the UK than it is in Germany (Bettio et al., 2000). Thus in Germany one can still speak of a standard working time for full-timers while in the UK it is harder to make such a claim (Schmidt, 2004). However, in both the UK and Germany, the share of employees with flexible working times and the polarisation of working times are still increasing in spite of the different institutional frameworks. It is in this context that we analyse the time use surveys for both countries.

## 1.2 Methodological issues

In order to explore time requirements deriving from family responsibilities, we need an extended concept of work that includes both gainful work and family work (Bauer et al., 2004). We therefore argue against the reductionalism that does not pay enough attention to family obligations and focuses too much on leisure. Following Kambartel (1993), our analysis of time allocation starts from the idea of a complementary relationship between waged work and family work. In doing so, we differentiate between *formal* and *informal* societal work. ‘Societal work’ is used as a term from the field of political economy; in developed industrial societies, societal work is organized as ‘performance within the framework of the social division of labour that is laid down by law and economy’ (op cit: 241). In contrast to waged work, family work is often not perceived as societal work because it is mainly performed in the private sphere – hidden from the general public and politics. Nevertheless, it is included in the societal interchange of performance, even if not in the form of market or law. For this reason, Kambartel calls it *informal* societal work.

Our methodological design includes a re-classification of time use activities based on the guidelines of Eurostat. This re-classification enables us to differentiate between formal and informal work and to build a total volume of time spent for societal work (Box 1). This total volume of time spent for societal work is a good measure to demonstrate possible differences between household constellations (male full-time, female full-time;

male full-time, female long part-time; male full-time, female short part-time; male full-time, female economically inactive; other), between male and female employees and/or self-employed. The two time use data sources used for this research are the UK 2000–1 National Time Use Survey data and the German Time Budget Survey 2001–2 (*Zeitbudgeterhebung*). The datasets consist of time use diaries and questionnaires from approximately 5,000 households in Germany and 6,400 households in the UK. For each participating household, all members aged over eight years of age in the UK and over ten years of age in Germany were given an individual questionnaire and required to complete two (UK) or three (Germany) 24-hour diaries on the same days as each other. The two

## Box 1 Classification of time use activities

The following classification of time use activities attempts to operationalise the theoretical considerations of formal and informal work using the common coding in the time use surveys of Germany and the UK (see also Eurostat's 'Guidelines on harmonised European Time Surveys'). The examples in brackets refer to the coding of the diary data, which was identical down to three-digit level in Germany and the UK.

### 1. Formal work

#### True working time

Main job (working time, breaks, travel for main job)

Second job (working time, breaks, travel for second job)

Activities related to employment (lunch breaks, activities related to work)

Travel to/from work

### 2. Informal work

#### Family care

Childcare (physical care, teaching, reading, playing, accompanying)

Help to an adult family member (help and transport)

Household (food preparation, dish washing, household upkeep, cleaning, laundry, ironing, repairs, maintenance)

Shopping and services (shopping, commercial, administrative)

### 3. Volunteer work (organisational work, food and household help)

### 4. Education (school, classes and lectures, free time study)

### 5. Personal care (except sleep) (eating, washing, dressing)

### 6. Sleep

### 7. Free time (gardening and pet care, participatory activities, social life, entertainment and culture, resting, physical exercise, productive exercise, sports related activities, arts, hobbies, games, reading, tv and video, radio and music, travel related to free time)

datasets are compatible with each other as a result of the HETUS project, established in the 1990s to develop standards allowing for more cross-national comparative research using time-diary data. The creators of both the UK and German surveys have adhered to the HETUS coding and questionnaire guidelines, although there are some differences between the surveys in terms of the level of detail of some activity codes and in the data collection methods used. Respondents in the German survey were asked to record two weekdays plus a weekend day, while the UK survey has information for only one weekday and one weekend day from its respondents. Both surveys ask for time use to be recorded in ten-minute time slots, and provide extra columns for recording secondary activities, the location of the diarist, and whom the respondent was with.

When comparing the German and UK questionnaires, it became apparent that we would benefit most from the identical diary data at a three-digit level. Although the two surveys are bound by the comparative framework developed by Eurostat, there remain differences between them. For example in the UK personal and household questionnaires, there are some questions that are either not available in the respective German questionnaires or are asked differently. As the key theme of the project is time use, comparable diary data (as defined by Eurostat) were used as the main source to derive the variables relevant to the research questions. These analyses concern the volume of hours in formal and informal work per week as well as their location and distribution (see Box 1).

## 2 Time use in working households

### 2.1 Introduction

The examination of the distribution of working households between different ‘constellations’ provides an important first step in our research. In both the UK and Germany the proportion of dual-earner households has been rising and this is one of the key reasons for our interest in work–life balance in the two countries (Smith, 2005). However, the form that households take helps shape the nature of the work–life balance problems they face and the impact upon their time use patterns. Here we focus on working households, those with at least one person in employment. The inclusion of the ‘traditional’ male breadwinner female homemaker household form not only provides a useful comparison for time use patterns but also demonstrates the extent to which working households in both countries are moving away from this model (Anxo and O’Reilly, 2000). In both countries the proportion of households where men do not work full-time is small so we have aggregated these into the ‘other’ category.

Families with both partners being dependently employed (or where the male breadwinner in the household is an employee) account for the majority of working households. In Germany, 83% of all couple households with at least one partner economically active are households based on dependent employment. Similarly in the UK, the figure is 81%. By contrast, we find a slightly higher proportion of working households with one self-employed worker in the UK than in Germany, 17% compared to 11%. Those households with both partners self-employed account for a small proportion in both countries, although this model of household organisation is more prevalent in Germany (6%) than the UK (3%). Turning to the different models of the division of formal labour we find that male full-time, female full-time or male full-time, female long part-time are more popular in the UK than in Germany (36% and 28% compared to 14% and 16% respectively) (see Table 1).

**Table 1**  
**Working-time arrangement and childcare intensity for all working households – self-employed and dependent employees (in %)**

Working-time arrangement	Childcare intensity				Total
	High (0–3 years)	Medium (4–11 years)	Low (12–15 years)	Zero (16+ years)	
<b>Germany</b>					
Full-time/full-time	7	10	22	15	14
Full-time/long part-time	15	28	32	11	16
Full-time/short part-time	17	19	12	3	8
Full-time/economically inactive	49	30	19	11	18
Other	13	12	14	60	44
<b>UK</b>					
Full-time/full-time	17	28	35	50	36
Full-time/long part-time	30	37	41	19	28
Full-time/short part-time	11	13	11	5	9
Full-time/economically inactive	38	20	9	17	22
Other	4	3	5	8	5



Considering the childcare intensity of the couples by age of the youngest child, we find strong differences between the countries in all childcare intensity categories. In Germany half (49%) of the couples with a high childcare intensity, where the youngest child is less than three years old, adopt the ‘male full-time, female economically inactive’ model whereas in the UK the figure is only 38% (see Table 1). We also find that the share of households with this more traditional organisation falls away more quickly in the UK as the age of the youngest child increases. In the UK, the proportion of low-care intensity households – youngest child between 12 and 15 years – with a male breadwinner type organisation is less than a quarter of that of households with high-care intensity (9% compared to 38%), while in Germany the share only falls by about two fifths (49% to 19%) (see Table 1). A corollary of this pattern is the different proportion of households with a child under three and where partners both work full-time; the pattern is much less frequent in Germany (7%) than in the UK (17%). The country difference remains for couples with zero care intensity: in Germany 15% of such couples are both full-time and in the UK nearly half of such households have this arrangement (50%). The evidence clearly confirms the higher degree of involvement in formal work in the UK with lower proportions of male breadwinners across households with different caring commitments in this country.

The contractual status of employed household members is also an important factor in shaping time use, particularly as work based around self-employment may place different demands on individuals than that based on dependent employment. In households where both workers are employees or where the single breadwinner is an employee we find the country patterns replicated. For example in Germany, the male breadwinner is the most common form of household organisation (27%) while in the UK dual full-time households are most common (37%). In fact we find that in both countries an examination of employee only households slightly exaggerates the country patterns. There are higher proportions of German households based around male breadwinners (27% compared to 21%) and, similarly, we find a very strong increase in dual full-time households in the UK (37% compared to 19%). This pattern is replicated across the care groups in both countries (see Table 2).

**Table 2**  
**Working-time arrangement and childcare intensity – both dependent employees (in %)**

Working-time arrangement	Childcare intensity				Total
	High (0–3 years)	Medium (4–11 years)	Low (12–15 years)	Zero (16+ years)	
<b>Germany</b>					
Full-time/full-time	6	9	23	25	19
Full-time/long part-time	13	27	34	17	20
Full-time/short part-time	15	21	11	5	10
Full-time/economically inactive	56	33	21	19	27
Other	10	10	11	35	24
<b>UK</b>					
Full-time/full-time	18	29	37	51	37
Full-time/long part-time	29	38	38	20	28
Full-time/short part-time	12	12	11	4	8
Full-time/economically inactive	37	19	9	17	21
Other	4	2	5	9	6

## 2.2 Time use for formal and informal work

In both the UK and Germany, time use for formal work can be seen to increase as childcare intensity decreases (with the exception of households in which childcare or other family care is low or unnecessary). In Germany, time use for formal work increases from 41.3 hours per week for households with high intensity childcare to 53.1 hours per week for medium childcare intensity, up to 57.9 hours per week for low intensity and then slightly decreases to 57.7 hours per week for households without childcare responsibilities. In the UK, time spent in formal work increases from 58.3 hours to 66.0 hours per week between high and medium level intensity, again up to 70.1 hours per week for low childcare intensity and down again to 62.8 hours per week for households without children. However, there are differences between the former West and East Germany: in West Germany, time use for formal work increases from 39.5 hours to 49.7 hours and then up to 53.4 hours and 53.7 hours per week, while in East Germany time use for formal work increases from 63.3 hours up to 71.6 hours and decreases to 57.7 hours and 63.7 hours per week.

