

New couples' employment models during the COVID-19 pandemic in Austria

Caroline Berghammer and Bernhard Riederer

Department of Sociology, University of Vienna

Vienna Institute of Demography (OeAW), Wittgenstein Centre (IIASA, OeAW, University of Vienna)

Background

- In Austria, couples with children mostly live according to a man full-time/woman part-time model (46% in 2019).
- The COVID-19-related restrictions resulted in an increase in the unemployment rate, short-time work (around 30% of employed in April 2020) and informal reduction in work hours.
- These changes led to a rise in couples' employment models that rarely existed before in Austria; e.g. fathers working part-time.
- Similar studies on changes in couples' employment during the pandemic, e.g., for Italy (Brini et al. 2021) and the UK and US (Qian and Hu 2021)

Research questions

- How has the distribution of couples' employment models changed between 2019 and 2020?
- How have employment models changed *within couples* during the first lockdown in spring 2020 compared to the months before?
- In which couples have mothers increased/decreased their employment share/hours?

Data, measures and methods

Data: Austrian labour force survey 2019-20

- Continuous survey covering all weeks of the year
- Around 22,500 households interviewed in each quarter
- Panel data: households participate in five consecutive quarters
- Compulsory participation (around 95% response rate)
- Sample selection: couples with children below age 15

Measures and methods

- Descriptive methods, OLS regression models
- Sample selection: couples with children below age 15
- Employment models: part-time (0-35 hours), full-time (36+ hours); "about equal" if both part-time, both full-time or both non-working
- Dependent variable: Change in share of mothers' working hours (in percentage points; controlled for share at Time 1)
- Independent variables on family (e.g., number of children, age of youngest child), education and employment (e.g., essential jobs, working from home)

Conclusion

- Rise of "new" employment models: "about equal" and "reversed roles" → fathers need to combine work and family
- At the same time strengthening of the "male breadwinner" model → temporary polarization?
- Increase in share of mothers' working hours: with older children, in urban regions, certain occupational combinations (she manager/professional, he clerical support/service/sales worker)

Acknowledgement

This work was funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) within the project "Couples' division of work during COVID-19 lockdown in Austria" (P 34362).

Results

Figure 1: Mean working hours, comparison of 2019 and 2020

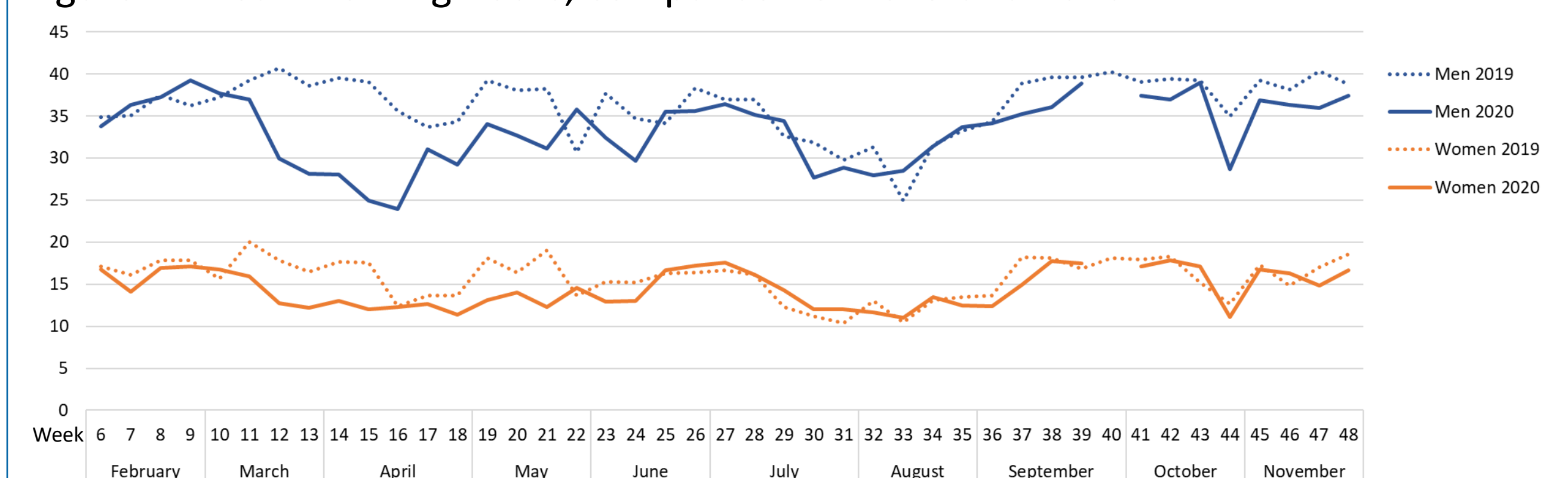


Table 1: Distribution of employment models in 2019 (in %) and changes (in percentage points) between 2019 and 2020

