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Eastern Germany Ahead in Employment of Women

By Elke Holst and Anna Wieber

Almost a quarter of a century after the fall of the Wall, there are still more women in employment in eastern Germany than in the west. Although the disparity is marginal now, the two regions started from dramatically different levels. In 1991, immediately after reunification, the employment rate for women in western Germany was 54.6 percent, but since then it has increased year on year, reaching 67.5 percent in 2012. In eastern Germany, female employment initially plummeted after the fall of the Wall but then sharply increased again and, at 69.1 percent, slightly exceeded the western German rate in 2012.

In both parts of the country, women are more likely to work part-time today than in the past, although, at 27.8 hours per week in 2013, the actual volume of work carried out by eastern German women is considerably higher than in the west (21.7 hours). According to a study conducted by DIW Berlin using Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) study data, however, many women would prefer to work more hours per week. A comparison of the desired, contractually agreed, and actual weekly working hours of women in the east and west of the country shows that, on average, for eastern German women all values in these three categories far exceed even the maximum value for western German women. In contrast, the majority of employed men in both parts of the country would like to work a 40-hour week, but this is a reality for only 22.6 percent of western German and 29.2 percent of eastern German men. The majority works longer hours, despite the fact that this is unpopular among men. The post-reunification changes had a significant impact on the lifestyles of couples with children: the modernized breadwinner model (father in full-time work/mother part time) is playing an increasing role in both parts of Germany—in western Germany, this has been at the expense of the sole breadwinner model (father as sole earner) and, in the east, at the expense of the equality model (both parents working full-time).

Between 1991 and 2012, the female employment rate in western Germany rose a dramatic 12.9 percentage points to 67.5 percent.¹ Yet even in 2012, the employment rate for women in the west was lower than that in the east. There, the female employment rate was temporarily reduced as a result of German reunification (by 9.3 percentage points up to 1995) and then rose again. At 69.1 percent in 2012, the figure was more than two percentage points above the 1991 level (see Table 1). The labor market participation rates showed slightly less convergence. These figures also include unemployment, and can thus be used to derive information on employment orientation. In the east, the labor market participation rate for 2012 was 75.8 percent, more than 5.2 percentage points above that among women in western Germany.

Among men, the 2012 employment rate in western Germany reached the approximate level of 1991, following slumps in the intervening period. In eastern Germany it rose again after declines up to around 2004, but, at 74.3 percent, did not reach the starting level of 78.5 percent. Employment orientation, measured by the labor market participation rate, was almost equal among men in the east and west of Germany at around 82 percent.

In the period to 2012 there was a particularly marked increase in employment among women and men aged 55 and above, in both parts of Germany (see Figure 1). This development can be linked with the gradual disappearance of favorable arrangements for exiting working life before retirement age, the raising of the regular retirement age from 65 to 67, and associated deductions for early retirement in the 2000s. Among younger people up to 25, the employment rate has fallen, which can be ascribed to increased educational participation and longer vocational training periods. In all age groups from 25 years onwards, the female employment rate in

¹ The micro-census figures for 2013 were not yet available at the time of going to press.

Table 1

Labor Market Participation and Employment Rate by Gender

In percentage of population aged between 15 and 65

	Labor market participation rate ¹		Employment rate ¹	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Former West German Länder (not including Berlin)²				
1991	81.1	60.7	78.4	54.6
1995	81.3	59.9	74.7	54.5
2000	80.7	62.9	74.3	57.7
2004	80.4	64.5	71.7	58.5
2006	81.4	67.1	74.5	61.5
2008	81.9	68.3	77.0	64.1
2010	81.9	69.4	76.6	65.5
2011	82.1	70.5	77.8	67.1
2012	82.1	70.6	78.1	67.5
Former East German Länder (including Berlin)²				
1991	84.2	77.2	78.5	66.8
1995	79.2	73.9	70.5	57.5
2000	77.9	69.3	66.7	57.7
2004	79.9	73.4	62.9	58.1
2006	80.1	73.4	65.9	60.8
2008	81.6	74.7	70.6	64.9
2010	82.8	76.1	72.8	68.2
2011	82.7	76.4	74.0	69.3
2012	82.0	75.8	74.3	69.1

¹ From 2005 onward: annual average.² Deviating regional definitions for employment rates 1991 to 2000: former West Germany including West Berlin / former East Germany including East Berlin.

Sources: Federal Statistical Office; table by DIW Berlin.

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The female employment rate in western Germany has increased dramatically.

the west rose after German reunification. This constitutes a significant societal change.