Unsurprisingly, time use for family care decreases with falling childcare intensity in both countries: in Germany from 31.2 hours per week for households with high intensity childcare, to 14.3 hours per week with medium intensity 4.4 hours per week for low intensity (West Germany: 4.5 hours, East Germany: 4.2 hours), and down to 1.3 hours per week for households with zero childcare intensity. In the UK, the pattern is similar, with time spent on family care by high intensity households being 27.8 hours per week, then 10.5 hours per week for medium intensity, 4.0 hours per week for low intensity, down to 2.0 hours per week for households with zero childcare intensity. Time use for household work follows a different pattern, remaining nearly the same in all categories of childcare intensity, with total time devoted to household work between 44 and 47 hours in Germany and between 41 and 43 hours in the UK (see Table 3).

Looking at household totals of time spent on formal and informal work (family care and household work combined), time use for formal work can be seen to increase with decreasing childcare intensity and time use for informal work to decrease with falling childcare intensity. In Germany, time spent on informal work decreases by 36%, from 76.0 hours for high intensity to 60.2 hours per week between high and medium care intensities, and then 50.4 for low intensity down to 48.4 hours per week for households with no childcare responsibilities. In the UK, informal work falls by 34% between the highest and lowest childcare intensities, from 68.8 down to 45.1 hours per week (see Table 3).

These results suggest that in both countries childcare intensity is the decisive variable in determining the amount of informal work. The more time allocated to care work activities decreases, by 86% in Germany and by 85% in the UK, the more total time use for informal work decreases and time use for formal work increases (in Germany by 34% (from 41.3 to 55.6 hours per week) and in the UK by 8% (from 58.3 to 62.8 hours per week)). The care variable is also decisive for the combined time commitment to formal and informal work. With decreasing childcare intensity the combined time for informal and formal work also diminishes: in Germany by 13% in total, or from 117.3 hours per week to 104.1 hours per week; and in the UK by 18%, or from 127.1 hours per week down to 107.9 hours per week (see Table 3).

## 2.3 Gender-specific time use

In both the UK and Germany, dependently employed men spend more time on formal work than dependently employed women. The majority of male employees work full-time, while women tend to work part-time. We also find that time spent on formal work by female full-timers is lower than that of men for both countries and across all levels of childcare intensity. When looking at time spent on formal work in the former West Germany and the former East Germany separately, quite noticeable differences emerge between the two. In total, women in East Germany spend more than twice as long in formal work as their West German counterparts: 25.6 hours per week compared to just 11.5 hours per week. In contrast, women in West Germany spend nearly 50% more time on informal work than their counterparts in East Germany (41.9 compared to 33.1 hours per week). However, for dependently employed men there is also a difference between West and East Germany in time spent on formal work: male employees in the West spend on average 36.8 hours per week on formal work while their counterparts in the East spend 39.6 hours per week. Regarding informal work (family care plus household), dependently employed men in West Germany spend nearly the same time on informal work as their counterparts in East Germany. The latter spend 20.3 hours per week on informal work whereas the former spend only 19.7 hours. As a result, male employees in West Germany spend less time on household work than their counterparts in East Germany (15.3 hours per week compared to 16.8 hours). These differences amount to considerable variations in time spent on formal and informal work: men in West Germany spend in total 56.1 hours per week on formal and informal work while their counterparts in East Germany commit 59.9 hours per week. For women, the variation in the figures is similar, with women in the West contributing 53.4 hours per week to informal and formal work compared to 58.7 for their counterparts in the East. Interestingly, the gender gap in the East is also smaller than the West, and more in line with that in the UK.

Dependently employed women spend more time on informal work than dependently employed men in compensation for the shorter amount of time they spend on formal work: in the high childcare intensity group, dependently employed men in Germany work 26.7 hours per week longer than dependently employed women, but spend 24.0 fewer hours per week on informal work. This is nearly the same in the UK, where male employees in high childcare intensity households spend 28.3 hours per week longer in formal work than female employees but 24.6 fewer hours per week in informal work. In the households with medium childcare intensity, the gap is slightly smaller with German men spending 24.5 hours per week more than women on formal work but 22.0 fewer hours per week on informal work. The corresponding values for UK men are 20.6 more hours per week for formal work, and 18.0 fewer hours per week in informal work. Finally, for low childcare intensity households, German men spend 17.3 more hours per week in formal work than women and 16.0 fewer hours per week in informal work. Meanwhile in the UK, the gender gap is again smaller with men spending 12.3 more hours per week in formal work than women but 10.5 fewer hours per week than them in informal work (see Table 3).

These results show that the gender-specific differences between the countries in terms of time commitments to formal and informal work are smaller in the UK than in Germany. However, the East–West distinction in Germany is clearly important for gendered patterns for time use. The country differences are partly caused by variations in the employment

**Table 3**  
**Time use for formal and informal work for employee households**

	Germany (hours per week)												UK (hours per week)																	
	Formal work (a)			Family care (b)			Household work (c)			Informal work (b+c)			Work total (a+b+c)			Formal work (a)			Family care (b)			Household work (c)			Informal work (b+c)			Work total (a+b+c)		
	m	f		m	f		m	f		m	f		m	f		m	f		m	f		m	f		m	f		m	f	
<b>0–3 years</b>																														
Full-time/full-time	39.5	24.3		11.6	22.4		12.3	16.9		23.9	39.3		63.4	63.6		41.6	34.2		6.6	14.7		16.1	21.6		22.7	36.3		64.3	70.5	
Full-time/long part-time	38.4	20.8		7.2	13.0		13.7	25.4		20.9	38.4		59.3	59.2		42.0	22.5		11.4	15.2		11.6	23.0		23.0	38.2		65.0	60.7	
Full-time/short part-time	35.2	6.7		7.2	18.6		17.5	28.4		24.7	47.0		59.9	53.7		44.8	15.3		9.6	10.5		14.2	28.3		23.8	38.8		68.6	54.1	
Full-time/economically inactive	36.6	0.3		9.5	24.2		15.5	31.5		25.0	55.7		61.6	56.0		48.0	0.8		6.8	22.2		13.1	33.5		19.9	55.7		67.9	56.5	
Other	3.3	32.2		16.2	18.0		26.9	15.1		43.1	33.1		46.4	65.3		28.7	17.3		9.6	20.2		15.3	23.8		24.9	44.0		53.6	61.3	
<b>Total</b>	<b>34.0</b>	<b>7.3</b>		<b>9.5</b>	<b>21.7</b>		<b>16.5</b>	<b>28.3</b>		<b>26.0</b>	<b>50.0</b>		<b>60.0</b>	<b>57.3</b>		<b>43.3</b>	<b>15.0</b>		<b>8.5</b>	<b>19.3</b>		<b>13.6</b>	<b>27.4</b>		<b>22.1</b>	<b>46.7</b>		<b>65.4</b>	<b>61.7</b>	
<b>4–11 years</b>																														
Full-time/full-time	43.0	35.0		4.1	6.7		16.4	23.2		20.5	29.9		63.5	64.9		46.1	39.1		3.4	5.9		15.9	21.6		19.3	27.5		65.4	66.6	
Full-time/long part-time	40.3	21.4		4.5	9.4		13.3	27.4		17.8	36.8		58.1	58.2		42.3	25.2		2.8	7.3		14.0	26.3		17.8	33.6		60.1	58.8	
Full-time/short part-time	39.0	8.8		4.0	10.9		13.5	31.9		17.5	42.8		56.5	51.6		50.5	15.1		3.5	5.6		14.6	34.8		18.1	40.4		68.6	55.5	
Full-time/economically inactive	38.6	1.2		4.2	12.2		15.3	37.2		19.5	49.4		58.1	50.6		49.2	4.3		3.5	7.6		10.8	42.6		14.1	50.2		63.3	54.5	
Other	23.4	31.8		4.5	7.9		22.1	22.7		26.6	30.6		50.0	62.4		16.3	24.4		4.3	6.7		23.1	24.1		27.4	30.8		43.7	55.2	
<b>Total</b>	<b>38.8</b>	<b>14.3</b>		<b>4.2</b>	<b>10.1</b>		<b>14.9</b>	<b>31.0</b>		<b>19.1</b>	<b>41.1</b>		<b>57.9</b>	<b>55.4</b>		<b>43.3</b>	<b>22.7</b>		<b>3.7</b>	<b>6.8</b>		<b>14.7</b>	<b>29.6</b>		<b>18.4</b>	<b>36.4</b>		<b>61.7</b>	<b>59.1</b>	
<b>12–15 years</b>																														
Full-time/full-time	42.6	31.5		1.3	1.7		16.5	23.5		17.8	25.2		60.4	56.8		40.8	39.2		1.3	1.6		18.4	23.2		19.7	24.8		60.5	64.0	
Full-time/long part-time	38.7	24.3		1.3	3.3		15.2	29.6		16.5	32.9		55.2	57.2		45.9	30.8		1.8	2.5		14.2	27.6		16.0	30.1		61.9	60.9	
Full-time/short part-time	41.6	9.2		1.5	3.6		13.7	38.6		15.2	42.2		56.8	51.4		39.7	17.4		1.0	2.6		21.0	34.8		23.0	37.4		62.7	54.8	
Full-time/economically inactive	34.3	1.3		1.6	4.8		16.1	39.4		17.7	44.2		52.0	45.5		50.6	9.3		1.4	3.9		11.2	29.4		12.6	33.3		63.2	42.6	
Other	10.7	29.5		2.8	1.5		20.4	23.2		23.2	24.7		33.9	53.2		14.3	22.8		2.2	3.7		28.6	23.0		30.8	26.7		45.1	49.5	
<b>Total</b>	<b>37.6</b>	<b>20.3</b>		<b>1.4</b>	<b>3.0</b>		<b>15.8</b>	<b>30.2</b>		<b>17.2</b>	<b>33.2</b>		<b>54.8</b>	<b>53.5</b>		<b>41.2</b>	<b>28.9</b>		<b>1.5</b>	<b>2.5</b>		<b>17.3</b>	<b>26.8</b>		<b>18.8</b>	<b>29.3</b>		<b>60.0</b>	<b>58.2</b>	
<b>16+ years</b>																														
Full-time/full-time	40.4	32.8		0.6	0.3		16.6	25.1		17.2	25.4		57.6	58.2		45.5	40.3		0.8	0.8		14.2	20.6		15.0	21.4		60.5	61.7	
Full-time/long part-time	40.7	24.8		0.4	0.6		15.0	29.0		15.4	29.6		56.1	54.4		40.9	25.2		0.8	1.1		15.6	30.2		16.4	31.3		57.3	56.5	
Full-time/short part-time	42.2	8.6		0.4	1.1		11.3	35.9		11.7	37.0		53.9	45.6		45.6	19.1		1.1	1.6		15.1	30.4		16.2	32.0		61.8	51.1	
Full-time/economically inactive	40.8	1.3		0.5	1.1		12.9	39.2		13.4	40.3		54.2	41.6		39.3	3.9		1.5	1.6		13.5	33.1		15.0	34.7		54.3	38.6	
Other	11.5	20.4		0.6	1.0		27.7	27.4		28.3	28.4		39.8	48.8		10.8	22.5		1.2	0.5		24.6	27.9		25.8	28.4		36.6	50.9	
<b>Total</b>	<b>38.1</b>	<b>17.6</b>		<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.8</b>		<b>15.6</b>	<b>31.5</b>		<b>16.1</b>	<b>32.3</b>		<b>54.2</b>	<b>49.9</b>		<b>36.2</b>	<b>26.6</b>		<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>		<b>16.6</b>	<b>26.5</b>		<b>17.6</b>	<b>27.5</b>		<b>53.8</b>	<b>54.1</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>37.3</b>	<b>14.1</b>		<b>4.2</b>	<b>10.0</b>		<b>15.5</b>	<b>30.2</b>		<b>19.7</b>	<b>40.2</b>		<b>57.0</b>	<b>54.3</b>		<b>39.3</b>	<b>24.0</b>		<b>3.0</b>	<b>5.5</b>		<b>15.7</b>	<b>27.3</b>		<b>18.7</b>	<b>32.8</b>		<b>58.0</b>	<b>56.8</b>	

