

# Growing Diversity in Couples' Employment Models During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Austria

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CES 2023, Reykjavik/Iceland

June 27, 2023

## Previous Research

COVID-19 had multiple effects: Catalyst for more traditional gender roles?

(e.g., Bujard et al. 2020; Collins et al. 2021; Cook and Grimshaw 2021; Hipp and Bünning 2020)

Mixed evidence: Larger decrease in employment hours among women or not?

+ US, Canada, UK, Israel

(US: Collins et al. 2021; Fan and Moen 2022; Canada: Fuller and Qian 2021;

UK: Hupkau and Petrongolo 2020; Israel: Kristal and Yaish 2020)

– Germany, Italy, Austria

(Germany: Knize et al. 2021; Italy: Brini et al. 2021; Austria: Steiber et al. 2022)

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## Theory

Gender role theory (e.g., Collins et al. 2021; Eagly and Wood 2016; Geist and Ruppner 2018)

Resource/bargaining approaches (e.g., Agarwal 1997; Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard 2010)

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Welfare state regime/context (e.g., Esping-Andersen 1990; Petts et al. 2023)

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Couple level: decline in dual earners, increase in female main workers

(Italy: Brini et al. 2021; UK/US: Qian and Hu 2021)

only two studies; longitudinal perspective missing

## Austria

### PRE COVID

Conservative welfare state regime

Institutional characteristics and cultural attitudes foster part-time work

(Berghammer and Schmidt 2019, Riederer and Berghammer 2020)

Almost half of Austrian couples with children below age 15 male full-time/female part-time model (Statistics Austria 2020)

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### DURING THE PANDEMIC

Reduced working hours due to unemployment and short-time work  
(Steiber et al. 2021; Vogtenhuber and Steiber 2021)

Flexibility and double-burden due to working from home (Berghammer 2022)

Women more frequently in critical occupations, but also in those that closed during lockdowns (Bock-Schappelwein et al. 2021; Bock-Schappelwein and Mayrhuber 2020)

## Research Questions

How has the distribution of couples' employment arrangements changed?

How did employment arrangements change on a couple level during the first lockdown in spring 2020 compared to the months before?

Which couple characteristics played a role?

## Data and Methods

Austrian Microcensus 2019 and 2020 (22,500 households)

Focus on heterosexual couples with co-resident children < 15

Persons in main working age (25-54)

Multinomial logistic regression models



## Analytic Strategy

Actual working hours, not contracted or usually worked hours

<b>Couple's Employment</b>	<b>Male partner</b>	<b>Female partner</b>
<b>Male sole worker</b>	Full-/part-time	Not employed
<b>Male main worker</b>	Full-time (36+ hrs/week)	Part-time (1-35 hrs/week)
<b>About equal</b>	Both either full-time, part-time, or not working	
<b>Reversed roles</b>	Female partner more hours per week than male partner	

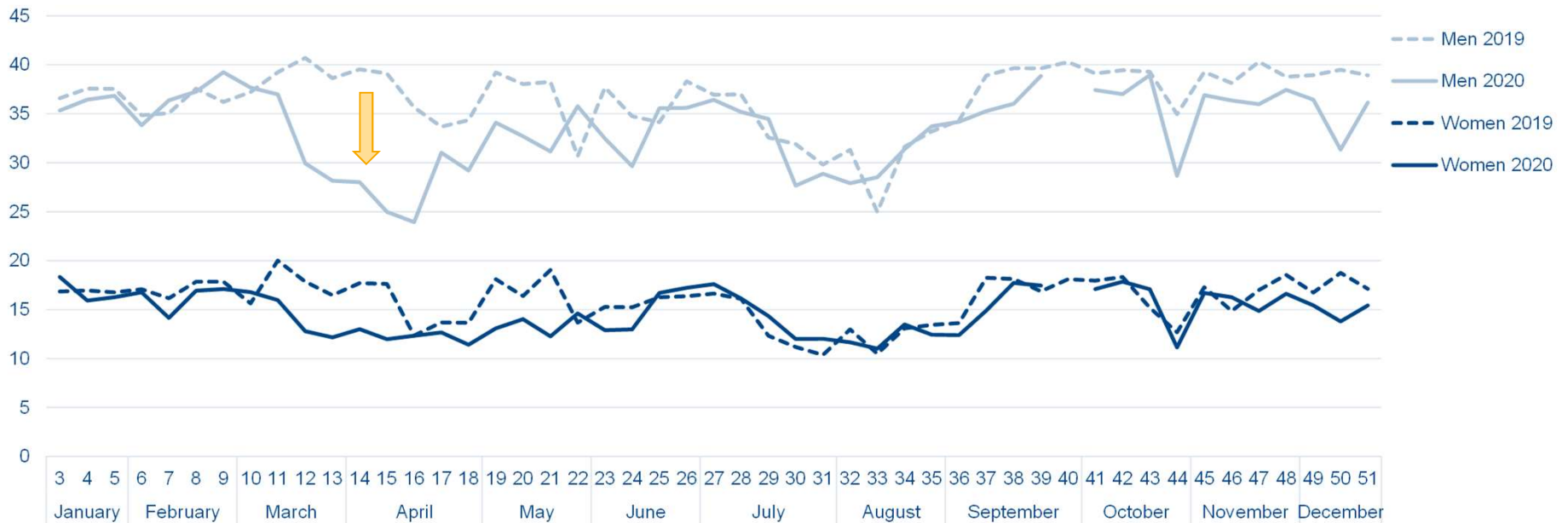
Time series: January 2019 to December 2020

