

## NEW TEXTS

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# Why Do Women Still Quit Their Jobs? Women's Employment Transitions in the European Context



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## Abstract

Vast amounts of research are devoted to the 'motherhood penalty': discrimination in hiring, salary, and leadership opportunities for working mothers relative to childless women. For a significant number of women, 'employed' is not a continuous uninterrupted status but rather a type of activity that can be paused for an indefinite period in order to pursue other life goals, such as raising a family. A large proportion of women do not return to the labour market after giving birth, and others switch to part-time or stay out of work for a long time before returning. Using data from the first and the second waves of the Generations and Gender Survey (GGG) for Austria, Bulgaria, France, Georgia, Hungary, and Russia, I explore which factors influence the probability that women employed full-time will go part-time or withdraw from paid work (i. e., become inactive). I analyse the sample of 1446 childless women employed full-time during the first wave of the study. This paper focuses on women's individual characteristics and their employment as well as contextual factors. The results show that, apart from the transition to motherhood, the factors that influence women's participation in the labour market are traditional gender ideology and lack of state support.

**Keywords:** motherhood; female labour market participation; part-time employment; employment trajectories; parental leave; gender regime.

## Introduction

The global gender gap in educational attainment, workforce participation, and political representation has narrowed in recent years. Nevertheless, women's labour force participation rate continues to stand below that of men: among adults aged 20–64 years old across the EU-28, the gender employment gap was 11% in 2018, meaning that the proportion of men of working age in employment exceeded that of women by 11% [Eurostat 2020]. Moreover, women in most countries continue to have a discontinuous pattern of employment over their life-course, resulting in substantial income loss [Gash 2009]. To support and encourage increased women's participation in the labour market, governments in most countries have adopted various work-family reconciliation policies in recent decades. Despite this, major obstacles to maternal employment nonetheless persist [Mills et al. 2014; Valentova 2019].

The aim of this paper is to explore which factors influence the transition from full-time employment to part-time or unpaid work for women in six countries: Austria, Bulgaria, France, Georgia, Hungary, and Russia. The countries in the sample represent different welfare regimes and women's employment patterns.

For example, being a stay-at-home mother was very common in Western Europe until the 1970s, when it began to be perceived as a transitory situation only while children were small or still in school [Anxo et al. 2007]. In Eastern Europe, meanwhile, states strongly encouraged women's participation in the labour force during the 20th century; however, since the end of the Communist era, women's financial need to be in paid work in post-socialist countries has remained while their possibilities and state support to do so have become very limited [Fodor, Kispeter 2014]. Selected countries have different fertility patterns: following the collapse of socialism, Central and Eastern European countries, as well as the former Soviet Union, experienced a population crisis characterised by a deterioration in fertility rates, which had a negative impact on some of these countries' demographic trends in 2000s [Iwasaki, Kumo 2020]. Western European regions experienced more limited demographic decline during the period of 2000–2014, observable at the regional level (e. g., inner parts of France) [European Union Committee of the Regions 2016]. The countries in the sample also have varying parental leave policies in terms of length and payments, which also influence women's labour market behaviour [Valentova 2019]. Opportunities to enter part-time employment also differ from country to country [Barbieri et al. 2019]. Exploring female employment patterns in different institutional contexts allows us to understand better some of the barriers women face when they become mothers and leave the labour market or reduce their working time for the sake of the family. Thus, my goal is to examine the factors which increase the likelihood of making these transitions. In particular, I explore the role of individual characteristics, such as views on working mothers and women's right to a job, in changes of women's labour market status.

This paper uses data from the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS), a longitudinal survey and a part of a broader research programme initiated in 2000 under the umbrella of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) [Vikat et al. 2007]. It collects data on a wide range of demographic, social, and economic issues using nationally representative samples. My sample is comprised of women who were aged 18–40, childless, and employed full-time in wave 1 and were interviewed again in wave 2, at which point their employment and motherhood statuses may have changed.

I structure the research as follows: First, I examine if motherhood status influences women's labour market transitions. Next, I assess whether women's gender ideology (e. g., their views on working mothers and women's right to a job compared to that of men) plays a part in these transitions. Despite changing ideologies about gender, studies still find mothers' time with children to be more important than fathers', along with a continued expectation that mothers always be available for their children [Hays 1996; Biese 2017; Orgad 2019]. Therefore, I ask, does thinking that a pre-school child will suffer if their mother works, or that men have more right to a job than women, increase a woman's probability of giving up full-time employment? Finally, I investigate whether gender-friendly welfare policies increase mothers' probability of staying in the labour market, adding a context control variable. Since lack of affordable childcare and the absence of paternal leave tend to decrease the rate of women's employment [Damaske 2011], I look for social policy factors that might explain women's labour market transitions.

This article contributes to the existing literature in several ways. First, studies of mothers' labour market transitions depending on social class and race predominantly examine the U.S. context and employ qualitative methodology [Hays 1996; Stone 2007; Damaske 2011]. This study focuses on the European context and uses quantitative methods. Second, previous research has used a longitudinal approach to study the individual factors influencing women's labour market decisions, such as the realization of women's labour market intentions [Gauthier, Emery, Bartova 2016] or contextual factors like the length of parental leave [Valentova 2019]. I broaden the number of possible explanatory factors at both individual and context levels, such as gender ideology and social policies, which allows for a more holistic view of a wide array of reasons why women leave full-time employment.

The remainder of this article is organized into four sections. The first reviews factors that may explain women's labour market behaviour in different contexts. The second section presents hypotheses, data structure, and

variable descriptions, while the third engages with the descriptive statistics and the models I use to analyse women's labour market transitions. The fourth and final section presents my conclusions.

