Resendez, Sarahi; Li, Jianghong; Pollmann-Schult, Matthias

Article — Published Version

Nonstandard work schedules and work-life balance in dual-earner households: The role of parenthood

Journal of Family Research - JFR

Provided in Cooperation with:
WZB Berlin Social Science Center

Suggested Citation: Resendez, Sarahi; Li, Jianghong; Pollmann-Schult, Matthias (2026) : Nonstandard work schedules and work-life balance in dual-earner households: The role of parenthood, Journal of Family Research - JFR, ISSN 2699-2337, University of Bamberg Press, Bamberg, Vol. 38, pp. 1-22, https://doi.org/10.20377/jfr-1259

This Version is available at:
https://hdl.handle.net/10419/334722

JFR JOURNAL OF FAMILY RESEARCH

Nonstandard work schedules and work–life balance in dual-earner households: The role of parenthood

Sarahi Resendez[1,2], Jianghong Li[1,3,4] & Matthias Pollmann-Schult[5]

[1] WZB Berlin Social Science Center, [2] Hertie School, [3] Curtin University, [4] The Kids Research Institute Australia, [5] University of Siegen

Address correspondence to: Sarahi Resendez, WZB Berlin Social Science Center, Reichpietschufer 50, 10785 Berlin (Germany). Email: sarahi.resendezchavez@wzb.eu

— Article

Abstract

Objective: This study examines whether nonstandard work schedules (NSWS) improve or hinder work–life balance (WLB) for parents and non-parents in dual-earner households.

Background: Previous research shows that NSWS can negatively affect workers' well-being. However, less is known about whether and to what extent these effects differ between parents and childless individuals.

Method: Using data from the first wave of the German Family Demography Panel Study (FReDA), linear regression models are applied to assess whether the effect of NSWS on WLB is influenced by family circumstances.

Results: Parenthood is generally associated with lower WLB. However, the negative association between NSWS and WLB is more pronounced among childless workers. Notably, mothers of young children (ages 0–5), as well as fathers of school-aged children (ages 6–12) working NSWS report higher WLB than their childless counterparts.

Conclusion: Parents with NSWS in dual-earner households do not necessarily experience lower WLB than childless workers. In some cases, NSWS may even help parents better reconcile work and family responsibilities.

Key words: nonstandard work schedules, work–life balance, parenthood, Germany

1. Introduction

In recent decades, an increasing number of individuals have been working evenings, nights, and on weekends as a result of the emerging 24/7 economy and the growing need for more flexible work arrangements (Bolino et al., 2021; Presser, 2003). Such work schedules, also called "nonstandard work schedules" (NSWS), fall outside the temporal range of 9am to 5pm, Monday through Friday. In the European Union (EU), approximately 17 percent of employed people typically work in the evening or night, and 33 percent regularly work on weekends (Eurostat, 2023). Existing research has extensively documented the negative effects of NSWS on the physical and mental health of workers (Bolino et al., 2021; Moreno et al., 2019; Suleiman et al., 2021). However, less research has focused on working parents and examined whether they are more (or less) affected by NSWS than childless individuals.

NSWS can affect the personal and social lives of workers by disrupting regular routines and participation in broader community or family activities (Presser, 2003; Strazdins et al., 2006). As a result, workers may have less time for meaningful interactions with family and friends, which can foster feelings of isolation and strained relationships (Presser, 2003). These challenges can undermine overall work–life balance (WLB), defined broadly as an individual's ability to manage and integrate work and non-work responsibilities (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011; Kirchmeyer, 2000). Empirical research further shows that NSWS are directly associated with reduced WLB, as workers often find it difficult to coordinate work with leisure and family time (Arlinghaus et al., 2019; Bolino et al., 2021).

While NSWS affect all workers, their effects can be particularly pronounced for parents with dependent children. These work schedules often overlap with typical family time (such as evenings and weekends), when caregiving and bonding typically take place. In such contexts, workers frequently experience increased work–family conflict (WFC), struggling to meet both job demands and family obligations (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). This challenge is further amplified in dual-earner families, where both partners engage in paid work, making it increasingly difficult to coordinate work and caregiving roles (Craig & Powell, 2012; Yucel & Borgmann, 2022).

Existing literature on the relationship between NSWS and parents' ability to balance work and family life has provided mixed findings. Studies from the United States and Australia generally report a strong, negative link between NSWS and work–family balance (Davis et al., 2008; Zhao, Cooklin, Richardson, et al., 2021), whereas evidence from European countries is more varied. For instance, Moilanen and colleagues (2019) found a positive association between NSWS and WFC for mothers in Finland, but not among those in the Netherlands or the United Kingdom. Similarly, Taiji and Mills (2020) reported a connection between NSWS and increased difficulties managing work and family obligations for women in Germany, but not for men.

However, some studies highlight potential benefits of NSWS for parents. Under certain conditions, NSWS can support the balance between work and family responsibilities. For example, Täht and Mills (2012) found that working NSWS allows parents to engage in "tag-team" parenting, where parents desynchronize their work schedules to ensure continuous parental presence (Boushey, 2006; Hattery, 2001). Such arrangements may enhance family cohesion and ultimately ease tensions between work and family roles (Täht & Mills, 2012).

Although a number of studies have examined the relationship between NSWS and work–family reconciliation, this research has been conducted mainly in neoliberal welfare regimes such as Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Davis et al., 2008; Tammelin et al., 2017; Zhao, Cooklin, Butterworth, et al., 2021; Zhao, Cooklin, Richardson, et al., 2021). These studies typically reflect the context of neoliberal labor markets, where long or irregular hours are more common and policies for reconciling work and care are limited (Taiji & Mills, 2020).

In contrast to liberal regimes, corporatist welfare states such as Germany, France, Austria, and Belgium, combine moderate welfare support with more traditional family norms (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Lewis, 2009). Germany is particularly relevant for investigating NSWS and WLB: despite a gradual shift toward dual-earner norms, caregiving responsibilities remain highly gendered and part-time employment among mothers remains a norm (Yucel & Borgmann, 2022). Additionally, the limited availability of formal childcare in some regions makes it challenging to reconcile NSWS with family responsibilities (Huber & Rolvering, 2023). Moreover, Germany's strong regulation of work hours, the widespread availability of part-time and flexible work arrangements (Ministry of Justice, 2025), and cultural emphasis on preserving boundaries between work and personal time also shape the WLB of childless individuals (Lott, 2015). These

structural and cultural features make Germany a compelling case for exploring how NSWS are related to WLB in a corporatist welfare context for both parents and non-parents.

The present study

This study aims to bridge the above-described knowledge gap by examining the relationship between NSWS and WLB among parents and childless couples in Germany. For this study, the term "family" refers to cohabiting parents with dependent children. This group is contrasted with cohabiting couples who do not have dependent children, although they may have adult children living outside the household.

Most existing research on NSWS and WLB has primarily focused on parents (Arlinghaus et al., 2019; Craig & Powell, 2011; Suleiman et al., 2021). In contrast, fewer studies have explored whether NSWS influence the WLB of parents and non-parents in different ways – a gap this study aims to address. By differentiating between parents with dependent children and childless couples, we explore whether, and to what extent, parenthood moderates the association between NSWS and WLB. Moreover, we examine whether the age of the youngest child living at home interacts with NSWS to shape WLB, shedding light on the heterogenous effects of NSWS among parents. To answer these questions, we use nationally representative, large-scale household survey data.

2. Theoretical considerations

2.1 Nonstandard work schedules and work–life balance

WLB refers to the equilibrium individuals seek between the demands of paid work and responsibilities or activities in their personal lives, such as family obligations, leisure, and self-care (Kirchmeyer, 2000). When this balance is disrupted, individuals may experience work–life conflict (WLC), which encompasses incompatibilities between work and non-work roles that can negatively affect caregiving, social relationships, or personal well-being. A core theoretical lens for examining WLC is the concept of inter-role conflict, defined as a form of tension that occurs when the demands of one role (e.g., work) are incompatible with the expectations of another role (e.g., family) (Kahn et al., 1964). WLC represents a specific form of inter-role conflict, extending beyond the narrower scope of WFC as conceptualized by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), to include a broader range of non-work domains.

According to Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) framework, WFC manifests in three ways: time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based. Time-based conflict arises when work hours overlap with time that would typically be allocated for personal or family activities, reducing time for childcare, household responsibilities, or leisure (Moilanen et al., 2019; Zhao, Cooklin, Richardson, et al., 2021). Strain-based conflict occurs when stress or pressure from one role negatively affects performance in another role. For instance, work-related stress can lead to exhaustion or irritability, making it difficult to engage in family activities or responsibilities effectively (Lozano et al., 2016). Behavior-based conflict stems from differences in role expectations across domains. For example, an individual who adopts an authoritative and decisive approach at work may struggle to shift to a more nurturing and empathetic role in the family setting (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

We draw on the WLB framework and inter-role conflict theory to analyze the broader implications of NSWS. Building on Greenhaus & Beutell's (1985) model, we adopt the view of WLB as a bidirectional construct, encompassing both work interference with personal life (WIPL) and personal life interference with work (PLIW). This distinction allows for a more nuanced understanding of how demands in one domain can disrupt functioning in the other. While our primary focus is on overall WLB, we also investigate whether the associations with NSWS differ when WIPL and PLIW are considered separately.