Compare spring 2019 and spring 2020 (first lockdown)

Panel component: changes between the time before and during the lockdown

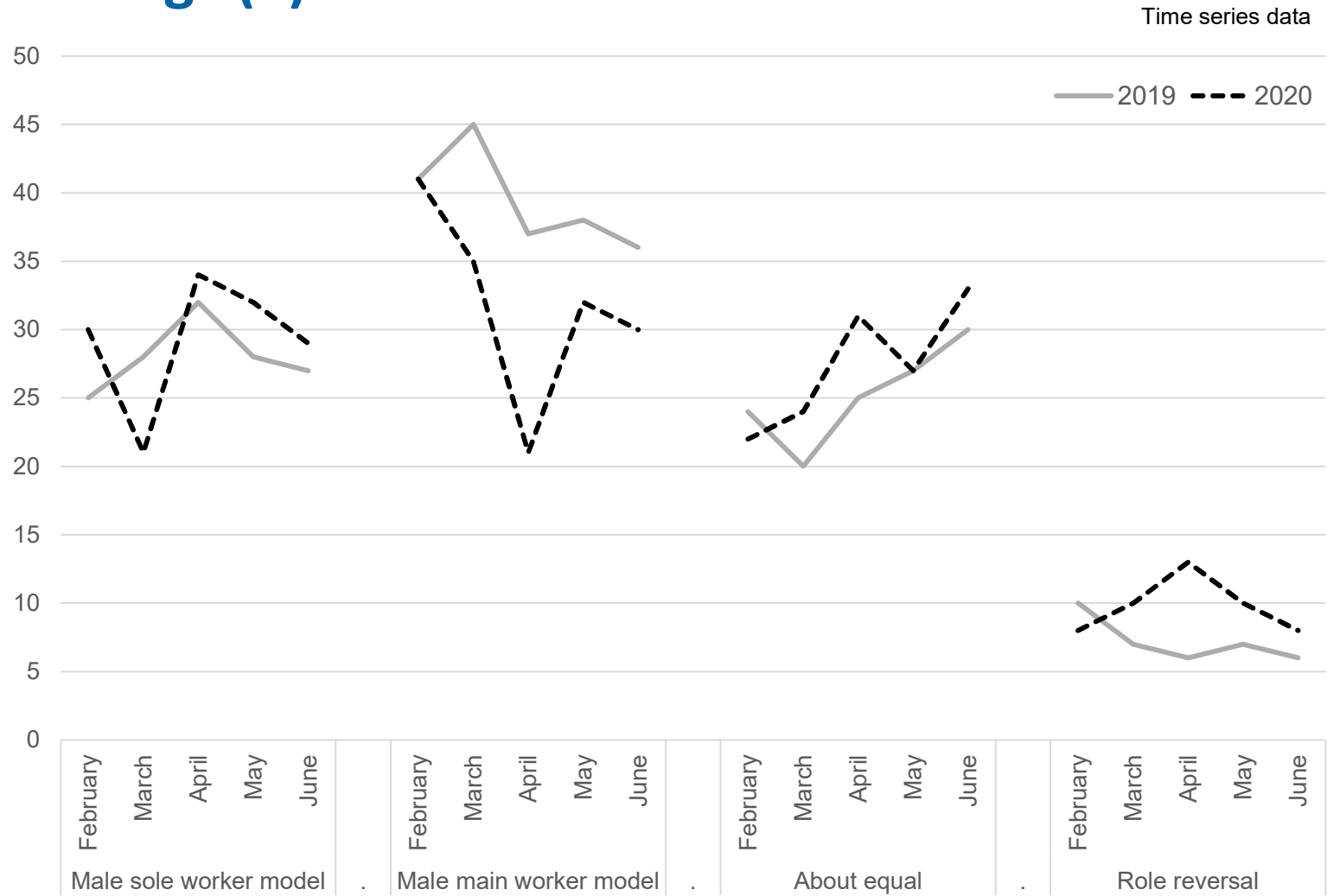
Family characteristics, educational/occupational characteristics, controls