## **Theoretical Approaches: Why Do Women Quit or Reduce Working Hours in Postmodern European Countries?**

The main theoretical approaches to women's employment behaviour can be divided into three categories: gender socialization theories, structural theories, and the developmental approach. Gender socialization theories emphasize the role of internalized attitudes and preferences in the everyday process of "doing gender" [Butler 1988; Chodorow 1999]. Women learn gender during childhood and adolescence by absorbing, from their social environment, feminine traits, gender-typed attitudes, and behavioural patterns (such as caring and relational skills, thinking about others, or empathy).

Structural theories state that most of the outcomes that are often attributed to behavioural or psychological differences between men and women are a result of (1) the structural positions they occupy due to their race, sex, class, and so on; and (2) the ways in which society allocates market rewards across the social structure [Reskin 1988].

According to the developmental approach, agency, structure, choice and constraint are interwoven; thus, social action is a mixture of constrained choice and chosen constraint. Personal attitudes, preferences, expectations, and internalized gender roles provide a rigid normative frame that sets the available choices for action. However, institutions and structures set restrictions on the options available to individuals depending on their location within economic, social, political, and gender systems [Damaske 2011]. Thus, it is very important to include context variables into the analysis of women's labour market transitions.

The factors that influence a woman's decision to leave full-time employment can be divided into three types: individual factors, factors associated with the timing of family events, and macro-factors [García-Manglano 2015]. Individual factors refer to personal characteristics, like holding traditional opinions about working mothers (that they neglect their family responsibilities because of work) or practicing "intensive mothering", and external constraints, such as job discrimination, job precariousness, a husband's negative attitude to a wife's work, unequal division of household tasks, or bad health conditions. Timing of family events comprises the age at which a woman got married and had children, and defines weak or strong attachment to the labour force in early adulthood. Macro-factors comprise labour market structure in terms of vertical inequalities and horizontal differences,<sup>1</sup> gender culture, and family policy. Comparative international research has demonstrated a link between family policies that support female employment and caring and fertility decision-making [Sinjavskaya, Billingsley 2015].

To answer my research question, I investigate the factors that refer to both agency and structure, thus employing the developmental approach in my analysis of possible women's labour market transitions. In the following two sections I elaborate on these transitions.

### **Transition from Full-Time Employment to Unpaid Domestic Labour**

There is theoretical evidence on women's family decisions, which has become classic, that labour and family policies have an impact on mothers' labour supply [Willis 1973; Becker 1993]. Women with children allocate their time between the labour market and childcare. There are several factors that determine their choice: pref-

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<sup>1</sup> Vertical inequalities relate to job rewards and positions, while the concept of horizontal differences refers to the evidence that men and women tend to be predominantly employed in specific labour market segments (e. g., heavy industry sectors vs. service and education occupations).

erences and cultural aspects, the price of childcare, possible substitutes for childcare, the prospects of reducing working hours, and family taxation policies. All these elements play a fundamental role in a mother's employment decision and, consequently, in her transitions from employment to non-employment after a first birth. In order to understand how different policies affect female participation after childbearing, between-country and across-time comparisons are crucial.

While being a stay-at-home mother was very common in Western Europe until the 1970s, the rapid increase in female labour force participation in the last decades of the 20th century has completely changed the situation [Ganguli, Hausman, Viare 2014]. From a highly accepted and desirable "choice", being a stay-at-home mother today has instead come to be perceived as going slightly against the common behaviour although with large variations across countries [Grunow, Veltkamp 2017]. For the majority of stay-at-home mothers in contemporary Western Europe, being out of the labour market is therefore a temporary situation while children are young or are still in school [Anxo et al. 2007]. In Eastern European countries the situation was different: under socialism the participation of women in the labour force was strongly encouraged. Being a stay-at-home mother did not correspond to the politics of the Communist party, and the government provided various measures, including state-provided childcare, to support the "mother-worker" model [Kocourková 2002]. Since the end of the Communist era, women's financial need to be in paid employment has remained, but the opportunities and support to do so have deteriorated to a large extent [Fodor, Kispeter 2014]. Some authors refer to this transition as a "backlash" or a re-familiarization process characterized mainly by the significant extension of parental leaves and the closure of numerous day-care facilities, particularly for children under the age of 3 [Gauthier, Emery, Bartova 2016]. In Eastern Europe, although still temporary, being a stay-at-home mother often takes on a long-term quality.

With regards to the demographic characteristics of stay-at-home mothers, they are usually younger, have a lower level of education, and come from less affluent households [Cohn, Livingston, Wang 2014]. Beyond these averages, there is, however, much heterogeneity among this subgroup of mothers. Recent studies have drawn attention to the so-called "opting-out mothers" phenomenon, which refers to professional and highly educated mothers withdrawing from the labour market for the sake of their children [Still 2006; Stone 2007]. However, studies on this specific group of stay-at-home mothers have found that this is not only a rare phenomenon [Kitterød, Rønsen 2013], but that these highly educated mothers experience great ambivalence and a highly emotional situation when deciding to withdraw from the labour market [Stone 2007]. In general, stay-at-home mothers are more traditional in terms of their attitudes towards gender roles and hold negative views regarding non-parental childcare [Reid Boyd 2002; Gauthier, Emery, Bartova 2016]. These personal attitudes share some similarity with the category of "home-centred women" in Hakim's preference theory, which assumes that such women prefer not to work and regard family life and children as their main priority [Hakim 2003].