NSWS– including evening, night, and weekend work, as well as irregular or unpredictable schedules (e.g., changing shifts or on-call duties) – pose significant challenges for individuals and families striving to maintain WLB (Presser, 2003). These schedules often disrupt regular routines, making it difficult to preserve consistent personal time, social relationships, and family interactions (Suleiman et al., 2021).

While NSWS can negatively affect the health and well-being of all workers (Bolino et al., 2021; Moreno et al., 2019; Suleiman et al., 2021), the consequences may be especially acute for parents who must coordinate caregiving and household responsibilities. Empirical studies show that NSWS can lead to sleep disruption, stress, exhaustion, and strain-based WFC (Li et al., 2014; Moreno et al., 2019; Short et al., 2015), with these stresses often spilling over into family life and affecting both marital quality and children's emotional well-being (Maume & Sebastian, 2012; Suleiman et al., 2021). However, the experience of NSWS among parents is not solely negative. In some families, parents choose to work these schedules in order to perform tag-team parenting, in which partners alternate work hours to ensure one parent is always available for childcare (Täht & Mills, 2012).

Social production theory (Lindenberg, 1996) provides a useful framework for understanding how families make such decisions. This theory posits that individuals and households strive to produce well-being through combinations of resources, including time, income, and social support. NSWS can thus be understood not merely as a constraint, but as a strategy to optimize the allocation of limited resources. Since typical childcare facilities operate within standard business hours, parents need to find alternative solutions for early mornings or late evenings, such as hiring private childcare (if they can afford it) or relying on informal arrangements with friends and family (Craig & Powell, 2012). For parents of young children, working NSWS can be a deliberate choice to minimize non-parental or non-relative childcare (Boushey, 2006; Hattery, 2001; Täht & Mills, 2012). This is perhaps reflected in the high prevalence of NSWS among parents. For example, in Europe, 34.4 percent of parents with children living at home work during the evening, at night, or on weekends (Han et al., 2025).

From the perspective of social production theory (Lindenberg, 1996), tag-team parenting is an adaptive strategy to efficiently produce key elements of well-being, particularly affection, comfort, and behavioral confirmation without incurring the financial or emotional costs of outsourcing childcare. NSWS and tag-team parenting reflect an intentional, if constrained, effort to optimize well-being under structural and economic limitations. In this way, social production theory helps highlight how families make such choices not just out of necessity, but as rational responses to complex resource negotiations within contemporary family life.

It is important to acknowledge that whether, and to what extent, NSWS may impact well-being depends on institutional settings. For example, in Germany, collective bargaining agreements and strong labor protections may increase workers' ability to choose or negotiate schedules that align with family responsibilities. In such contexts, working NSWS may reflect workers' agency and it may even help improve WLB. In contrast, in neoliberalist countries like the United States, NSWS often indicate labor market precarity (Presser, 2003) rather than a voluntary choice. In coordinated market economies, such as Germany and the Netherlands, NSWS may be less detrimental, or even advantageous, when accompanied by supportive family policies and social norms (Taiji & Mills, 2020).

In sum, we draw on inter-role conflict theory and social production theory to conceptualize NSWS not merely as external constraints, but as embedded within a complex set of choices, negotiations, and institutional frameworks. While NSWS can present significant challenges for WLB, particularly among parents, they can also enable strategic adaptations that enhance parental involvement and reduce reliance on external childcare. Through approaches like tag-team parenting, couples can maintain consistent caregiving and stay actively engaged in their children's lives. These strategies, while often born of necessity, may help foster a more nurturing family environment and promote greater balance between work and family life.

2.2 The role of child age

Working parents often experience tension between work and family responsibilities, and the level of conflict varies depending on the age of their children (Allen & Finkelstein, 2014). Parents of young children (0–5 years) face high caregiving demands, such as feeding, establishing emotional bonding, and providing continuous supervision, which can heighten conflicts between work and family roles. With school–aged children (6–12 years), parental responsibilities take a different form. While these children spend part of the day in school, parents are often engaged in more structured and fragmented tasks, including supervising homework, attending parent–teacher meetings, and managing extracurricular activities, all of which require considerable parental time and involvement (Wight et al., 2008). Adolescents (13–17 years) pose distinct challenges, as they need support in navigating academic responsibilities, social relationships, and

extracurricular commitments – often requiring schedule adjustments by parents. Given these varying demands, parents of young children may benefit from working NSWS, as it could help them manage their intense caregiving demands more effectively, potentially reducing strain between work and family obligations.

Young children require more intensive, hands-on caregiving. This need is especially pronounced during mornings and evenings, when routines such as feeding, dressing, and bedtime take place. These are times of the day that NSWS might better accommodate. In the case of Germany, while daycare services are an option, many parents prefer to care for their children themselves, especially before the age of three (Federal Statistical Office, 2022a; Philipp et al., 2024). In many cases, there are also limited daycare facilities, or the costs associated with daycare are high. As a result, parents may rely on informal care or adjust their work schedules (Pilarz & Awkward-Rich, 2024). Working NSWS can offer parents a solution by allowing them to be present during the day while their child is awake and active, without relying on external daycare services (Li et al., 2014; Pilarz & Awkward-Rich, 2024). Evening, night, or weekend shifts could help them balance caregiving responsibilities with paid work demands, reducing the pressure to find daycare alternatives and potentially alleviating work–family strain (Täht & Mills, 2012). These scheduling advantages may be especially beneficial for parents of young children, who typically require more direct care, compared to older children who may already have greater self-sufficiency or more structured daily routines.

2.3 Gender differences

Working men and working women do not share family responsibilities equally. Regardless of their career level and work hours, women spend more time than men taking care of the household work, caring children, and managing other family responsibilities (Bianchi et al., 2012; Hochschild & Machung, 2012). In contrast, men typically take on the breadwinning role and tend to work more hours per week, especially after having a child (Knight & Brinton, 2017; Miani & Hoorens, 2014). Although women have increased their participation in the labor market and men are increasingly sharing care responsibilities within the home (Chung & Lippe, 2020; Craig & Mullan, 2011), women remain the primary provider for childcare and household service (Bianchi et al., 2012; Dotti Sani & Treas, 2016; Hochschild & Machung, 2012; Yucel & Borgmann, 2022). Thus, women are more likely than men to experience difficulties in achieving satisfactory WLB (Taiji & Mills, 2020).

These observed patterns in family and work responsibilities can be better understood through the gender role theory, which posits that societal norms and cultural expectations prescribe appropriate roles and behaviors for men and women, thereby reinforcing a gendered division of labor (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Wood, 2012). According to this theory, women are often socialized to adopt nurturing and caregiving roles, while men are socialized to be providers and pursue occupational success. These internalized expectations shape individual choices and institutional structures, reinforcing the gendered allocation of time and responsibilities across work and family domains. Consequently, even as women participate more in paid employment, they continue to shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid domestic labor. This dynamic contributes to greater challenges in achieving WLB for women, particularly when managing NSWS alongside family responsibilities.

Previous studies have presented mixed evidence regarding gender differences in the experience of tension between work and family responsibilities (Craig & Powell, 2011; Zhao, Cooklin, Richardson, et al., 2021). For example, Zhao and colleagues (2021) found that NSWS are linked to increased difficulty managing work and family obligations, with fathers in Australia being more vulnerable than mothers. In contrast, Tammelin and colleagues (2017) found that women in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Finland experienced higher WFC than men. Furthermore, Taiji and Mills (2020) showed that the effect of NSWS on work–family strain was stronger for women than for men across 32 European countries.

These mixed findings suggest that broader gendered work and family dynamics may influence how NSWS affect men and women differently. For instance, research has shown that mothers, more than fathers, tend to adopt part-time or flexible NSWS to accommodate caregiving demands (Craig & Powell, 2012; Pilarz & Awkward-Rich, 2024). This allows mothers to be present for essential caregiving routines, which is particularly important for young children (John Bowlby, 1969). In contrast, fathers may have limited opportunities to work part-time or outside the regular work schedule due to traditional gender roles and the pressure to maintain stable, full-time employment as primary breadwinners.

2.4 German context

2.4.1 Gendered employment patterns and family policies

In Germany, women's participation in the labor market has significantly increased (Crößmann et al., 2018). However, the traditional male-breadwinner model still dominates (Yucel & Borgmann, 2022). A notable gender disparity persists: 73 percent of working mothers are employed part-time, whereas 91.4 percent of fathers typically work full-time (Federal Statistical Office, 2023). This difference is influenced by various factors, including societal expectations rooted in traditional gender roles, family-friendly workplace policies, and inadequate provision of childcare services, especially for those parents working NSWS (König & Cesinger, 2015). Over the past two decades, the dual-earner and dual-carer family model – in which both parents work and share caregiving duties – has gained more support from new legislative provisions and family policies (Abendroth, 2022). Despite these shifts, women remain the main caregivers for children and are mainly responsible for household work, reinforcing gender disparity in employment patterns (Yucel & Borgmann, 2022).