## Findings (1)

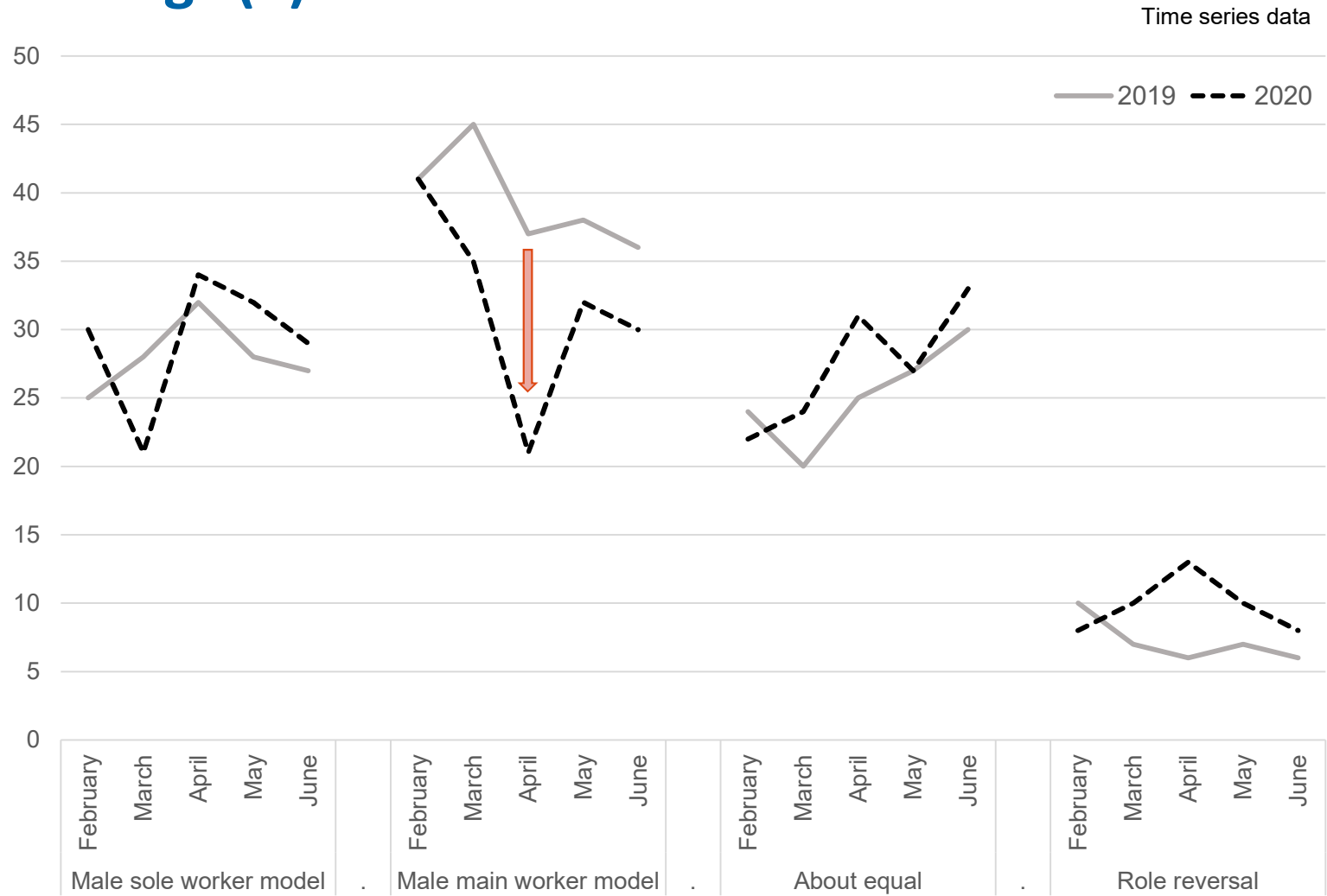


**Average weekly working time among couples with children below age 15 in Austria in 2019 and 2020 by gender (both partners age 25-54)**

