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Berghammer, Caroline; Milkie, Melissa A.

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# Felt deficits in time with children: Individual and contextual factors across 27 European countries

Caroline Berghammer<sup>1,2</sup>  | Melissa A. Milkie<sup>3</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Department of Sociology, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria

<sup>2</sup>Vienna Institute of Demography (OeAW), Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Global Human Capital (IIASA, OeAW, University of Vienna), Vienna, Austria

<sup>3</sup>Department of Sociology, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

## Correspondence

Caroline Berghammer, Department of Sociology, University of Vienna, Rooseveltplatz 2, Vienna A-1090, Austria. Email: caroline.berghammer@univie.ac.at

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## Abstract

A sizeable portion of parents say they lack time with children—an important social problem given that time strains link to parental well-being. Extending perspectives on the demands and rewards of parenting beyond the individual level, we provide a contextual-level window onto mothers' and fathers' time strains. Based on data from the European Quality of Life Survey 2016/17 ( $n = 5,898$ ), we analyze whether parents feel they spend enough time caring for their children using multilevel models. We first observe that country context matters in that perceptions of time only moderately or weakly relate to hours with children across countries, especially for fathers, suggesting varying social expectations across Europe. Second, in multivariate analyses examining micro- and macro-level factors, we show that at the individual level, feeling too little time with children is more frequent among fathers and those who work more hours, even when controlling for estimated weekly hours spent caring for children. At the country level, parents' time strain is higher in countries where employees have less time and place flexibility, typically in Central and Eastern as well as Southern Europe. Gender norms matter as well. Extending contextual perspectives, we argue that how gender-work-family regimes color felt time strain is a promising future research direction.

## KEYWORDS

childcare, Europe, flexibility, gender, parents, time use

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Parents are concerned about spending sufficient time with their children (Shaw & Dawson, 2001) in part because of very high expectations for developing children's potential. The demands on mothers to support children's achievements and well-being have become more intensive (Hays, 1996; Sandberg & Hofferth, 2001; Sayer, Bianchi, et al., 2004) and fathers are increasingly expected to be present and engaged (Hobson, 2002). Furthermore, parents want to be with children—and they benefit emotionally from time with children compared to time apart (Musick et al., 2016; Poortman & Van Der Lippe, 2009).

Against a high standard of intensive and involved parenting, around one-half of employed parents in the United States and Canada feel they have too little time with their children (Milkie et al., 2004, 2019). They feel rushed between work demands, their personal needs and time with their children (Mattingly & Sayer, 2006; Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2017). When time is scarce for children, parents suffer emotionally (Milkie et al., 2019); as such a better understanding of time strains as an important social problem is vital. Research shows that several individual level factors tied to work demands, especially work hours and control—and to parents' gender—affect the level of felt time strains.

How parents' larger sociocultural context matters for their feelings about time with children is relatively unknown. Yet both structural aspects of different countries, such as policy and workplace factors, as well as cultural beliefs about gender roles in families and at work should matter for perceptions of time adequacy (Collins, 2019) and thus comparative work is vital. Building on a demands and rewards framework for assessing parental well-being that focuses on individual-level factors, we posit that a *contextual perspective* on time strain is vital. Countries vary greatly in their work-family regimes, which support parents through various payments, work conditions, or neither (Glass et al., 2016; Sayer, Gauthier, et al., 2004); moreover, a country's gender culture is vital to consider when examining family relationships (Gonalons-Pons & Gangl, 2021). We argue that these contextual factors of a society will color parents' feelings about the time they spend with children beyond individual factors, likely through mechanisms of social network support, social comparison, and a sense of value and mattering as parents who are raising the next generation.

In this study, we build on research using single-country analyses in the U.S. and Canada to examine parents' feelings about time with children in the diverse European Union context. We examine both key individual factors as well as contextual factors that we argue may be relevant for parents' time strains. We ask: (1) Which European countries have the highest percentages of mothers and fathers who feel they have too little time to care for their children? How does this map onto reported time spent in care? (2) Considering individual-level factors, how do work conditions, family structure, and gender link to felt time deficits for European parents? (3) How do variations in country contextual factors linked to workplace structure and policies and to gendered cultures matter for parents' feelings of time adequacy? The fourth wave of the European Quality of Life Surveys (EQLS) 2016/17 provides, for the first time, a data base that enables an analysis of parents' perceptions of time adequacy in caring for children among 27 European countries. The significance of the study is two-fold. First, this study empirically expands assessments of parents' time adequacy with children—arguably a strain in one of the most important relationships in mothers' and fathers' lives—to the European context. Second, it elucidates contextual-level conditions that may shape parents' time deficits, beyond those at the individual level. By doing so, it emphasizes the importance of the social context of time strains arising among parents.

## 2 | THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: A DEMANDS-REWARDS PERSPECTIVE

Parents today spend more time with their children than their counterparts did some decades ago. Despite the considerable increase in childcare time over recent decades in Western nations (Bianchi et al., 2006; Dotti Sani

& Treas, 2016), many parents, at least from North America, perceive their time with children as not enough. This apparent puzzle has been explained by increasing standards of mothering and fathering over the past decades. Especially mothers are expected to invest large amounts of time and energy in their children in order to guarantee their emotional well-being and cognitive development. Hays has aptly described childrearing as 'child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor-intensive, and financially expensive' (Hays, 1996, p. 8). But also the social ideal of an involved father implies that he is present and engaged (Hobson, 2002). These high standards have developed during a time when mothers have gradually entered the labor force and fathers have continued their full-time work schedules. In consequence, time stress for both mothers and fathers has grown (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2017).

A demands-rewards theoretical perspective on parental well-being calls scholars' attention to the challenges and strains parents may experience in the parental role, including time strains (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020) and the rewards parents expect, including the joys of watching children grow as well as being part of their developing a relationship with the community. When parents experience structures of overwork or inflexible workplaces, they are likely to feel time strain in this important relationship. Moreover, these same structural challenges associated with combining an intense and greedy workplace with parenthood, may at the same time prevent parents from the rewarding aspects of parenthood, like attending children's sporting events or eating together with children. Felt time adequacy with children, versus feeling like one is sacrificing family for other demands, is important for parental well-being (Lee et al., 2017; Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020).

Indeed, prior research in North America underscores the arguments of the demands-rewards perspective, highlighting work, gender and family structure as key factors in time strain. First, the conditions of work matter. The higher the work hours, the more likely parents feel they do not spend enough time with their children. Notably, a higher number of work hours remains a strong predictor even when controlling for estimated childcare time (Milkie et al., 2004, 2019). An interpretation would be that employed parents may lack the spontaneity and flexibility of being with their children at key activities, for example at school or extracurricular events. They could also be prevented from being present at shared meals and rituals around bed time—both important routines in families' everyday life (Fiese et al., 2002). This ties in with findings from Canada, that parents who have less control over their work schedule and who work away from home, for example traveling (instead of at a fixed location) more often report that they feel that time with their children is insufficient (Milkie et al., 2019). Another explanation for the finding that employed parents experience more time deficits net of their estimated childcare time relates to work-family conflict (e.g., being preoccupied with work matters or too tired for family members): employed parents might be less psychologically available during time spent with their children, resulting in feelings of time strain (Jurczyk, 2009).

The demands-rewards perspective also includes attention to key social statuses that shape parents' demands and experiences. Parents' gender matters for felt strain. After controlling for work hours and other factors, there are no significant gender differences in felt deficits (with fathers reporting even slightly less strain), though notably mothers only feel 'right' about time with children at a high level of estimated time with children compared to fathers (Milkie et al., 2004). There are considerable differences in the amount of childcare time—mainly measured as primary childcare—as well as kind of activities by parents' characteristics. Mothers spend roughly twice as much time as fathers do on childcare (Dotti Sani & Treas, 2016), they attend more to their offspring's physical needs (Negraia et al., 2018; OECD, 2011) and are more inclined than fathers to perform childcare tasks that are disruptive to their work, for example, staying home when a child gets sick (Maume, 2008). Moreover, the negative stereotyping of working mothers with young children could lead them to overestimate time that homemakers spend with their children and feel more time deficits themselves (Napierski-Prancl, 2019).

Family characteristics are important for the level of time strain felt. Mothers living with partners spend more time in childcare than single mothers (Craig & Mullan, 2011). Single mothers perceive less time strain than married mothers, while there are no differences among single and married fathers (Milkie et al., 2004). In the U.S., a lack of time is felt more with adolescents, in particularly for fathers, than with children in school or preschool age; in

Canada, parents with preschoolers most often report time deficits. Younger children are more time intensive for parents than older ones and, with older children, time for physical care declines while managerial tasks increase (Berghammer, 2013; Daly, 2001; Milkie et al., 2009). In the US, gender differences in parents' time with children persist with older children, although there is some convergence (Negraia et al., 2018). Highly educated mothers and fathers also report more hours of childcare than their less educated peers; norms of intensive parenting might prevail more strongly in this group (Altintas, 2016; Dotti Sani & Treas, 2016). However, there is also evidence that intensive parenting norms have diffused similarly across educational groups (Ishizuka, 2018). Prior North American research shows either no significant differences by years of education (Milkie et al., 2004) or a negative education effect (Milkie et al., 2019), with more years of education related to less time strain.