Given this persistent gender divide, workplace policies, family policies, and childcare availability play a crucial role in shaping parents' labor market status and work arrangements (König & Cesinger, 2015). For instance, parents have the right to reduce their working hours and choose part-time employment (BMFSFJ, 2022). Many mothers take advantage of this flexibility when their children are young, particularly during the preschool years, as state-provided childcare is often not readily available, leaving parents with limited formal childcare options (König & Cesinger, 2015). This gap frequently leads mothers to take longer unpaid parental leave, supported by policies that guarantee their right to return to work once their leave period ends (Zoch & Hondralis, 2017).

It is also important to recognize the significant differences between Western and Eastern Germany in terms of gendered employment patterns and family policies. In the eastern states, childcare participation rates for young children are considerably higher, supported by a more extensive public childcare infrastructure and a longer tradition of female employment (Barth et al., 2020). This legacy reflects the socialist-era policies that encouraged dual-earner households and extensive state-supported childcare (Trappe & Rosenfeld, 2000). In contrast, Western Germany continues to exhibit lower childcare participation rates and a stronger adherence to traditional gender roles (Federal Statistical Office, 2022b). These regional disparities influence parents' labor market participation and their ability to balance work and family responsibilities, reinforcing gendered patterns of employment and caregiving in the West.

Beyond regional disparities, parents across Germany benefit from generous financial support, such as parental allowance and other family-oriented benefits (BMFSFJ, 2022). These policies may further incentivize part-time work for mothers with young children (0–5 years). Such work arrangements are also often NSWS (Betthäuser et al., 2024), which may allow mothers to better align their work hours with their caregiving responsibilities.

While these policy frameworks aim to support families, they may unintentionally reinforce the existing gender inequality in caregiving. As a result, we expect NSWS to have a greater impact on women's WLB than on men's.

2.4.2 Labor law

The regulation of working hours is a standard practice across Western and industrialized economies, with many countries establishing a maximum limit of around 48 hours per week, often in line with the International Labor Organization Guidelines (Anxo & Karlsson, 2019). However, German labor law enforces particularly strict regulations (Ferrari et al., 2024) compared to other nations (Anxo & Karlsson, 2019). The German Working Hours Act (Arbeitszeitgesetz) (Ministry of Justice, 2025) provides a comprehensive framework that defines limits on maximum working hours, rest intervals, and night work to preserve employees' well-being. Shift work is closely monitored to ensure that employees receive adequate breaks during irregular hours and that night shifts are designed according to ergonomic principles to minimize health risks.

Beyond statutory regulations, collective bargaining agreements play a crucial role in further defining and enhancing the rights of employees who work NSWS. According to the Confederation of German Employers' Associations (2025), these agreements enable trade unions and employee representatives to

create tailored solutions that meet the specific needs of workers. For instance, collective agreements often allow employees to adjust their start and end times to better accommodate family obligations, such as childcare drop-offs and pick-ups, school events, and medical appointments. Additionally, workers may have the option to swap shifts with colleagues or reduce their hours to part-time, giving them greater control over their schedules.

This flexibility is vital for managing family responsibilities while maintaining job security. Some collective agreements even include the provision of on-site childcare services, facilitating the simultaneous management of work and family responsibilities (BDA, 2025). Thus, collective bargaining agreements complement and enhance the statutory protections provided by the German labor law, offering additional support to employees facing the challenges of balancing work and family life. This suggests that in contrast to neoliberal economies (the US, the UK, and Australia), working NSWS in the German context can be beneficial to parents by enabling them to fulfil their work and family responsibilities and thus increase WLB.

3 Data and methods

3.1 Data and analytical sample

We analyzed the German Family Demography Panel Study (FReDA) data set (Bujard et al., 2024) to answer our research questions. FReDA is a nationally representative survey of individuals aged 18 to 49 who were residing in Germany in 2020. It provides information on various demographic, psychological and socioeconomic aspects of family life and related domains, such as individuals' employment, work hours, and work schedules (Schneider et al., 2021). Data collection in the FReDA study follows a mixed-mode, self-administered format, combining both online and paper-based surveys. In the first wave, the response rate was approximately 80% (Bujard et al., 2024).

For our analysis, we used data from the first wave of the FReDA survey, conducted between April 2021 and January 2022 (N=37,756). We restricted the sample to men and women who lived with a gainfully employed partner and worked 15 hours or more per week. Individuals who were in education, military or civic service, or self-employed (no regulation of work hours) were excluded, as their work patterns and responsibilities differ significantly from those of employees. Although these restrictions limit the generalizability of our findings to the broader population, we applied sample weights to adjust for potential sampling biases and improve representativeness within our target subpopulation. Additionally, respondents with missing values on variables of interest (6.2 percent of cases) were excluded from the analysis. The final study sample consisted of 4560 individuals from dual-earner households, including those with and without children under age 18 living at home. Respondents in "living apart together" (LAT) relationships were not included in the final sample, as they do not share a household with their partner and thus face different work–family dynamics than cohabiting couples. Single individuals and single parents were also excluded, as the study focuses on dual-earner households, where the presence of a working partner provides relevant contextual information for analyzing the association between NSWS and WLB.

3.2 Dependent variable

The dependent variable was the work–life balance score. Respondents were asked about five different aspects related to difficulties in balancing work and personal or family life. The general question was "How often has each of the following happened to you during the past three months?" The answers were: 1) Too tired to do chores, 2) Difficult to fulfil family responsibilities, 3) Too tired to function at work, 4) Difficult to concentrate because of family responsibilities, and 5) Private conflicts impair job performance. The first two statements refer to work interfering with personal life (WIPL) and the last three refer to personal life interfering with work (PLIW). To each statement respondents gave a score between 1 and 4, with 1 meaning several times a week and 4 meaning never in the last three months. In line with earlier studies (French et al., 2018; Netemeyer et al., 1996), we calculated a score for overall WLB based on the row mean of all five items ($\alpha = 0.76$). For further analysis, we also calculated separate scores for WIPL ($\alpha = 0.72$) and PLIW ($\alpha = 0.73$).

3.3 Key independent variables

The first key independent variable was work schedule, categorized as either standard or nonstandard. The variable was constructed using the question, "Which of the following possibilities best describes your schedule?" Respondents could choose from six options: "Only during the day and on weekdays", "Fixed shift, never on weekends", "Fixed shift, also on weekends", "Changing shifts, never on weekends", "Changing shifts, also on weekends", and "Other, or no regulation of working hours". For the analysis, the first category was classified as standard schedule, while the remaining fixed and changing shift categories were classified as nonstandard schedule. Our preliminary analysis showed no difference between fixed and changing shifts in their association with WLB, justifying their grouping.

The second key independent variable was parental status, with two categories: partnered without dependent children and partnered with dependent children. The "partnered without dependent children" group included individuals who reported not having children living at home at the time of the interview, including empty-nest parents, as they no longer have daily childcare responsibilities that influence work–family dynamics. "Partnered with dependent children" referred to those with at least one child under the age of 18 living at home. In the analysis, "partnered without dependent children" served as the reference category. While this group faces challenges in balancing work, personal life, and relationship maintenance (Unger et al., 2013), partnered individuals with dependent children are confronted with even greater challenges due to ongoing childcare responsibilities.

3.4 Control variables

We included a range of sociodemographic and work-related characteristics in the analysis to account for factors associated with both work schedules and WLB. These controls include gender (men vs. women), age, financial situation, education level, region in Germany (East vs. West), and migration background (no migration background, first- or second-generation). Financial situation was derived from a question about the household's ability to make ends meet, with original responses ranging from "with great difficulty" to "very easily." For the analysis, this variable was recoded into three categories: very easy, easy (combining "fairly easily" and "easily"), and difficult (combining "with some difficulty," "with difficulty," and "with great difficulty"). Education level was based on the respondent's highest vocational training qualification and recoded into two categories: low/medium (including no or lower vocational training qualifications, currently enrolled individuals, and other forms of training) and high (including technical college, university, and doctoral degrees).

We also controlled for work characteristics, including weekly work hours [1](including overtime) and type of occupation. Weekly work hours were recoded into three categories: 15–34 hours, 35–44 hours, and 45 hours or more. Type of occupation was based on the International Classification of Occupations and recoded into four categories: high-skilled professional, technicians and semi-professional, clerical/service/sales, and skilled manual/elementary.

Although men and women in our sample work NSWS at similar rates (see Table 1), gendered expectations around caregiving and household responsibilities may differentially affect WLB. Age is associated with both the likelihood of working NSWS (e.g., younger workers are more likely to hold irregular jobs) and the nature of personal responsibilities that influence WLB (Kalleberg, 2009). Lower financial security and lower education levels are generally linked to less control over schedules and reduced WLB (Golden, 2015). Regional and migration-related differences reflect broader labor market structures that shape access to stable schedules and influence WLB through inequalities (Kalleberg, 2011). Weekly work hours and type of occupation directly shape the likelihood of having NSWS and affect the time and flexibility available for personal and family needs (Presser, 2003).

Finally, because NSWS may result from family-level decisions, we included partner characteristics: education level, work hours, and occupation. A partner's education and employment situation can influence the division of household responsibilities and, in turn, individual WLB (Presser, 2004).

[1] Since the data we used was collected when COVID-19 work-related measures (e.g., short-time work) and remote working were widespread in Germany, these circumstances may have influenced respondents' reported work hours and schedules.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for study variables.