# Findings (2)

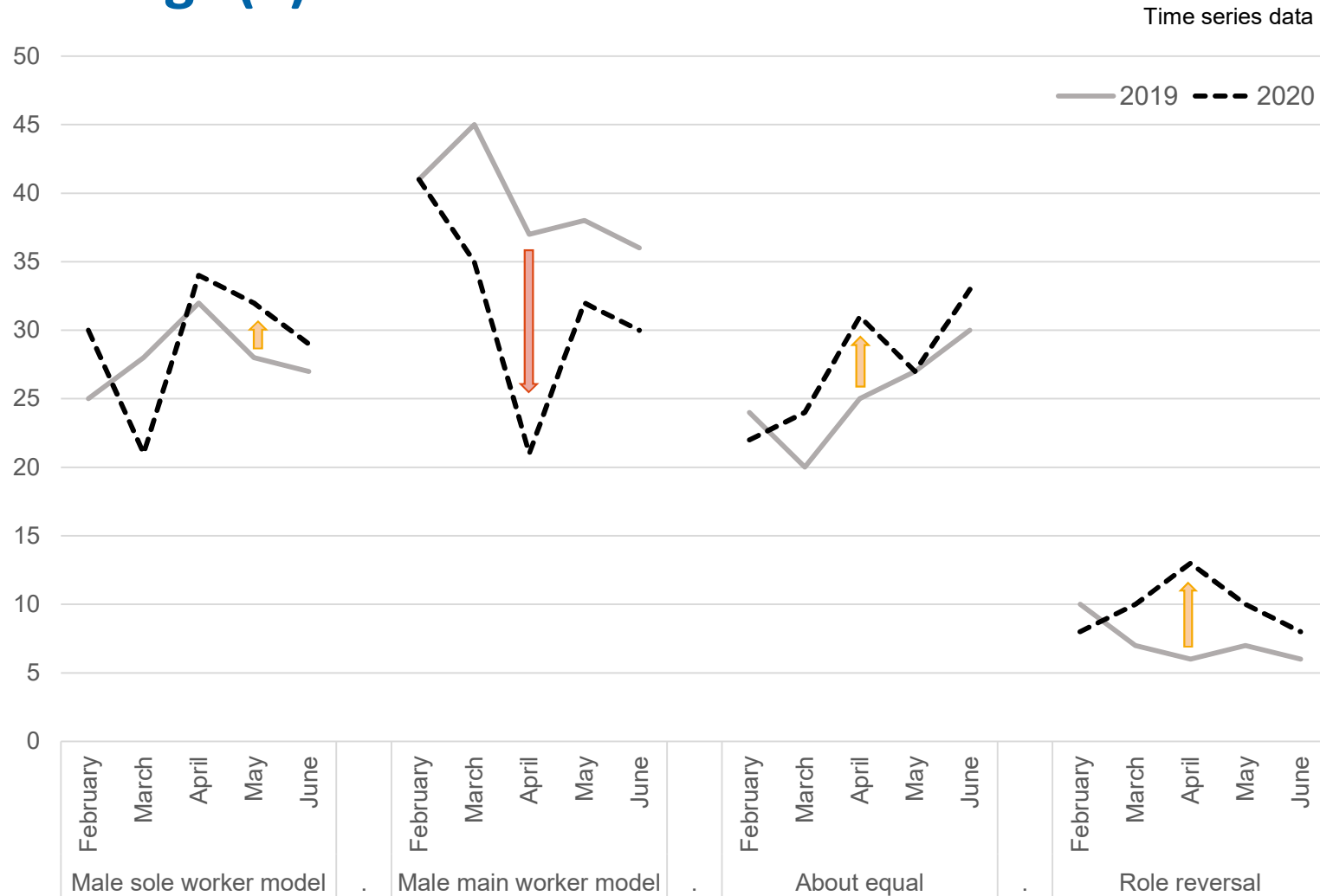


# Findings (2)



- Strong decrease of male main worker model (16 ppt.)

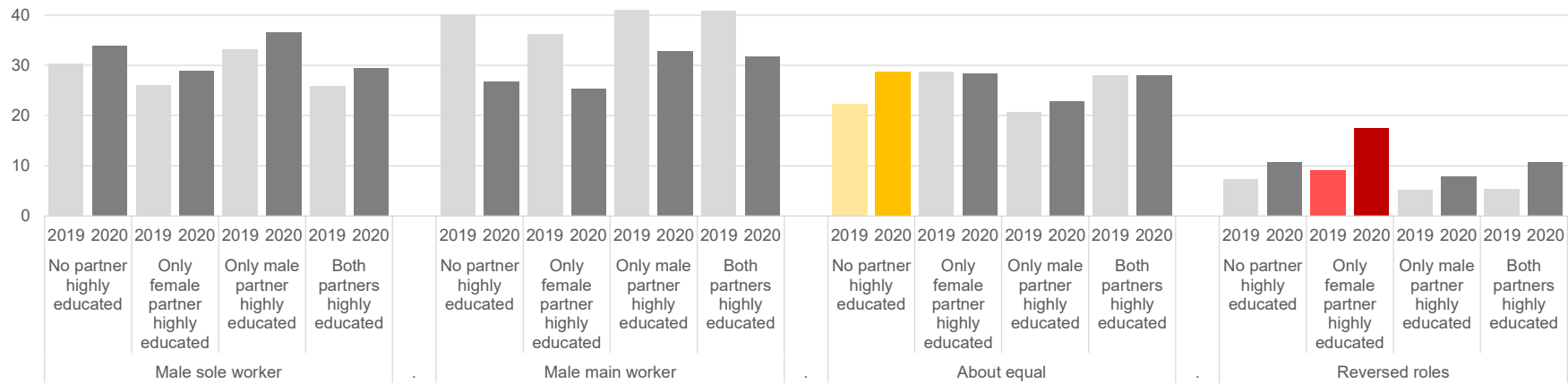
# Findings (2)



- Strong decrease of male main worker model (16 ppt.)
- About equal and role reversal increasing an; but also male sole worker model → temporary polarization