B. Pettit and J. L. Hook found that a higher level of education is related to higher probabilities of employment, while having infants and toddlers has a negative effect on these probabilities [Pettit, Hook 2009]. These findings align with G. Becker's framework of household specialization, which suggests that the economically weaker partners will have a decreased labour supply as a consequence of their disproportionate responsibility for domestic work [Becker 1993]. However, Pettit and Hook note that there is a great deal of variation in educational effects across different countries, implying that in some countries education is a stronger predictor of employment than in others. Thus, analysing the transition from full-time employment to unpaid domestic labour requires taking into account both individual and context level variables.

## **Transition from Full-Time to Part-Time Employment**

Another transition that women employed full-time might make after giving birth is into part-time employment. Recently, many governments have considered part-time jobs as a response to economic crises and sub-



sequent rising unemployment, given that they offer greater flexibility to firms regarding the use of their labour force while at the same time facilitating job creation [Simon, Sanroma, Ramos 2017; Barbieri et al. 2019]. However, academic and policy literature consistently documents part-time employment as being inferior in employment characteristics such as promotion, on-the-job training, and quality of work when compared with full-time employment. Part-time jobs are also usually associated with lower wages, high temporality (with lower firing costs), and fewer workers' rights, like paid holidays or remuneration for medical leave. There is a wide array of research confirming this view. In particular, part-time employees earn less in terms of hourly wages than full-time employees, and this wage gap is not explained by differences in personal characteristics between both groups of workers [Hirsch 2005]. Moreover, part-time workers usually have reduced access to social security benefits, fewer promotion opportunities, smaller pensions [O'Connell, Gash 2003], less labour stability [Fernández-Kranz, Paul, Rodríguez-Planas 2015], and a lower unionization rate [Belous 1989].

Although part-time work increases the share of employed women, it is one of the causes of increasing gendered labour market segregation [Barbieri et al. 2019]. Tomlinson notes that mothers working part-time are clustered into a few occupational areas consisting of "elementary administration and service occupations", "sales and customer service occupations", "caring personal service occupations", and "administrative occupations" [Tomlinson 2006]. Moreover, many of these women are over-qualified for jobs in these occupational areas. In further research J. Tomlinson, W. Olsen, K. Purdam examine the apparently paradoxical notion that women "choose" part-time work, when it is consistently documented as being less preferential in employment terms, conditions and prospects compared with full-time work [Tomlinson, Olsen, Purdam 2009]. Drawing upon Hakim's preference theory, they suggest that four dimensions—care networks, employment status, welfare policy context, and work-life balance preferences—influence women's transitions to part-time work after maternity [Hakim 2000; Tomlinson, Olsen, Purdam 2009].

M. Dieckhoff et al. offer strong evidence that within-couple inequalities in the personal realm have an influence on women's labour market outcomes: women in their study were far more likely to leave full-time jobs if their economic position relative to their partners was weak [Dieckhoff et al. 2016]. They also find the presence of young children in the home to be a major incentive for women to leave full-time employment. These findings suggest that women are not engaging in "self-sabotage" by pursuing part-time employment, but rather are responding to pre-existing inequalities in the home.

X. Bartoll, I. Cortès, L. Artazcoz note that part-time employment can be voluntary or involuntary and can be used as a mechanism to engage unemployed workers in the labour market [Bartoll, Cortès, Artazcoz 2014]. But it can be a "labour trap" as well, characterized by low pay and poor benefits. Therefore, access to and type of part-time employment is conditioned not only by personal choice but also by the country context and policies: regulation and implementation of non-discriminatory practices, availability of childcare services, automatic reversion from part-time employment to full-time employment, or unemployment rights. With this in mind, I include control context-related variables in my analysis.

Thus, motherhood affects the labour market transitions that women make, and society considers female labour supply to be adaptable [García-Manglano 2015]. For a significant number of women, 'employed' is not a continuous uninterrupted status; rather, work can be paused temporarily to prioritize other life pursuits, such as raising a family.

## Hypotheses

Women of different social statuses, in different life circumstances, and in different contexts are likely to vary in their employment statuses and transitions. I focus on how women's maternity status, traditional motherhood values, and welfare context influence the possibility of going part-time or leaving the labour market.

**Motherhood status** may be one of the most important factors in understanding women's decision to leave the labour market. Women make decisions about their labour market participation taking their family status into account [Willis 1973; Becker 1993]. Mothers are more likely to decrease their working hours or leave the labour market altogether as compared with non-mothers. Thus, I expect women who became mothers or got pregnant between the first and the second waves of the GGS to be more likely to go part-time or move to unpaid family labour.

*Hypothesis 1 (H 1): motherhood penalty hypothesis.*

**Traditional motherhood values** are likely to relate to women's employment status. According to the gender perspective on family roles, mothers are held to cultural expectations for motherhood, including being ever-present or all-giving to their children [Hays 1996]. Social norms and individual attitudes shape individual behaviour and impact life-course decisions [Skoglund 2021]. In line with the gender perspective, I expect that women with strong traditional views on gender roles are more likely to become part-time workers or homemakers and fully devote their time to mothering

*Hypothesis 2 (H 2): traditional gender ideology hypothesis.*

## **Data, Sample, and Variables**

My sample is comprised of women who were aged 18–40, childless, and employed full-time in wave 1 of the GGS, and who were interviewed again in wave 2. The countries that took part in both waves of the GGS and were included in the sample are Austria, Bulgaria, France, Georgia, Hungary, Russia. The age restriction of 18–40 years old is based on the data on the average women's age at the first birth in the selected countries at the time of wave 2 — 26.1, with the lowest age in Georgia — 23.5 and the highest in Austria — 28.7 [UNECE Database 2022]. Table 1 presents the years when the survey was conducted in each country, along with socio-demographic characteristics.