### 3 | THE IMPORTANCE OF COUNTRY CONTEXT: WORK AND GENDER REGIMES

Assessing how parents' work conditions and gender contribute to time strain is important in its own right. However, parents' individual-level work and family conditions may not capture the full picture of how parents' well-being unfolds (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020). Macro-level contexts of work and gender regimes importantly shape individual parents' lives (Collins, 2019), and acknowledging and studying these factors help move away from a 'parental determinism' (Faircloth, 2014) in which parents believe it is their sole responsibility to produce healthy children rather than a community or societal one. The cross-comparative nature of this study allows us to assess how the report of having too little time with children differs across countries and to assess possible explanations such as labor force characteristics and gendered culture for this variation. Although we are not able to see what mechanisms may be at play in terms of how the work and gender regimes reach into parents' sense of whether they have enough time for children, we briefly mention two here. First, the work-family regime has more or fewer structures that allow a modicum of support for parents. A more family-friendly context may be indicated by what portion of workers work part time or have flexible work, along with aligned factors, for example, child care infrastructure (Young et al., 2020). Second, the work-family social context also includes cultural beliefs surrounding who should work, how much, and who should care for children. Social comparison is a potential mechanism (Glavin & Young, 2017) in which people are able to see how their time in family roles measures up to others around them. If a mother works long hours in a society where most of her female neighbors work part time and have traditional attitudes, she may feel especially strained (Collins, 2019). Thus the gender-work-family regimes should implicate felt strains through normative processes and social expectations that parents use as social comparators (Gonalons-Pons & Gangl, 2021). Mothers and fathers assess whether they are spending the right amount of time with children relative to how much the society believes mothers versus fathers should be parenting, and how much the extended family, community and state 'should' provide care for children (Collins, 2019; Gonalons-Pons & Gangl, 2021).

The U.S. and Canada, which prior studies have focused on, are both liberal countries, marked by comparatively low public spending on family benefits, high women's full-time employment rates and short to medium employment breaks after childbirth (in the U.S., there is no general paid childbirth-related leave guaranteed). In addition, both countries rank rather high on gender equality attitudes. The countries included in this study are much more diverse. We discuss their characteristics below, with regard to three measures: work time, time and place flexibility of work, and gender attitudes (see Appendix Table A1).<sup>1</sup>

First, a contextual perspective points to the structures of the labor market above and beyond parents' own work conditions. In terms of work time, while women's labor force participation rates have converged across Europe in the past decades, the context of women's work should be important (Collins, 2019). There are still marked differences in women's working hours across countries. The Netherlands stand out with 74% of employed women working part-time; part-time rates are also considerable (around 40%–50%) in Germany, Austria, Belgium

and the United Kingdom. On the other hand, part-time is very rare (<12%) across all of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) (see Appendix Table A1). Previous research reports mixed results: either no effect of work hours on general levels of happiness among parents (Glass et al., 2016) or a negative effect on work-family strain, i.e., shorter hours are linked to more work-family strain, because of an increased sensitivity to work-family strain in countries with shorter hours (Ruppanner & Maume, 2016). Still, we expect that the country-level part-time rate might be negatively related to perceived time strains—over and above effects on the individual-level—because it could reflect women's greater flexibility in realizing their individual working time preferences. Although full-time employment is the standard among men across Europe, the country-specific regulations concerning the number of hours in a standard work week, extent of overtime and part-time vary. Even so, in most countries, men work on average about 40 actual weekly hr (including overtime), while they work less in the Netherlands and Denmark (averaging 35 hr) and in Sweden (38 hr) (see Appendix Table A1).

*Second*, the flexibility of the country's workers should matter for parents' perceptions, given the high expectations they imply regarding the importance of family time outside of paid work (Ewald & Hogg, in press). Societies that have more of these policies and practices available for workers are likely to value the freedom to prioritize family time and acceptability of adapting work to family. Cross-national research documents how countries with high working time flexibility are linked with parents' greater life satisfaction and happiness (Glass et al., 2016; Pollmann-Schult, 2018) as well as children's well-being (Andersson et al., 2021). We note great variation in Europe as to how flexibly employees can adjust their work hours and place to personal needs or family demands. We find the highest flexibility with regard to flexible working time arrangements (such as adapting working hours within certain limits or employees determining working hours entirely by themselves) in the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland and Sweden) as well as Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands and the UK where at least 40% of employees enjoy these opportunities (with moderate gender differences) (see Appendix Table A1). On the contrary, employees in CEE and Southern European countries have the least flexibility in this regard (typically below 20%).

We assume that parents in countries with more working time flexibility feel less time strain because of both the social networks and care infrastructure that it represents. A time flexible workforce is reflective of a workplace and a society that is part of provisioning of a collective approach to its citizens and their offspring's needs. A similar assumption pertains to flexibility of working place. Working from home is most frequent in the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland and Sweden) and the Netherlands where one third and more of employees work at least partly from home, and least frequent in CEE and Southern European countries (see Appendix Table A1). When not just parents but all employees can work in locations that provide ease of work-life integration, extended families, neighbors and community members may be more available to support parents and their children.

*Third*, differences in cultural attitudes regarding gender should matter for how parents see their time with children (Gonalons-Pons & Gangl, 2021). Differences continue to persist among European countries. For reasons of data availability (see section on 'Measures'), we measure gender attitudes based on the question 'A job is alright, but what most women really want is a home and children' (European Values Study 2017). Gender attitudes have been described as multidimensional (Grunow et al., 2018) and we acknowledge that a single-item measure cannot cover them comprehensively, yet some recent work does use only one item to assess gendered contexts (Gonalons-Pons & Gangl, 2021).

We find that gender attitudes are most egalitarian in the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Sweden) as well as in Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK, where less than one third of the population agrees to this statement (see Appendix Table A1). Gender attitudes are, by contrast, most traditional in many CEE countries (especially in Bulgaria, Czechia, Lithuania and Slovakia) and Southern European countries (especially Cyprus and Malta) where more than two-thirds agree. Responses to this specific measure are likely influenced by the quality of jobs in a certain country. In countries with a high prevalence of 'bad jobs' (Vidal, 2013), home and children could be a relatively more desirable option compared to the labor market. In CEE countries, in particular, many employees work in jobs that are marked by high workload, little job autonomy and low working time flexibility

(Holman, 2013). In such contexts, high agreement to the gender attitudes measure could thus be more reflective of a focus on the family than of gender traditionalism. In order to obtain a more nuanced picture, we also need to view stated gender attitudes and actual employment behavior together. Specifically, in the Netherlands, Germany and Austria, low to moderate shares (27% to 36%) agree that 'a job is alright, but what most women really want is a home and children', however, the shares of female part-time employment are highest in these three countries.

We expect that in countries with more gender egalitarian attitudes, mothers and fathers might feel more time strain with children. The arguments could be similar to those made in previous research that reported higher levels of work-family conflict in more gender egalitarian cultures (Steiber, 2009). In such cultures, mothers' labor force participation rates are higher and even mothers who are not able to combine paid work and family well, engage in employment. What is more, an equal division of unpaid work in families often lags behind more egalitarian attitudes, resulting in tensions (Ollier-Malaterre & Foucreault, 2017). For fathers in more gender egalitarian countries, where their family involvement is encouraged, they may feel more time strain with their children compared to fathers in more traditional countries, because expectations for involvement are high (Ruppanner & Huffman, 2014). However, the effect of gender egalitarian culture might vary by parents' employment hours: in traditional cultures, parents with high work hours might feel more strain because policies for combining work and family are less well developed.

In summary, time strain among parents, a key one of which is feeling enough is spent caring for children, is an important problem. Prior research from North America points to the crucial nature of work conditions and gender in how much time strain parents feel. We extend the assessment of scarce time with children to parents in the European context, a mix of gender-work-family regimes different from the United States and Canada. We extend a demands-rewards of parenting lens beyond the individual level to compare how the larger labor markets and gender attitudes of countries may influence parents' strain. We ask the following research questions:

1. Which European countries have the highest percentages of mothers and fathers who feel they have too little time to care for their children? How does this map onto reported time spent in care?
2. Considering individual-level factors, how do work conditions, family structure, and gender link to felt time deficits for European parents?
3. How do variations in country contextual factors linked to state/workplace policies and gendered cultures matter for parents' feelings of time strain?

## 4 | DATA AND METHODS

### 4.1 | Data

The European Quality of Life Surveys (EQLS), organized by the Eurofound (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions), were conducted in 2003, 2007, 2012, and 2016 (Eurofound, 2018b). The fourth wave included, for the first time, questions both on parents' estimated weekly time with children and feelings about whether they spend enough or too little time with their children. It is the only cross-nationally comparative survey we are aware of that contains both of these questions.