# Findings (3)

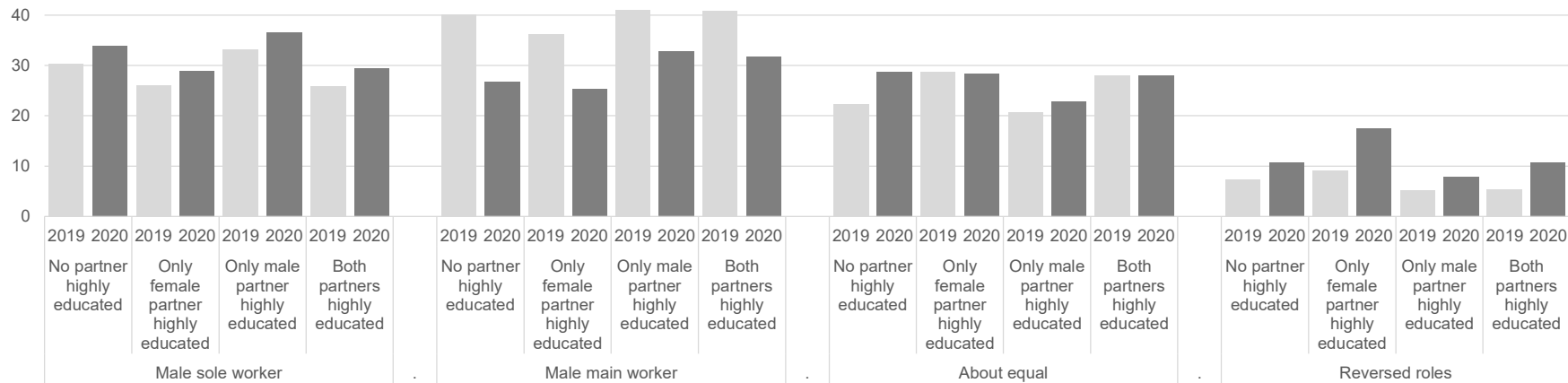
Time series data  
March-May (pooled) 2019 vs. 2020



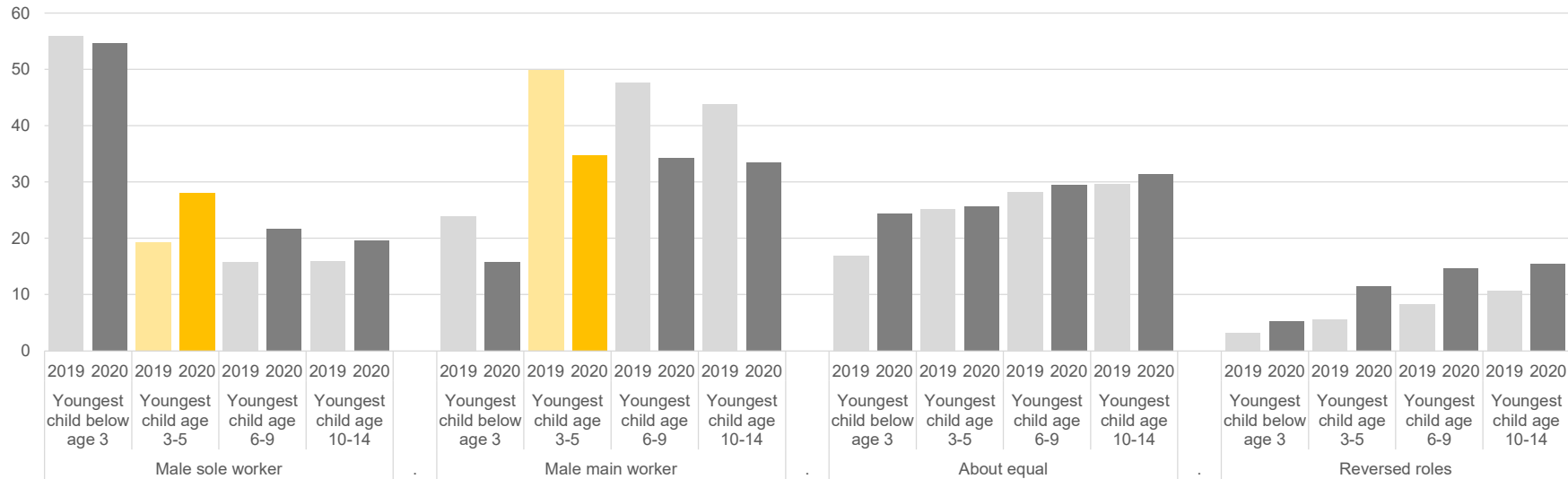
- Lower education: about equal (short-time work), highly educated female: role reversal