Table 1

## Timing of GGS Waves 1 and 2 and Main Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Country	Years Wave 1 (W 1) of GGS was Conducted	Years Wave 2 (W 2) of GGS was Conducted	Rate of Maternal Employment (Age 15–64 with at Least 1 Child under 15) at W 2 (%) [OECD 2021]	Total Fertility Rate at W 2 (%) [OECD Family Database 2021]	Gender Wage Gap at W 2 (%) [OECD 2021]	Gender Ideology/Gender Regime	Share of Children under Age 3 in Childcare in 2007 (%) [Eurostat 2020]	Duration of Paid Parental Leave in 2005 (Weeks) [Damme 2020]	Compensation for Parental Leave in 2007
Austria	2008/2009	2012/2013	76.6	1.44	18.2	Dual-earner families/unequal caring [OECD Economic Surveys 2013]	8	104	100% of net earnings in the previous three full calendar months [European Commission 2020]
Bulgaria	2004	2007	68.9	1.49	N.A.	Traditional gender roles [Ådnanes 2001]	8	104	90% of prior year income [European Commission 2020]
France	2005	2008	72.7	1.99	14.3	Dual-earner/state caregiver model [Ai-Thu, Monnier 2011]	27	156	100% of prior year income, up to €2,885/month [Connexion France 2020]
Georgia	2006	2009	N.A.	1.87 [Knoema 2021]	38.3 [Sputnik-Georgia.ru 2019]	Traditional gender roles [Chkheidze 2011]	16 [GGS 2021]	50	100% of prior income for state workers, max of €60/month for private sector [Sova.news 2020]
Hungary	2004/2005	2008/2009	53.6	1.35	2.2	Traditional gender roles [Glass, Fodor 2011]	8	136	Minimum old-age pension payment, approx. €110/month [Vighova 2015]
Russia	2004	2007	85.3 [Karabchuk, Nagernyak 2013].	1.42 [Zakharov, Sakevich 2009]	36.9 [Nikolayev, Marchenko, Tochilkina 2017]	Dual-earner / “double shift” for women model [Lipasova 2016]	15 [Pettit, Hook 2009]	78	40% of prior year income, up to approx. €300/month [Federal Laws of Russian Federation Database 2021]

In countries that took part in both waves of GGS, only about 50% of childless women employed full-time in wave 1 were interviewed in wave 2. I removed Germany, Lithuania, and the Czech Republic from the analysis due to small number of cases. The initial sample consisted of 1974 women aged 18–40 years at the time of wave 1 from six countries: France, Austria, Bulgaria, Russia, Georgia, and Hungary. The final sample size used for regression analysis is  $N=1446$  due to missing values. Table 2 presents the attrition rate in the countries included in the sample.

Table 2

**Attrition Rate Among Childless Women Employed Full-Time between GGS Waves 1 and 2**

Country	W 1	W 2	Attrition Rate, %
Bulgaria	568	337	41%
Russia	338	183	46%
Georgia	167	139	17%
France	536	324	40%
Hungary	722	550	24%
Austria	592	441	26%
Total	2923	1974	32%

Source: [GGS 2021]; author's calculations.

Generally, non-responses result from failures to locate a previously interviewed person, failures to contact a person from the previous wave of the study, or respondents' refusals to participate [Lepkowski, Couper 2002]. According to I. Buber-Ennser, living in a single household is associated with lower rates of follow-up [Buber-Ennser 2014]. The findings on demographic and socio-economic characteristics regarding cooperation can be summarized as follows: being female, being married, or having children is positively related to the probability of future cooperation, whereas being widowed or divorced, not living in a couple, or being a lone parent is negatively related [ibid: 462]. Some authors using GGS data find that childless persons are underrepresented, while the married, the educated, and persons with relatively higher income are overrepresented in the second wave sample [Bartus, Spéder 2013]. Buber-Ennser found that overall dropout is significantly lower only among persons with traditional attitudes towards marriage [Buber-Ennser 2014]. To avoid bias, I checked the educational level and traditional attitudes to marriage (the level of agreement with the statement "Marriage is an outdated institution") among childless women employed full-time in wave 1 ( $N = 2923$ ) and in the sample of women interviewed in both waves ( $N = 1974$ ) and found their profiles to be very similar. Thus, the women included in the final sample do not differ from childless women employed full-time in wave 1 in terms of education and traditional views on marriage.

In wave 2 data, a woman was considered to be employed full-time if she either worked a minimum of 40 hours (in all countries except France, where the minimum was 35 hours) or was on a maternity leave; employed part-time if she worked fewer hours, and inactive if she reported her current activity as a 'homemaker' (based on the question: "Which of the items on the card best describes what you are mainly doing at present?").

My **dependent variable** is mothers' *current activity status*, a categorical variable with employed full-time coded as 1, employed part-time as 2, and inactive as 3. My **independent variables** are motherhood status and traditional motherhood values. The *motherhood status* variable has the value of 0 if a woman remained childless in wave 2, the value of 1 if she has one child or is childless and pregnant, and the value of 2 if she has one or more children and is pregnant or has two or more children. For measuring *traditional motherhood values*, I used the answers to two questions (in wave 1): "To what extent do you agree with the statement: A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his/her mother works?" and "When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women", where 1 is 'agree', 2 is 'neither agree nor disagree' and 3 is 'disagree'.