rate of women but differences persist within working-time constellations. Across all groups of childcare intensity, women in the UK have longer hours of formal work than German women (overall 24.0 hours per week compared to 14.1). Similarly, across all categories of childcare intensity, German women have correspondingly longer hours of informal work than their counterparts in the UK (overall 40.2 hours per week compared to 32.8). The examination of these time commitments in formal and informal work also shows that the gender-specific temporal differences are slightly less distinctive in the UK than in Germany: 58.0 and 56.8 hours per week, and 57.0 and 54.3 hours per week respectively (see Table 3).

## 2.4 Time use within household constellations

When both partners are working full-time, women in the UK in all childcare intensity groups have a higher burden of combined formal and informal work than men. The difference is most marked in the group with the highest childcare intensity – at 6.2 hours per week (compared to 1.2, 3.5 and 0.8 hours per week for medium, low and zero care intensities respectively). Similar results can also be found in Germany, although the differences are not as distinctive as in the UK and the proportion of households affected is smaller. In fact, in Germany, the strongest difference of 0.8 hours per week can be found in the group with medium childcare intensity, while in the group with the highest childcare intensity the gender gap is very weak at just 0.2 hours per week. This gender gap is also found for the group with zero childcare intensity, with women working an additional 0.6 hours per week on formal and informal work compared with men. However, in the group with lowest childcare intensity, children aged 12–15 years, German men spend more time on formal and informal work than German women (3.6 hours per week) (see Table 3).

Again, comparing the UK with West and East Germany separately, we find that in total women in East Germany spend more time in formal work than women in both the West and in the UK. Taking households where both partners work full-time, gender differences in formal work time are the lowest for households in the UK and East Germany, particularly in households with medium intensity childcare. The difference in formal work time for men and women working as full-time employees is much more marked in West Germany. However, for households with high childcare intensity, the difference between men and women is larger for both countries, but in the UK the difference of 6.8 hours is smaller than that in East Germany (12.3 hours) and West Germany (19.8 hours).

In both the UK and Germany, women who work short part-time hours and who do not work, with partners who work full-time, are found to have the highest burden of informal work – with the exception of the group with low childcare intensity in the UK. For male employees the picture is not so uniform, as the time they spend on informal work is often dependent on the time they spend on formal work. The households spending the most time doing informal work are those with the highest childcare intensity and a male full-time, female short part-time working-time arrangement.

## 3 Work–life balance in working households

### 3.1 Blurring of the boundaries between work and leisure time

#### 3.1.1 Blurring of working time

The first theme presented here is the blurring of boundaries between work (both formal and informal) and leisure time, or the erosion of a standard working time. In order to explore this blurring of boundaries, we analysed individual working-time patterns during a single day and for the whole week of couples living in family households. By comparing the German and UK mean schedules, it can be seen that UK workers tend to be engaged in formal work later in the day than Germans: while in the UK employed persons cross the border of a 50% share of employees working at about 7.40am in the morning and again at about 6.00pm, in Germany this happens earlier, with the share creeping above 50% at about 7.00am in the morning and dropping below again at 4.20pm in the afternoon. The number of people doing paid work starts to increase at about 5.00am in the UK and reaches its peak at about 10:30am, while in Germany the increase starts at about 4.30am and reaches its peak at about 8.30am. In Germany, employed persons among the couples we analysed tended to start work later than their UK counterparts, but also appeared to finish earlier. In addition, the share of people working in the evening and later at night diminished much more noticeably in Germany than in the UK: while 20% of workers were still engaged in formal work at 8.00pm in the UK, only 10% in Germany were. The main period of paid work is not only situated a little earlier in the day in Germany than in the UK, but also tends to be a little shorter for the majority of employees.

In order to establish a clearer picture of the differences in working-time schedules of employed persons within different household and working-time arrangements, we attempted to define ‘core hour’ periods of work as reference periods and surrounding time slots as ‘pre-core’, ‘post-core’ and ‘night hours’ periods (see Harvey et al., 2000). Since the patterns of time spent in work differ significantly between the two countries, we assigned nation-specific limits when defining ‘core hours’. We defined them as the time period during the day when more than 50% of employees reported formal work as their primary activity. In this sense, we understand the ‘blurring of boundaries’ between work and leisure time to be deviations from a nation-specific cultural or rather predominant daily work-period standard among full-time employees. As such, we have defined formal work done outside these core hours, as well as work performed at the weekend or during public holidays, as examples of paid work crossing boundaries into times where non-work activities usually predominate.

According to this criterion of more than 50% of employees in paid work, core hours in Germany fall between 7.00am and 4.20pm, and in the UK between 7.40am and 6.00pm. All other working-time periods were defined identically in both countries: post-core hours end at midnight (0:00), night hours last from midnight to 4.00am, and pre-core hours

from 4.00am to the start of the core period. The four most common combinations of these periods are those in which formal work is done:

- only during the core period
- during core and post-core hours
- during pre-core and core hours
- during pre-core, core and post-core hours.

Other combinations that included those working during night hours were practised only by a minority (5% in Germany, 4% in the UK) and so we focused on the four main combinations.

Table 4 shows the daily dimension of ‘blurring’ based on the weekday diaries of cohabiting or married couples where at least one person was dependently employed (but neither was self-employed), and where at least one work episode was reported.

In Germany, the most common combination of time periods for employees in family households is to work during the core and post-core periods of the day, amounting to one-third of workers. The second biggest share, 23% of employees, have work periods in the pre-core and core areas, while 21% work during all three periods. Interestingly, only 19% have work periods within the core hours of 7.00am to 4.20am. The pattern is markedly different in the UK. Here, 36% of employees work only during core hours, while the second largest share (28%) work over the pre-core and core periods. Core and post-core periods are used by 19% for formal work activities, and only 15% of those in family households work over all three periods. As we have already noted, the core hours period for the UK, at 10 hours and 20 minutes, is one hour longer than the core hours period for Germany. Looking at the distribution of paid work over the day, it can be seen that in the UK a markedly higher share of employees allocate their work episodes only within this nationally defined time slot. In Germany on the other hand, the core hours period is shorter, but the distribution of formal work is more blurred in the sense that employees are much more likely to be working in pre- and post-core hours than their counterparts in the UK.