Share of Mothers Working Full Time Twice as High in East as in West

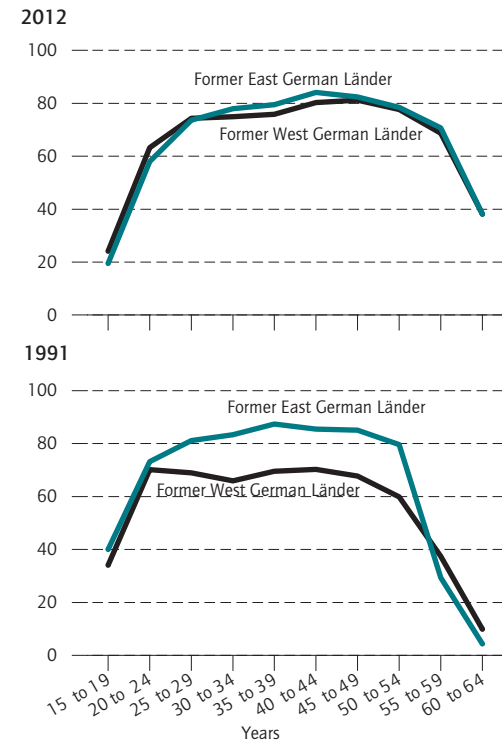
The increase in the female employment rate in western Germany in recent years has been driven particularly by a change in employment behavior among mothers. According to Federal Statistical Office figures,² the female employment rate has converged: in eastern Germany, it fell 6.6 percentage points between 1996 and 2012 to 62.9 percent, while it rose 9.2 percentage points in the west, to 59.7 percent.

² The following statistics, up to the section "Wishes and Reality—Weekly Working Time in East and West," are taken from M. Keller and T. Hausteine, "Vereinbarkeit von Familie und Beruf," *Wirtschaft und Statistik* 12 (2013): 862–82. They relate to mothers and fathers with children under 18 in their household.

Figure 1

Female employment rate in the former West and East German Länder

In percentage of population for each age group



Sources: Federal Statistical Office; graph by DIW Berlin.

© DIW Berlin

The employment rate for western German women has increased in all age groups above 25.

Although the east-west difference in employment volume among mothers with children under 18 in their household has narrowed, it remained very significant in 2012: in eastern Germany, 55.7 percent of mothers worked full time in 2012 (1996: 76.7 percent), in western Germany only 25.2 percent (1996: 37.5 percent). Mothers cohabiting with partners worked full time more often than married mothers.

Modernized Breadwinner Model Gaining Significance in Both Parts of Germany

With the rise in employment among mothers in western Germany, the family model for working couples with children has also changed. In this part of Germany, "only" 30.7 percent of two-parent households live according to the male breadwinner model, with only the father working. In 1996 this figure was 44.8 percent.

Box

Data basis, Definitions, Distinctions

The data basis for the following study is the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) study compiled by DIW Berlin in conjunction with Infratest Sozialforschung. This representative repeat survey of households in Germany has provided a wealth of information on objective living conditions and subjective attitudes, for West Germany since 1984 and for both western and eastern Germany since 1990—that is, even prior to German reunification.

The present study distinguishes between contractually agreed, actual and desired working time. These working time volumes are gathered in the survey using the following questions:

- Contractually agreed working time: "How many hours per week are stipulated in your contract (excluding overtime)?"
- Actual working time: "And how many hours do you generally work, including any overtime?"
- Desired working time: "If you could choose your own working hours, taking into account that your income would change according to the number of hours: How many hours would you want to work?"

The working time volumes below are average values. "Full-time employees" are understood to be persons with a contractually agreed working time of at least 35 hours per week on average. "Part-time employees" are those with an contractually agreed working time of up to 34 hours per week. For persons with no contractually agreed working time, the actual working time is used.

The study covers female and male employees aged from 18 to 64 in eastern and western Germany; that is, private-sector waged and salaried employees and public employees (not including trainees).

In eastern Germany, there has been barely any change (2012: 23.2 percent, 1996: 23.5 percent).

In over half of households with two working parents in eastern Germany, both parents are still in full-time employment (2012: 53.5 percent), thus living according to the equality model. In comparison to 1996, however, when the share was almost three-quarters, it constitutes a drastic decline in this family model (–21.3 percentage points). As many mothers in western Germany have taken up part-time employment, the equality model lost significance there too (2012: 19.1 percent, 1996: 32.6 percent). In the west of Germany, the model of father in full-time employment and mother in part-time employment (the "modernized breadwinner model")³ gained ground, accounting for over three-quarters of these two-parent households by 2012 (76.1 percent, 1996: 65.0 percent). Almost all employed fathers in these households still work full time, in both east and west. Thus, the modernized breadwinner model has gained considerable significance in both parts of Germany—in western Germany at the expense of the sole breadwinner model (father as sole earner),⁴ in the east at the expense of the equality model.

