



Work-life conflict in Ireland and Europe: Evidence from the European Social Survey

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Outline of Presentation

- 1) Introduction to work-life conflict
- 2) Work-life conflict (WLC) - what it means, how it is measured, previous research
- 3) The European Social Survey - introducing the *Social Indicators* journal special Issue on work-life conflict
- 4) Illustrative findings from Special Issue: McGinnity & Calvert paper
- 5) Future prospects

1. Introduction

- Reconciling work-family life has become a critical issue for both academic and policy debates in Europe and the US
- Backdrop of rising female participation/inc in dual earners & lone parents, ageing population and falling fertility
- Concerns regarding work intensification, longer working hours (Burchell *et. al.*, 2002; Thirion et al., 2007)
- WLC may have a detrimental impact on personal effectiveness, marital relations and child development

Introduction II

Work-life conflict and the life cycle

- Work-life conflict a ‘new risk’ in an important phase of the life cycle
- Growing female labour market participation and changing family structures means many individuals combine adult and childcare with paid work
- Home demands particularly high with young children
- Work pressure also varies across the life cycle, lowest amongst under 25s

Introduction III - European variation

- *Employment patterns* e.g. part-time work; mothers'/fathers' employment rates
- *Policies* e.g. employment regulation, working hours, annual leave, flexible working
- *Family support* e.g. family leave rights and benefits, childcare, tax-benefit regimes
- *Gender role attitudes* e.g. to maternal employment

2. Work-life conflict - Definitions

- ‘Meeting demands in one domain makes it difficult to meet the demands in another domain’ (e.g. Greenhaus et al)
- Can be ‘Work-to-Life’ or ‘Life-to-Work’, more focus in published research on former.
- Sometimes *work-family*, sometimes *work-life*
- Limitations: only focus on those in employment; some current and future ‘costs’ ignored

Work-life conflict - Measurement

- ‘Objective’
 - part-time work /or long working hours
- ‘Subjective’
 - Assessment by the individual
 - Allows people with same workload to record different responses
 - Either person’s own account (qualitative studies) or combination of questions from survey
 - May vary by expectations – best strategy to focus on relationships between resources, conditions and workload than give too much weight to individual ‘scores’

Work-life Conflict - Previous Research

Paid work factors

Long working hours
Unsocial/unpredictable hrs
work pressure
Working-time flexibility

Demands from home

Caring commitments for
children/older relatives
Household's paid wk hrs
Division of unpaid work
Gender role attitudes

Country level factors:

welfare state reconciliation policies;
employment regime – e.g. working time:
gender culture/attitudes

3. The Special Issue

- All papers use **European Social Survey 2004** – academically driven social survey, designed to chart attitudes.
- Rigorous methodologies - sampling, very high response rate, equivalence of questions; 30 countries, highly comparable!
- Descartes prize for excellence in collaborative research.
- Specially designed questions on work-life conflict and in addition excellent information on work pressure, autonomy, pay and conditions of work, unpaid work, division of housework, childcare, gender role attitudes.

The Special Issue

- ✘ **Steiber:** Reported levels of time-based and strain-based conflict between work and family roles in Europe
- ✘ **Gallie and Russell:** Work-Life Balance and Working Conditions in Western Europe.
- ✘ **McGinnity and Calvert:** Work-life Conflict and Social Inequality in Western Europe
- ✘ **Kasearu:** The effect of union type on the division of labour and work-life conflict in five European countries
- ✘ **Boye:** Relatively different? How do gender differences in well-being depend on paid and unpaid work in Europe?
- ✘ **Scherer:** The Social Consequences of Insecure Jobs
- ✘ **Gash:** Sacrificing their Careers for their Families? An Analysis of the Family Pay Penalty in Europe.
- ✘ **Polavieja:** Domestic Supply, Job-Specialization and Sex-Differences in Pay