	Men		Women	
Variable	*Mean / %*	*SD*	*Mean / %*	*SD*
Work–life balance	3.05	0.01	2.95	0.01
Work schedule				
Standard	84.19		85.18	
Nonstandard	15.81		14.82	
Parenthood				
Partnered without children	42.05		43.61	
Partnered with children	57.95		56.39	
Child age				
Partnered without children	42.05		43.61	
Youngest child 0-5	31.66		24.64	
Youngest child 6-12	20.02		22.05	
Youngest child 13-17	6.27		9.70	
Age	37.72	0.15	37.20	0.14
Education level				
Low/Medium	54.14		51.98	
High	45.86		48.02	
Financial situation				
Very easy	36.40		38.22	
Easy	54.06		53.48	
Difficult	9.54		8.30	
Region				
West	86.58		84.49	
East	13.42		15.51	
Migration background				
1st Generation	7.66		9.27	
2nd Generation	9.24		8.28	
No migration background	83.10		82.45	
Work hours				
15-34h	6.13		45.57	
35-44h	69.01		44.22	
45h and more	24.86		10.21	
Type of occupation				
High-skilled professional	45.34		44.26	
Technicians and semi-professional	26.46		32.10	
Clerical, service, and sales	12.46		21.30	
Skilled manual and elementary	15.73		2.34	
Education level partner				
Low/Medium	51.53		56.82	
High	48.47		43.18	
Work hours partner				
15-34h	43.64		6.90	
35-44h	46.42		66.12	
45h and more	9.94		26.98	
Type of occupation partner				
High-skilled professional	44.85		42.26	
Technicians and semi-professional	30.00		23.82	
Clerical, service, and sales	21.15		12.76	
Skilled manual and elementary	4.00		21.16	
Number of observations	2121		2439	

Note: FReDA data, wave 1. Own weighted estimates.

3.5 Analytic strategy

To investigate the relationship between NSWS and WLB, we performed multiple regression analyses, controlling for the sociodemographic and job-related variables described above. We stratified the analysis by respondent's gender, based on the theoretical arguments and existing evidence discussed earlier, which highlight substantial differences between women and men in how NSWS impact WLB. These gender differences are shaped by societal expectations, occupational roles, work and family policies, and cultural norms surrounding work and family roles in Germany, as outlined above.

We used robust standard errors in the OLS regressions to account for heteroskedasticity. For all descriptive and multivariate analyses, we applied the raw FReDA design weights provided in the FReDA SUF data. These weights adjust for unequal probabilities of individuals being included in the sample and are essential for producing accurate estimates for the target population. Because we analyzed a subpopulation, we applied the raw design weights as recommended for such cases (Bujard et al., 2024).

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the sample. The mean score of WLB was 3.05 for men and 2.95 for women. Approximately 15 percent of both men and women worked NSWS, indicating a similar prevalence across genders. However, we observed a notable gender difference in work hours, with a high proportion of women working less than 35 hours per week (45.57 percent), whereas men were more likely to work 35 hours or more (93.9 percent). Other sociodemographic and economic characteristics were fairly similar between men and women. These similarities enhance the validity of cross-gender comparisons in the stratified models.

In addition, our supplementary descriptive analysis showed that mothers working NSWS were more than three times as likely to hold part-time jobs compared to mothers on standard daytime schedules (see Appendix Table A-1). This finding supports the notion that working NSWS may serve as a caregiving strategy for mothers.

4.2 Regression results

Table 2 (Model 1) provides the results from the OLS model by gender (see Appendix Table A-2 for full results). Interestingly, we did not find significant differences in the level of WLB between individuals working NSWS and those adhering to daytime schedules. However, most sociodemographic covariates were significantly associated with WLB.

Parents, both men and women, reported lower WLB than childless couples (β = -0.132 for men, and β = -0.172 for women, $p < 0.001$). To examine whether the association between NSWS and WLB varied by parental status, we included an interaction between NSWS and parenthood (Model 2 in Table 2). In Model 2, the main effect for NSWS indicates the association between NSWS and WLB among childless individuals. The findings for men show that childless men experienced lower WLB when working nonstandard schedules (β = -0.155, $p < 0.01$), compared to those working standard hours. Among childless women, in contrast, the level of WLB did not vary significantly with the type of work schedule. However, the positive and statistically significant interactions between parental status and work schedules for women (β = 0.167, <0.05) and men (β = 0.166, <0.05) show that the association between working NSWS and WLB differed by parenthood status.

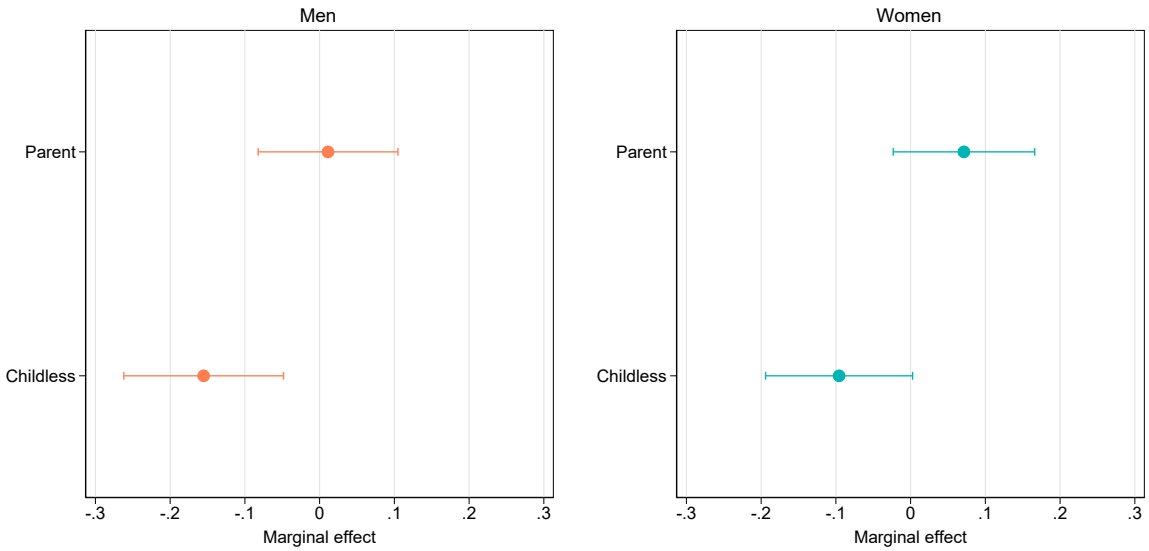
Figure 1 reports the marginal effects from the interaction model (Model 2 in Table 2). The plots show that the negative association between NSWS and WLB was statistically significant only for childless men, while it was not significant for childless women. For both mothers and fathers, the marginal effects of NSWS were positive but did not reach statistical significance.

Table 2: Nonstandard work schedules, parenthood, and overall work–life balance.

	Men				Women			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
	B	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*
Work schedule								
Standard (ref.)								
NSWS	-0.060	0.037	-0.155**	0.054	-0.004	0.036	-0.096	0.050
Parental status								
Partnered without children (ref.)								
Partnered with children	-0.132***	0.035	-0.157***	0.037	-0.172***	0.036	-0.198***	0.038
Work schedule * Parental status								
NSWS * Partnered with children			0.166*	0.070			0.167*	0.068
Number of observations	2121		2121		2439		2439	
R^2	0.10		0.10		0.08		0.09	

Note: *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001 The reference group for the interaction is respondents with a standard work schedule and no dependent children.

Figure 1: Marginal effect of nonstandard work schedules on overall work–life balance for partnered parents and nonparents.



Note: FReDA data, wave 1. Own weighted estimates. Horizontal lines represent 95% CI.

4.2.1 Child age differences

The mostly insignificant associations between NSWS and WLB shown in Figure 1 raised the question of whether the effect of NSWS was masked by combining parents of children of different ages. The theoretical underpinnings pertaining to the importance of child age in understanding NSWS and WLB point to a plausible interaction between NSWS and child age.

To test whether parents' level of WLB varies with the age of their children, we included a variable capturing the age of the youngest child in our model (Model 1 in Table 3, see Appendix Table A-3 for full results). For both mothers and fathers, child age affected their experience of WLB. Having a youngest child

aged 0–5 was associated with significantly lower WLB compared to having no dependent children living at home (β = -0.144 for men, and β = -0.208 for women, $p < 0.001$). Having a youngest child aged 6–12 was also significantly associated with lower WLB (β = -0.122 for men, $p < 0.05$, and β = -0.211 for women, $p < 0.001$). In contrast, the presence of adolescents (aged 13–17) was not associated with lower WLB among parents.

To examine whether the association between working NSWS and WLB varied by child age, we added interactions between NSWS and child age to the model (Model 2 in Table 3). The results revealed that the relationship between NSWS and WLB differed across child age groups. Among mothers, having young children (ages 0–5) and working NSWS showed a positive interaction effect (β = 0.193, $p < 0.05$) on WLB, indicating that the association between NSWS and WLB differ between mothers with young children and childless women. However, this moderating effect was not observed for mothers whose youngest child was aged 6–12 or 13–17. For fathers of school-aged children (ages 6–12) there was also a positive interaction effect (β = 0.236, $p < 0.05$), indicating that the association between NSWS and WLB differs between these fathers and childless men.