Wishes and Reality—Weekly Working Time in East and West

This section considers how far the altered realities of working time meet employees' wishes and how they have developed in the course of Germany's economic and societal transformations from 1991 to 2013.⁵ Here, too, we differentiate by gender and region (see box).

During the observation period from 1991 to 2013, men's average contractually agreed working time and desired working time remained relatively stable across the country, aside from slight variations. For women, the same figures have been stable only since 2000 (see Figure 2), and there have been greater variations in average actual weekly working hours. This development appears to follow variations in the economy as a whole. There is a greater gap between desired and actual weekly working hours among men than among women. The difference

income at least 60 percent). This proportion was significantly higher in eastern Germany (15.2 percent) than in western Germany (9.3 percent). Taking lone parents into account, the total share of female breadwinners in Germany was 18 percent of all multi-person economically active households. See U. Klammer, C. Klenner, and S. Pfahl, *Frauen als Ernährerinnen der Familie: Politische und rechtliche Herausforderungen*. Policy Paper. BMFSF und Max-Planck-Institut für ausländisches und internationales Sozialrecht (2010).

⁵ See also E. Holst and H. Seifert, "Arbeitszeitpolitische Kontroversen im Spiegel der Arbeitszeitwünsche," *WSI-Mitteilungen* 65, no. 2 (2012): 141–49.

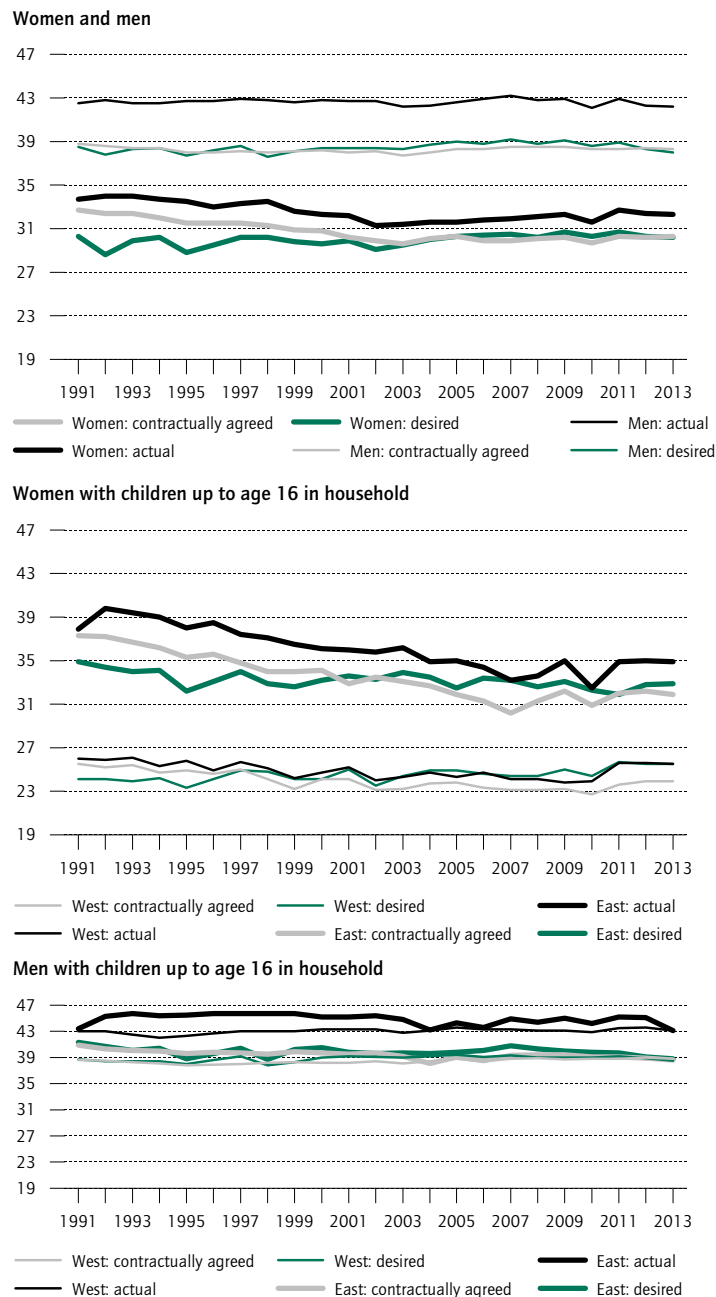
³ See also B. Pfau-Effinger, "Welfare State Policies and the Development of Care Arrangements," *European Societies* 7, no. 2 (2005): 321–47.