# Findings (3)

Time series data  
March-May (pooled) 2019 vs. 2020

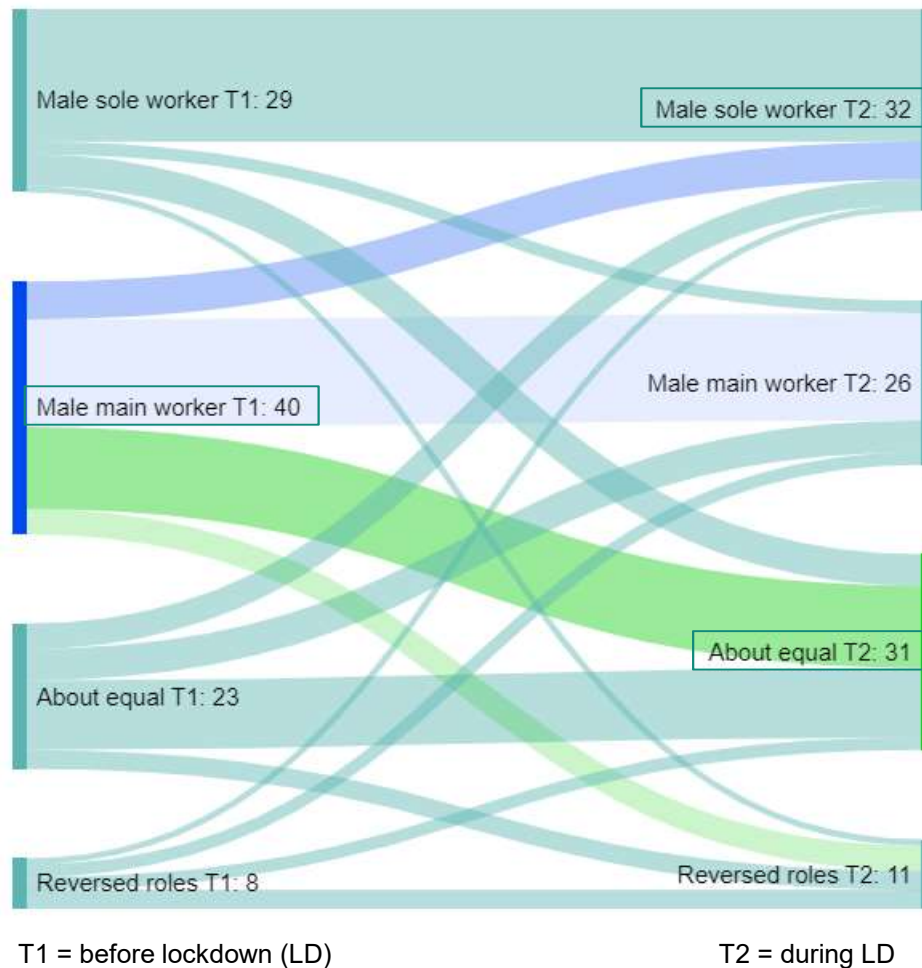


- Lower education: about equal (short-time work), highly educated female: role reversal



- both decline of male main worker and increase of male sole worker stronger among parents of “kindergarten kids” (age 3-5) / closed childcare facilities

## Findings (4)



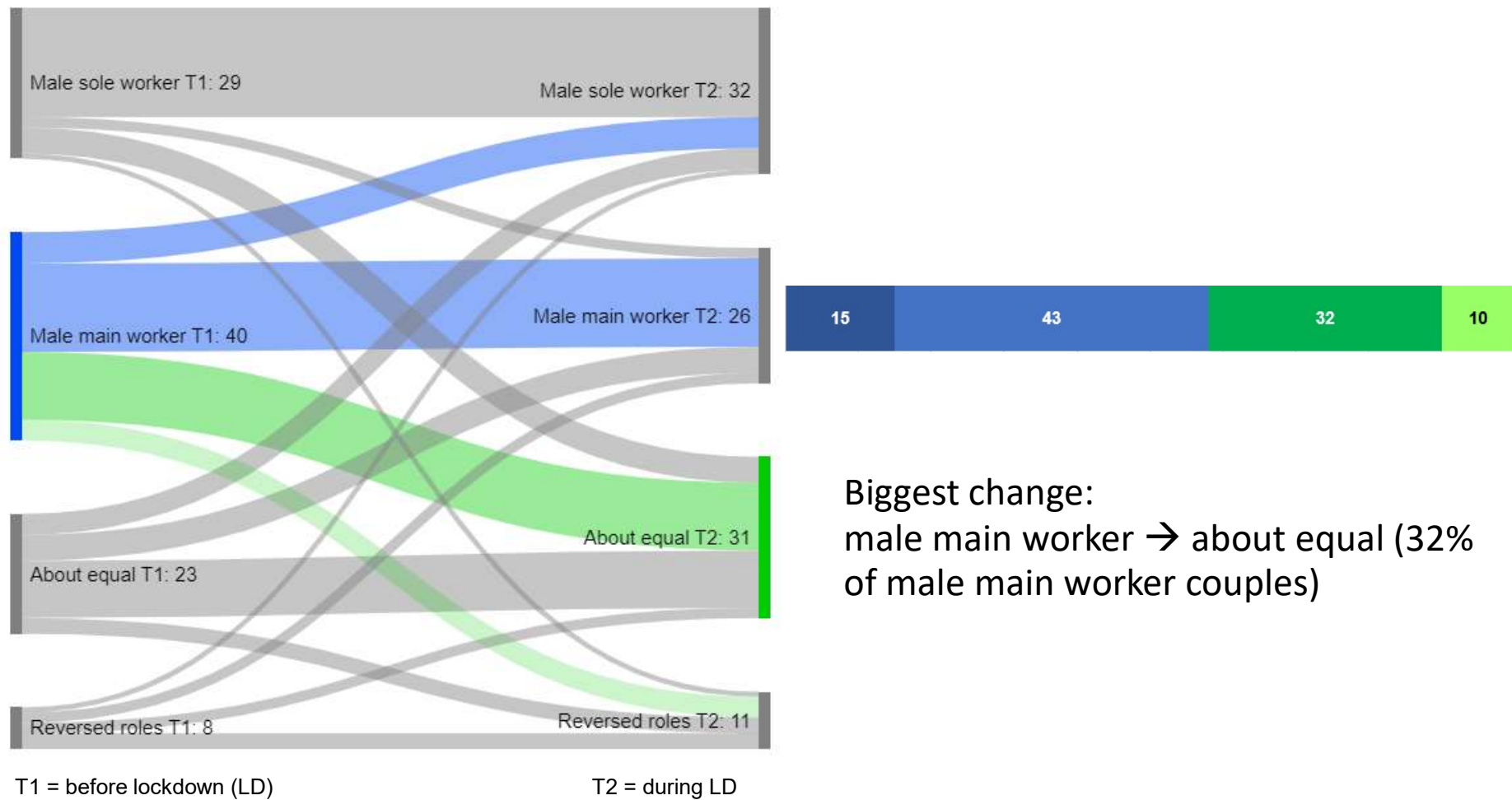
Changes in the division of employment within couples with children below age 15 from before (T1) to the first lockdown (T2) in Austria (Share of employment models in %)

