

Part-time and women's employment in Europe. Studying regions over time

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Paolo Barbieri (paolo.barbieri@unitn.it)

Giorgio Cutuli (g.cutuli@unitn.it)

Raffaele Guetto (raffaele.guetto@unitn.it)

Stefani Scherer (stefani.scherer@unitn.it)

The last decades witnessed a steady increase in women's Labour Market (LM) participation concomitantly with the expansion of part-time employment. The literature often claims that a higher availability of part-time jobs could foster women's employment opportunities in countries with little female employment (OECD, 2013). Yet, ambiguous empirical support has been provided with regard to the existence of a direct role played by part-time in boosting women's employment (OECD, 2010). It has been even claimed that, in the period 1983-1997, "there is no clear evidence [...] that countries which experienced a rise in the share of part-time jobs also experienced a rise in overall employment" (Boeri et al., 2005: 24). This ambiguity suggests part-time effects to be heterogeneous, depending on features of the institutional and normative contexts on the one hand and women's characteristics (children and education) on the other (Del Boca et al., 2009). This work contributes to this discussion adopting a comparative perspective over time and regions, which takes into account cross-level interactions between LM arrangements and women's characteristics.

It has been recognised that most of the empirical analyses concerning women's employment decisions fail to address the issue of cross-level interactions between aggregate measures of family policies and/or labour market arrangements and women's characteristics (Steiber and Haas, 2012). This paper addresses the issue, separately for four country clusters, by investigating how the effect of the diffusion of part-time on women's employment trends depends on women's education and, above all, the presence of children of different age in the household. Country clusters composition as follows: Modified Breadwinner: Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, France and UK. Breadwinner: Spain, Greece, Italy and Ireland; Dual Earner (re-familialised): Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia; Dual Earner (de-familialised): Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway.

We pool yearly data (1992-2003) and data from the second quarter (2004-2011) of EU-LFS for 22 European countries and analyse employment patterns of women aged 25-44. For 15 out of 22 countries, depending on specific information included in each national dataset, we are also able to reconstruct the household structure (presence of partner and children). We regress women's employment behaviour on micro-level characteristics and LM arrangements, operationalised at the regional level. Focusing on regional heterogeneity allows for a more robust identification of the association between part time availability and trends of female employment. Our dataset entails about 3 million cases, thus allowing to base estimates of the macro effects exclusively on regional variation over time.

Regional within-variation in part-time employment is positively associated with increasing women's employment. When we disaggregate by country-clusters, the empirical evidence shows relevant heterogeneity in the part-time effect across normative and institutional contexts.

In fact, increases in part-time employment seem to go hand-in-hand with growing employment rates only in "Male Breadwinner" models, and especially in its "familialised" version (largely represented by Southern European countries).

Results are robust to changes in the measurement of the incidence of part-time: when measuring part-time diffusion as the part-time share among women belonging to the age groups excluded from the empirical analyses (women aged 15-24 and 45-64), thus reducing possible biases due to the simultaneity between women's part-time/full-time and activity/inactivity choices, results are fully confirmed.



Moreover, preliminary results indicate how the diffusion of part-time seems to be associated, at least in Modified Breadwinner and Breadwinner countries, with a higher responsiveness of women's employment rates to life-cycle events.