⁴ According to other studies on the basis of SOEP, every tenth couple household is supported by a female breadwinner (woman's share of family

Figure 2

Contractually agreed, Actual, and Desired Weekly Working Time¹ for Employees

In hours



¹ 1992 data for western Germany only. No data available for 1996. Values for 1992 and 1996 calculated as arithmetic mean of previous and subsequent year.

Sources: SOEPv30, provisional weighting from SOEPv29 for 2013; calculations by DIW Berlin.

es between the average desired and contractually agreed working time, however, are small for men across the entire period—and from 2000 onwards, the same goes for women. All in all, actual, contractually agreed, and desired weekly working time is, predictably, higher on average among men than among women.

According to SOEP figures, the average contractually agreed working time for men in the entire period was approximately 38 hours per week. In 2013 it was 38.3 hours (−0.5 hours compared to 1991). It thus corresponded almost exactly to the desired weekly working time (38 hours, −0.5 hours compared to 1991). The actual weekly working time was well above this figure, most recently almost as high, at 42.2 hours, as in 1991 (42.5 hours). Men's actual working time initially rose slightly in the course of the economic upturn after 2005, then fell as the economy declined as a result of the financial and economic crisis, only to increase again more recently.

Among women, the average actual and contractually agreed weekly working hours fell from 1991 until around 2003 and then remained relatively stable. As with men, the actual average working time per week was influenced by wider economic factors. In 2013, average actual working time was 32.3 hours (1991: 33.7 hours), thus some two hours higher than the average contractually agreed weekly working time. In 1991 the difference between the actual and contractually agreed figures was one hour. Desired working time was 30.2 hours, remaining almost the same as the 1991 figure (−0.1 hour) and very similar to the average contractually agreed working time (30.3 hours). Thus, there is also a large disparity between desire and reality with respect to average working time volumes for women, though not as large as for men.

Subtracting women's average weekly working time from that of men, the gender-specific differences in actual and contractually agreed working time increased during the period under observation. In terms of actual working hours, the difference was 9.9 hours in 2013 (+1.1 hour in comparison to 1991), while in terms of contractually agreed working time it was 8 hours (+1.9 hours compared to 1991). However, there was a slight reduction in the gender-specific difference in terms of desired weekly working time (2013: 7.8 hours, 1991: 8.2 hours). During phases of economic upturn, men extended their working time more substantially and thereby contributed to the enlargement of the gender difference in actual and contractually agreed working times. During the economic and financial crisis, the difference then declined again.

Desired and Actual Working Time for Eastern German Mothers Still Significantly Higher than in the West

Whereas this article has so far discussed the changes in family models due to the altered employment patterns of mothers in two-parent households with children, the focus is now on the volume of employment among women and men with children up to 16 in the household; that is, including lone parents (see Figure 2).⁶ It becomes clear here that fathers in eastern and western Germany work the same number of hours per week (2013: 43.1 hours) but significantly more than mothers in eastern and western Germany. There are clear east-west differences among mothers, in contrast: in 2013, mothers in eastern Germany worked over nine hours longer, at an average 34.9 hours of actual working time, than mothers in the west (25.5 hours). This difference is linked with the gender regime standard in the GDR. Until 1989, the societal model was a woman in full-time employment, accompanied by practical preconditions such as childcare provision.⁷ This major difference to western Germany—where women's role as mothers was more strongly emphasized, child care was rather privatized, and paid work for mothers was generally seen merely as a source of supplementary income⁸—is presumably the reason why mothers' desires and realities are on average so strongly divergent in the east and not in the west. Mothers' desired average weekly working time increased in the west from 1991 to 2013 by 1.4 hours, while it fell by two hours in the east. On average, actual working time in the west now corresponds to mothers' desired working time (2013: 25.5 hours). In the east, actual working time is two hours higher than the desired time. Thus, the average desired working time among working mothers in eastern and western Germany still differs considerably (by 7.4 hours).