Figure 2 displays the marginal effects of NSWS on WLB based on the interaction model (Model 2 in Table 3). Among childless men, working NSWS was associated with significantly lower WLB. For fathers, the association was positive only for those whose youngest child was aged 6–12, but this effect did not reach statistical significance. For fathers of younger (0–5) or older children (13–17), the association between NSWS and WLB was negative, although not statistically significant. A similar negative, though non-significant, association was observed for childless women. In contrast, among mothers, the estimated associations between working NSWS and WLB were positive across all child age categories, but none reached statistical significance.

Table 3: Nonstandard work schedules, child age, and overall work–life balance.

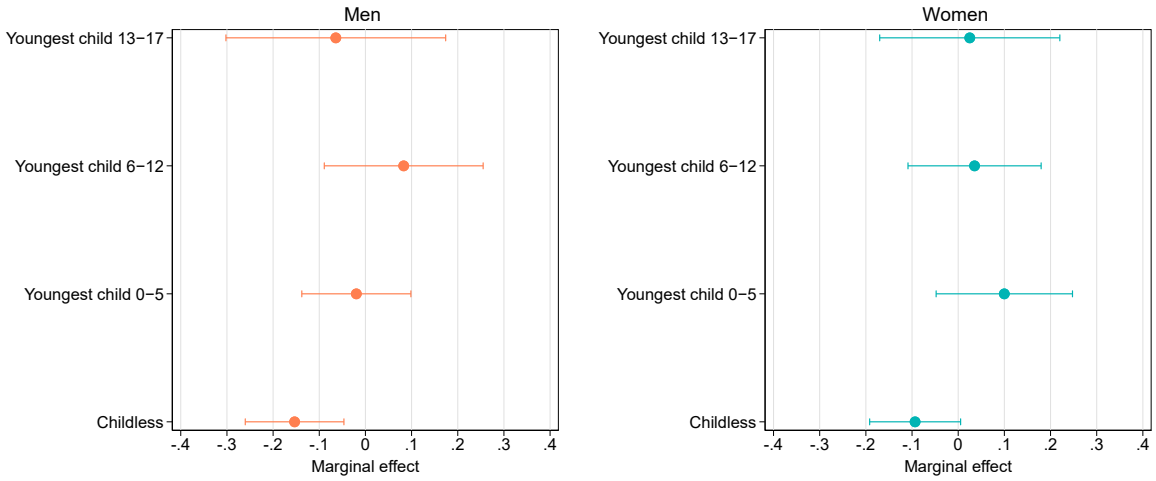
	Men				Women			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
	B	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*
Work schedule								
Standard (ref.)								
NSWS	-0.061	0.03	-0.153**	0.05	-0.008	0.03	-0.093	0.05
Child age								
Partnered without children (ref.)								
Youngest child 0-5	-0.144***	0.03	-0.163***	0.03	-0.208***	0.04	-0.239***	0.04
Youngest child 6-12	-0.122*	0.04	-0.158**	0.05	-0.211***	0.04	-0.232***	0.04
Youngest child 13-17	-0.061	0.06	-0.078	0.07	0.015	0.05	-0.007	0.05
Work schedule * Child age								
NSWS * Youngest child 0-5			0.134	0.07			0.193*	0.09
NSWS * Youngest child 6-12			0.236*	0.10			0.129	0.08
NSWS * Youngest child 13-17			0.089	0.13			0.118	0.11
Number of observations	2121		2121		2439		2439	
R^2	0.10		0.10		0.09		0.10	

Note: *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001 The reference group for the interaction is respondents with a standard work schedule and no dependent children.

These findings provide insight into the association between NSWS and overall WLB. However, because imbalances can arise in two distinct ways—when work interferes with personal life (WIPL) and when

personal life interferes into work (PLIW)—we further examined whether there was an interaction between work schedule and child age when each dimension of WLB was analyzed separately.

Figure 2: Marginal effect of nonstandard work schedules on overall work–life balance at each child age category.



Note: FReDA data, wave 1. Own weighted estimates. Horizontal lines represent 95% CI.

The results in Table 4 show the association of NSWS with WIPL and PLIW (see Appendix Tables A-4 and A-5 for full results). The coefficients indicate significant interactions between NSWS and WIPL for men ($\beta = 0.280$) and women ($\beta = 0.249$), but not between NSWS and PLIW. Consistent with the results reported in Table 3, these findings suggest that mothers with young children at home as well as fathers with school-aged children benefit from working NSWS.

Figure 3 presents the marginal effects from the interaction models in Table 4. For childless men and women, working NSWS had a negative and significant association with WLB when considering WIPL, but such effect was not observed when considering PLIW. Moreover, all associations of NSWS with both PLIW and WIPL were statistically insignificant for fathers as well as for mothers.

5. Discussion

Using a large representative sample of partnered workers in Germany, our analysis reveals two important findings. While parents generally reported lower WLB than childless couples, working NSWS appeared to be more detrimental for those without dependent children. In contrast, mothers with young children (ages 0–5) and fathers with school-aged children (ages 6–12) showed modest positive associations, suggesting that NSWS may be beneficial for parents.

The early years of a child's life are typically characterized by greater dependency and unpredictability, which may make NSWS particularly advantageous for parents of young children. Mothers who work NSWS and have young children report higher WLB than women without dependent children working NSWS, likely because these schedules enable them to better align their work hours with their child's care needs. A key factor in this increased balance may be that many parents—particularly mothers—choose NSWS as part-time employment, enabling them to avoid non-parental childcare. In Germany, this strategy is made possible by family-friendly workplace policies and practices that enable parents to work reduced hours, flexible scheduling, and parental leave options. For example, in the sample, 80% of mothers reported that their workplace allows flexible time arrangements, providing them with greater autonomy to adapt their schedules to family needs.

Table 4: Nonstandard work schedules, child age, and work–life balance dimensions.

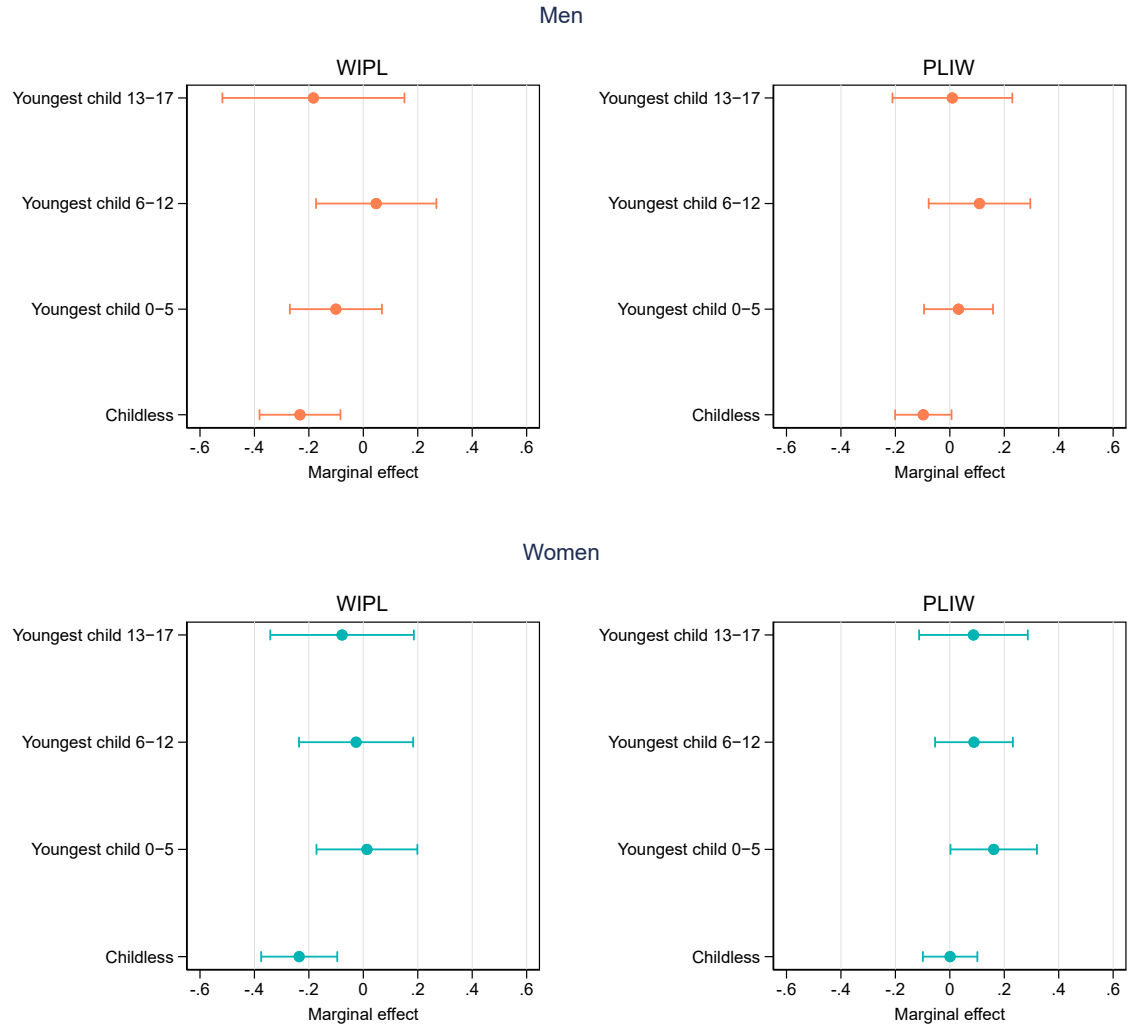
Men				
	WIPL		PLIW	
	B	*SE*	*B*	*SE*
Work schedule				
Standard (ref.)				
NSWS	-0.233**	0.076	-0.097	0.053
Child age				
Partnered without children (ref.)				
Youngest child 0-5	-0.056	0.054	-0.229***	0.041
Youngest child 6-12	-0.101	0.068	-0.191***	0.054
Youngest child 13-17	-0.039	0.115	-0.101	0.073
Work schedule * Child age				
NSWS * Youngest child 0-5	0.132	0.111	0.129	0.081
NSWS * Youngest child 6-12	0.280*	0.134	0.206	0.109
NSWS * Youngest child 13-17	0.049	0.185	0.107	0.123
Number of observations	2121		2122	
R^2	0.08		0.09	