Our analysis is based on the fourth wave of the EQLS, fielded between September 2016 and March 2017. This survey of 28 EU-countries and 5 candidate countries (Albania, FYR of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey) focuses on quality of life, quality of society and public services. It covers adults aged 18+ living in private households using a multi-stage, stratified, random sample and contains around 1,000–2,000 respondents per country. The interviews were conducted face-to-face [for more information on the surveys, see Eurofound (2018a)]. Our analytical sample consists of respondents who had children (own and stepchildren) below age 18 in the household. The final sample size is 5,898 cases in 27 countries. We excluded six countries for the following



reasons. Portugal was excluded due to very high shares of missing values on weekly hours spent in childcare (27%). Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia were excluded due to the lack of country-level indicators.<sup>2</sup> Turkey was found to be a sharp outlier with regard to time spent with children, especially for fathers (only 11% of fathers reported spending too little time with children at very low estimated average childcare hours of 11.6 per week). Hence, it is one of only three countries in which fathers reported less often than mothers that they spend too little time, the difference being 14 percentage points.<sup>3</sup> More generally, the gendered division of work is very different in Turkey compared to EU-countries: the female employment rate at ages 25 to 54 years was only 36% in Turkey compared to 74% in EU-27 in 2020 (Eurostat, 2021). We hence decided to exclude Turkey and thus focus on EU-countries only (plus the UK which was in the EU at the time of data collection). As robustness check, we, however, re-estimated the multilevel linear probability models including Turkey.

## 4.2 | Measures

The subjective assessment of time with children is measured by the following question: *'Could you tell me if you spend as much time as you would like caring for children or grandchildren, or if you wish you could spend "less time" or "more time" in that activity? Spend less time; spend as much time as I currently do; spend more time.'* We combined 'spend less time' (4%) and 'spend as much time as I currently do' (52%) versus 'spend more time' (44%); thus, the dependent variable is (0) 'spend enough time' and (1) 'spend too little time'. We excluded respondents with missing values (3%) and those with grandchildren in the household ( $n = 20$ ;  $<0.5\%$ ). We note that the wording of the question ('caring for') might be more suitable for the kind of time spent with younger children, whereas parents of older children/adolescents spend time with their children without necessarily referring to it as childcare.

Estimated time spent with children was measured as follows: *'In general how often are you involved in caring for and/or educating your children? Every day; several days a week; once or twice a week; less often; never.'* Respondents who gave one of the first three answers were asked for the weekly hours: *'On average, how many hours per week are you involved in caring for and/or educating your children?'* If respondents answered the first question on the involvement with 'less often' (i.e., less than once or twice a week) or 'never,' the question on weekly hours was recoded with zero. We excluded respondents with missing values (7%; the share of missing values was slightly higher among women than men and among less-educated respondents). We acknowledge that the measurement of hours per week with childcare based on a retrospective measure and not on diary entries is a limitation of this data source. Respondents who are presented with a retrospective measure typically have more difficulties in defining childcare time—especially counting non-focused, secondary childcare time—and in calculating the mean number of hours per week. A retrospective measure is also more susceptible to social desirability bias (Gershuny, 2000; Juster & Stafford, 1991; Schulz & Grunow, 2012). Moreover, similar to what was noted for the previous question, the wording refers to 'caring for/educating' which might be more fitting for younger children.

The following independent variables were included at the individual level (see Appendix Table A2 for distributions). *Work hours* rely on normal weekly work hours (including overtime) and on first and second job combined; childcare or other leave are coded as zero hours. Work hours of 60 and above were recoded to 59 hr (95th percentile). Missing information (2% of cases) was imputed with the gender- and country-specific mean working hours. *Family structure* was categorized into (0) parent in couple and (1) single parent. *Age of the youngest child* was grouped into ages 0 to 5 years (preschool); 6 to 12 years (school age); 13 to 17 years (adolescent). *Number of children below age 18 in the household* was coded as one; two; or three or more. *Age* was coded in years. *Level of education* was grouped into lower secondary or below; upper secondary or post-secondary; tertiary. We excluded respondents with missing values (0.5%). Regrettably, neither information on respondents' work flexibility nor on their gender attitudes is available in the dataset. Moreover, we estimated couple-level models where we included *partner's work hours* as well as *couples' division of childcare time* based on the question (posed to the respondent): *'Do you spend more, less or the same amount of time as your partner does looking after your children?'*; response



categories were 'more time than my partner does,' 'the same amount of time as my partner does,' or 'less time than my partner does'.<sup>4</sup>

On the country level, we included four variables to assess general working conditions: working time (actual mean weekly working hours; for women, in addition we examine the part-time rate), flexibility of time, flexibility of work location or place, and gender attitudes (see Table A1).

Working time is measured as the average number of usual weekly working hours in the main job (among employed persons). For mothers, part-time employment is measured as the percentage of women in the country who indicate that they work part time, of the total employed (self-assessment of part-time). Both measures were obtained from the Eurostat database. Flexibility at work is measured as the share of employees with the ability to set working time arrangements in one of the following ways: (a) choose between several fixed working schedules; (b) adapt working hours within certain limits; (c) working hours determined entirely by themselves (OECD, 2016). On the contrary, not flexible are those employees whose 'working hours are set entirely by the company/organization with no possibility for change'. Flexibility of place is measured as the share of employees who report that they have worked from their own home in the past twelve months, on the scale of: (a) daily or several times a week; (b) several times a month; (c) less than several times a month (OECD, 2016). Not flexible on workplace are those who never worked from their own home. Measures of flexibility are obtained from the OECD Family database.<sup>5</sup>

Gender attitudes are based on the European Values Study (EVS) 2017, measured by the question 'A job is alright but what most women really want is a home and children'; the choices were: agree strongly, agree, disagree, disagree strongly. The measure is coded so that a higher value indicates conservative values; as 4 = agree strongly, 3 = agree; 2 = disagree and 1 = strongly disagree. Results for 6 out of 27 countries are based on the EVS 2008 wave (Belgium, Cyprus, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, and Malta) because they did not participate in the EVS 2017. This specific measure of gender attitudes was chosen because, due to major changes in the questionnaire between 2008 and 2017, it is the only item measuring those attitudes in the same way in both surveys. Between these two waves, the gender roles battery has been shortened from eight to four items. We acknowledge that a single-item measure is less desirable than an index, especially in a cross-national comparison where its interpretation might vary more strongly by context. We have thus conducted a robustness check using an index (based on the EVS 2008) as described in the next section.

### 4.3 | Analytic plan

While the total sample size of 5,898 is substantial, the limited observations by country preclude multivariate country-specific analyses. All descriptive and multivariate comparative analyses were weighted with the population weight that considers population size (*Wcalib\_crossnational\_EU28*); individual country analyses were also weighted (*Wcalib*).

We estimated multilevel linear probability models with individuals nested within countries; additional models were conducted separately for mothers and fathers (see Appendix Tables A5 and A6). Feelings about time with children was used as dependent variable. We estimated linear probability models instead of logistic regression models because we included cross-level interactions, which is advised against in non-linear models (Mood, 2009). Country-level variables were included individually; an approach that has also been taken in several previous studies in which items may be tapping into various aspects of a gender-work-family regime (Boeckmann et al., 2014; Budig et al., 2016; Young & Wheaton, 2013). Table A4 in the Appendix shows a model containing all country-level variables together.

We conducted several robustness checks. First, as a family policy measure, we used a composite index that considers both childcare services (e.g., number of places, opening hours) and childcare leaves (e.g., duration and financial compensation) (Matysiak & Węziak-Białowolska, 2016). For the countries considered in this analysis, it ranges between 15.3 for Ireland and 75.4 for Sweden with a mean of 35.8 (no data for Croatia available). Second,

we replaced the single-item measure of gender attitudes with a gender norms index, developed by Matysiak and Węziak-Białowolska (2016), which consist of five items<sup>6</sup> from the EVS 2008. It ranges from 16.2 in Romania to 92.2 in Denmark with a mean of 48.8 among the countries included in this study (no data for Croatia available). The correlation between our single-item measure and the gender norms index is 0.61. Third, we included Turkey in the multilevel linear probability models. Fourth, we estimated different cross-level interactions in order to explore the micro-macro structure further: between gender roles and parents' working hours and between family policies and parents' working hours.