Among fathers, desired and actual working time are much further apart—and at a far higher level—than among mothers. In both parts of Germany since reunification, significantly lower working hours are desired than are actually worked. The difference between actual and desired working time among fathers in the east

Table 2

Contractually agreed, Actual, and Desired Weekly Working Time¹ for Women in Full-Time Employment

In hours

	Western Germany			Eastern Germany		
	Contractually agreed	Actual	Desired	Contractually agreed	Actual	Desired
1991	38.6	41.2	34.7	40.4	40.5	37.0
1992	38.6	40.9	34.4	40.0	42.3	36.6
1993	38.5	40.9	34.5	39.9	42.6	36.1
1994	38.4	40.7	34.8	39.8	42.7	36.2
1995	38.4	41.3	33.7	39.7	43.3	34.9
1996	38.2	40.7	34.4	39.7	43.0	36.1
1997	38.4	41.5	35.1	39.5	43.5	37.3
1998	38.3	41.3	34.9	39.5	43.4	35.8
1999	38.3	41.2	35.7	39.3	42.4	35.9
2000	38.6	41.6	35.7	39.5	42.6	36.4
2001	38.4	41.5	36.0	39.3	42.9	37.2
2002	38.5	41.3	35.7	39.4	42.7	37.0
2003	38.5	41.4	35.9	39.5	42.9	37.3
2004	38.5	41.4	36.1	39.2	42.5	37.3
2005	38.9	41.8	36.7	39.2	43.2	37.4
2006	38.7	42.1	36.5	39.2	43.3	37.8
2007	38.9	42.2	37.0	39.3	43.8	37.8
2008	39.0	42.5	36.4	39.2	43.1	37.1
2009	38.8	42.4	36.3	39.2	43.1	37.5
2010	38.9	42.1	36.4	39.3	42.2	37.5
2011	39.0	42.8	36.8	39.6	42.9	37.3
2012	39.1	42.5	36.5	39.4	42.8	36.6
2013	39.1	42.5	36.4	39.2	43.3	36.9

1 1992 data for western Germany only. No data available for 1996. Values for 1992 and 1996 calculated as arithmetic mean of previous and subsequent year.

Sources: SOEPv30, provisional weighting from SOEPv29 for 2013; calculations by DIW Berlin.

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The contractually agreed working time of women in full-time employment had practically equalized between east and west by 2013.

was most recently 4.3 hours (2013: actual weekly working time 43.1 hours, desired 38.8 hours), and in the west 4.6 hours (actual 43.1 hours, desired 38.5 hours). Fathers' desired work volume was thus at about the same level as their contractually agreed working time (2013: west 38.8 hours, east 38.6 hours).

Men in Full-Time Employment Want to Work around Five Hours Less per Week

For women in full-time employment, there has been a significant convergence between east and west regarding contractually agreed, desired, and actual working time (see Table 2). This was particularly the case in the most recent years of the observation period, with the convergence coming from both sides. It is interesting

⁶ These women and men with children in the household are referred to hereafter as mothers and fathers. Strictly speaking, the children may not be their biological offspring. In some cases, they may be the children of other family members. It is assumed, however, that the adults adopt a function corresponding to a mother/father role toward the children in the household.

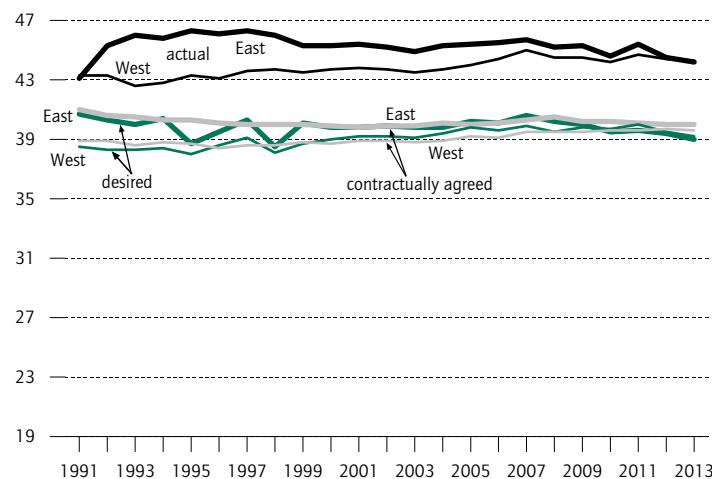
⁷ See, for instance, H.M. Nickel, "Geschlechterverhältnis in der Wende. Individualisierung versus Solidarisierung?" Inaugural lecture, July 5, 1993, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Social Studies Faculty (1993), and H.M. Nickel, "Mitgestalterinnen des Sozialismus – Frauenarbeit in der DDR," in *Frauen in Deutschland 1945–1992*, ed. G. Helwig and H.M. Nickel (Berlin: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1993), 233–56.