The share of employees who confine their episodes of formal work to core hours is almost twice as large in the UK as in Germany. However, in Germany, a large number of employees have work episodes in phases of the day when fewer workers are engaged in paid work. In other words, it is more usual for employees in Germany to work before or

**Table 4**  
**Distribution of work episodes over different time slots: all employees in family households (%)**

	Germany			UK		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Core	10.5	31.0	18.5	24.9	49.9	35.5
Core + post	31.2	34.0	32.3	19.8	18.1	19.1
Pre + core	26.2	19.0	23.4	30.2	23.5	27.4
Pre + core + post	26.9	11.9	21.0	21.6	6.1	15.1
Other	5.2	4.0	4.8	3.5	2.2	3.0

after the core hours period. It is also interesting to compare the share of employees whose work episodes stretch from the pre-core to the post-core period: in Germany almost 21% have such periods, while in the UK this is true for only 15%. This is a long period of time over which to be engaged in paid work, which may be attributable to other factors such as long commuting times rather than very long hours spent actually working or on work premises, but which nonetheless points to a high degree of the blurring of boundaries between formal and non-formal work time.

This overall pattern obscures a very strong gender specific differentiation, which is revealed by looking at the percentages for men and women as shown in Table 4. In Germany, the strongest contrast is to be found in the share of men and women having episodes of formal work in the core periods only: while 31% of female employees confine their working hours to the core period, only 11% of male employees do so. The share of employees working over the pre-core, core and post-core periods also reveals a strong contrast: the share of men allocating formal work over all three periods is more than twice as large (27%) as that of women (12%). A similar share (around a third) of men and women worked over the core and post-core periods, and a difference of between a fifth (19%) of women and a quarter (26%) of men worked over both the pre-core and core periods. In Germany then, the blurring of the boundaries of work and leisure periods appears to be a more relevant phenomenon for the male than the female workforce. Only 10% of men restricted their working time to the core period when over 50% of the workforce was engaged in formal work, while more than a quarter spent time doing formal work activities before, during and after this core period.

While a much larger share of employees work during core periods in the UK overall, a similar gender-specific pattern to that of Germany occurs in that half of female employees living in family households reported formal work only during core hours; this is true for only a quarter (25%) of men. On the other hand, only 6% of women allocated their work over the pre-core, core and post-core periods while over three times as many men did (22%). The small share of women across all three time periods is partly based on the relatively low share of UK employees distributing work episodes over this extended phase of the day as well as the more dispersed core hours.

### **3.1.2 Blurring and household working patterns**

Looking at the distributions of paid work for men and women within different working-time constellations (Table 5) reveals further gender-specific patterns of blurring of boundaries between work and non-work times. It is interesting that when both partners are working full-time the afore-mentioned pattern remains visible although the differences become much smaller: within full-time/full-time households in Germany (i.e. where both partners are working full-time), a share of 17.5% women work only during the core period, while a share of only 8.6% men do so. On the other hand, 27.5% of the men in this constellation spread their working time over the pre-core, core and post-core periods, while a share of only 19.1% women do so. The time use means discussed in Chapter 2 revealed that there are very few differences in the working times between men in different household constellations, while full-time employed women work markedly longer than the average time spent on paid work by women in a family household with a full-time employed partner. The results displayed in Table 5 support this pattern, showing that the average share for women working during core hours only is 31%, in contrast to 18% of women in the full-time/full-time constellation. Similarly, an average of 12% of women spent time doing paid work in the stretched pre-core, core and post-core



**Table 5**  
**Work episodes in different time slots and working-time constellation (%)**

	Germany			UK		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
<b>Full-time/full-time</b>						
Core	8.6	17.5	13.1	26.1	44.0	34.6
Core + post	34.3	41.1	37.8	17.5	17.7	17.6
Pre + core	23.9	21.8	22.8	29.2	27.4	28.3
Pre + core + post	27.5	19.1	23.2	24.0	8.5	16.6
Other	5.8	0.5	3.1	3.2	2.4	2.8
<b>Full-time/part-time</b>						
Core	8.2	53.4	23.3	25.9	61.2	41.4
Core + post	30.0	24.9	28.3	19.4	16.4	18.1
Pre + core	28.2	12.6	23.0	32.1	16.8	25.4
Pre + core + post	28.9	2.0	19.9	20.7	3.6	13.2
Other	4.7	7.2	5.5	1.8	2.0	1.9
<b>Full-time/economically inactive</b>						
Core	10.4	57.2	14.2	15.9	60.8	19.9
Core + post	31.2	22.6	30.5	25.5	29.3	25.9
Pre + core	27.3	3.8	25.4	30.0	6.8	27.9
Pre + core + post	27.1	4.1	25.3	24.3	3.1	22.4
Other	4.0	12.3	4.7	4.3	0.0	3.9
<b>Others</b>						
Core	41.6	23.8	28.0	41.3	38.0	39.3
Core + post	22.8	34.2	31.5	16.6	21.7	19.6
Pre + core	16.3	24.8	22.8	26.3	31.7	29.5
Pre + core + post	4.4	11.9	10.2	5.3	5.8	5.6
Other	14.9	5.3	7.5	10.6	2.8	5.9
<b>Total</b>						
Core	10.5	31.0	18.5	24.9	49.9	35.5
Core + post	31.2	34.0	32.3	19.8	18.1	19.1
Pre + core	26.2	19.0	23.4	30.2	23.5	27.4
Pre + core + post	26.9	11.9	21.0	21.6	6.1	15.1
Other	5.2	4.0	4.8	3.5	2.2	3.0

periods, compared to 19% of women in dual full-timer constellations. In other words, for households where both partners work full-time, the patterns of blurring are more similar between the sexes, although gender differences are still clearly visible.

In the UK, the pattern is different from the one among German employed women in that 44% of women in full-time/full-time households spent time doing paid work exclusively in the core time slots, a variation from the average share of only 5 percentage points (Table 5). As in Germany, the fewer the hours of gainful employment (whether working full-time, long or short part-time hours), the greater the likelihood that women will restrict their formal work activities to core slots only. It is remarkable that the share of women working in core hours decreases by such a small amount compared to the drop of 18.5% in Germany. Looking at the other extreme of working-time patterns, a rather more steady 3.6%-8.5% of UK women (depending on their household constellation) allocate work episodes over the long time slot stretching from the pre-core to the post-core period compared to their German counterparts (Table 5). In Germany, where the average share of women working over all three periods is 12%, there is much greater variance between women in different working-time arrangements of between 2% for female part-timers with full-time partners and 19% for dual full-time arrangements.

As might be expected, the gender-specific differences are very strong in households with a male full-time, female part-time working-time arrangement. This pattern is in itself the expression of a gender-specific division of formal work and consequently enlarges the gendered patterns in the tables. In Germany, 53% of the women of this constellation have core work periods only, while this holds true for just 8.2% of the men. In the UK, 61% of the women have exclusively core periods, while men have core periods only to a share of 26%. Again looking at the other extreme, in Germany only 2% of part-time female employees with a full-time employed partner have work episodes over all three pre-core, core and post-core periods, while 29% of their partners allocate formal work to this extended time-frame. In the UK, the comparable proportions were similar at 3% to 24%.

It can be seen from both countries that, if men deviate from the classic pattern of gender-specific division of labour and work on a part-time basis, their allocation of time for paid work changes, as it does for women who work part-time. Part-time work increases the probability that paid work will be restricted to a single time slot, usually the core period when the majority of workers are also engaged in paid work. In contrast, for full-time employed persons in family households, especially men, it is far more likely that they will be working both within and outside this core period.

### 3.1.3 Blurring and household care intensities

It is also important to consider whether the time allocation for work episodes over the different periods of the day vary according to childcare intensity (Table 6). As might be expected, childcare intensity increases gender-specific differences. In Germany, 42% of women with high childcare intensity have work episodes in the core period only, ten percentage points more than the average share for women and exactly four times the average share for men. For those with high childcare intensity, the share working only during core periods rises by just one percentage point compared to the average. High childcare intensity appears to have a larger effect on the share of those working during the pre-core, core and post-core periods, as 4.6% more of this group distributed their working hours in this way than the average.

**Table 6**  
**Work episodes in different time slots and childcare intensity (%)**

	High childcare intensity			Medium childcare intensity			Zero childcare intensity		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
<b>Germany</b>									
Core	11.5	42.0	19.2	9.2	43.0	21.6	11.1	23.3	16.4
Core + post	22.8	23.9	23.1	32.7	25.8	30.1	32.6	39.7	35.7
Pre + core	30.9	13.1	26.4	24.7	19.6	22.8	26.0	19.4	23.1
Pre + core + post	30.8	15.3	26.9	28.4	6.6	20.4	24.7	14.3	20.1
Other	4.0	5.7	4.4	5.1	5.0	5.0	5.7	3.3	4.7
<b>UK</b>									
Core	24.1	56.9	33.7	24.9	56.0	38.2	25.3	45.5	34.5
Core + post	21.9	19.4	21.2	23.9	20.8	22.6	16.6	16.6	16.6
Pre + core	26.0	17.7	23.6	31.7	18.7	26.2	30.8	27.1	29.1
Pre + core + post	22.3	1.1	16.1	16.4	1.7	10.2	24.2	9.4	17.4
Other	5.6	4.8	5.4	3.0	2.9	2.9	3.0	1.4	2.3

A similar pattern can be seen in the UK. The share of women with work periods only during the core period rises from the average of 49.9% to a maximum value of 56.9% for women with high childcare intensity (for those with medium childcare intensity, the value is equal: 56%). At the same time, the share of women having work episodes in the pre-core, core and post-core slots decreases from an average of 6.1% to only 1.1% in the category of high childcare intensity. Conversely, for women with no childcare responsibilities, the share of those with work episodes found only in the core period is below average (45.5%) and the share of work episodes distributed over all three periods is above average (9.5%).