Women				
	WIPL		PLIW	
	B	*SE*	*B*	*SE*
Work schedule				
Standard (ref.)				
NSWS	-0.236***	0.071	0.001	0.051
Child age				
Partnered without children (ref.)				
Youngest child 0-5	-0.170**	0.058	-0.283***	0.044
Youngest child 6-12	-0.186**	0.064	-0.260***	0.046
Youngest child 13-17	-0.017	0.084	0.006	0.056
Work schedule * Child age				
NSWS * Youngest child 0-5	0.249*	0.117	0.160	0.095
NSWS * Youngest child 6-12	0.209	0.127	0.088	0.088
NSWS * Youngest child 13-17	0.158	0.151	0.086	0.113
Number of observations	2444		2440	
R^2	0.08		0.09	

Note: *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001. The reference group for the interaction is respondents with a standard work schedule and no dependent children.

Fathers of school-aged children, on the other hand, may experience improved WLB through NSWS for different but equally important reasons. NSWS may allow fathers to be more present during critical times of the day (such as mornings, after-school hours, or evenings), thereby enhancing their involvement in family life. Additionally, having NSWS can make it easier for fathers to take their children to various out-of-school activities, such as sports, music lessons, or extra learning classes, which often demand significant time and effort. Together these factors can contribute to higher WLB for fathers of school-aged children.

Figure 3: Marginal effect of nonstandard work schedules on work–life balance dimensions at each child age category.



Note: FReDA data, wave 1. Own weighted estimates. Horizontal lines represent 95% CI.

When we disaggregated the overall WLB score into its two dimensions—work interfering with personal life (WIPL) and personal life interfering with work (PLIW)—we found that improvements in overall WLB appeared to be primarily driven by less interference of work into personal life. For both men and women, the interaction between child age and NSWS was somewhat stronger for WIPL than for the overall WLB score. This finding may suggest that NSWS primarily help mothers with young children and fathers with school-aged children by reducing work demands that interfere with family responsibilities. For example, working NSWS allows parents to schedule work hours around childcare and family needs, thus minimizing the strain of work encroaching onto family life. However, differences between WIPL and PLIW may partly reflect social desirability bias: it may be more acceptable to report that work interferes with family life than that family responsibilities interfere with work. Such bias could undermine the measurement of PLIW, potentially explaining the lack of a significant association between NSWS and PLIW for parents with preschool- and school-aged children.

Our research corroborates earlier findings that NSWS can sometimes increase WLB (and reduce WFC) for parents by providing greater flexibility in managing work and family demands (Arlinghaus et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2011). NSWS may offer parents more opportunities to coordinate their work hours with those of their partner to be available for their children during non-working hours. This reduces the conflict between work and family demands (Täht & Mills, 2012). Additionally, when working NSWS is a voluntary choice, it

may provide parents with young or school-aged children more control over their time, allowing them to better cope with the unpredictable nature of caring for a young child (Pilarz & Awkward-Rich, 2024).

The complexity of the relationship between NSWS and WLB suggests that these benefits may not be universal and could vary depending on other factors. Further research should explore additional factors—such as employer and partner support, the availability of child care resources, and work schedule characteristics (such as work time flexibility)—which might also play a role in the link between NSWS and WLB. Understanding these elements could provide valuable insights into how work schedules can be optimized to support parents with young children or school-aged children.

These results have important implications. They suggest that employers and policymakers should consider the specific needs of diverse family structures when designing work schedules and family-friendly labor policies. Employers should recognize that NSWS can affect employees differently depending on individual and familial circumstances. Additionally, policymakers could explore initiatives that further support parents working NSWS, especially considering the unique challenges they face in balancing work and family responsibilities.

The discrepancies between our findings and those of previous studies conducted in neoliberal welfare regimes such as the United States, the United Kingdom, or Australia point to the importance of the national context. In these liberal contexts, NSWS are often associated with precarious employment, limited schedule control, and minimal access to supportive work–family policies. Consequently, parents in these countries generally experience more inter-role conflict when working NSWS (Davis et al., 2008; Tammelin et al., 2017; Zhao, Cooklin, Butterworth, et al., 2021; Zhao, Cooklin, Richardson, et al., 2021).

In contrast, in corporatist welfare regimes such as Germany, the consequences of NSWS appear less negative, reflecting greater schedule autonomy and institutional support for reconciling work and family demands. For mothers, this includes cultural and structural support for part-time work and maternal caregiving, as well as entitlements to parental leave and flexible work schedules (Bünning & Hipp, 2022; Trappe et al., 2015). Although access to formal childcare remains limited (Scholz et al., 2019), higher schedule control enables many mothers to coordinate work and family responsibilities more effectively.

For fathers, NSWS can provide opportunities to be more involved during key family times – such as early mornings, school pick-up, or evenings – without compromising full-time employment. This pattern reflects a gradual cultural shift toward greater paternal involvement and illustrates how the German context, while still shaped by traditional gender norms, offers context-specific strategies for reconciling work and family life across different stages of parenthood.

These findings underscore the importance of considering the welfare regime context, gendered caregiving norms, as well as the degree of schedule control when examining the effects of NSWS on WLB. They highlight the importance of cross-national comparative research that takes into account such institutional and cultural differences.

This study has some limitations. First, the nature of cross-sectional data limits our ability to establish a causal link between NSWS and WLB, despite controlling for a wide range of potential confounders. The cross-sectional analysis may also overlook potential long-term effects and temporal dynamics of how NSWS influence WLB.

Second, although we controlled for various sociodemographic and job-related factors, as well as partner characteristics, unobserved personal traits may lead to self-selection into certain types of work schedules. This bias is likely for mothers of young children, who often take extended time off after childbirth and re-enter the labor market through nonstandard work, typically part-time. For fathers, selection bias may be less pronounced, though it can occur in cases of health constraints or difficulty securing full-time employment. Such unmeasured factors could influence both the choice of NSWS and the experience of WLB, potentially confounding the observed associations.

Moreover, our data do not include information on partner's work schedules. While we account for partners' key sociodemographic and employment characteristics, we cannot examine how the alignment or mismatch of partner's working times may influence work–family outcomes. Future research with data capturing both partners' work schedules should examine the impact of joint work schedules on WLB.

Importantly, the data do not allow us to distinguish between voluntary or involuntary NSWS. This distinction is critical: individuals working NSWS by choice may experience different WLB outcomes compared to those constrained by employer requirements or limited job opportunities.

Despite these limitations, the findings offer a deeper understanding of the complex interface between work, family, and well-being. They underscore the need for devising balanced, family-friendly work policies

and practices that may enhance workers' well-being and work performance, thus generating a win-win outcome for employers and families.

Acknowledgments

This research was funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) (grant number LI833/6-1 and project number 521362261). We are grateful for the constructive feedback provided by Wen-Jui Han, Lyndall Strazdins, and Pablo Gracia, as well as by participants of the DYNAMICS Research Training Group at the Humboldt Universität and the Hertie School. We also thank the editor and reviewers for their thoughtful and valuable comments.

Data availability statement

This study uses FReDA panel data from the release v.4.1.0 (DOI: 0.4232/1.14398 | 10.4232/1.14195 | 10.4232/1.14080 | 10.4232/1.14065 | 10.4232/1.13745), Bujard et al. (2024). A detailed study description can be found in Schneider et al. (2021). The dataset can be obtained free of charge after application at https://search.gesis.org/research_data/ZA7777 . Stata do-files are available from the corresponding author upon request.