⁸ See Pfau-Effinger, "Welfare State Policies."

Figure 3

Contractually agreed, Actual, and Desired Weekly Working Time¹ for Men in Full-Time Employment

In hours



1 1992 data for western Germany only. No data available for 1996. Values for 1992 and 1996 calculated as arithmetic mean of previous and subsequent year.

Sources: SOEPv30, provisional weighting from SOEPv29 for 2013; calculations by DIW Berlin.

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Eastern and western German men in full time employment work about 5 hours per week longer than desired.

that the average actual weekly working time for women in full-time employment in eastern Germany directly after reunification was 40.5 hours, this was below the corresponding figure for western Germany (41.2 hours). This had already changed by 1992 and women in eastern Germany have since been ahead (1993: 43.3 hours, western Germany: 42.5 hours). In contrast, the average contractually agreed weekly working time of women in full-time employment in eastern Germany fell by 1.2 hours to 39.2 hours per week, while in western Germany there was a slight increase of 0.5 hours between 1991 and 2013 to 39.1 hours. Interestingly, women in full-time employment in western Germany now wish for a weekly working time of 36.4 hours on average, on a similar level to their eastern German counterparts (2013: 36.9 hours, 1991: west 34.7, east 37 hours).

A conspicuous factor among men in full-time employment is the gap between reality and wishes in terms of working time, in all years—this phenomenon was more marked in eastern than western Germany for a long time (see Figure 3). The difference between actual and desired weekly working time reached a peak in 1995 (west 5.3 hours, east 7.6 hours) and then settled at around five hours in both parts of Germany. Between

1991 and 2013, the actual working time of men in full-time employment rose by about one hour. It was roughly equal in both regions by this point (west: 44.3 hours, east: 44.2 hours per week). Desired weekly working time increased in the west (39.2 hours, +0.7) and decreased in the east (39 hours, -1.7 hours). All in all, the gender-specific differences are at their lowest among people in full-time employment.

Women in Part-Time Employment Work Significantly Longer in Eastern Germany than in the West

Part-time and marginal part-time employment are women's domains in Germany.⁹ Only relatively few men take up these forms of employment. The following analysis of reduced paid employment in eastern and western Germany (hereafter "part-time work") is therefore focused on women.

The clear differences in employment orientation between women in eastern and western Germany previously observed among mothers are repeated among part-time employees in total (see Figure 4). In eastern Germany, all the average working time values examined are above the highest average value among women in western Germany—although to a slightly lesser extent than among mothers specifically. The east-west difference in desired working time is particularly large—indicating dissatisfaction among eastern German women with the volume of their part-time work. The large gap between wishes and reality applies across the entire observation period, although the east-west difference has decreased over time. Whereas eastern German women wanted to work 10.2 hours longer than western German women in 1991, by 2013 this difference was 6.8 hours. A similar development can be observed in contractually agreed working time: the east-west gap has narrowed from 6.2 to 4.9 hours. Although women working part-time in western Germany also want to work more hours, the desired number of working hours was only 1.5 hours above the actual working time, a comparatively small difference (east: +2.2 hours). Looking at the average figures, one might assume a high degree of satisfaction with the vol-

9 On the low percentage of men and gender-specific trends in the number of employees subject to social insurance in full-time and part-time work since 1999, see for example Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, www.bpb.de/nachschlagen/zahlen-und-fakten/soziale-situation-in-deutschland/61705/teilzeitbeschaeftigte, accessed September 5, 2014. On the development of marginal part-time work, see for example Deutscher Bundestag, Entwicklung der geringfügigen Beschäftigung in Deutschland, Bundestags-Drucksache 17/6382 (2011), and most recently Bundesagentur für Arbeit, Beschäftigung – Die aktuellen Entwicklungen in Kürze – August 2014, statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/Navigation/Statistik/Statistiknach-Themen/Beschaeftigung/Beschaeftigung-Nav.html, accessed September 5, 2014.

ume of employment in western Germany. However, the following findings relativize this impression.

Weekly Working Time in Eastern and Western Germany in 2013 in Detail: Long Weekly Working Hours Also Unpopular among Men

The previous sections have presented average values for weekly working hours among people in full-time and part-time employment. This section examines actual and desired working time in detail and contrasts the percentages of women and men in the various time categories. The analyses refer to the year 2013.