For men in the UK, there appears to be very little variation according to childcare intensity differences when looking at the share of formal work episodes at core periods only (Table 6). The average value here is 24.9%: for those with high childcare intensity it is 24.1%, medium childcare intensity, 24.9% and when there are no children in the household, 25.3%.

The strongest driving force behind the gender-specific allocation of working time seems to be the presence of children. If there are children in the household who need to be taken care of, then the allocation of working times of employed mothers in both the UK and Germany predominantly takes place within the core area of the working day (almost 60% in the UK and more than 40% in Germany). At the same time, an allocation pattern distributing work episodes from very early in the day to the late evening – i.e. a pattern which can be described as a blurring pattern – is reduced to a minimum of less than 2% of the working times of UK mothers in family households and about 5% of the same group in Germany. This clearly reflects that there are still relevant groups in society who adhere to cultural norms of temporal allocation. It also shows the functions of norms like these: they enable employees to carry out their responsibilities not only in the workplace, but also at home.

## **3.2 Synchronisation of working households**

### **3.2.1 Introduction**

Synchronisation is a central issue for families trying to balance work and family life. Where both parents are in paid employment, the scheduling of time off is one of the key dimensions to the quality of time away from paid work. The extent to which time off can be shared with other family members may be regarded as an important measure of the quality of work–life balance. Even in households organised along traditional lines of a full-time working father and home-carer mother, time spent together may be limited by the long working hours of the male partner and/or other non-work tasks that need to be carried out when the employed partner is not working. For households where there are two parents engaged in paid work, the complexity of these interwoven activities can further limit the time spent together and/or time spent with children. Indeed, the organisation of working lives in dual-earner households may actually be structured around not spending time together as one parent picks up childcare and other household activities while the other begins work. Fagan (2001) highlights how dual-earner families may adopt working patterns that involve overlaps and staggered time at work, thus limiting synchronised time at home. Typically women have often taken short part-time jobs that either fit with their male partner or their children’s schooling hours. However,

such short-hours jobs may also be undertaken at a time where an employed partner is not working – for example, evening or twilight shifts. Similarly, in those households where one parent works unsocial hours – for example, nights – there may be a routine that provides a solution to childcare needs, but the non-work time of working parents will be largely unsynchronised. Here we explore the synchronisation patterns of dual-earner households with children.

### 3.2.2 Work span

Whereas the other measures used in this part of the report consider how well household members synchronise their time, here the measure of work span can be regarded as an indicator of the lack of synchronicity in householders' time. Where the work span is long, this may be evidence of householders working long hours or hours that are not well synchronised. Although the measure of work span might be regarded as a rather crude method for the examination of synchronisation, it shed some interesting light on the patterns of working within households. Table 7 shows how for German households the span of working hours is highest for the households with the youngest children (638 minutes compared to fewer than 600 minutes for medium and zero care intensities) compared to the UK households where the presence of older children or no children is associated with the longest work span (688 minutes compared to fewer than 670 minutes for medium and zero care intensities). It is important to note that for all measures of work

**Table 7**  
**Average (mean) number of minutes of work span: the total length of time partners engaged in formal work**

	Germany		UK	
	Mean	Std Dev.	Mean	Std Dev.
<b>Full-time/full-time</b>				
High care (0–3 years)	(572.4)	239.9	(689.1)	173.7
Medium care (4–15 years)	634.7	228.4	668.7	138.7
Zero care (16+ years)	591.2	205.2	696.6	123.1
Total	598.5	211.4	689.0	131.4
	n = 394		n = 562	
<b>Full-time/long part-time</b>				
High care (0–3 years)	(680.8)	243.0	(645.0)	172.2
Medium care (4–15 years)	594.4	175.3	656.4	153.7
Zero care (16+ years)	593.6	206.0	683.4	129.2
Total	600.9	197.9	665.9	146.8
	n = 500		n = 318	
<b>Full-time/short part-time</b>				
High care (0–3 years)	(604.5)	63.7	(659.9)	117.1
Medium care (4–15 years)	571.8	212.6	(697.8)	110.5
Zero care (16+ years)	582.7	184.3	643.1	90.2
Total	579.4	191.3	666.4	103.7
	n = 190		n = 109	
<b>Total</b>				
High care (0–3 years)	638.4	216.9	664.9	163.7
Medium care (4–15 years)	599.0	198.3	667.1	142.1
Zero care (16+ years)	591.4	204.0	688.7	122.6
Total	597.0	203.2	679.1	134.1
	n = 1084		n = 990	

Note: figures in parentheses are based on cells of fewer than 25.

span the German households show a high degree of variety, recording standard deviations around 50% higher than in the UK. However, generally speaking, the work spans are longer in the UK, reflecting the longer recorded work hours and the higher overall participation rate of women: almost 11 hours 20 minutes in the UK compared to just fewer than ten hours in Germany.

Within working-time constellations we find that care intensity has an unpredictable impact on work span. For dual full-time households, the lowest care intensity has the longest span in the UK while for Germany we find medium care households with the longest span – almost three-quarters of an hour more than households with zero or low care requirements (see Table 7). For the households containing a female part-timer, the lowest care intensity pushes up the work span with long part-time work in the UK. In Germany, the highest care intensity has the longest span but the sample size for this cell is particularly small. Among households with a female short part-timer in Germany, we find that a higher care intensity pushes up the work span but in this case too the sample is not large; in the UK, households with medium intensity have a longer span (again there is a small sample).

When we look across working-time constellations, we find there is actually relatively little difference between the working time spans of households with quite different contractual arrangements. In Germany, households with a long-hours part-timer have virtually the same working time span as dual full-time households (around 600 minutes), while in the UK there is no difference between the work spans for households with short and long part-timers (666 minutes). Furthermore, for two of the three care intensity categories, the work span for households with a short part-timer is longer than for the corresponding household with a long part-timer (Table 7). These results suggest that the scheduling of short part-time hours for some workers may act to increase the work span or promote specialisation and thus the desynchronisation of family time. On the other hand, these arrangements may allow a continuity of family care and the working hours of household members to mesh. In the UK, the overall span of dual full-time households is longer and we might expect this given the length of the normal working week for many full-timers.

### **3.2.3 Synchronisation at work**

The first dimension to synchronisation of working lives is the time that both working parents spend at work. On the one hand, this is time that cannot be allocated to synchronised family time, care for children or other household activities, necessitating the use of some form of childcare for younger children. On the other hand, if both parents have similar working schedules, it also means that their non-working schedules have a greater chance of being aligned, thus increasing the potential for synchronised family time. Here we use a measure of the time that both parents are at work (including paid work at home) to capture the synchronisation of gainful employment of both partners.

Overall, we find there are more minutes per day of synchronised working time for families in the UK than in Germany, partly reflecting the longer working hours and higher female participation rate in the UK (Table 8). We find there are on average 6 hours 27 minutes each day when both parents are working in the UK compared to 5 hours 52 minutes in Germany. In both cases, the amount of synchronised working time rises as care intensity falls. Working households with no children or children over 16 years have the longest period of synchronised working time (385 and 424 minutes in Germany and the

**Table 8**  
**Average (mean) number of minutes of both partners at work: the total time both partners are in work (including paid work at home)**

	Germany		UK	
	Mean	Std Dev.	Mean	Std Dev.
<b>Full-time/full-time</b>				
High care (0–3 years)	340.0	211.4	421.7	114.8
Medium care (4–15 years)	400.3	147.7	420.2	120.5
Zero care (16+ years)	443.7	143.5	479.4	130.9
Total	432.7	148.7	460.2	129.8
	n = 394		n = 562	
<b>Full-time/long part-time</b>				
High care (0–3 years)	307.1	132.8	312.0	178.6
Medium care (4–15 years)	303.8	112.4	275.4	162.8
Zero care (16+ years)	320.0	119.6	322.5	141.2
Total	311.8	117.9	300.1	157.2
	n = 500		n = 318	
<b>Full-time/short part-time</b>				
High care (0–3 years)	238.5	112.3	357.6	150.4
Medium care (4–15 years)	211.2	101.6	225.6	138.9
Zero care (16+ years)	224.2	121.1	271.1	119.9
Total	218.8	110.2	267.3	137.0
	n = 190		n = 110	
<b>Total</b>				
High care (0–3 years)	296.9	153.2	363.0	157.0
Medium care (4–15 years)	306.6	135.3	332.2	162.4
Zero care (16+ years)	384.8	153.0	423.8	155.0
Total	352.7	152.4	387.4	163.0
	n = 1084		n = 990	

UK respectively). By contrast, the synchronised working time for working households with high levels of care are 297 and 363 minutes for Germany and the UK respectively. In the UK, the amount of synchronised working time for households with high care intensity is just 19 minutes fewer than that for households with low or zero care commitments (95% of the duration). This not only reflects the longer hours worked in the UK but also the greater propensity for dual full-time households where synchronised working hours are more likely.