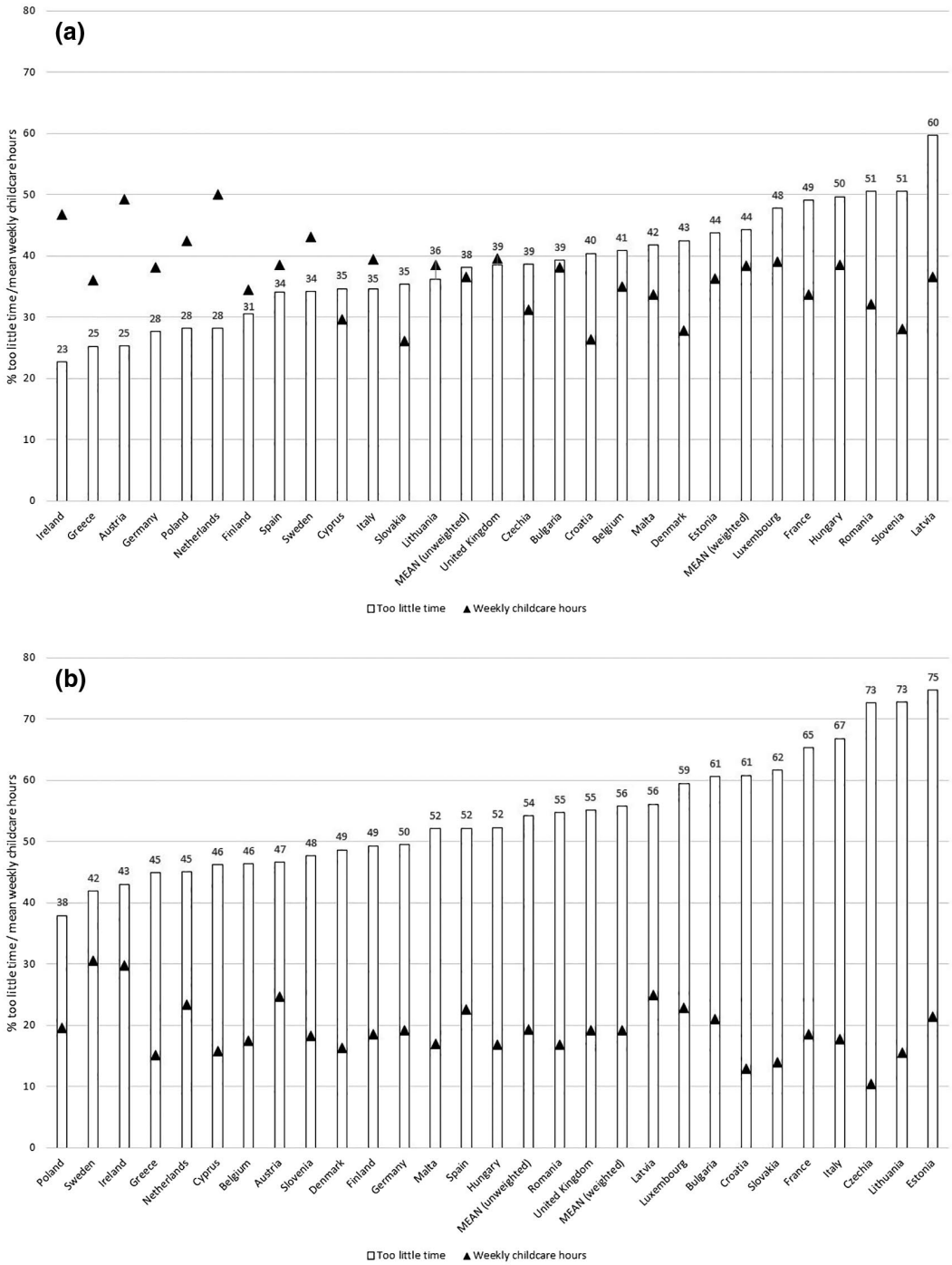
## 5 | RESULTS

### 5.1 | Descriptive results

Figure 1 depicts the share of mothers and fathers that reported having too little time with their children as well as the mean estimated hours spent with children (for numbers for both parents see Table A1). There was considerable variation between countries in the perception of having too little time and this was to a similar extent between mothers and fathers. Between 23% and 60% of mothers thought that time with their children was too scarce, with values being lowest in Ireland, Greece, and Austria and highest in Latvia, Slovenia and Romania. The mean was 38% (unweighted by population size). The country ordering suggests a moderate negative relationship of the percentage feeling time deficits with children and the mean estimated hours spent in childcare ( $r = -.48$  across countries). Even so, the subjective perception of not having enough time with children fluctuated substantially at similar hours of estimated time with children, which implies different cultural norms and expectations related to childcare time.

Among fathers, 38% to 75% stated that they did not spend enough time with their children; the mean was 54% (unweighted by population size). The range across countries was similar to mothers, while variation in mean estimated hours spent in childcare was rather modest compared to mothers (correlation between mean estimated hours spent in childcare and feeling about time with children:  $r = -.40$ ). The full-time work standard pertaining to men in all European countries, seemingly constrained their time with children in a similar way. Among mothers, by contrast, more options in working time (full-time, part-time, inactive) were linked to a larger variation in time spent in childcare. Despite relatively moderate differences in fathers' estimated hours spent in childcare among countries, their levels of time strain differed greatly. The feeling of having too little time with children was especially pronounced in CEE countries as well as in France and Italy.

Table 1 shows which parental characteristics were relevant for the feeling of not spending enough time with children at the bivariate level (Appendix Table A3 depicts the respective results by country). Fathers more often reported time strain than mothers. While for mothers, this feeling was more frequent with a youngest child of school age, fathers more often felt they spent too little time with preschoolers and school-aged children than with adolescents ( $p < .001$ ). The distributions by employment status revealed similar results for mothers and fathers: 63% of parents with overwork reported too little time and 53% of full-time employed parents; 31% of part-time employed mothers feel time strain (part-time employment is negligible among fathers, see Table A2). These values are close to the values observed in the U.S. (51% among full-time employed and 30% among part-time employed parents) (Milkie et al., 2004) and Canada (45% of employed mothers and 51% of employed fathers) (Milkie et al., 2019). Observed differences between mothers and fathers in feelings of time strain were thus clearly related to their different work intensities. In the non-employed category, more fathers than mothers reported too little time, which is likely related to the composition of this category: The majority of non-employed mothers were either homemakers or on leave (61%) while the majority of fathers were either unemployed or unable to work due to long-term illness (76%). This perhaps constrained fathers' time more than mothers': unemployed persons can spend up to several hours per day searching for a job (Krueger & Mueller, 2012). Single mothers did not report



**FIGURE 1** Report of 'too little time caring for children' and mean weekly childcare hours, by country and gender: (a) mothers; (b) fathers

Note. Weighted data. Weighted mean refers to the mean across all countries weighted by population size; unweighted mean is not weighted by population size.

TABLE 1 Report of 'too little time caring for children' in per cent, 27 European countries

	All parents	Mothers	Fathers	Difference between mothers and fathers
<b>Employment status</b>				
Not employed	22	17	35	***
Part-time (1–34 hr)	33***	31***	45	**
Full-time (35–45 hr)	53***	49***	56***	**
Overwork (≥46 hr)	63***	63***	63***	
<b>Gender</b>				
Mothers	36			
Fathers	55***			
<b>Family structure</b>				
In couple	45	36	55	***
Single parent	39**	38	43*	
<b>Age of youngest child</b>				
Preschool (ages 0–5)	44	32	60	***
School age (ages 6–12)	49*	42***	57	***
Adolescent age (ages 13–17)	37***	35	41***	*
<b>Number of children</b>				
One	43	36	54	***
Two	46	38	56	***
Three or more	42	31	53	***
<b>Level of education</b>				
Lower secondary or below	38	27	50	***
Upper secondary or post-secondary	44***	35***	55	***
Tertiary	50***	44***	57**	***
<i>n</i>	5,898	3,658	2,240	

Note: Weighted data. First category of each variable was used as reference category within variables. Significance levels:

\*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ .

significantly more often than mothers in couples that they felt they do not spend enough time with their children (single fathers constitute a small minority). Finally, we found a clear education gradient in subjective feelings of time spent with children both among mothers and fathers in that higher education is related to more time strain.

Part of the correlation between parents' characteristics and the feeling of spending not enough time with children may be explained by the hours spent with them (Table 2) that also is linked to these factors. Mothers spent around twice as much time with childcare as fathers, which closely ties in with the previous literature (Dotti Sani & Treas, 2016). Mothers spent much more time with children in the preschool age (an age group, which is at least partly covered by maternity/parental leave) than with school-aged children; they spent the least time with adolescents. Fathers spent more time with preschoolers and school-aged children than with adolescents; still they reported most often feeling spending too little time with young children. The time spent with children is lower with more work hours. In every employment category, time spent with children was lower (up to one half) among fathers than mothers. Estimated childcare time was similar among single mothers and mothers in couples. With regard to education, we found no significant differences in the estimated number of hours spent on caring for children.

TABLE 2 Mean hours per week spent in childcare, 27 European countries

	All parents	Mothers	Fathers	Difference between mothers and fathers
<b>Employment status</b>				
Not employed	41	46	26	***
Part-time (1–34 hr)	37***	39***	23*	***
Full-time (35–45 hr)	26***	35***	19***	***
Overwork ( $\geq 46$ hr)	19***	28***	15***	***
<b>Gender</b>				
Mothers	38			
Fathers	19**			
<b>Family structure</b>				
In couple	29	38	19	***
Single parent	37***	39	28***	***
<b>Age of youngest child</b>				
Preschool (ages 0–5)	39	52	23	***
School age (ages 6–12)	27***	33***	20***	***
Adolescent age (ages 13–17)	17***	22***	13***	***
<b>Number of children</b>				
One	27	35	17	***
Two	31***	39***	21***	***
Three or more	33***	47***	20*	***
<b>Level of education</b>				
Lower secondary or below	29	39	19	***
Upper secondary or post-secondary	30	38	19	***
Tertiary	30	38	20	***
<b>Weekly hours of childcare</b>				
Enough time	33	41	21	***
Too little time	25***	34***	18***	***
<i>n</i>	5,898	3,658	2,240	

Note: Weighted data. First category of each variable was used as reference category within variables. Significance levels:

\*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ .

Finally, we observed vast gender differences in the feeling of how much childcare time was enough: mothers who perceived the time with children as enough spent on average 41 hr while fathers were satisfied at a mean of 21 hr caring for children. In other words, twice as much direct childcare is needed for European mothers to feel they have 'enough' time with children, clearly highlighting divergent gendered expectations for parents across Europe.