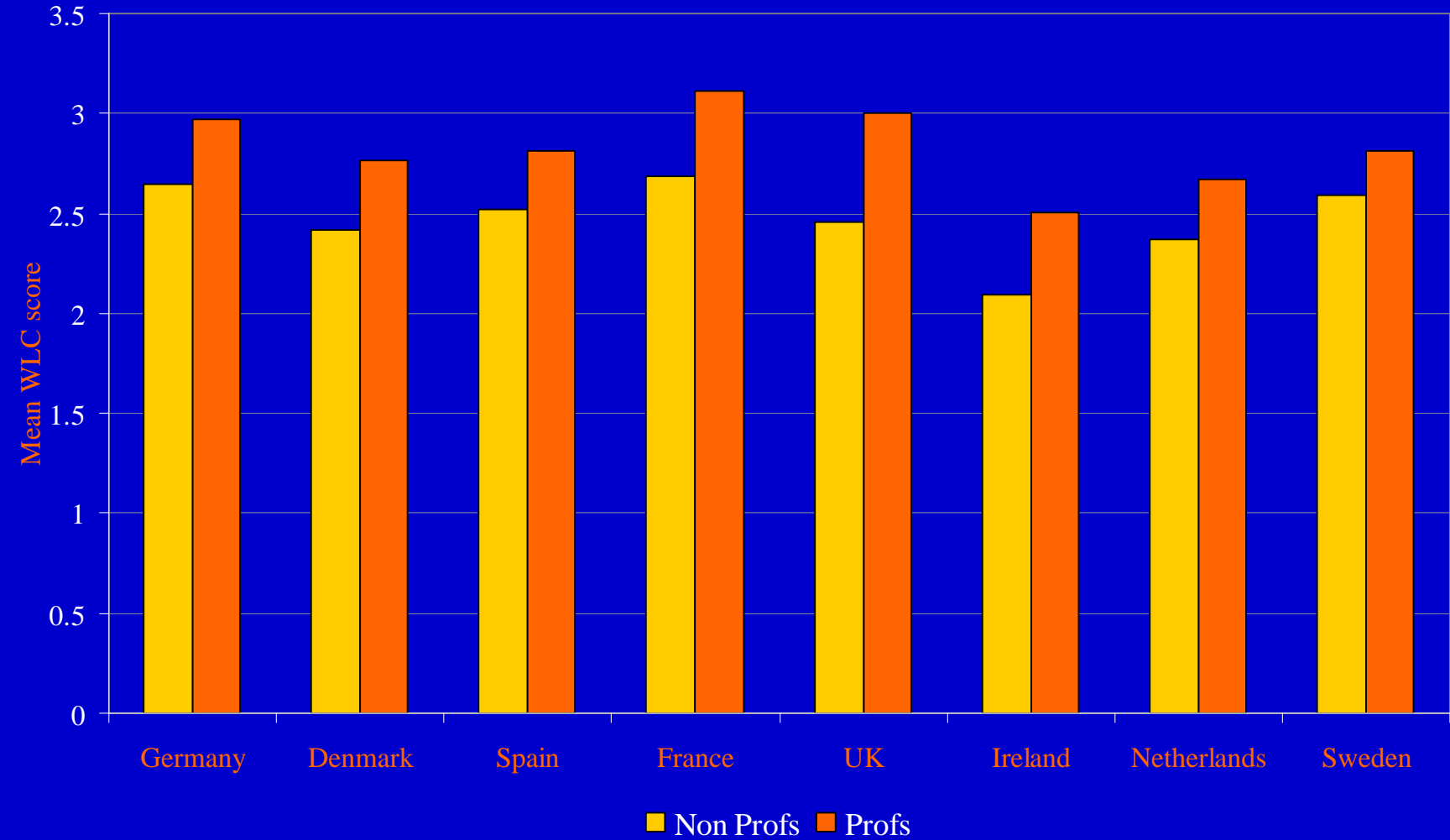
4. Sample paper: McGinnity and Calvert, Work-life Conflict and Social Inequality