References

Abendroth, A.-K. (2022). Transitions to parenthood, flexible working and time-based work-to-family conflicts: A gendered life course and organisational change perspective. *JFR - Journal of Family Research, 34*(4), Article 4. https://doi.org/10.20377/jfr-730

Allen, T. D., & Finkelstein, L. M. (2014). Work–family conflict among members of full-time dual-earner couples: An examination of family life stage, gender, and age. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 19*(3), 376–384. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036941

Anxo, D., & Karlsson, M. (2019). Overtime work a review of literature and initial empirical analysis. ILO Working Papers, Article 995012793502676. https://ideas.repec.org//p/ilo/ilowps/995012793502676.html

Arlinghaus, A., Bohle, P., Iskra-Golec, I., Jansen, N., Jay, S., & Rotenberg, L. (2019). Working Time Society consensus statements: Evidence-based effects of shift work and nonstandard working hours on workers, family and community. *Industrial Health, 57*(2), Article 2. https://doi.org/10.2486/indhealth.SW-4

Barth, D., Jessen, J., Spieß, C. K., & Wrohlich, K. (2020). Mothers in Eastern and Western Germany: Employment Rates and Attitudes Are Converging, Full-Time Employment is Not (Text No. 38; DIW Weekly Report, pp. 404–4010). DIW Berlin. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18723/diw_dwr:2020-38-1

BDA. (2025). Working time, flexible part-time, and labour and collective bargaining law. Retrieved November 10, 2025, from https://arbeitgeber.de/en/themen/arbeitsrecht-und-tarifpolitik/arbeitszeit/

Betthäuser, B. A., Trinh, N. A., & Fasang, A. E. (2024). The temporal dimension of parental employment: Temporary contracts, nonstandard work schedules, and children's education in Germany. *European Sociological Review, 40*(6), 950–963. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcad073

Bianchi, S., Sayer, L., Milkie, M., & Robinson, J. (2012). Housework: Who Did, Does or Will Do It, and How Much Does It Matter? Social Forces - SOC FORCES, 91, 55–63. https://doi.org/10.2307/41683183

BMFSFJ. (2022). Parental Allowance and Parental Leave—The Federal Parental Allowance and Parental Leave Act. Retrieved November 14, 2025, from https://www.bmfsfj.de/resource/blob/139908/0/elterngeld-elterngeldplus-englisch-data.pdf

Bolino, M. C., Kelemen, T. K., & Matthews, S. H. (2021). Working 9-to-5? A review of research on nonstandard work schedules. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 42*(2), 188–211. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2440

Boushey, H. (2006). Tag Team-Parenting. CEPR Reports and Issue Briefs, Article 2006–20. Retrieved November 14, 2025, from https://ideas.repec.org//p/epo/papers/2006-20.html

Bujard, M., Gummer, T., Hank, K., Neyer, F. J., Pollak, R., Schneider, N. F., Spieß, C. K., Wolf, C., Bauer, I., Börlin, S., Bretschi, D., Brüggemann, K., Christmann, P., Edinger, R., Eigenbrodt, F., Frembs, L. C.,

Groß, K., Jost, C., Kunz, T., ... Weih, U. (2024). FReDA – The German Family Demography Panel Study (Version 4.1.0) [Dataset]. GESIS. https://doi.org/10.4232/1.14398

Bünning, M., & Hipp, L. (2022). How can we become more equal? Public policies and parents' work–family preferences in Germany. *Journal of European Social Policy, 32*(2), 182–196. https://doi.org/10.1177/09589287211035701

Chung, H., & Lippe, T. (2020). Flexible Working, Work-life Balance, and Gender Equality: Introduction. Social Indicators Research, 151, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-018-2025-x

Craig, L., & Mullan, K. (2011). How Mothers and Fathers Share Childcare: A Cross-National Time-Use Comparison. *American Sociological Review, 76*(6), 834–861. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122411427673

Craig, L., & Powell, A. (2011). Nonstandard work schedules, work-family balance and the gendered division of childcare. *Work, Employment and Society, 25*(2), Article 2. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017011398894

Craig, L., & Powell, A. (2012). Dual-earner parents' work-family time: The effects of atypical work patterns and non-parental childcare. *Journal of Population Research, 29*(3), 229–247. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12546-012-9086-5

Crößmann, A., Mischke, J., & Hoffmann, J. (2018). Arbeitsmarkt auf einen Blick (Wiesbaden: Statistisches Bundesamt).

Davis, K. D., Benjamin Goodman, W., Pirretti, A. E., & Almeida, D. M. (2008). Nonstandard Work Schedules, Perceived Family Well-Being, and Daily Stressors. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 70*(4), Article 4. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2008.00541.x

Dotti Sani, G. M., & Treas, J. (2016). Educational gradients in parents' child-care time across countries, 1965–2012. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 78*(4), Article 4. https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12305

Eagly, A. H. (1987). Sex differences in social behavior: A social-role interpretation (pp. xii, 178). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Eagly, A. H., & Wood, W. (2012). Social role theory. In P. Van Lange & A. Kruglanski (Eds.), Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology: Volume 2 (pp. 458–476). SAGE Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446249222.n49

Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). The three worlds of welfare capitalism. Princeton University Press.

Eurostat. (2023). Employment and unemployment (LFS). Retrieved November 10, 2025, from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/lfs/database?node_code=lfsa_wrktime

Federal Statistical Office. (2022a). Day care for children. Federal Statistical Office. Retrieved November 10, 2025, from https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Social-Statistics/Day-Care-Children/_node.html

Federal Statistical Office. (2022b). Day care for children. Federal Statistical Office. Retrieved November 10, 2025, from https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Social-Statistics/Day-Care-Children/_node.html

Federal Statistical Office. (2023). Parents working part time. Federal Statistical Office. Retrieved November 10, 2025, from https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Labour/Labour-Market/Quality-Employment/Dimension3/3_7_ParentsWorkingParttime.html

Ferrari, F., Bertolini, A., Borkert, M., & Graham, M. (2024). The German platform economy: Strict regulations but unfair standards? Digital Geography and Society, 6, 100084. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.diggeo.2024.100084

French, K. A., Dumani, S., Allen, T. D., & Shockley, K. M. (2018). A meta-analysis of work-family conflict and social support. *Psychological Bulletin, 144*(3), 284–314. https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000120

Golden, L. (2015). Irregular Work Scheduling and Its Consequences. Economic Policy Institute. Retrieved November 14, 2025, from https://www.epi.org/publication/irregular-work-scheduling-and-its-consequences/

Greenhaus, J. H., & Allen, T. D. (2011). Work–family balance: A review and extension of the literature. In Handbook of occupational health psychology, 2nd ed (pp. 165–183). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/10474-000

Greenhaus, J. H., & Beutell, N. J. (1985). Sources of Conflict Between Work and Family Roles. *Academy of Management Review, 10*(1), 76–88. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1985.4277352

Han, W.-J., Gracia, P., & Li, J. (2025). Parental work schedules and hours from a cross-national perspective: A welfare regime analysis on 29 countries. In K. Repo, M. Tammelin, & P. Eerola (Eds.), Families with Children in a Turbulent Era: In a Turbulent Era series (pp. 171–200). Edward Elgar Publishing. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781035320523.00017

Hattery, A. J. (2001). Tag-Team Parenting: Costs and Benefits of Utilizing Nonoverlapping Shift Work in Families with Young Children. *Families in Society, 82*(4), Article 4. https://doi.org/10.1606/1044-3894.185

Hochschild, A., & Machung, A. (2012). The Second Shift: Working Families and the Revolution at Home. Penguin.

Huber, K., & Rolvering, G. (2023). Public Child Care and Mothers' Career Trajectories (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 4568742). Social Science Research Network. Retrieved November 14, 2025, from https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=4568742