## 5.2 | Multivariate results

As a next step, we present the results of the multilevel models, for both parents together (Table 3; see Appendix Tables A5 and A6 for separate models for mothers and fathers). In Model 1 (M1), we included variables at the

individual level: work hours, gender, family structure, age of the youngest child, number of children, parents' age and level of education. In the second model, we added hours spent caring for children. Models 3 to 6 contain single macro level indicators (while including variables at the individual level).

The first model revealed that a higher number of work hours was related to the feeling of not spending enough time with children. Mothers felt less time strain than fathers. Single parents did not perceive more time strain than their peers in couples. Parents of adolescents felt less time strain than parents of school age and preschool children. The number of children and parents' age did not yield any significant results. Parents with tertiary education more often felt that they did not spend enough time with the children than parents with lower secondary (or below) education. These results remained virtually unchanged when we added time caring for children in the second model, which had an (expected) negative and significant effect.

With regard to the country-level predictors, we show in Model 3 that the mean weekly working hours in a country are not-significantly related to parents' felt deficits. Model 4 shows that in countries where employees were granted more time flexibility, the share of parents reporting too little time with their children was significantly lower. We also find in Model 5 an effect of the country's workforce's level of place flexibility (working from home), with parents in these countries feeling less strain. Gender role attitudes had a positive significant effect (Model 6): the more traditional the attitudes in a country the higher the time strain. However, due to the limitations of this specific measure, the result must be interpreted with caution. The cross-level interaction between gender role attitudes and work hours showed, in addition, for mothers (but not for fathers) a marginally significant positive effect (.000;  $p = .077$ ), which suggests that mothers with higher work hours feel more time strain in more traditional countries.

The gender-specific models (see Appendix Tables A5 and A6) reveal, in addition, that work hours was the most important predictor for mothers. There is, moreover, evidence—but only from few models—that mothers with preschool children felt less time strain than mothers of school-age children and that highly-educated mothers felt more time strain compared with the least.

The results for fathers show a positive effect of work hours, but it was smaller than for mothers, i.e., for an additional work hour, fathers' feelings of not spending enough time with children did not increase as much. Fathers, moreover, tended to feel less time strain with adolescents than with school children. We found an education effect for fathers, with more educated fathers more likely to feel a time deficit with children. The inclusion of estimated time spent with children makes the education effect slightly stronger. We also explored the effect of weekly childcare time further in country-specific models (see Figure A1 in Appendix), where we show negative effects in the majority of countries, though few are statistically significant. Partly, this may be due to the limited sample sizes, ranging between 131 and 387 for mothers and fathers together (see Table A3 in Appendix). The effects are generally more strongly negative for fathers compared to mothers. With regard to the country-level effects, both for mothers and fathers, we observed negative effects of work time flexibility at the country level on the feeling of not spending enough time with children (Model 4). In other words, more flexibility in the labor force is linked with a lower likelihood of parents having time deficits.

Results for the couple-level models are shown in Table A7 in the Appendix. Generally, we find that one's own and the partner's time in childcare mattered for the respondent's feelings about time with children: if the respondent spent less time in childcare than the partner, she or he tended to feel they were not spending enough time. For full-time employed mothers, their partner's employment mattered only weakly for feelings about time with children (M1). Their feelings were independent of whether their partner also worked full-time or less. Full-time employed fathers, on the other hand, felt more time strain when their partners were not employed, presumably because of the large difference in childcare hours between the partners (marginally significant at  $p = .066$ ).

Finally, the robustness checks for family policies showed a non-significant effect (M2 in Table 3 plus family policy measure), for all respondents (.000;  $p = .965$ ) and for mothers (.000;  $p = .929$ ) and fathers (.000;  $p = .962$ ) separately. The cross-level interaction with parents' working hours was not significant either. How can these results be interpreted? On the one hand, we see descriptively that some of the countries with the lowest values on

TABLE 3 Predictors of 'too little time caring for children,' 27 European countries (multilevel linear probability models)

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
<i>Fixed parameters, level 1</i>						
Work hours	0.007***	0.007***	0.007***	0.007***	0.007***	0.007***
Weekly hours of childcare	-0.001**	-0.001**	-0.001**	-0.001**	-0.001**	-0.001**
Gender (1=mothers)	-0.084***	-0.068***	-0.069***	-0.069***	-0.069***	-0.069***
Family structure (1=single parent)	0.013	0.018	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019
Age of youngest child (reference: school age)						
Preschool	-0.008	0.001	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.002
Adolescent age	-0.115***	-0.122***	-0.123***	-0.123***	-0.122***	-0.123***
Number of children (reference: two)						
One	-0.003	-0.005	-0.005	-0.005	-0.005	-0.005
Three or more	-0.033	-0.032	-0.031	-0.031	-0.031	-0.031
Age	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.002
Level of education (reference: lower secondary or below)						
Upper secondary or post-secondary	0.024	0.026	0.026	0.026	0.026	0.025
Tertiary	0.040*	0.043*	0.044*	0.045**	0.045**	0.043*
Constant	0.492***	0.512***	0.504***	0.582***	0.571***	0.440***
<i>Fixed parameters, level 2</i>						
Mean weekly working hours (women)			-0.005			
Mean weekly working hours (men)			0.007			
Time flexibility				-0.002***		
Place flexibility					-0.003**	
<i>Gender attitudes (traditional)</i>						
Gender attitudes (traditional)						0.002*
<i>Random part</i>						
Level 1 variance	0.465 (0.005)	0.464 (0.005)	0.464 (0.005)	0.464 (0.005)	0.464 (0.005)	0.464 (0.005)
Level 2 variance	0.067 (0.009)	0.064 (0.009)	0.063 (0.011)	0.058 (0.011)	0.061 (0.011)	0.060 (0.012)

(Continues)



TABLE 3 (Continued)

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
<i>n</i>	5,898	5,898	5,898	5,898	5,898	5,898
$\rho$	0.126	0.122	0.120	0.111	0.116	0.115
- 2 Log likelihood	-4,536.569	-4,527.158	-4,526.219	-4,524.830	-4,525.732	-4,525.376

Note: Weighted data. Work hours and age were centered around means. Significance levels:

\*\*\*\* $p < .0001$ ; \*\*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ .

the family policy index (Austria, Greece, Ireland, Poland) also report most often having enough time for childcare. Quite on the contrary, time strain is also low to moderate in the Nordic countries, which have very high values on the family policy index. It seems that in countries with a low performance in terms of family policies (such as a low coverage of childcare), families have adapted by reducing mothers' labor force participation (long leaves, inactivity, part-time). Predominantly those who are able to balance paid work and family obligations well, engage in full-time employment. This selection could explain why mothers with high working hours do not feel more time strain in countries with weak compared to strong family policies. In the Nordic countries, time strain at high working hours tends to be alleviated by family policy measures. Furthermore, the countries with the highest time strains (e.g., Estonia, Latvia, Czechia, Romania) exhibit mostly low to moderate values on the family policy index. In these countries, rigid labor markets do not allow families to adjust (mothers') labor force participation, while, at the same time, family policies do not provide enough support.

The robustness checks for the gender norms index as an alternative measure also show a non-significant effect (M2 in Table 3 plus gender norms index), for all respondents ( $-.001$ ;  $p = .253$ ) and for mothers ( $-.001$ ;  $p = .468$ ) and fathers ( $-.001$ ;  $p = .278$ ). Because it is scaled inverse (higher values indicating more gender equality) compared to the single-item measure, the tendency is (as for the single-item measure) toward parents feeling more time strain in more traditional countries, which reinforces our results. Again, we may descriptively distinguish different country clusters: countries with rather traditional gender roles (mostly Southern and CEE countries) tend toward moderate to high time strain. In some of these countries, there is a contrast between, on the one hand, traditional gender roles and less developed family policies and, on the other hand, an economic need for women to work full-time. Thus time strain may be particularly acute at higher working hours for women (as the marginally significant interaction effect for the one-item measure suggests). By contrast, the most gender egalitarian countries display low to moderate levels of time strain. In these countries, more egalitarian gender roles are mirrored in more developed family policies.

Third, the robustness checks for the models that include Turkey are available in the online 'Supporting information' (Table S1). There are several notable differences in the results, given the unusually low values for fathers feeling too little time in childcare and the large population size of Turkey.

## 6 | DISCUSSION

Around the developed world, standards for parental investment in children's lives and education have increased, as parenting has intensified (Faircloth, 2014; Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020). In this study, for the first time, we are able to assess the level of childrearing time strain that parents have outside of the North American context. Examining 27 European countries, we find a relatively high portion of parents feel they do not have enough time with children. Fathers experience high levels of time strain, with more than one-half reporting they have too little time with children, similar to the U.S. and Canada. For fathers even more so than for mothers, the weekly amount of time in childcare and education of children only weakly correlates with feelings at the country level, suggesting cultural beliefs and standards vary. It is notable that the average hours of time spent in childcare among mothers who report enough time is twice the number of hours compared to fathers who feel enough time is spent, showing the gendered cultural norms pervading across countries. Once controlling for work hours and time caring for children, there is still a gender effect, with European fathers more so than mothers feeling scarcity. This speaks perhaps to the power of norms that keep mothers as central caregivers and fathers first as breadwinners. Fathers thus may feel longing to care more for children which they cannot easily realize.