The patterns across working-time constellations show the greater levels of synchronised working time for households with constellations that involve more female labour supply (Table 8). Overall, dual full-time households in the UK have around half an hour more of synchronised working time (7 hours 40 minutes and 7 hours 12 minutes in the UK and Germany respectively). In the case of households with a long part-time job, the amount of synchronised working time is slightly longer in Germany (312 and 300 minutes in Germany and the UK respectively). However, we find the opposite pattern for households containing a short part-timer with fewer than four hours of synchronised working time in Germany and slightly longer in the case of the UK (219 and 267 minutes in Germany and the UK respectively).

The patterns within working-time constellations also repeat the trend of rising levels of synchronised working time as care intensities fall, with the UK again recording higher levels while controlling for working-time status and care commitments. In Germany, there is a particularly low level of synchronised working time for dual full-time households with high care intensities, but the low sample size in this cell (reflecting the low incidence of the working-time pattern among this group) means that it is difficult to comment further.

For households based around a long part-timer and one full-time job, synchronised working-time minutes are actually lowest for families with medium care intensity. This is particularly so in the UK where the amount of synchronised working time is 37 minutes fewer for households with medium care intensity than those with the highest. Interestingly, here the country differences in the amount of synchronised working time are very small with just a couple of minutes between the recorded results for high and zero care intensity households (Table 8). For households based around a full-timer plus a short part-timer, the country differences reassert themselves, but we do find that once again synchronised working-time minutes are actually lowest for families with medium care intensity, particularly in the UK. This result, and that for the long part-timers, may reflect the desynchronising effects of some part-time work. While part-time work may be carried out during the full-timers' working day – for example, in the morning, over lunch or in the afternoon – part-time work based around early morning shifts or twilight shifts may reduce the synchronisation of working hours.

### **3.2.4 Synchronisation at home**

The flip side of the synchronisation of working lives is the synchronisation of time at home. We can use time spent at home, and not working, as a measure of the potential for balancing working lives even if individuals are not actually engaged in caring or other household tasks.

Overall, we find that German households have more time each day when both working partners are at home and not working or sleeping (Table 9). At the overall level for dual-earner households, this equates to an additional hour and half each day, partly reflecting the longer working hours of couples in the UK. For this measure of synchronised home time, the working hours of the male partner can be particularly important. For example, the short hours of a female partner may free up the male partner to work longer hours, resulting in the measured level of synchronised home time being correspondingly low. The country gap in synchronised home time falls slightly to 84 minutes for households with the highest care responsibility, but remains large and actually rises to an hour and 52 minutes for households with medium care commitments.

The patterns across working-time constellations confirm the country effects with the amount of synchronised home time being much lower in the UK than in Germany. All full-time households have the shortest synchronised home time in both countries: 279 minutes in Germany and 194 minutes in the UK. The difference between working short part-time or long part-time hours has a relatively small impact on the amount of synchronised home time; in the UK, both households have the same amount of synchronised home time (212 minutes), whereas in Germany households with a female working long part-time actually have a greater amount of synchronised home time (309 compared to 297 minutes). Here we may be seeing evidence of both specialisation – as shorter working time for one partner results in longer hours for the other – and also differential scheduling as the timing of full- and part-time jobs overlap resulting in less synchronised home time.

**Table 9**  
**Average (mean) number of minutes of both partners at home: the total length of time partners at home together (excluding time spent sleeping and doing paid work)**

	Germany		UK	
	Mean	Std Dev.	Mean	Std Dev.
<b>Full-time/full-time</b>				
High care (0–3 years)	(303.2)	87.1	(201.0)	104.9
Medium care (4–15 years)	299.9	126.3	178.2	106.6
Zero care (16+ years)	273.0	107.7	199.8	100.0
Total	278.8	111.3	194.4	102.2
	n = 394		n = 612	
<b>Full-timer/long part-time</b>				
High care (0–3 years)	(320.1)	69.3	231.5	125.1
Medium care (4–15 years)	311.2	104.4	216.6	129.2
Zero care (16+ years)	304.5	97.5	201.2	111.7
Total	308.7	98.8	212.6	121.5
	n = 500		n = 346	
<b>Full-timer/short part-time</b>				
High care (0–3 years)	259.1	96.2	(218.3)	77.8
Medium care (4–15 years)	313.5	101.1	(190.7)	88.8
Zero care (16+ years)	284.8	94.4	226.8	97.9
Total	297.3	100.2	212.2	91.7
	n = 190		n = 116	
<b>Total</b>				
High care (0–3 years)	301.1	84.6	217.1	110.0
Medium care (4–15 years)	309.0	109.4	196.6	116.1
Zero care (16+ years)	284.6	104.4	202.6	102.6
Total	294.0	105.6	202.2	107.9
	n = 1084		n = 1074	

Note: figures in parentheses are based on cells of fewer than 25.

Within working-time constellations we again find a rising amount of synchronised home time as care intensity increases, but the impact of care commitments varies. For the UK, there is relatively little difference between the synchronised home time of families with zero and high care intensity, while for Germany there seems to be a step change between medium and no care commitments. For households based around a long-hours part-timer and a full-timer, the pattern is more straightforward – a rise in synchronised home time as care commitments fall – with the UK having around 90-100 fewer synchronised home minutes each day. For households with a short part-timer, it is the medium care intensity families that have the highest synchronised home time in Germany but the lowest in the UK. In fact in Germany, these households have an additional two hours of synchronised home time each day compared to their counterparts in the UK.



### 3.3 Paid and unpaid help for working households

#### 3.3.1 Introduction

In developed service industry economies, the supply of social and personal services often expands to replace previous informal work by formal work provided by the market, and, as such, service sector growth is thought to relate to the increasing amount of time that women devote to paid work and the decreasing amount of time that households have to produce services within the home (Gershuny and Miles, 1983; Bosch, 2004). Although there are a growing number of dual full-time households in Germany, we saw from our exploration of household constellations that there are still a much higher number of German households where females work short part-time hours or who do not work (see Chapter 2). Throughout this report, our time use data also show that both men and women spend longer in paid work in the UK than their counterparts in Germany. Consequently, we would expect levels of outsourcing of domestic work to be greater in the UK than in Germany because of the shorter amount of time available to those in UK households for 'self-production of services'. In order to identify the impact of different courses of tertiarisation in the UK and Germany, we have used information from households about help received for domestic work, both care and household work, to explore the ways in which personal services provided by the market are used and their interaction with time use patterns.

Questions relating to the paid and unpaid help that households had received in the four weeks prior to the survey were asked as part of the household questionnaire in both countries. Households were asked whether or not they had received help for various types of domestic work. Each type of help was asked about separately and the responses aggregated into two groups to reflect our time use activity groupings: care work (consisting of childcare and eldercare/looking after sick adults) and household work (consisting food preparation, cleaning/tidying up, shopping/errands, repairs/construction, vehicle servicing, working in the garden, taking care of pets and transport or removals).<sup>2</sup> Those who had received help in the UK could answer 'yes, all paid help', 'yes, all unpaid help' or 'yes, both types of help', while in Germany respondents were given the choice between 'yes, predominantly paid help' and 'yes, predominantly unpaid help'. As we were primarily interested in instances in which households were formally outsourcing their domestic tasks (i.e. paying another person or organisation to do them), the two categories for paid help in the UK variables were aggregated to give a 'yes, some or all paid' category. In some instances, therefore, we need to approach the results with caution. For example, households that receive predominantly unpaid help would appear in the 'yes, some or all paid' category for the UK, but in the 'yes, predominantly unpaid' category in Germany. While the number of households that this affects is very small, grouping the responses in this way may result in UK households having an artificially high number of people receiving paid help compared to Germany.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Respondents in the UK were asked about help for three further activities: ironing, window cleaning and car washing, but as these activities were not included explicitly in the German survey they have been excluded from our analysis.

<sup>3</sup> For the UK, 18 households said they received both paid and unpaid help, 17 of which were in the high/medium childcare intensity category.

### 3.3.2 Help with care for working parents

In both countries, the vast majority of households receiving care help (both paid and unpaid) were those with younger children (under 12), as may be expected. In the UK, around 40% of these households said they had received care help over the last four weeks compared to only 3.8% of households with low/zero childcare intensity. In Germany, a slightly greater number of households with high/medium childcare intensity (45%) claimed to have received help, compared with just 2.6% of households with low/zero childcare intensity (see Figure 1). While a small fraction of care help received relates to care help for elderly household members or sick adults, the vast majority consists of help for childcare,<sup>4</sup> and so we will focus our analysis on high/medium childcare intensity households.