My **control variables** concern the relationship between family welfare policies and women's participation in the economy. Several studies suggest that a parental leave of 20–30 weeks—considered 'short' in the literature—has a positive effect on women's employment outcomes, while longer leaves have an opposite effect [Pettit, Hook 2009; Akgunduz, Plantenga 2013]. However, a large comparative work suggests that if parental leave is too short, it negatively influences mothers' employment outcomes [Keck, Saraceno 2013]. In contrast to parental leave, comparative studies almost universally suggest that affordable public childcare service provision facilitates mothers' employment, and often consider childcare to be a component of family policy with the strongest impact on maternal employment [De Henau, O'Dorchai, Meulders 2010]. Therefore, I focus on childcare services and parental leave and add the share of children under three years old in public childcare and the length of paid parental leave in weeks as of the year 2008.

I also control for age and age squared at the time of wave 2, education at the time of wave 1, occupation status at wave 1 (ISEI code from 10 to 90 derived from ISCO<sup>2</sup>), and household income measured in quartiles for each country.

## Results

Among women who maintained full-time employment, the majority (68.5%) remained childless, while 37.8% of women who became homemakers had given birth. Women who changed to part-time work tended to disagree with the opinion that "A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his/her mother works" more than full-time workers and homemakers did. The largest share of women who thought that "When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women" came from the homemakers. Women who made a transition to unpaid work tended to have a lower level of education, less qualified jobs, and to come from poorer households, compared with those who stayed in the labour market. As for the context variables, women who continued to work part-time came from the countries with less available childcare services, while those who stayed at full-time jobs had the longest paid parental leave. Table 3 presents descriptive statistics for the independent and control variables for women whose employment status was registered in wave 2 of the survey.

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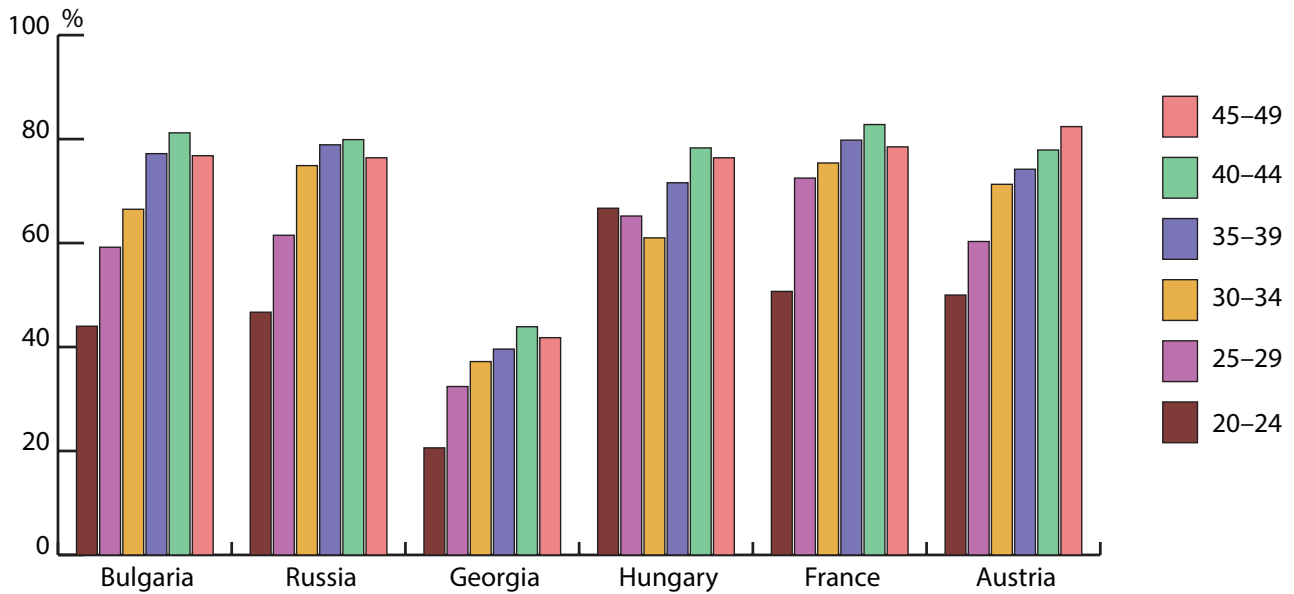
<sup>2</sup> International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status (ISEI) scales occupations by the average level of education and average earnings of job holders [Ganzeboom, De Graaf, Treiman 1992]. It is a two-digit value ranging from 10 (low-qualified jobs) to 90 (managerial positions).