Similar to research from the North American context, we see that the very strong connection between the number of work hours and parents' feeling time deficits matters at the individual level. Other factors relevant within the demands-rewards framework are notable. Those with a youngest child of school age feel more time deficits than those whose youngest is an adolescent. This suggests parents may be wanting more of certain kinds

of time with children of school age. And more educated parents, particularly evident among fathers, feel time deficits with children, controlling for other factors, including actual time in care, in the European context. It is of future interest to assess this educational gradient comparatively with the North American context.

The study also affords the opportunity to begin assessing contextual factors for parents' time strain, as these contexts should color parental assessments (Collins, 2019). For one, particularly among fathers, we show the relative weakness of country levels of estimated hours with children correlating with feeling not enough time with them, highlighting varied expectations across Europe. In other words, despite relatively similar numbers of estimated hours reported by fathers across European countries, there was a much wider range of country averages in fathers' time strain. Likely paid work is relatively fixed for fathers—they must do a fair amount to live up to the expectations of bringing resources to their children, but how the country policies and practices around work and family are structured also intimately connects with family time and what fathers want and feel they should want.

We illuminate how the country's workplace practices matter for parents: the portion in the country's workforce that has some flexibility in work time or place is linked to lesser parental time strain for mothers and fathers. It is possible of course that this influence comes through the individual parents' work flexibility, which we are not able to measure. Theoretically, it also suggests a supportive culture for workers and emphasizes a society's role in the message that the self and family care that workers need can take precedent over paid work. We note that the CEE and Southern European cultures characterized by lesser flexibility, may be putting parents under higher time pressure by rigid workplaces, which undermine family, and place fathers in jeopardy of feeling adequate about this important relationship in their lives. In CEE countries, more generally, a disproportionate share of jobs are what Holman calls 'high-strain' jobs that—besides low working-time flexibility—entail a high workload, low mental demand and little job autonomy (Holman, 2013). Consequences of such low-quality jobs are a low job satisfaction and low psychological and physical well-being (Holman, 2013). Indeed recent research in the U.S. finds that parents' occupational conditions influence time with children on workdays (Hook et al., in press).

The cultural aspects of parents' feelings about time deserve future research attention. Although we expected that more liberal gender attitudes in a country might be associated with feeling more time strain with children, due to higher expectations for parental (or at least paternal) involvement, we found that parents in countries with more traditional attitudes toward gendered family norms feel time caring for children to be more scarce. The coefficient is larger for fathers than for mothers suggesting perhaps that relatively less family-friendly policies characteristic of more conservative contexts affect fathers the most in terms of keeping them from desired time caring for children.

The study has limitations. First it is important to be aware that the measurement of felt time deficits is a bit different in this study, with the question focusing on time 'caring for' children. The North American studies use time 'with' children, which is broader in the sense of being present with children, and thus more applicable to older children. This may be linked to differences in time strain with different-aged offspring compared with prior studies. Another limitation is that there are limited variables at the individual level available, making it more difficult to ascertain individual versus contextual effects. However, the study is suggestive of the important idea that context of these countries matter for parental well-being, aligning with recent cross-national work that underscores the importance of governmental policies and workplace structures that provide parents with the ability to tend to children as needed (Glass et al., 2016).

In conclusion, it is clear that a sizeable minority of European parents—almost half (46%)—wish for more time to care for their children, but there is a great deal of variation across countries. Workplaces matter a great deal. At the individual level, more work hours interfere with adequate time with children. Parents can use more time away from work to feel like they have adequate time with children, though protections must be in place to protect their income. The results point to the importance of country context in workplace flexibility in terms of time schedule and location of work. Those countries in which workers have more flexibility may benefit parents in their raising of the next generation. Other key supports not examined in this study may also be important, such as high quality non-parental care. Structural supports such as these might counter a pervasive ideology of parental

determinism, in which parents' actions are assumed to be the fundamental determinant of how children succeed (Faircloth, 2014) that pervades now. Parents in many countries then are pressured to do more as individuals, and are blamed when difficulties arise, even though many other societal and cultural factors clearly influence the prosperity of children and the parents themselves.

In all, parents have enormous responsibilities in raising children across Europe. In some places, they have more resources in terms of supportive workplaces and government policies that allow workers some control over the scheduling and location of their paid work. This support by their communities, workplaces and governments matters for alleviating strains parents feel in a central and vital relationships in their lives (Glass et al., 2016). This study is not only an empirical extension of earlier work on felt time deficits with children, it provides a pathway forward in the attempts to understand some of the larger structural and cultural forces that matter for parental time strain and thus well-being.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The Eurofound datasets are stored with the UK Data Service (UKDS) in Essex, UK and promoted online via their website (<https://ukdataservice.ac.uk/>). The data are available free of charge to those who intend to use them for non-commercial purposes. Requests for use for commercial purposes will be forwarded to Eurofound for authorisation. The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in UK Data Service at <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-7348-3>, reference number 7348.

## ORCID

Caroline Berghammer  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4955-8729>

Melissa A. Milkie  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7772-6614>

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> European countries also differ substantially in the duration of maternity and parental leave and the availability of childcare for infants and preschoolers. These factors can influence feelings about time with children through mothers' labor force participation but since we consider children of a wide age range (0 to 17 years) in our analyses, we do not specifically focus on policies targeting the first years of children's lives. We have, however, conducted robustness checks where we included a family policy measure (combination of childcare services and childcare leaves).
- <sup>2</sup> For all four countries, the indicators of 'flexibility of working time' and 'working from home' were missing (see Appendix Table A1). In addition, for Albania, data on 'mean weekly working hours' and 'part-time employment' were missing.
- <sup>3</sup> 24.9% of mothers reported spending too little time with their children and average estimated weekly childcare time was at 25.3 hr (both values are at the lower end of the distribution, see Figure 1).
- <sup>4</sup> No information on partner's education or income is available in the dataset.
- <sup>5</sup> Because flexibility of time and place is available in the database only for women and men (and not for both together), we used the mean in the models for all parents (Table 3).

- <sup>6</sup> The items are: (1) A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work. (2) A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works. (3) A job is alright but what most women really want is a home and children. (4) In general, fathers are as well suited to look after their children as mothers. (5) Men should take as much responsibility as women for the home and children.

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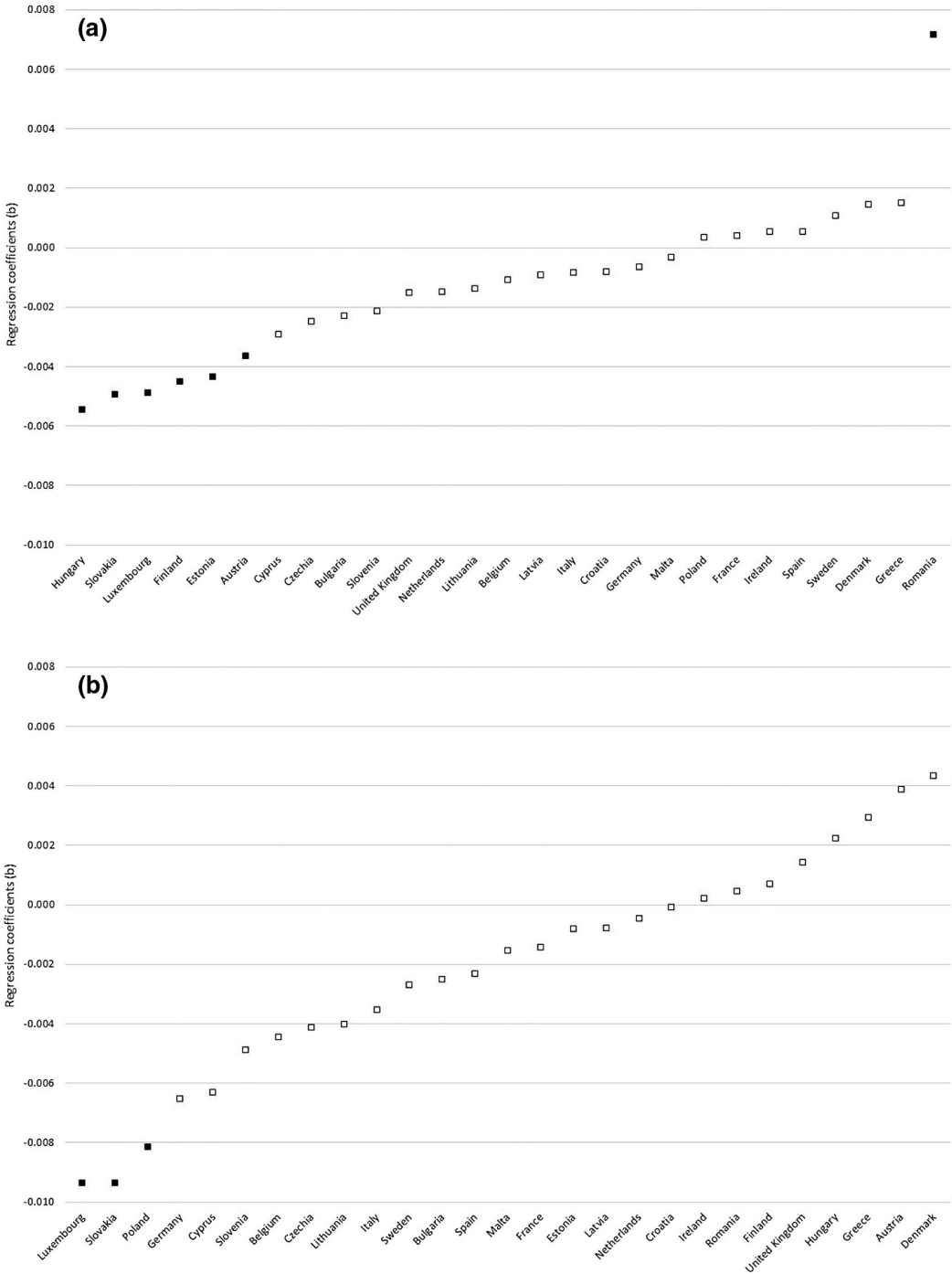
## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of the article at the publisher's website.