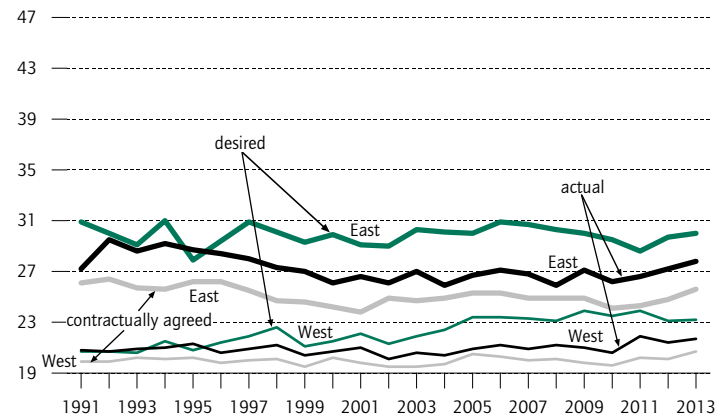
In this analysis, it is once again the major differences between women in western and eastern Germany that stand out (see Figure 5). The majority of employed women in eastern Germany want to work full time or nearly full time. The working time preferences of women in western Germany, however, vary significantly—including in the part-time sector. Almost one-third (32 percent) of employed women in eastern Germany wish for a volume of 40 working hours per week, while only 19 percent are actually employed for 40 hours a week. In western Germany, 18 percent would like to be employed for 40 hours per week and 14 percent actually work this number of hours. The second most frequently desired working time bracket among eastern German women is 30 to 34 hours per week (28 percent). This volume of work is also popular in western Germany (20 percent, although actually worked by only 10 percent) and is preferred slightly more frequently than a working time of 20 to 24 hours per week (15 percent, actually worked by 12 percent). Among women, the disparities between actual and desired working time are greatest in the time brackets 20 to 24 hours and 30 to 34 hours. Women in both parts of Germany rarely wish for a very short working time of below 15 hours or long weeks of over 40 hours. However, it is rather more frequent for women in western Germany to actually work short weeks and for women in eastern Germany to work long weeks.

Actual working time and desired working time are significantly more similar among men in the two parts of Germany (see Figure 6) than among women. The preferred working time is a 40-hour week—favored by 42 percent of western German and 53 percent of eastern German men. However, significantly fewer men actually work this volume of hours (west 23 percent, east 29 percent). Many men work over 40 hours per week, but few of them wish to do so. For example, 14 percent of western German men and 15 percent of eastern German men work 45 hours per week, while only 4 percent (west) and 3 percent (east) want to do so. The differences

Figure 4

Contractually agreed, Actual, and Desired Weekly Working Time¹ for Women in Part-Time Employment

In hours



¹ 1992 data for western Germany only. No data available for 1996. Values for 1992 and 1996 calculated as arithmetic mean of previous and subsequent year.

Sources: SOEPv30, provisional weighting from SOEPv29 for 2013; calculations by DIW Berlin.

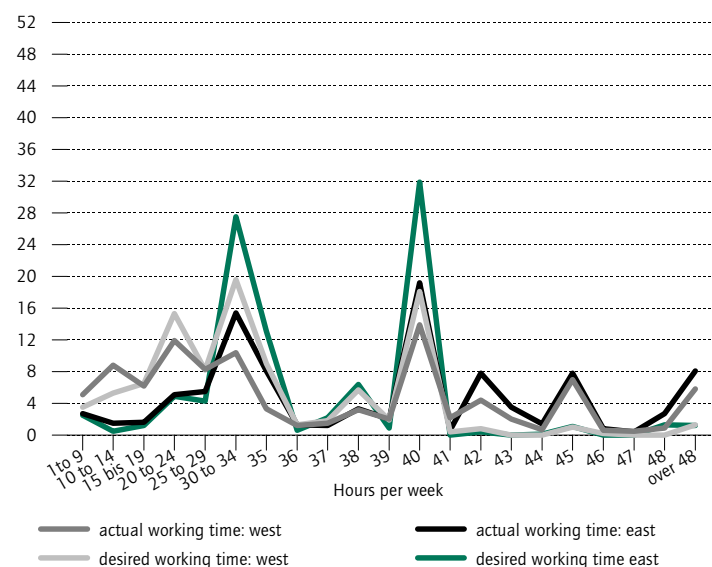
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The working time of women in part-time employment is much higher in the east than in the west.