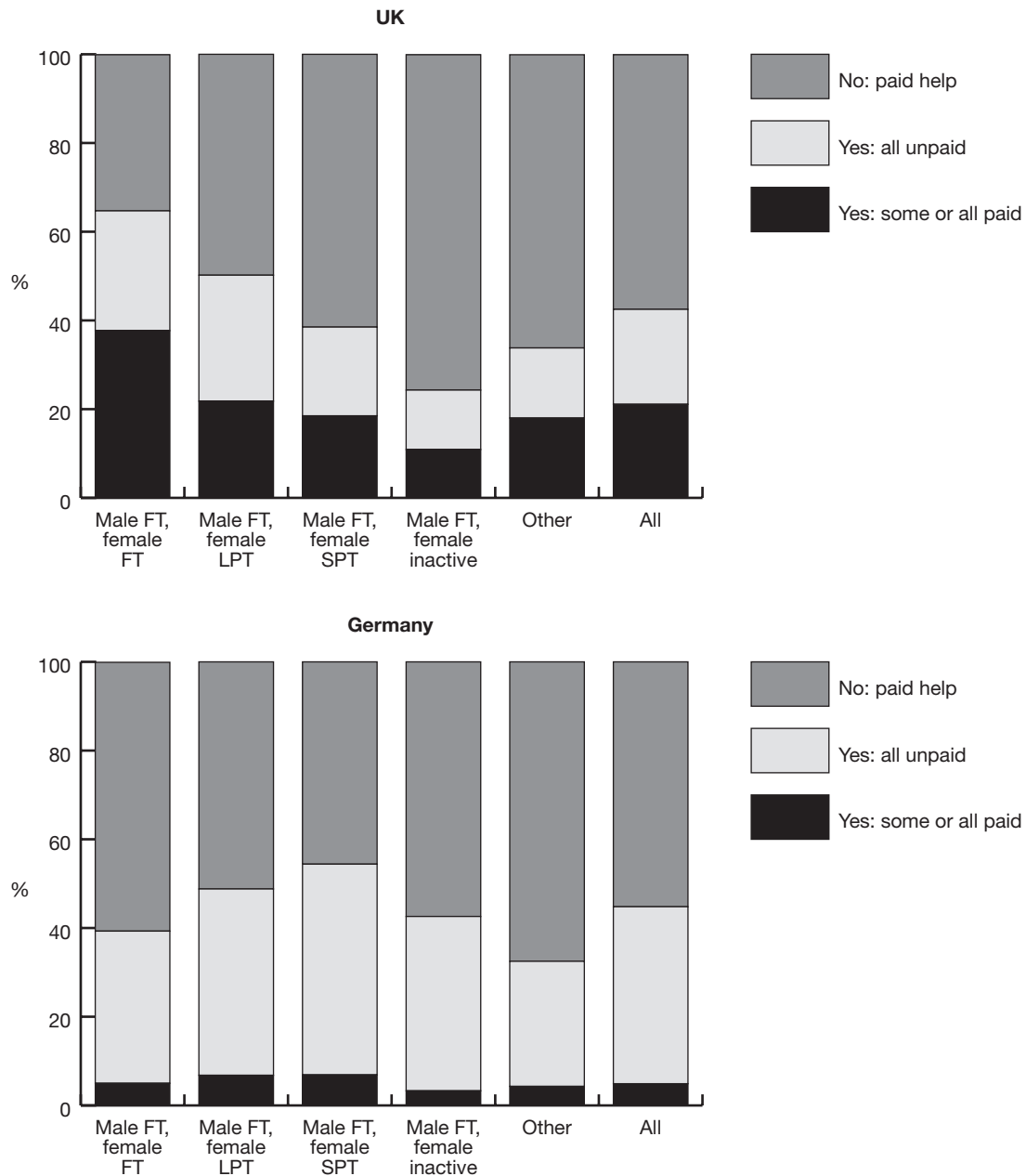
Figure 1 shows the distribution of responses for households with children under the age of 12 in Germany and the UK. For all high/medium childcare intensity households, the levels of paid and unpaid care help combined are just over 40% for each country, with a slightly higher proportion of German households receiving care help than UK households. On average, households in each country seem to outsource a similar amount of care work. The crucial difference between the two countries lies in the distribution of paid and unpaid care help among those who received help: 21.5% of these households in the UK paid for the help they received compared to only 4.5% of the German households. In UK households with high/medium childcare intensity, formal and informal care help is distributed evenly, with a fifth of households receiving help from someone whose paid work it was and a fifth receiving help from someone whose paid work it was not (informal care help). In Germany, paying for care help appears to be far less common, with only one in nine households claiming that the help they received was predominantly paid for.

By controlling for working-time arrangement, further interesting differences between the two countries can be seen (Figure 1). In the UK, households are more likely to receive care help the more hours the female partner spends in formal paid work. The percentage of households receiving paid care help diminishes with the working hours of the female partner: 38% of dual full-time couples paid for some or all of their childcare help, compared to around 20% of couples with a male full-timer, female part-timer arrangement, and 11% of couples where the female partner was not gainfully employed. The balance between paid and unpaid care help also shifts with working-time arrangement: 10% more dual full-time households received paid help rather than unpaid help, whereas for all other working-time arrangements the reverse seems to be the case and unpaid care help is more common than (or at least as common as) paid care help. This pattern also holds for low/zero intensity households, although on a much smaller scale (see Figure 1).

For German households the opposite appears to be true. Incidences of care help (predominantly paid and predominantly unpaid combined) actually increase as the female partner's formal work hours become fewer. While the group in the UK most likely to receive care help is dual full-time couples with young children (65% of households), in Germany it is households with a male full-time, female short part-time working arrangement (55%). The majority of this group receiving help compares with the 39% of

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<sup>4</sup> There were just three cases where households had received both eldercare and childcare help incidences for high/medium intensity families.



**Figure 1**  
**Care help received in high/medium care intensity households**

dual full-time couple households and 49% of households with a male full-time, female long part-time arrangement. The percentage of households receiving predominantly paid care help differs slightly between different working-time arrangements, but again it appears that paid help, ranging from 3% to 7%, becomes slightly more common for households as women spend fewer hours in employment. In households where the female does not work, the incidence of both paid and unpaid help is lower, at 43%. These rather counterintuitive results for Germany, particularly when viewed in comparison with the UK, may be the result of particular welfare arrangements in Germany. The finding that help with care tends to rise as working time falls may reflect the volunteer childcare ‘circles’ that parents can be involved in, and such arrangements would be easier to take advantage of if fewer hours of paid work were undertaken.

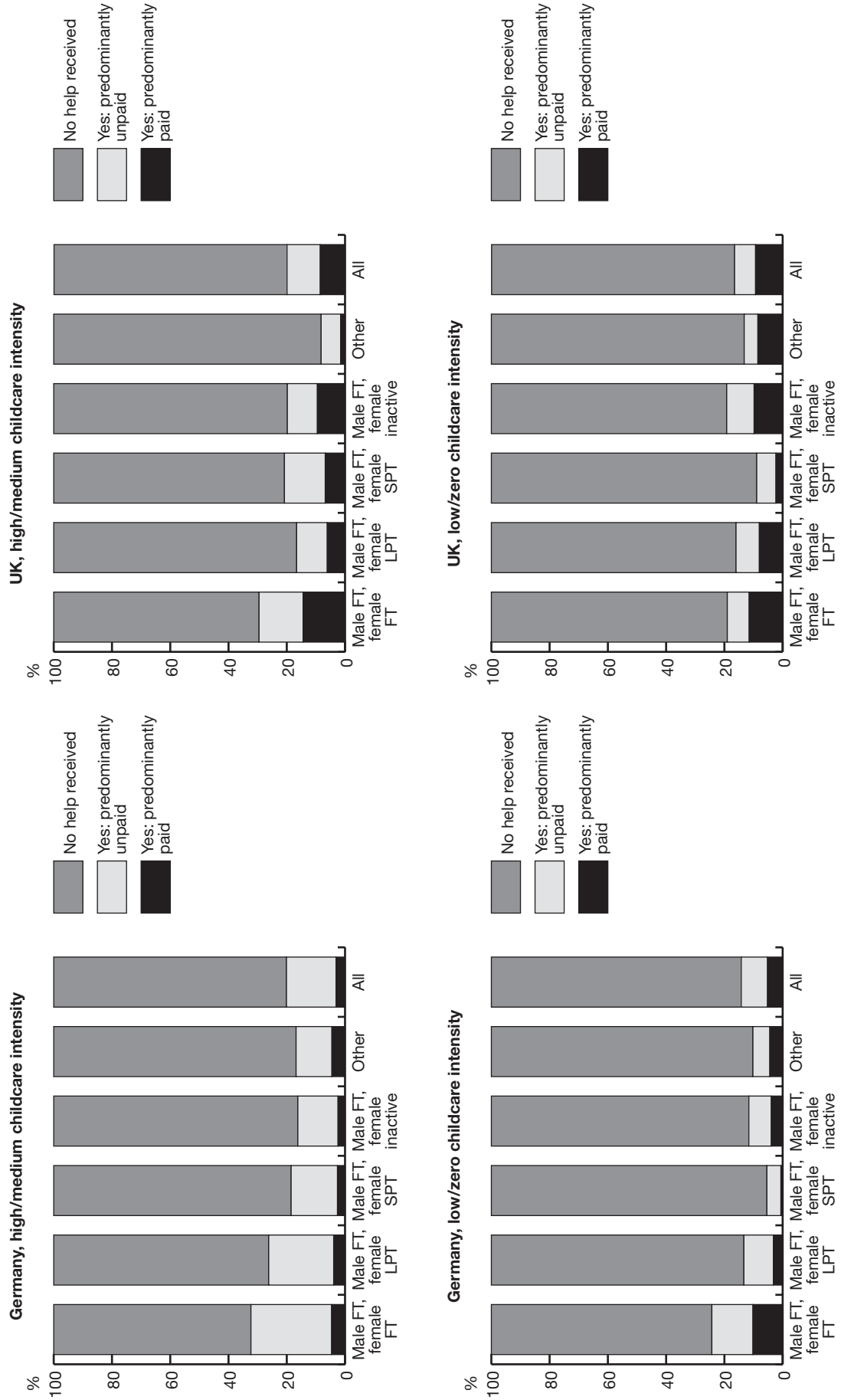
As expected, the very limited availability of formal childcare provision in Germany is reflected in these results as the majority of households appear to rely on informal help with care work. Households that cannot rely on informal help must either buy services formally on the market or forego having them and find alternative means (Bosch, 2004). The lower numbers of households where women work longer than 20 hours per week in Germany compared to the UK may therefore help explain the much lower incidence of paid help for childcare received by German households with young children.. At the time of data collection (2000), the childcare sector in the UK was already expanding although services were (and still are) somewhat limited and very expensive; so this in itself does not explain the higher incidence of paid help in the UK. However, while German families are entitled to welfare state transfers for parents of young children that discourage women from engaging in paid work, there is no such provision for parents in the UK. The higher incidence of paid help in the UK for all working-time arrangements reflects the greater, although still limited when compared to a county like Sweden, availability of formal childcare help in the UK, but also the lack of any viable alternative for working parents who cannot rely on informal help.

