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The rise of working from home in Austria: New or old inequalities?

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Introduction

- Comparing changes in working from home between the pre-pandemic (2019) and post-pandemic (2022) period
- Widening **gender** and/or **socio-economic inequalities**?
- Couple perspective



Source:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/17/parenting/seattle-child-care.html>



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Theory and Austrian context

- **Moderate level of flexibility:** around 30% of employees work from home – less than in other western European countries
- **Demands/resource framework:** working from home as a resource – especially for mothers?
- **Gendered care responsibilities:** part-time employment as a means for mothers to combine work and family – 74% of mothers with children below age 15 worked part-time vs. 8% of fathers (2024)
- **Women's work commitment:** secondary earners → flexibility stigma more tolerated?
- **Digital divide:** use of information and communication technology – differences in skills and jobs

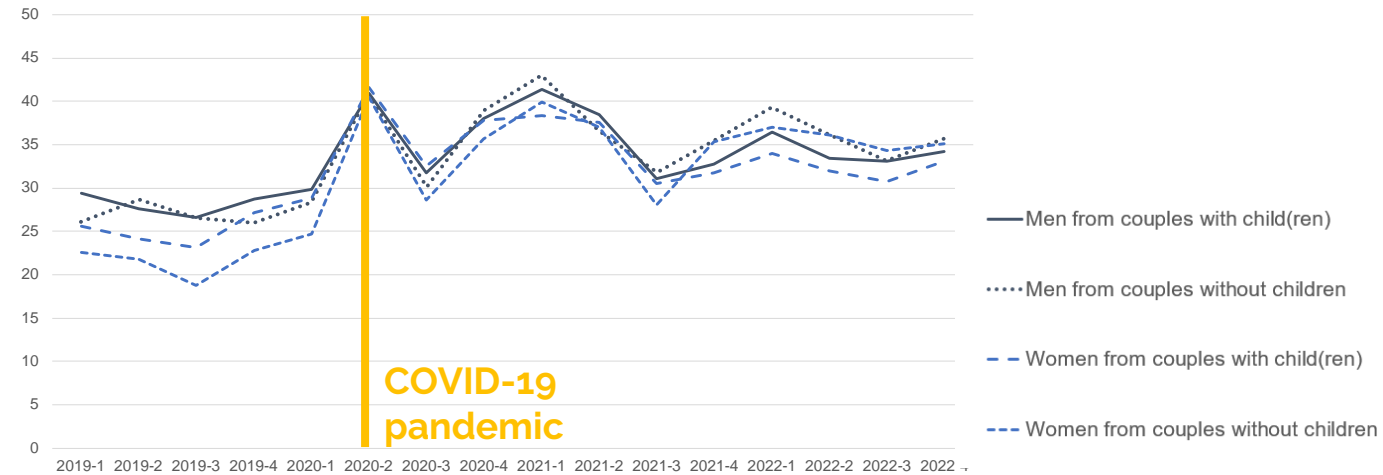
Data and methods

- **Labour Force Survey 2019 and 2022**
- **Sample:** Dual-earner heterosexual couples aged 25 to 54 (n=47,998 couples)
- **Methods:** Multinomial logistic regression and decomposition analysis
- **Key measures:**
 - Working from home: Referring to the four weeks prior to the interview: “How often did you work from home during this period?” On at least half of the working days; less often; never
 - Socio-economic status (SES): occupational status (ISCO) and educational level