Table 3

**Dependent Variable and Covariates Descriptive Statistics**

	<b>Remain Full-Time</b> <i>N</i> = 1,500	<b>Go Part-Time</b> <i>N</i> = 306	<b>Become Homemaker</b> <i>N</i> = 127	<b>P-Value</b>
<b>Number of Children Motherhood Status W 2</b>				
Childless	1,028 (68.5%)	208 (68.0%)	79 (62.2%)	< 0.001
1	214 (14.3%)	57 (18.6%)	35 (27.6%)	
2	258 (17.2%)	41 (13.4%)	13 (10.2%)	
<b>A Pre-School Child is Likely to Suffer if His/Her Mother Works</b>				
Agree	810 (54.8%)	142 (47.2%)	66 (52.4%)	0.008
Neither agree nor disagree	270 (18.3%)	71 (23.6%)	35 (27.8%)	
Disagree	397 (26.9%)	88 (29.2%)	25 (19.8%)	
<b>When Jobs are Scarce, Men Should Have More Right to a Job than Women</b>				
Agree	152 (10.2%)	39 (12.8%)	34 (26.8%)	< 0.001
Neither agree nor disagree	216 (14.5%)	49 (16.1%)	21 (16.5%)	
Disagree	1,126 (75.4%)	217 (71.1%)	72 (56.7%)	
<b>Share of Children under 3 Years Old in Public Childcare, %</b>				
	12.41 (7.26)	11.60 (6.08)	13.44 (6.58)	< 0.001
<b>Length of Paid Parental Leave in Weeks</b>				
	118.43 (28.19)	106.88 (29.30)	99.73 (37.45)	< 0.001
<b>Age of Respondent Wave 2</b>				
	30.96 (5.18)	31.79 (5.62)	30.26 (5.88)	< 0.001
<b>Level of Education Wave 1</b>				
Low	36 (3.0%)	11 (4.1%)	12 (11.0%)	< 0.001
Medium	690 (56.6%)	148 (54.6%)	62 (56.9%)	
High	494 (40.5%)	112 (41.33%)	35 (32.1%)	
<b>Household Income in Quartiles for Each Country</b>				
1	293 (24.0%)	75 (28.7%)	36 (42.4%)	<0.001
2	457 (37.4%)	90 (34.5%)	31 (36.5%)	
3	228 (18.7%)	44 (16.9%)	11 (12.9%)	
4	244 (20.0%)	52 (20.0%)	7 (8.2%)	
<b>Occupational Status Wave 1 (ISEI code)</b>				
	49.97 (14.23)	49.65 (14.47)	46.57 (15.67)	0.099

The six countries differ in terms of the rate of female employment. As shown in Figure 1, with the exception of Georgia, most countries in the sample show the rate of female employment to be about 60% at the average age of the first birth. The age at which the employment rate reaches its peak also differs from country to country: for most countries it reaches its maximum among the 40–44 age group, while in Austria it peaks for the 45–49 age group.



Source: Elaborated by the author based on GGS wave 2 data: Bulgaria (2007), Russia (2007), Georgia (2009), Hungary (2008/2009), France (2008), Austria (2012/2013).

**Figure 1.** Rate of Female Employment by Country and Age Group, GGS (2021)

To analyse which factors influence the probability of women's labour market transitions, I use multinomial logistic regression, a method for modelling nominal outcome variables that are assumed to be unordered. The coefficients of the model are the log odds of the outcomes which are modelled as a linear combination of the predictor variables [Long, Freese 2014]. In the first model, the transition from childless state to having one child is associated with a 0.46 increase in the relative log odds of going part-time vs. staying full-time and a 0.94 increase in the relative log odds of becoming a homemaker vs. staying full-time. The base outcome used in my models is staying in full-time employment, the second outcome is going part-time, and the third outcome is becoming a homemaker. Table 4 presents the results of the analysis<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Due to the high attrition rate, sample sizes for each country were too small to perform individual regression analysis, and all countries were pooled in one single sample. The rule of thumb is to have at least 500 subjects to perform logistic regression analysis [Bujang et al. 2018].

Table 4

**Transitions from Full-Time Employment to Part-Time Work  
or Unpaid Household Labour (Results of Multinomial Logistic Regression)**

Variables	<i>N</i> = 1,446 Model 1 Motherhood penalty hypothesis	<i>N</i> = 1,415 Model 2 Traditional gender ideology hypothesis	<i>N</i> = 1,168 Models 3 and 4 Adding Institutional context control variables	<i>N</i> = 1,168
<b>Staying Full-Time (Base Outcome)</b>				
<b>Going Part-Time</b>				
<b>Motherhood Status in W 2 (Number of Children, Base: Childless)</b>				
1	0.46*	0.39*	0.28	0.50
2	- 0.49*	- 0.46*	- 0.29	- 0.51
<b>Age in W2</b>				
	- 0.12	- 0.10	0.04	0.05
<b>Age Squared</b>				
	0.00	0.00	- 0.00	- 0.00
<b>Education in W 1 (Base: Low)</b>				
Medium	- 0.11	- 0.09	- 0.02	0.06
High	- 0.20	- 0.22	- 0.02	0.11
<b>Occupational Status in W 1 (ISEI Code)</b>				
	- 0.00	- 0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>A Pre-School Child is Likely to Suffer if His/Her Mother Works (W 1, Base: Agree)</b>				
Neutral		0.63***	0.37	0.23
Disagree		0.38*	0.07	- 0.14
<b>When Jobs are Scarce, Men Should Have More Right to a Job than Women (W 1, Base: Agree)</b>				
Neutral		- 0.24	0.03	- 0.01
Disagree		- 0.32	0.00	- 0.05
<b>Household Income in Quartiles for Each Country in W 2 (Base: 1st Quartile)</b>				
2nd quartile			- 0.18	- 0.18
3rd quartile			- 0.72**	- 0.78**
4th quartile			- 0.47*	- 0.53*
<b>Share of Children under 3 Years Old in Public Childcare (2008)</b>				
			- 0.26***	0.20
<b>Length of paid parental leave in weeks (2008)</b>				
			- 0.03***	0.01
<b>Interaction between motherhood status and country (Eastern vs. Western Europe)</b>				
Childless#Western				1.85***
1 child#Western				1.57**
2 children#Western				2.24***
<b>Staying Full-Time (Base Outcome)</b>				
<b>Becoming a Homemaker Motherhood Status in W 2 (Number of Children, Base: Childless)</b>				
1	0.94***	1.00***	1.03**	0.86
2	- 0.21	- 0.24	- 0.52	- 0.76
<b>Age in W 2</b>				