- To what extent is work-life conflict a problem of the (comparatively) rich professional and managerial classes?
- Is this because profs have more demanding jobs, suffer work pressure or are professionals just ‘complainers’
- Are the professionals under more time pressure/suffer more work-life conflict in all countries?
- Might vary by labour market/state context. Test argument for 8 EU countries using ESS:
 - Germany, France, Spain, The Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, UK & Ireland

Measurement

- Measuring inequality: (occupational) social class schema
- Measuring work-life conflict:
 - Subjective measure/creation of index from:
 - *How often do you keep worrying about work problems when you are not working?*
 - *‘How often do you feel too tired after work to enjoy the things you would like to do at home?’*
 - *‘How often do you find that your job prevents you from giving the time you want to your partner or family*

Figure 1: Country variation in WLC (mean scores) by class



Regression Models – WLC: All Employees – 8 countries pooled

	Class	Class, time	Class, time, flex, stress
(Constant)	2.52***	1.58***	0.54***
Professional	0.33***	0.25***	0.18***
Female		0.17***	0.14***
Partner		0.04	0.06*
Child <6		0.09**	0.01
Child 6-17		0.05 ~	0.00
Lone parent		0.10 ~	0.08 ~
H/work hrs/week		0.00 ~	0.00
Paid wk hrs/wk		0.02***	0.01***
Start/finish time (1-4)			-0.01 ~
Unsocial hrs (1-5)			0.15***
Job pressure (1-5)			0.26***
H/work stressful (1-5)			0.08***
Egalitarian attitudes (1-5)			0.05**
Adjusted R Square	.039	.106	.253
N	5496	5496	5496

McGinnity/Calvert - Summary of Comparative Findings

- Higher work-life conflict among professionals in all countries
- Reduced after controlling for work hours and work stress in all countries but class differences still maintained
- Similar patterns across countries, when we test this - some modest variation
- Class differences almost disappear in Sweden; to lesser extent in The Netherlands and Spain

OLS Regression Models – WLC: IRELAND

	Class	Class, time	Class, time, flex, stress
(Constant)	2.08***	1.39***	0.01
Professional	0.41***	0.38***	0.27***
Female		0.17**	0.17**
Partner		-0.06	0.02
Child <6		0.26**	0.17*
Child 6-17		0.17*	0.14 ~
Lone parent		0.00	0.00
Paid wk hrs/wk		0.02***	0.01*
Start/finish time (1-4)			-0.01
Unsocial hrs (1-5)			0.14***
Job pressure (1-5)			0.34***
Egalitarian attitudes (1-5)			0.15***
Adjusted R Square	.061	.104	.249
N	707	707	707

Summary of model for Ireland

- Generally similar effects to pooled model – professionals higher work-life conflict, women higher work-life conflict, children inc work-life conflict, as do higher hours of paid work, unsocial hours, job pressure.
- Note children greater impact on work-life conflict in Ireland than in pooled model, particularly under 6, likely this is linked to low levels of formal childcare for preschool children.
- Impact of job pressure on work-life conflict even stronger in Ireland than in pooled model.
- Impact of egalitarian attitudes stronger effect on work-life conflict in Ireland than other countries.

McGinnity/Calvert - Policy implications?

- Policy implications: if welfare now a ‘social investment’ and EU governments keen on high labour market participation of highly skilled and reproduction of highly skilled, work-life conflict likely to remain on the agenda
- Download earlier version of paper:
<http://www.esri.ie/UserFiles/publications/20080514143726/WP239.pdf>

5. Future Prospects for Work-life Conflict

- Findings suggest work-life conflict more than just a 'passing fad'.
- It touches core issues about the changing nature of work and the role it plays in people's lives.
- Employers and governments need to take demands inside and outside work seriously
- If EU governments serious about achieving high employment economies without compromising fertility, work-life conflict likely to stay on the agenda.