Male main worker model no longer dominant

(→ polarization?)



## Findings (4)



## Findings (4)

### Change traditional model → egalitarian model

- average working time of men decreases significantly (23.5 hours/week)
- average working time of women remains almost unchanged
- male partner long part-time (21-35 hrs/week), female partner short part-time (max. 20 hrs/week), in which only the male partner or both show a decrease in working hours

### More detailed:

- male sole worker → “about equal”: mainly reduction in working hours of men (increases among women are rare)
- male main worker → “about equal”: reduction of average working time larger among men than women

### Change egalitarian model → traditional model

- “about equal” → male main worker: average working time of men even increased whereas average working time of women slightly decreased

## Findings (5) / Change in multinomial logistic regression

### Male sole worker more likely if

- Young children
  - Lower education
  - His income higher than hers
- + male sole worker less likely if both partners in critical occupations and working from home

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### About equal more likely if

- Lower educated parents
- Specific occupations (e.g., office clerks)
- Other adults in the same household

+ male sole worker less likely if both partners in critical occupations and working from home

### Role reversal more likely if

- Older children
- Living in cities
- Higher education
- Her income higher than his
- Woman in critical occupation

## Findings (5) / Change in (multinomial) logistic regression

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- Lower education
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### About equal more likely if

- Lower educated parents
- Specific occupations (e.g., office clerks)
- Other adults in the same household

### Stability higher in couples

- with children below age 3
- with highly educated male partner

- + male sole worker less likely if both partners in critical occupations and working from home

### Role reversal more likely if

- Older children
- Living in cities
- Higher education
- Her income higher than his
- Woman in critical occupation

## Summary & Conclusion

- (1) Male main worker model dominant before lockdown
- (2) In lockdown (temporary) polarization: male sole worker & about equal
- (3) Increase in male sole worker model among parents of young children (*gender roles*), couples with lower education and high earnings share of male partner (*bargaining/resource model*)
- (4) Change to “about equal” more likely if support by other adults and among specific occupations (office clerks, services) (*time availability*)
- (5) Role reversal if older children, living in cities, high education and high earnings share of female partner (*bargaining/resource model*)
- (6) Austria as conservative welfare state:  
both resources and gender roles mattered

## Questions? Comments?

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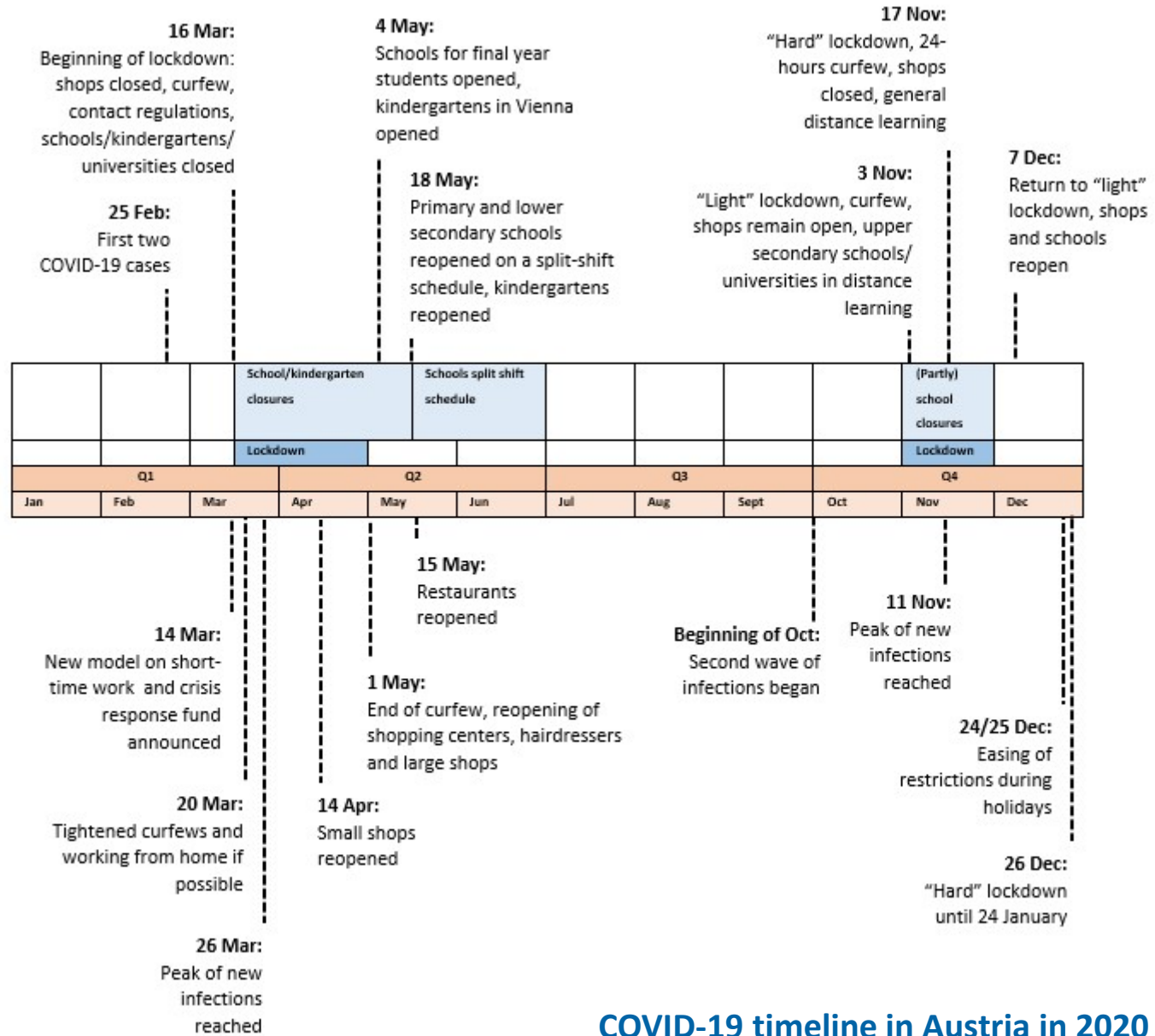
✉ bernhard.riederer@univie.ac.at