	Male breadwinner	Modernized male breadwinner	About equal	Reversed roles
	He employed, she not employed	He full-time, she part-time	Both not employed; both part-time; both full-time	She works more hours than he
February	25% +5	41% +0	24% -2	10% -2
March	28% +7	45% -10	20% +4	7% +3
April	32% +2	37% -16	25% +6	6% +7
May	28% +4	38% -6	27% +0	7% +3
June	27% -2	36% -6	30% +3	6% +2

Figure 2: Changes between quarter before first lockdown (T1) and first lockdown (T2)

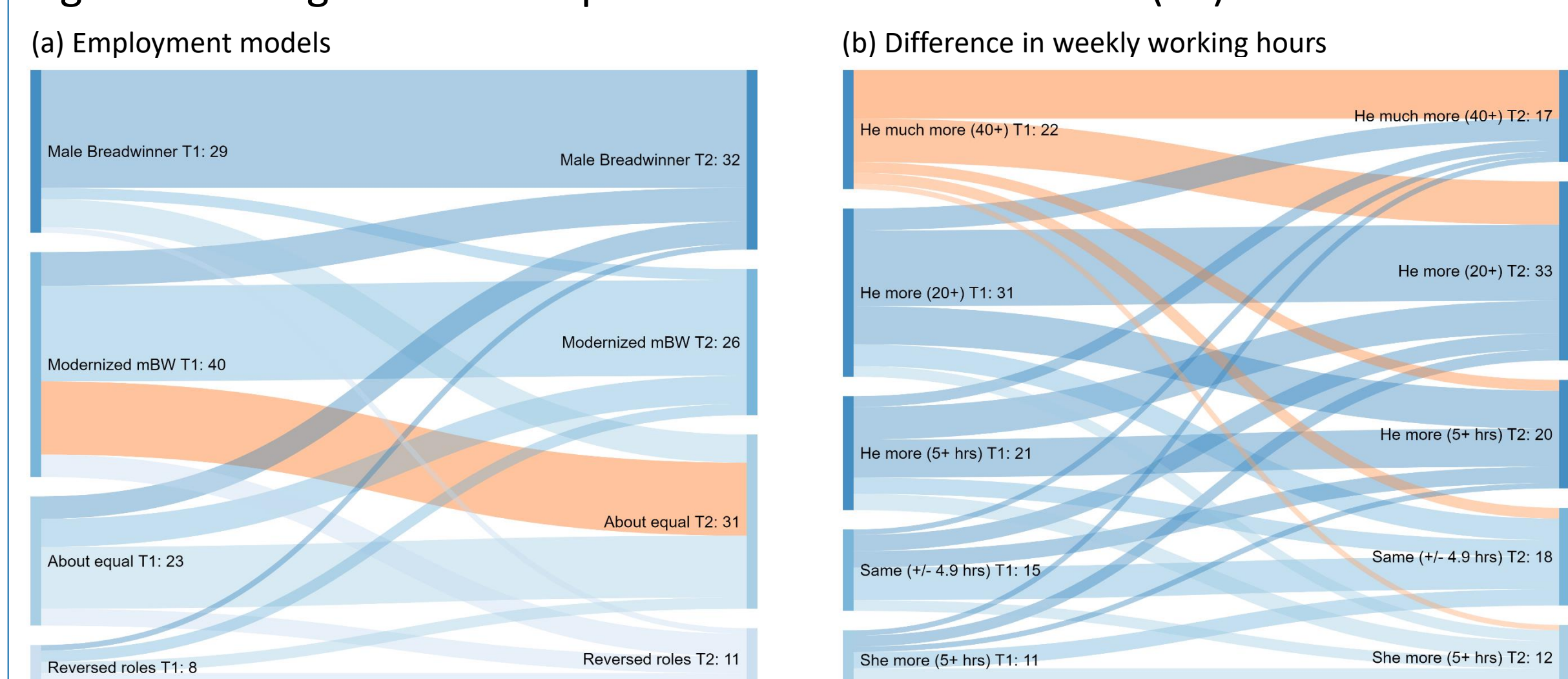


Table 2: Determinants of change in share of mothers' working hours (in percentage points); selected results

Age of youngest child (ref. 0-2 years)	Woman's occupation (ref. clerical support workers & service and sales workers)
3-5 years	Managers and professionals
6-10 years	Technicians and associate professionals
11-14 years	Skilled workers, craft workers and elementary occupations
Urbanization (ref. rural region)	
Small town	
Urban region	

*** p < .001, ** p < .01