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APPENDIX



**FIGURE A1** Effects of weekly hours of childcare on ‘too little time caring for children,’ 27 European countries (linear probability models): (a) mothers; (b) fathers  
 Note. Full markers indicate significance at  $p < .10$ . Controls are the same as for Model 2 in Table 3. Weighted data. Romania is an outlier. We conducted additional descriptive analyses and stepwise regression models. Note that case numbers for mothers are rather low ( $n = 99$ ). We found that, descriptively, mean hours of childcare in Romania are lower among mothers who feel they spend enough time compared to those who feel they spend too little time. This difference is magnified in the multivariate model, particularly when working hours are added.

TABLE A1 Country characteristics, 27 European countries

	Report of 'too little time caring for children,' all parents		Mean weekly working hours (among employed)		Part-time employment (in % of employed)		Flexibility of working time (in % of employees)		Working from home (in % of employees)		Gender attitudes (in % 'agree strongly' and 'agree')	
	(1)		(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		(5)	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Austria	34	32	41	41	49	48	44	48	24	21	36	36
Belgium	43	33	40	40	42	41	48	41	28	24	54	54
Bulgaria	49	41	41	41	2	7	7	7	12	7	67	67
Croatia	51	39	40	40	6	17	14	17	17	14	60	60
Cyprus	40	37	41	41	14	10	12	10	17	12	72	72
Czechia	55	39	42	42	9	27	28	27	14	19	68	68
Denmark	45	31	35	35	28	62	65	62	45	41	13	13
Estonia	59	37	40	40	11	35	36	35	25	25	53	53
Finland	40	35	39	39	15	55	50	55	34	39	33	33
France	57	34	40	40	29	42	42	42	26	26	40	40
Germany	37	31	39	39	48	39	43	39	13	17	28	28
Greece	35	39	44	44	13	17	15	17	15	15	38	38
Hungary	51	39	40	40	6	19	24	19	19	19	52	52
Ireland	32	32	40	40	29	32	30	32	15	24	55	55
Italy	51	33	40	40	33	28	27	28	10	8	57	57
Latvia	58	38	40	40	10	24	26	24	25	12	63	63
Lithuania	51	38	39	39	8	14	10	14	21	16	87	87
Luxembourg	53	34	40	40	35	43	46	43	20	24	48	48
Malta	47	35	41	41	25	15	25	15	19	13	78	78
Netherlands	36	25	35	35	74	54	63	54	37	37	27	27
Poland	32	39	42	42	8	32	31	32	22	11	61	61

(Continues)

TABLE A1 (Continued)

	Report of 'too little time caring for children,' all parents		Mean weekly working hours (among employed)		Part-time employment (in % of employed)		Flexibility of working time (in % of employees)		Working from home (in % of employees)		Gender attitudes (in % 'agree strongly' and 'agree')	
	(1)	(2)	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	(4)	(5)
Romania	53	39	40	6	18	17	16	24	66			
Slovakia	49	39	41	7	16	21	8	9	72			
Slovenia	46	38	40	10	30	30	22	19	54			
Spain	42	35	40	23	22	21	12	14	21			
Sweden	38	35	38	31	63	62	40	40	19			
United Kingdom	46	32	41	39	38	42	25	27	33			
Source		Eurostat 2016	Eurostat 2016	Eurostat 2016	OECD Family database 2015	OECD Family database 2015	OECD Family database 2015	OECD Family database 2015	OECD Family database 2015	OECD Family database 2015	EVS 2017 (partly 2008)	

Notes: (1) Average number of usual weekly working hours in main job (employed persons) [lfsa\_ewhuis]. (2) Part-time employment as percentage of the total employment (self-assessment of part-time), 25–59 years [lfsa\_ewhuis]. (3) Proportion of employees who are able to set working time arrangements: (a) choose between several fixed working schedules; (b) adapt working hours within certain limits; (c) working hours determined entirely by themselves ([http://www.oecd.org/els/family/LMF\\_2-4-Family-friendly-workplace-practices.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/els/family/LMF_2-4-Family-friendly-workplace-practices.pdf); LMF2.4.B). (4) Proportion of employees who report that they have worked from their own home in the past twelve months: (a) daily or several times a week; (b) several times a month; (c) less than several times a month ([http://www.oecd.org/els/family/LMF\\_2-4-Family-friendly-workplace-practices.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/els/family/LMF_2-4-Family-friendly-workplace-practices.pdf); LMF2.4.D). (5) Gender attitudes are measured by the question 'A job is alright but what most women really want is a home and children'. This question is measured on a four-point scale: agree strongly, agree, disagree, disagree strongly. Results for 6 out of 30 countries are based on the EVS 2008 wave (Belgium, Cyprus, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, and Malta). Weighted data.

TABLE A2 Distribution of key variables in per cent, 27 European countries

	All parents	Mothers	Fathers
Employment status			
Not employed	21	29	12
Part-time (1–34 hr)	18	28	5
Full-time (35–45 hr)	44	33	58
Overwork ( $\geq 46$ hr)	17	9	26
Work hours (mean)	31	25	38
Weekly hours of childcare (mean)	30	38	19
Gender			
Mothers	55		
Fathers	45		
Family structure			
In couple	89	84	96
Single parent	11	16	4
Age of youngest child			
Preschool (ages 0–5)	42	42	42
School age (ages 6–12)	35	36	35
Adolescent age (ages 13–17)	23	22	23
Number of children			
One	44	45	43
Two	41	42	41
Three or more	15	13	16
Age (mean)	40	38	41
Level of education			
Lower secondary or below	24	23	25
Upper secondary or post-secondary	43	43	42
Tertiary	33	34	33
<i>n</i>	5,898	3,658	2,240

Note: Weighted data.

TABLE A 3 Report of 'too little time caring for children' in per cent, 27 European countries

	AT	BE	BU	CY	CZ	DE	DK	EE	GR	ES	FI	FR	CR	HU	IE	IT	LT	LU	LV	ML	NL	PL	RO	SE	SI	SK	UK
<b>Employment status</b>																											
Not employed	34	31	14	22	43	20	33	23	15	13	30	35	18	38	14	13	12	36	33	29	22	13	36	24	31	9	26
Part-time (1–34 hr)	-12	+1	-	-5	-	+7	+3	+16	+46	+31	-7	-10	-	-	+12	+23	-	+3	-	+10	+5	-	-	-8	-	-	+15
Full-time (35–45 hr)	+6	+19	+40	+26	+9	+30	+15	+36	+16	+38	+8	+32	+47	+16	+29	+58	+47	+26	+27	+19	+18	+18	+20	+18	+21	+52	+24
Overwork (≥ 46 hr)	+20	+24	+58	+32	+35	+28	+17	+65	+49	+57	+33	+33	+46	+27	+38	+55	+63	+26	+48	+39	+40	+42	+23	+25	+29	+47	+43
<b>Gender</b>																											
Mothers	25	41	39	35	38	28	43	44	25	34	31	49	40	50	23	35	36	48	60	42	28	28	51	34	51	35	39
Fathers	+21	+6	+21	+12	+34	+22	+6	+31	+20	+18	+19	+16	+20	+3	+20	+32	+37	+12	-4	+10	+17	+10	+4	+8	-3	+26	+17
<b>Family structure</b>																											
In couple	33	42	50	38	57	38	46	62	35	41	39	58	51	50	32	51	52	54	57	47	37	32	53	39	49	46	49
Single parent	+14	+10	-	-6	-28	-4	-4	-31	-3	+5	-	-10	-	+4	-7	-9	-10	-12	+7	-	-9	-	-	-10	-	-	-15
<b>Age of youngest child</b>																											
Preschool (ages 0–5)	34	52	45	42	57	41	54	63	38	39	41	49	52	43	39	47	45	56	54	50	37	29	43	42	58	49	55
School age (ages 6–12)	+2	-10	+4	+3	-7	+1	-12	0	-4	+12	+2	+12	0	+22	-14	+11	+14	-5	+7	-3	-2	+13	+17	+1	-14	-5	-10
Adolescent age (ages 13–17)	-3	-29	+8	-18	-1	-14	-20	-30	-6	-5	-11	+18	-4	+2	-16	-2	+14	-3	+9	-8	-3	-5	+12	-21	-17	-5	-32
<b>Number of children</b>																											
One	34	47	55	35	42	34	46	62	40	45	45	52	46	57	29	51	47	56	58	41	32	38	54	32	49	46	40
Two	+4	-6	-8	+6	+21	+10	-3	-1	-6	0	-4	+8	+10	-10	+5	+1	+12	-6	0	+11	+3	-8	-2	+11	+2	+2	+8
Three or more	-11	-8	-	+14	-	-4	+6	-22	-14	-30	-15	+6	+7	-16	+2	-21	-	-2	-	+14	+15	-	-	+8	-	-	+11