Figure 5

Actual and Desired Working Time of Female Employees in 2013

In percentages



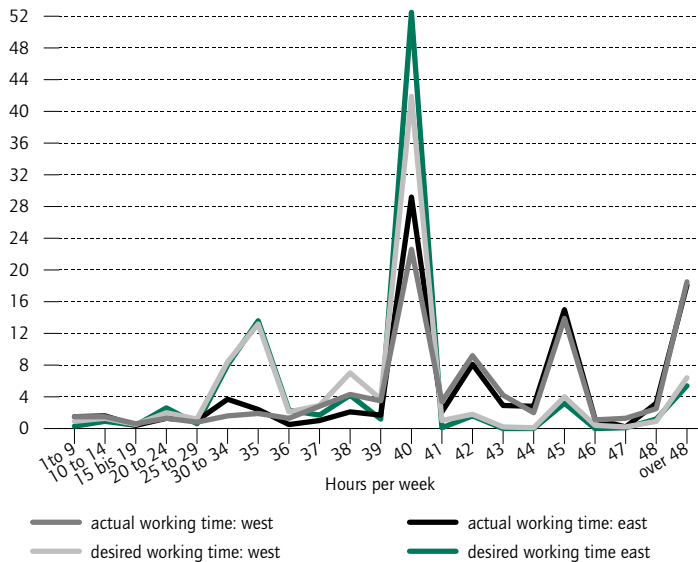
Sources: SOEPv30, provisional weighting from SOEPv29; calculations by DIW Berlin.

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The majority of eastern German women wants to work full time or almost full time.

Figure 6

Actual and Desired Working Time of Male Employees, 2013 In percentages



Sources: SOEPv30, provisional weighting from SOEPv29; calculations by DIW Berlin.

© DIW Berlin

Men prefer a 40-hour week, but often work longer.

are even clearer in the case of very long working weeks of 49 hours and more, which are worked by around 19 percent of men in western Germany and 18 percent of men in eastern Germany, but are only preferred by every twentieth man in employment. A working week of 35 hours is preferred by 13 percent of western German and 14 percent of eastern German men, but only very few actually work this few hours. Men rarely wish for working time below 35 hours per week—and very few of them actually work such short weeks.

Summary and Conclusions

Since German reunification, female employment in western Germany—particularly for mothers—has seen a constant and strong increase. In eastern Germany, actual female employment initially plummeted but is now above the western German level again. Women's employment orientation, however, is significantly higher in eastern Germany, as indicated by differences in labor market participation and the volume of work. Overall, developments in both parts of Germany have been accompanied by a rise in part-time and marginal part-time work.

Women's contractually agreed and actual weekly working time has fallen. The modernized breadwinner model has become more prevalent in both parts of Germany. The most marked differences between eastern and western Germany in the years 1991 to 2012 are found when comparing mothers: mothers in eastern Germany work a considerably higher number of hours. In western Germany, the average contractually agreed and actual working time fell only in the group of mothers, while it rose slightly in all other groups included in the analysis—that is, among fathers and among women and men working full and part time. The desired weekly working time among mothers in western Germany rose by 1.4 hours on average between 1991 and 2013—2.5 hours among women in part-time work and 1.7 hours for women in full-time jobs. In western Germany, since 1991 desired weekly working time has fallen only among fathers, and only to a small extent. The case is different in eastern Germany: there, not only fathers but all other groups in the analysis wanted to work less on average in 2013 than in 1991, though this decrease was greatest among fathers. Although conditions have changed and childcare options have been reduced in many cases, the standard GDR model of the woman in full-time employment still appears to influence women in eastern Germany almost a quarter of a century after reunification.

When looking for potential for expanding the present volume of work—for instance in the context of demographic change—the analysis based on SOEP data confirms that such potential exists first and foremost among women. The extent to which this working time potential can be realized, however, depends essentially on how far the demand for labor can be matched with the supply of labor, for instance with regard to region and qualification.

Many women and men work longer hours than they would like to—even when taking into account changes in their earnings that would result from the preferred working time. Long working weeks of over 40 hours are not popular among either men or women. Women wish for a wider spectrum of working volumes than men. In Germany as a whole, the gender differences in terms of actual and contractually agreed working time have increased from 1991 to 2013. This trend is reversed only when it comes to desired weekly working hours.

The findings indicate a considerable need for organizations to take action on restructuring weekly working time. The decline in labor supply due to demographic change could make that need even more urgent. Future working time models should therefore recognize new divisions of labor within the family as soon as possible. One example is the model of family-friendly working

times for new fathers and mothers, previously examined by DIW Berlin.¹⁰

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¹⁰ See, for example, K.-U. Müller, M. Neumann, and K. Wrohlich, "Bessere Vereinbarkeit von Familie und Beruf durch eine neue Lohnersatzleistung bei Familienarbeitszeit," DIW Wochenbericht 46 (2013).

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