Table 4

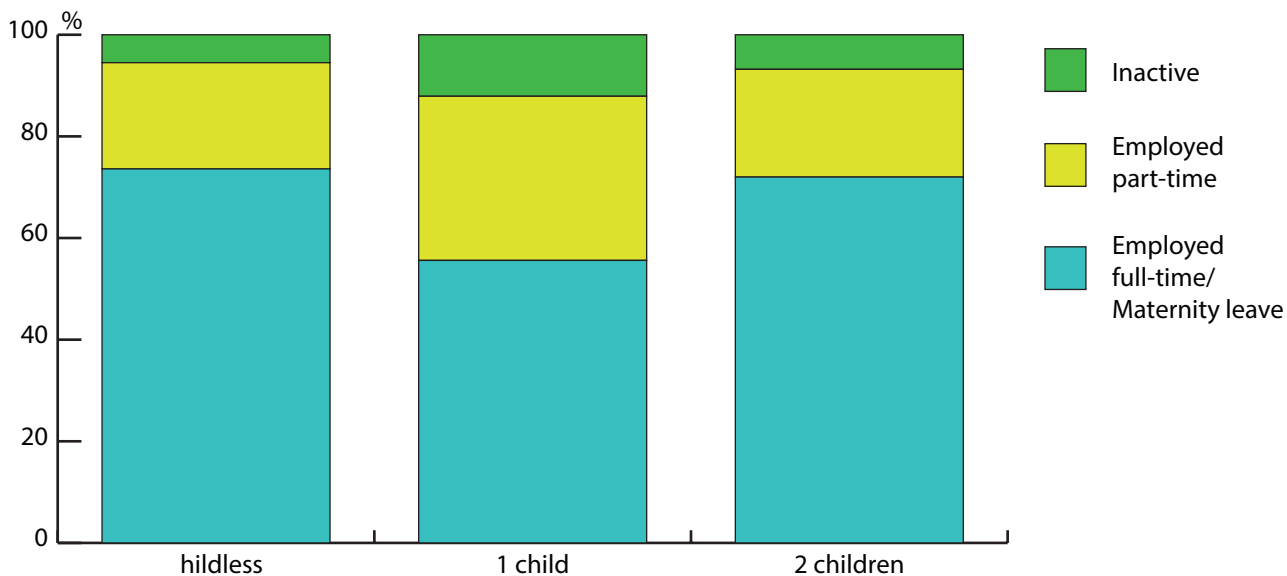
Variables	<i>N</i> = 1,446 Model 1 Motherhood penalty hypothesis	<i>N</i> = 1,415 Model 2 Traditional gender ideology hypothesis	<i>N</i> = 1,168 Models 3 and 4 Adding Institutional context control variables	<i>N</i> = 1,168
<b>Age Squared</b>	– 0.46*	– 0.37	– 0.04	– 0.11
	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Education in W 1 (Base: Low)</b>				
Medium	– 1.05*	– 1.11**	– 0.98	– 1.07
High	– 0.91	– 1.09*	– 1.54*	– 1.71*
<b>Occupational Status in W 1 (ISEI Code)</b>	– 0.00	– 0.00	0.01	0.01
<b>A Pre-School Child is Likely to Suffer if His/Her Mother Works (W 1, Base: Agree)</b>				
Neutral		0.47	0.24	0.31
Disagree		– 0.13	– 0.03	0.06
<b>When Jobs are Scarce, Men Should Have More Right to a Job than Women (W 1, Base: Agree)</b>				
Neutral		– 1.21***	– 0.59	– 0.69
Disagree		– 1.49***	– 0.91*	– 1.16**
<b>Household Income in Quartiles for Each Country in W 2 (Base: 1st Quartile)</b>				
2nd quartile			– 0.48	– 0.50
3rd quartile			– 1.12*	– 1.16**
4th quartile			– 1.49**	– 1.48*
<b>Share of Children under 3 Years Old in Public Childcare (2008)</b>			0.10	– 0.01
<b>Length of Paid Parental Leave in Weeks (2008)</b>			– 0.01	– 0.02
<b>Interaction between Motherhood Status and Country (Eastern vs. Western Europe)</b>				
<b>Childless#Western</b>				– 0.99
1 child#Western				– 0.30
2 children#Western				0.33
<b>Pseudo R-square</b>	0.0237	0.0469	0.0908	0.1068

Note: \* $p \leq 0.5$ , \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq 0.001$ .