### **3.3.3 Household help for working parents**

Overall, around 40% of households in the UK claimed to have received help for household work in the four weeks prior to the survey, compared to 25% of households in Germany (see Figure 2). When grouped by working-time arrangement, dual full-time households in both countries were those most likely to have sought help with household work. Grouping just by childcare intensity, there was little difference between high/medium and low/zero in the UK, while in Germany around 8% fewer low/medium households received help than the high/medium intensity households.

When working-time arrangement and childcare intensity are taken into account, dual full-time households with young children are clearly the most likely group in Germany to have received help (at least 12% more households than any other group). For high/medium childcare intensity households, the percentage of households receiving either paid or unpaid household help reduces as the female partner spends fewer hours in gainful employment. This is mainly reflected in the number of households receiving unpaid help; while unpaid help reduces steadily from 36% of dual full-time households to 16% of households where the female partner does not work, there seems to be no obvious link between working-time arrangement and paid help. Households in Germany with older or no children were less likely to receive help within every working-time arrangement category. For the UK, it is more difficult to identify a pattern. Households with low/zero childcare intensity and a male full-timer, female short part-timer or inactive working arrangement were less likely to have received help than the other groups, but otherwise there are few differences between different childcare intensity groups with 43% of high/medium households and 41% of low/zero households receiving help. Within households with high childcare intensity, dual full-time couples were most likely to have received help (51%), but households with a male full-time, female short part-time arrangement are only marginally less likely to have received help.

Finally, we turn to the differentiation between paid, or predominantly paid, help and unpaid, or predominantly unpaid, help. It is difficult to estimate levels of domestic outsourcing because, due to the informal nature of much of this work, it often goes unrecorded in official economic accounts. For example, ‘activities of households’ – i.e. domestic employment where households are the employers – accounted for just 0.5% of



**Figure 2**  
Household help received (excluding maintenance, construction and repairs)

economic activity in Germany and 0.4% in the UK (Eurostat, 2006). These Eurostat figures suggest that levels of domestic outsourcing are relatively similar in each country. Our results, however, show that over the four-week period households in Germany were far less likely to have received paid help for domestic work than their UK counterparts. In the UK overall, the percentage of households who paid for some or all of their household help was three times that of households who received only unpaid help (32% compared to 11%). This ratio is similar for different childcare intensities and working-time arrangements, with the percentage of households receiving paid help varying between approximately twice and four times the percentage of those receiving only unpaid help. For Germany, however, the reverse appears to be true. The percentage of high/medium childcare intensity households that received predominantly paid help (6.2%) was much lower than that of those who received predominantly unpaid help (22.1%), and this pattern held for different working-time arrangements. Low/medium intensity households were also more likely to receive unpaid help than paid help, although to a lesser extent (12.6% unpaid compared to 7.7% paid).

## 4 Summary

Work–life balance has become one of the most pressing issues facing industrial societies such as Germany and the UK. As the proportion of dual-working households grows with women’s increased participation in the labour market, time pressures increase as families seek to co-ordinate and control their working lives. At the same time, pressures from employers can pull in the opposite direction as organisations try to organise time in order to be more responsive, meet consumer demands and compete both domestically and internationally. These tensions between employer and household needs can be regarded as incompatible and, as such, result in the difficulties that families face in balancing work and non-work life. At the root of these difficulties are the challenges of organising two separate working lives and one family.

Our analysis of time use patterns in working households demonstrates how there are both considerable similarities and differences in the allocation of time across households and countries. In both the UK and Germany, time use for formal work can be seen to increase as childcare intensity decreases. Similarly, as formal work increases, the time spent on ‘care work’ (as opposed to household work) tends to decrease in both countries. These differences in the overall time use distributions are strongly affected by the underlying differences in participation rates by gender across household constellations.

However, there are important country differences that reflect the underlying working hours cultures in the two countries. The long hours of male full-timers in the UK are evident across childcare intensities and the resulting impact on time use within the household, particularly family time, is striking. We also show how female full-timers in the UK experience a greater squeeze on time available for informal work than their German counterparts. Furthermore, we also highlight the important legacy of previous divisions of East and West Germany and how these have an impact not only on household constellations but also on time use within different household forms. The higher participation of East German women in the labour market leads to higher overall levels of formal work but also a different distribution of time use within the household. In some respects, time use patterns in the former East Germany show greater similarities with patterns in the UK than with those in the former West – for example, in terms of gender gaps. Similarly, the longer formal hours for employees in the former East are closer to those in the UK.

The results presented here demonstrate how country differences persist and even where we compare households with similar participation patterns we are able to identify country-specific patterns in both the levels and gendered involvement in different activities. These differences not only represent the different approaches to the organisation of time but also variations in the impact of two of our key variables, care intensity and working-time status. These analyses also provide an important foundation for the exploration of working lives in Germany and the UK in relation to the key themes of our project: blurring, household synchronisation and strategies to balance work and family life in terms of access of paid and unpaid help.

Our analysis of notions of collective time patterns through the construction of societal distributions of time-allocation patterns shows that there are discernible differences between Germany and the UK. By constructing notions of country-specific core hours of work, we were able to identify employees who work before, after and during 'normal' working time. Perhaps surprisingly, we find that the share of employees who confine their work time to core hours is larger in the UK as in Germany more employees work before or after the core hours period. Furthermore, in Germany, a large number of employees have work episodes in phases of the day when fewer workers are engaged in paid work.

Gender patterns in the duration of work are replicated in this societal scheduling of activities. In Germany, there is a stronger contrast to be found in the share of men and women working only in the core period: female employees are three times more likely to confine their working hours to the core period. In the UK, we also find a gender gap in favour of women, but female employees are only twice as likely as their male counterparts to work in core hours. These country patterns hold for different working-time arrangements within the household. However, in households where both partners work full-time, the patterns of blurring are more similar between the sexes, although gender differences are still clearly visible. The gender-specific differences are stronger in households where the male partner works full-time and the female partner works part-time. The male specialisation in longer hours is also evident in working outside core hours while women are even more likely to work within the core band. Similarly, a higher childcare intensity increases the probability that women will work in country-specific core hours. The results show that there are still groups in society who adhere to norms of temporal allocation of formal work – in particular, those with shorter working hours or high care commitments. While such norms enable some (female) employees to carry out their responsibilities not only in the workplace but also at home, they may also free up others (men) to work outside the norm.

The differential temporal scheduling of men's and women's working hours at the societal level may lead to synchronization problems at the household level. As such, synchronisation is a key element in the work–life balance of working families, and time spent together can be used as a measure of the quality of time away from work. Overall, we find that households with two full-time working parents are experiencing the longest joint span of working hours and the shortest periods of time at home or at home with the family. However, full-time hours are not insensitive to care commitments and, as with other working-time constellations, those dual full-time households with children under four years of age tend to spend more time together at home and less time at work. On the other hand, the results show that households containing part-timers are not immune from synchronisation difficulties and the difference in synchronisation between dual full-time and full-time/part-time households is often a matter of minutes rather than hours.

Across most measures of synchronisation, the UK has higher levels of dual work time, longer work spans and less time spent at home. The longer working hours and higher female participation rate in the UK help explain these findings, but at the same time the results show the difficulties associated with dual earning in a long-hours culture. The higher levels of desynchronisation reflect the fragmentation of families' lives as working hours place pressure on the balance of work and family life. This is perhaps most evident in the finding that, overall, German dual-earning households have an additional hour and a half each day when both working partners are at home and not working.



One of the solutions to work–life balance pressures, particularly for those with the financial resources, is to access help for household tasks that may have their allocated time squeezed by dual working patterns. At the outset of this project, we identified the different trajectories of tertiarisation that may shape the capacity to access help. In economies with a highly developed service sector, the supply of social and personal services often expands to replace previous informal work by formal work provided by the market. As a result, the patterns of outsourcing are found to be similar in many ways to what might be expected of the two countries according to their respective pathways of tertiarisation and patterns of formal work (see Chapter 2.3). Households in the UK are more likely to formally outsource both care work and household work than households in Germany. The provision of welfare state transfers in Germany, which perpetuate a more traditional household structure, result in higher numbers of German women either remaining at home to care for their children, or participating in short part-time jobs, lowering the overall use of paid services in this country. However, country differences persist within working-time constellations and in dual full-time households with young children the likelihood of German parents paying for childcare help is still not high. Parents in the UK, faced with both longer hours and a greater availability and relative affordability of care and household services, make greater use of services (Bosch, 2003). It might be the case that higher incomes rather than time pressure are a greater driver for the use of paid services in Germany, reflecting the more expensive and less developed market for private services. Similarly, in the UK, households are more likely to pay for household work while households in Germany receive more help in total, paid and unpaid.

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