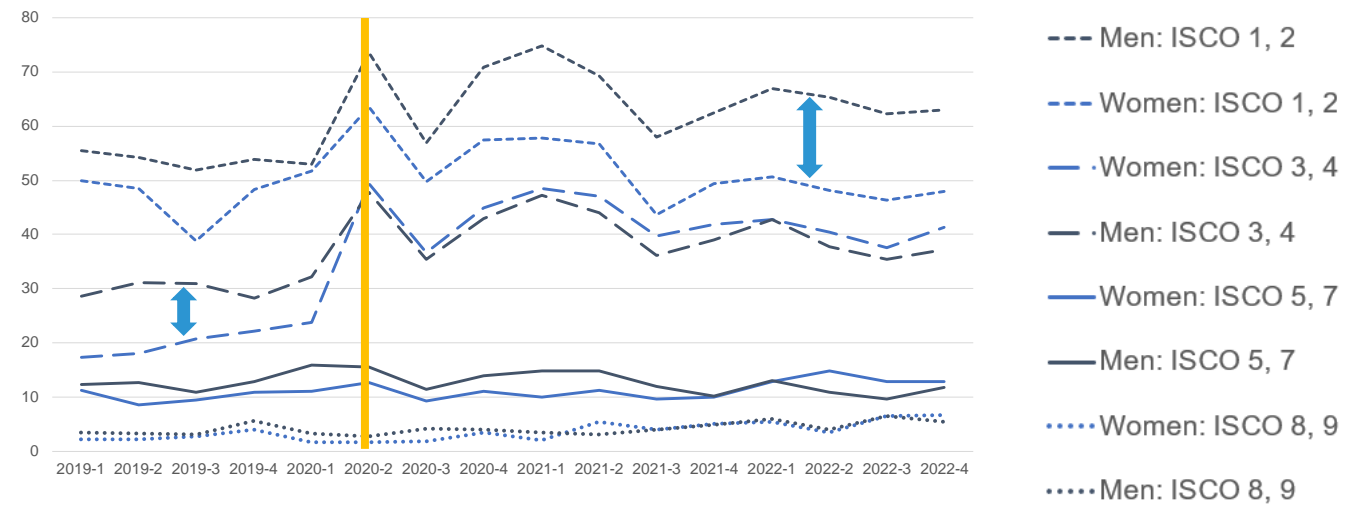
Results

- Gender gap in working from home remains stable among women and men with children – but increase among childless women
- Gap in occupational status widens considerably:
 - increase for male managers and professionals (but less for women in this ISCO 1, 2 group who work as teachers or in the health sector)
 - increase for women in offices and clerical jobs (ISCO 3, 4)

Working from home by gender and parenthood (%)



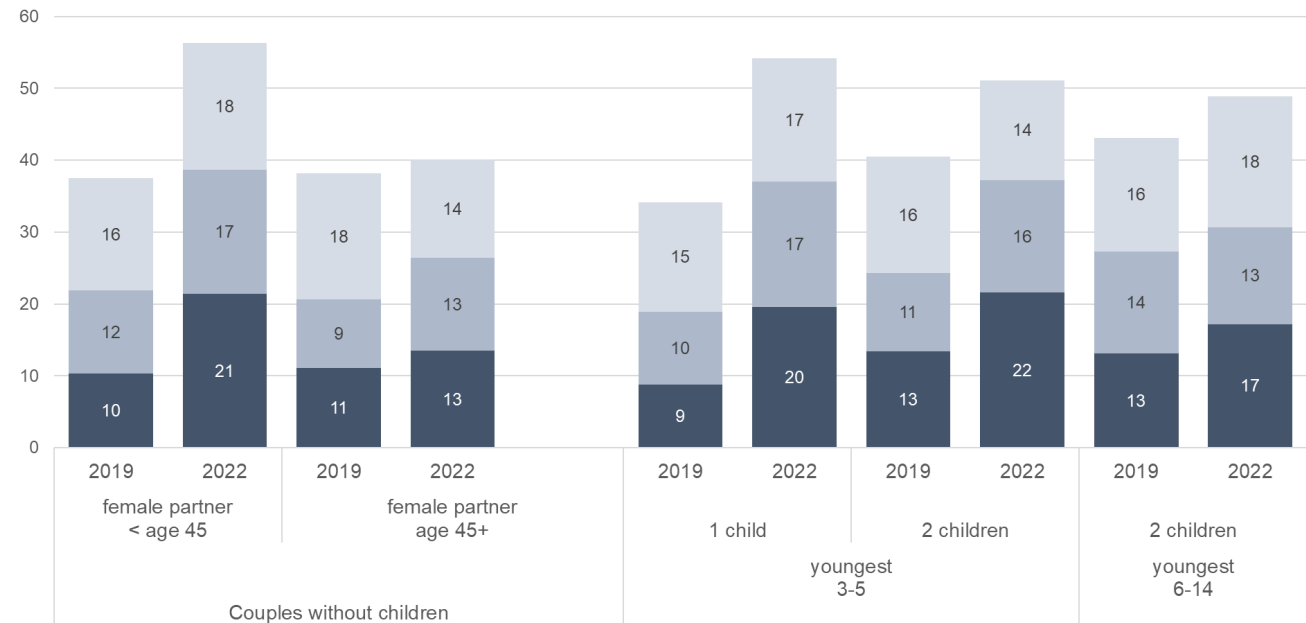
Working from home by gender and occupational status (%)



Results

- Increase among young women and couples without children
- Increase among mothers and couples with young children (3 to 5 years)

Working from home by parenthood, selected groups (%)



- only male partner working from home
- only female partner working from home
- both partners working from home

Results

Who works from home in couples with similar characteristics?

- When both are highly educated, women work from home more often than men
- Dual working from home has become prevalent

Working from home, 2022 (multinomial logistic regression model)

	No partner		Female partner		Male partner		Both partners	
	AME		AME		AME		AME	
Couple education (ISCED 5-8)								
No partner highly educated	ref.		ref.		ref.		ref.	
Female partner highly educated	-.14	***	.06	***	-.02		.11	***
Male partner highly educated	-.10	***	-.03		.05	***	.08	***
Both partners highly educated	-.23	***	.07	***	.01		.16	***

Discussion

- “Old” inequalities widen (socio-economic), but no “new” inequalities emerge (gender, parenthood)
- Working from home benefits high-SES employees, reinforcing divide in working conditions
- SES status homogamy → dual working from home among high-SES employees → both parents available for children
- Limited evidence that mothers increasingly use remote work to balance work and family → does their occupational distribution (teachers, health sector) limit opportunities?
- Important role of age
- With similar SES characteristics, working from home more likely among women

Next step:

- Further examine the intersection of occupation, gender, and parenthood

Questions? Comments?



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<https://cowork.univie.ac.at>