John Bowlby. (1969). Attachment and Loss, Vol 1: Attachment. Basic Books.
Kahn, R. L., Wolfe, D. M., Quinn, R. P., Snoek, J. D., & Rosenthal, R. A. (1964). Organizational stress: Studies in role conflict and ambiguity (pp. xii, 470). John Wiley.
Kalleberg, A. L. (2009). Precarious Work, Insecure Workers: Employment Relations in Transition. *American Sociological Review, 74*(1), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240907400101
Kalleberg, A. L. (2011). Good Jobs, Bad Jobs: The Rise of Polarized and Precarious Employment Systems in the United States, 1970s-2000s. Russell Sage Foundation. Retrieved November 14, 2025, from https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7758/9781610447478
Kirchmeyer, C. (2000). Work-life initiatives: Greed or benevolence regarding workers' time? In Trends in organizational behavior, Vol. 7: Time in organizational behavior (pp. 79–93). John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
Knight, C. R., & Brinton, M. C. (2017). One egalitarianism or several? Two decades of gender-role attitude change in Europe. *American Journal of Sociology, 122*(5), 1485–1532. https://doi.org/10.1086/689814
König, S., & Cesinger, B. (2015). Gendered work–family conflict in Germany: Do self-employment and flexibility matter? *Work Employment & Society*, 29. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017014545264
Lewis, J. (2009). Work–Family Balance, Gender and Policy. Edward Elgar.
Li, J., Johnson, S. E., Han, W.-J., Andrews, S., Kendall, G., Strazdins, L., & Dockery, A. (2014). Parents' Nonstandard Work Schedules and Child Well-Being: A Critical Review of the Literature. *The Journal of Primary Prevention, 35*(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10935-013-0318-z
Lindenberg, S. (1996). Continuities in the theory of social production functions. In H. Ganzeboom & S. Lindenberg, Verklarende Soziologie. Thesis Publications. Retrieved November 10, 2025, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265155440_Continuities_in_the_theory_of_social_production_functions
Liu, H., Wang, Q., Keesler, V., & Schneider, B. (2011). Nonstandard work schedules, work–family conflict and parental well-being: A comparison of married and cohabiting unions. *Social Science Research, 40*(2), 473–484. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2010.10.008
Lott, Y. (2015). Working-time flexibility and autonomy: A European perspective on time adequacy. European *Journal of Industrial Relations, 21*(3), 259–274. https://doi.org/10.1177/0959680114543604
Lozano, M., Hamplová, D., & Bourdais, C. L. (2016). Nonstandard work schedules, gender, and parental stress. Demographic Research, 34, 259–284. https://doi.org/10.4054/DemRes.2016.34.9
Maume, D. J., & Sebastian, R. A. (2012). Gender, Nonstandard Work Schedules, and Marital Quality. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues, 33*(4), 477–490. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10834-012-9308-1
Miani, C., & Hoorens, S. (2014). Parents at work: Men and women participating in the labour force: Short Statistical Report No. 2. https://doi.org/10.7249/RR348
Ministry of Justice. (2025). Labour law. Retrieved November 14, 2025, from https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/arbzg/
Moilanen, S., Aunola, K., May, V., Sevón, E., & Laakso, M. (2019). Nonstandard Work Hours and Single Versus Coupled Mothers' Work-to-Family Conflict. Family Relations, 68, 213–231. https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12353
Moreno, C. R. C., Marqueze, E. C., Sargent, C., Wright Jr, K. P., Ferguson, S. A., & Tucker, P. (2019). Working Time Society consensus statements: Evidence-based effects of shift work on physical and mental health. *Industrial Health, 57*(2), 139–157. https://doi.org/10.2486/indhealth.SW-1
Netemeyer, R., Boles, J., & Mcmurrian, R. (1996). Development and Validation of Work-Family and Family-Work Conflict Scales. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 81, 400–410. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.81.4.400
Philipp, M.-F., Büchau, S., Schober, P. S., Werner, V., & Spieß, C. K. (2024). How Daycare Quality Shapes Norms around Daycare Use and Parental Employment: Experimental Evidence from Germany. BiB Working Paper, Article 16729. Retrieved November 14, 2025, from https://www.bib.bund.de/Publikation/2024/How-daycare-quality-shapes-norms-around-daycare-use-and-parental-employment-Experimental-evidence-from-Germany.html?nn=1219558
Pilarz, A. R., & Awkward-Rich, L. (2024). Mothers' Work Schedules and Children's Time with Parents. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues, 45*(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10834-023-09894-z
Presser, H. B. (2003). Working in a 24/7 Economy: Challenges for American Families. Russell Sage Foundation. Retrieved November 10, 2025, from https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7758/9781610444590
Presser, H. B. (2004). Nonstandard Work Schedules and Marital Instability. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 62*(1), 93–110. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00093.x
Schneider, N. F., Bujard, M., Wolf, C., Gummer, T., Hank, K., & Neyer, F. J. (2021). Family Research and Demographic Analysis (FReDA): Evolution, Framework, Objectives, and Design of "The German Family Demography Panel Study." Comparative Population Studies, 46. https://doi.org/10.12765/CPoS-2021-06
Scholz, A., Erhard, K., Hahn, S., & Harring, D. (2019). Inequalities in Access to Early Childhood Education and Care in Germany. Deutsches Jugendinstitut e.V. Retrieved November 14, 2025, from https://www.dji.de/veroeffentlichungen/literatursuche/detailansicht/literatur/27205-inequalities-in-access-to-early-childhood-education-and-care-in-germany.html

Short, M. A., Agostini, A., Lushington, K., & Dorrian, J. (2015). A systematic review of the sleep, sleepiness, and performance implications of limited wake shift work schedules. *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health, 41*(5), 425–440. https://doi.org/10.5271/sjweh.3509

Strazdins, L., Clements, M. S., Korda, R. J., Broom, D. H., & D'Souza, R. M. (2006). Unsociable Work? Nonstandard Work Schedules, Family Relationships, and Children's Well-Being. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 68*(2), Article 2. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2006.00260.x

Suleiman, A. O., Decker, R. E., Garza, J. L., Laguerre, R. A., Dugan, A. G., & Cavallari, J. M. (2021). Worker perspectives on the impact of nonstandard workdays on worker and family well-being: A qualitative study. *BMC Public Health, 21*(1), 2230. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-12265-8

Täht, K., & Mills, M. (2012). Nonstandard Work Schedules, Couple Desynchronization, and Parent–Child Interaction: A Mixed-Methods Analysis. *Journal of Family Issues, 33*(8), 1054–1087. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X11424260

Taiji, R., & Mills, M. C. (2020). Nonstandard Schedules, Work–Family Conflict, and the Moderating Role of National Labour Context: Evidence from 32 European Countries. *European Sociological Review, 36*(2), 179–197. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcz048

Tammelin, M., Malinen, K., Rönkä, A., & Verhoef, M. (2017). Work Schedules and Work–Family Conflict Among Dual Earners in Finland, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. *Journal of Family Issues, 38*(1), 3–24. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X15585810

Trappe, H., Pollmann-Schult, M., & Schmitt, C. (2015). The Rise and Decline of the Male Breadwinner Model: Institutional Underpinnings and Future Expectations. *European Sociological Review, 31*(2), 230–242.

Trappe, H., & Rosenfeld, R. A. (2000). How Do Children Matter? A Comparison of Gender Earnings Inequality for Young Adults in the Former East Germany and the Former West Germany. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 62*(2), 489–507. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00489.x

Unger, D., Niessen, C., Sonnentag, S., & Neff, A. (2014). A question of time: Daily time allocation between work and private life. Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 87(1), 158–176. https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12045

Wight, V. R., Raley, S. B., & Bianchi, S. M. (2008). Time for Children, One's Spouse and Oneself among Parents Who Work Nonstandard Hours. Social Forces, 87(1), 243–271.

Yucel, D., & Borgmann, L.-S. (2022). Work-family conflict and depressive symptoms among dual-earner couples in Germany: A dyadic and longitudinal analysis. Social Science Research, 104, 102684. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2021.102684

Zhao, Y., Cooklin, A., Butterworth, P., Strazdins, L., & Leach, L. S. (2021). How does working nonstandard hours impact psychological resources important for parental functioning? Evidence from an Australian longitudinal cohort study. SSM - Population Health, 16, 100931. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2021.100931

Zhao, Y., Cooklin, A. R., Richardson, A., Strazdins, L., Butterworth, P., & Leach, L. S. (2021). Parents' Shift Work in Connection with Work–Family Conflict and Mental Health: Examining the Pathways for Mothers and Fathers. *Journal of Family Issues, 42*(2), 445–473. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X20929059

Zoch, G., & Hondralis, I. (2017). The Expansion of Low-Cost, State-Subsidized Childcare Availability and Mothers' Return-to-Work Behaviour in East and West Germany. European Sociological Review, 33(5), 693–707. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcx068

Information in German

Deutscher Titel

Atypische Arbeitszeiten und die Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Privatleben in Doppelverdienerhaushalten: Die Rolle der Elternschaft

Zusammenfassung

Fragestellung: Die Studie untersucht, wie sich atypische Arbeitszeiten auf die Work-Life-Balance (WLB) von Eltern in Doppelverdienerhaushalten auswirken.

Hintergrund: Frühere Studien zeigen, dass atypische Arbeitszeiten die Gesundheit und das Wohlbefinden von Erwerbstätigen beeinträchtigen können. Weniger erforscht ist jedoch, ob und in welchem Ausmaß sich diese negativen Folgen bei Eltern stärker oder schwächer ausgeprägt sind als bei kinderlosen Personen.

Methode: Auf Basis der ersten Welle des Familiendemographischen Panels (FReDA) wird mithilfe linearer Regressionsmodelle untersucht, ob der Zusammenhang zwischen atypischen Arbeitszeiten und WLB von der Familiensituation geprägt wird.

Ergebnisse: Elternschaft geht insgesamt mit einer geringeren WLB einher. Der negative Zusammenhang zwischen atypischen Arbeitszeiten und WLB fällt jedoch bei kinderlosen Erwerbstätigen stärker aus als bei Eltern. Mütter kleiner Kinder (0–5 Jahre) sowie Väter schulpflichtiger Kinder (6–12 Jahre) mit atypischen Arbeitszeiten tendenziell sogar über eine höhere WLB als ihre kinderlosen Pendants.

Schlussfolgerung: Eltern mit atypischen Arbeitszeiten in Doppelverdienerhaushalten verzeichnen nicht notwendigerweise eine niedrigere WLB als ihre kinderlosen Pendants. Vielmehr können atypische Arbeitszeiten Eltern dabei unterstützen, Berufs- und Familienverpflichtungen besser miteinander zu vereinbaren.

Schlagwörter: Atypische Arbeitszeiten, Work-Life Balance, Elternschaft, Deutschland

JFR – Journal of Family Research, 2026, vol. 38, pp. 1–22.

doi: https://doi.org/10.20377/jfr-1259

Section: Articles
Submitted: February 27, 2025
Accepted: December 5, 2025
Published online: January 8, 2026

Sarahi Resendez: https://orcid.org/ 0009-0000-6306-3330

Jianghong Li: https://orcid.org/ 0000-0002-2544-7592

Matthias Pollmann-Schult: https://orcid.org/ 0000-0002-0010-1667