(Continues)

TABLE A3 (Continued)

	AT	BE	BU	CY	CZ	DE	DK	EE	GR	ES	FI	FR	CR	HU	IE	IT	LT	LU	LV	ML	NL	PL	RO	SE	SI	SK	UK	
Level of education																												
Lower secondary or below	31	25	28	28	82	35	45	62	30	38	44	45	16	44	34	42	36	57	67	43	20	12	42	35	43	41	38	
Upper secondary or post-secondary	+4	+25	+21	+2	-29	-3	+9	-5	+6	+3	+4	+16	+42	+19	-6	+11	+15	0	+2	+12	+19	+18	+12	+7	+4	+6	+5	
Tertiary	+3	+23	+32	+20	-27	+15	-4	-2	+10	+13	-10	+16	+20	+5	-1	+14	+19	-9	-28	-1	+18	+29	+35	0	+14	+7	+16	
n	360	203	137	241	164	279	228	181	215	228	186	293	190	172	250	387	153	286	131	161	234	200	158	223	176	149	313	

Note: The first category (baseline) of each variable shows per cent reporting 'too little time', the successive categories show the difference to the baseline in percentage points (whereby a positive value indicates a higher share of 'too little time' compared to the baseline). Weighted data. A dash (-) indicates case numbers <20.

**TABLE A4** Predictors of 'too little time caring for children,' 27 European countries (multilevel linear probability model)

	M1
<i>Fixed parameters, level 1</i>	
Work hours	0.007***
Weekly hours of childcare	-0.001**
Gender (1=mothers)	-0.069***
Family structure (1=single parent)	0.020
Age of youngest child (reference: school age)	
Preschool	0.002
Adolescent age	-0.123***
Number of children (reference: two)	
One	-0.005
Three or more	-0.031
Age	0.002
Level of education (reference: lower secondary or below)	
Upper secondary or post-secondary	0.025
Tertiary	0.044*
Constant	0.571***
<i>Fixed parameters, level 2</i>	
Mean weekly working hours (women)	-0.011
Mean weekly working hours (men)	-0.001
Time flexibility	-0.003
Place flexibility	
Gender attitudes (traditional)	0.001
<i>Random part</i>	
Level 1 variance	0.464 (0.005)
Level 2 variance	0.055 (0.011)
<i>n</i>	5,898
$\rho$	0.107
- 2 Log likelihood	-4,523.994

Note: Weighted data. Work hours and age were centered around means. Significance levels:

\*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ .



TABLE A 5 Predictors of 'too little time caring for children,' 27 European countries (multilevel linear probability models), mothers

	M1	M2	M3	M3(b)	M4	M5	M6	M7
<i>Fixed parameters, level 1</i>								
Work hours	0.008***	0.008***	0.008***	0.008***	0.008***	0.008***	0.008***	0.008***
Weekly hours of childcare	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Family structure (1=single parent)	0.033	0.035	0.036	0.036	0.037	0.036	0.036	0.037
Age of youngest child (reference: school age)								
Preschool	-0.074*	-0.068	-0.067	-0.067	-0.067	-0.067	-0.067	-0.067
Adolescent age	-0.065	-0.068	-0.069	-0.069	-0.069	-0.068	-0.069	-0.069
Number of children (reference: two)								
One	-0.015	-0.015	-0.015	-0.015	-0.016	-0.016	-0.015	-0.016
Three or more	-0.008	-0.006	-0.006	-0.006	-0.006	-0.006	-0.006	-0.006
Age	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Level of education (reference: lower secondary or below)								
Upper secondary or post-secondary	0.014	0.015	0.014	0.014	0.014	0.015	0.014	0.013
Tertiary	0.042	0.044	0.045	0.044	0.046	0.046*	0.044	0.045
Constant	0.385***	0.398***	0.392***	0.423***	0.458***	0.441***	0.342***	0.443***
<i>Fixed parameters, level 2</i>								
Mean weekly working hours (women)			0.005					-0.002
Part-time employment rate (women)				-0.001				
Time flexibility (women)					-0.002*			-0.002
Place flexibility (women)						-0.002		
Gender attitudes (traditional)							0.001	0.000
<i>Random part</i>								
Level 1 variance	0.448 (0.007)	0.448 (0.007)	0.448 (0.007)	0.448 (0.007)	0.448 (0.007)	0.448 (0.007)	0.448 (0.007)	0.448 (0.007)

(Continues)

TABLE A 5 (Continued)

	M1	M2	M3	M3(b)	M4	M5	M6	M7
Level 2 variance	0.065 (0.010)	0.064 (0.010)	0.063 (0.012)	0.063 (0.011)	0.059 (0.011)	0.062 (0.010)	0.062 (0.012)	0.058 (0.011)
<i>n</i>	3,658	3,658	3,658	3,658	3,658	3,658	3,658	3,658
$\rho$	0.126	0.124	0.123	0.122	0.116	0.121	0.121	0.115
- 2 Log likelihood	-2,340.040	-2,339.047	-2,338.370	-2,338.454	-2,337.561	-2,338.353	-2,338.137	-2,337.485

Note: Weighted data. Work hours and age were centered around means. Significance levels:

\*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \* $p < .05$ .

TABLE A6 Predictors of 'too little time caring for children,' 27 European countries (multilevel linear probability models), fathers

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7
<i>Fixed parameters, level 1</i>							
Work hours	0.005***	0.004**	0.004**	0.004**	0.004**	0.004**	0.004**
Weekly hours of childcare		-0.002**	-0.002**	-0.002**	-0.002**	-0.002*	-0.002*
Family structure (1=single parent)	-0.094	-0.074	-0.074	-0.071	-0.072	-0.072	-0.071
Age of youngest child (reference: school age)							
Preschool	0.055	0.058	0.058	0.059	0.059	0.060	0.060
Adolescent age	-0.167***	-0.179***	-0.179***	-0.178***	-0.178***	-0.178***	-0.178***
Number of children (reference: two)							
One	0.008	0.003	0.003	0.002	0.003	0.002	0.002
Three or more	-0.044	-0.049	-0.049	-0.047	-0.047	-0.048	-0.047
Age	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003
Level of education (reference: lower secondary or below)							
Upper secondary or post-secondary	0.040	0.043*	0.043*	0.043*	0.043*	0.041*	0.042*
Tertiary	0.039*	0.043*	0.044*	0.046*	0.045*	0.043*	0.045*
Constant	0.520***	0.561***	0.561***	0.632***	0.617***	0.486***	0.595***
<i>Fixed parameters, level 2</i>							
Mean weekly working hours (men)			0.004				-0.011
Time flexibility (men)				-0.002**			-0.002
Place flexibility (men)					-0.003		
Gender attitudes (traditional)						0.002	0.001
<i>Random part</i>							
Level 1 variance	0.478 (0.005)	0.476 (0.005)	0.476 (0.005)	0.476 (0.005)	0.476 (0.005)	0.476 (0.005)	0.476 (0.005)
Level 2 variance	0.079 (0.013)	0.075 (0.013)	0.075 (0.013)	0.071 (0.013)	0.073 (0.015)	0.073 (0.014)	0.069 (0.014)
<i>n</i>	2,240	2,240	2,240	2,240	2,240	2,240	2,240
$\rho$	0.142	0.136	0.136	0.130	0.132	0.132	0.127
- 2 Log likelihood	-2,154.414	-2,146.513	-2,146.423	-2,145.157	-2,145.620	-2,145.318	-2,144.612

Note: Weighted data. Work hours and age were centered around means. Significance levels:

\*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ .

TABLE A7 Predictors of 'too little time caring for children,' 27 European countries (linear probability models), couples

	M1	M2	M3	M4
	Mothers	Mothers	Fathers	Fathers
Employment arrangement (reference: he full-time, she part-time)				
Both full-time	0.182***	0.167***	-0.033	-0.010
He full-time, she not employed	-0.148***	-0.142***	0.095	0.048
She full-time, he part-time or not employed	0.178*	0.123	-0.201**	-0.120
Both not employed	-0.166**	-0.179***	-0.166	-0.103
Other	-0.097	-0.105	-0.107	-0.074
Weekly hours of childcare				
		-0.001		-0.002
Division of childcare (reference: same as my partner)				
More than my partner		-0.027		0.080
Less than my partner		0.172*		0.204***
Age of youngest child (reference: school age)				
Preschool	-0.087*	-0.075*	0.022	0.017
Adolescent age	-0.096*	-0.107*	-0.172**	-0.223***
Number of children (reference: two)				
One	-0.001	-0.002	0.009	0.006
Three or more	-0.004	-0.001	-0.052	-0.079
Age				
	0.002	0.001	0.003	0.003
Level of education (reference: lower secondary or below)				
Upper secondary or post-secondary	0.017	0.018	0.035	0.040
Tertiary	0.054	0.050	0.045	0.057
Constant				
	0.360***	0.412***	0.571***	0.470***
<i>n</i>	2,873	2,870	2,123	2,114
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.111	.121	.050	.089

Note: Weighted data. Age was centered around mean. Significance levels:

\*\*\**p* < .001; \*\**p* < .01; \**p* < .05.