## Discussion

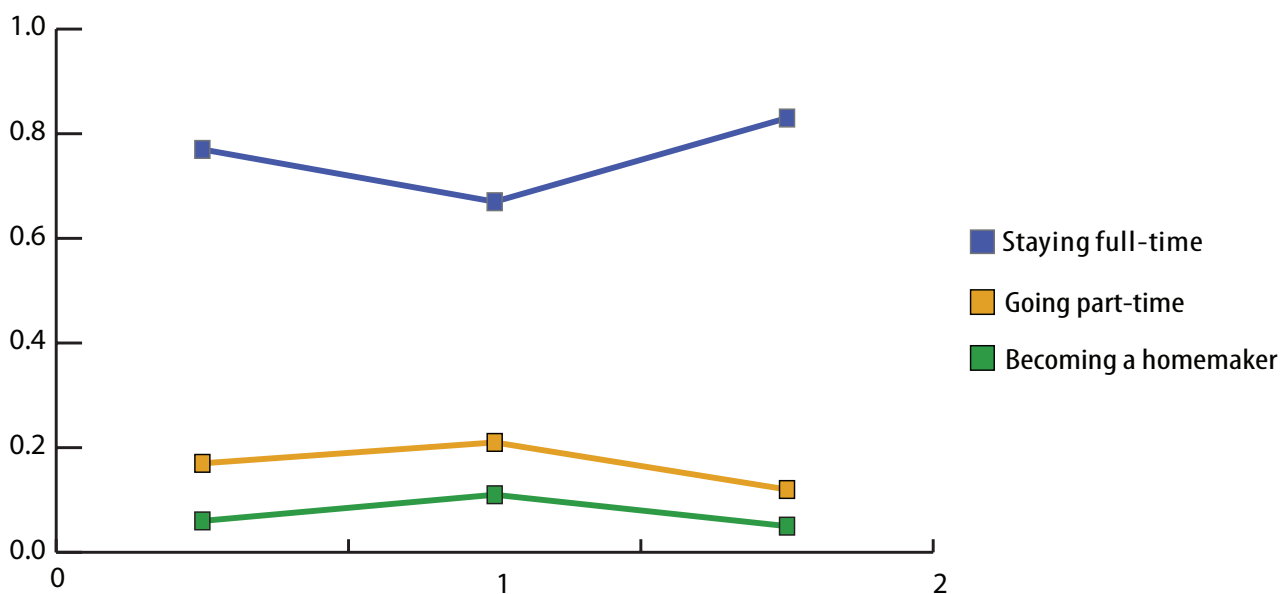
Women's motherhood status is predictive of moving to part-time work or leaving the labour market, which supports the *motherhood penalty hypothesis* (H 1). In the case of switching to part-time work, women are most likely to make the transition when they have one child; the same is true for the change to homemaking (see Fig. 2). Women remaining in full-time employment are more likely to be childless or to have two children, while part-timers and homemakers are more likely to have one child (see Fig. 3).





Source: Elaborated by the author based on data from GGS (2021) waves 1 and 2.

**Figure 2.** Employment Status in Wave 2 for Women Who were in Full-Time Employment in Wave 1, by Number of Children



Source: Elaborated by the author based on data from GGS waves 1 and 2.

**Figure 3.** Adjusted Predictions of Staying Full-Time, Moving to Part-Time, and Becoming a Homemaker, by Number of Children

I also expected women with traditional motherhood values to leave full-time employment. However, the results show that women who switched to part-time were less likely to hold a traditional gender ideology (i.e., agree with the statement “A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his/her mother works”), while for homemakers this factor was not significant. I also found that women who ‘dropped out’ of the labour market were more likely to agree with the statement “When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women”, whereas this variable was not significant for their part-time counterparts. It follows, then, that part-timers are more likely to think that work and home responsibilities can be combined, while homemakers show weaker

attachment to the labour market. Thus, the results only partially support my *traditional gender ideology hypothesis* (H 2).

Welfare-type differences, such as the length of paid parental leave services and the availability of childcare, are only significant for the full-time to part-time transition but not for becoming a homemaker. Women move to part-time when there are fewer possibilities for childcare services for children under 3 years old and when paid parental leave is shorter.

However, when I add interaction between motherhood status and geographical region (Eastern vs. Western Europe), welfare-type differences stop being influential for part-timers. Motherhood increases the log odds of going part-time in Western Europe, while for those who become homemakers this interaction effect is not significant. When I include context variables, both traditional gender ideology and low household income increase the log odds of leaving the labour market.

## Conclusion

Across the world, women's labour force participation is weaker than men's, especially when children are present. Many prominent sociologists have studied trends in women's employment patterns and have concluded that the gender revolution has stalled, with a decline in the trend towards equal outcomes between men and women [England 2010; Charles 2011]. A central argument of these theorists is that there is a persistence of gender essentialism in the personal realm, resulting in unequal division of the household labour, and that this gender essentialism is what causes the stalled revolution [England 2010; Charles 2011]. Other authors assert that women choose to work part-time [Hakim 2000; 2003]. In this paper I look at women who were in full-time employment before having children to determine why they may go part-time or leave the labour market afterwards. I assess the influence of individual factors that might affect transitions from full-time to part-time employment or unpaid work between the first and second waves of GGS, controlling for typical socio-demographic characteristics. My results show that when becoming a mother, thinking that pre-school children are unlikely to suffer when their mother works increases the odds of going part-time, while believing that men have more right for a job than women influences the transition to unpaid family labour. Having fewer possibilities to use childcare services and short parental leave also increase the odds of making the transition to part-time employment.

To investigate further the interaction between motherhood status and family policy context, I distinguished between Eastern and Western European countries. Due to a high attrition rate and small sample sizes, I could not check the influence of my variables of interest on women's labour market transitions in each country individually; however, I found that going part-time was more associated with motherhood in Western Europe, suggesting that Western European countries offer mothers fewer possibilities to stay in full-time employment. Though part-time employment may strengthen female employment in European countries, it does so at the cost of increasing labour market segregation, a larger gender pay gap, and a lack of career prospects for women working part-time. To tackle this problem, policies can comprise providing affordable childcare, regulating and implementing non-discriminatory practices, and establishing quotas for paternity leave to involve fathers more in parental and household duties.

The small sample sizes and high non-response rate also limited my research, such that I could not include partners' characteristics in the analysis. Due to a small number of countries, my results cannot be illustrative of Europe as a whole. Subsequent waves of the GGS may allow for more profound analysis of women's labour market transitions in future research.

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