FWF

Der Wissenschaftsfonds.

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).

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



COVID-19 timeline in Austria in 2020



# Findings (5), details

Panel analysis

Average Marginal Effects (AME)	Male sole worker model	Male main worker model	About equal	Reversed roles
SELECTED TIME 1 COVARIATES	AME	AME	AME	AME
Couple employment model				
Male sole worker	.53 ***	-.31 ***	-.15 ***	-.07 ***
Male main worker	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
About equal	.01	-.18 ***	.14 ***	.03
Reversed roles	-.07 *	-.14 ***	-.03	.24 ***

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Age of youngest child				
Below age 3	.06 *	-.06 *	.01	-.01
Age 3-5	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Age 6-9	-.04	.02	.00	.01
Age 10-14	-.04	.03	-.04	.05 *
Number of children below 15				
1 child	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
2 children	-.01	-.01	.02	.00
3 or more children	.05	-.08 *	.03	.00

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Age 10-14	-.04	.03	-.04	.05 *
Number of children below 15				
1 child	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
2 children	-.01	-.01	.02	.00
3 or more children	.05	-.08 *	.03	.00
Other adults in household (0/1)	.01	-.11	.14 *	-.04
Number of children age 15+				
no children 15+	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
1 child 15+	-.06 *	-.01	.07 *	.00
2 or more children 15+	-.04	-.07 (*)	.09 (*)	.03

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2 or more children 15+	-.04	-.07 (*)	.09 (*)	.03
<b>Degree of urbanisation</b>				
Thinly populated (rural areas)	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Intermediate (towns/suburbs)	.00	-.03	.01	.02
Densely populated (cities)	-.01	-.07 **	.04	.04 *
<b>Couple education (ISCED 5-8)</b>				
No partner highly educated	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Female partner highly educated	-.04	.01	-.02	.05 *
Male partner highly educated	-.02	.09 **	-.05 (*)	-.02
Both partners highly educated	-.05 *	.05 (*)	-.03	.04 (*)

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Average Marginal Effects (AME)	Male sole worker model	Male main worker model	About equal	Reversed roles
SELECTED TIME 1 COVARIATES	AME	AME	AME	AME
<b>(A) Occupational status among dual-earner couples</b>				
Both partners ISCO 1-3	-.08 *	-.08 (*)	.10 *	.06 *
Female partner ISCO 1-3, male partner ISCO 4-5	-.08 (*)	-.05	.01	.12 **
Female partner ISCO 1-3, male partner ISCO 6-9	-.10 **	-.04	.08 (*)	.06 (*)
Female partner ISCO 4-5, male partner ISCO 1-3	.02	-.10 *	.06	.02
Both partners ISCO 4-5	-.07 (*)	.03	.02	.02
Female partner ISCO 4-5, male partner ISCO 6-9	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Female partner ISCO 6-9, male partner ISCO 1-3	-.10	-.03	.04	.09
Female partner ISCO 6-9, male partner ISCO 4-5	-.07	-.07	.03	.11 (*)
Both partners 6-9	-.04	-.09 (*)	.09 (*)	.04
<b>(B) Employment in critical occupations (CO) among dual-earner couples</b>				
No partner exercising CO	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Male partner in CO, many working from home	-.03	.11 *	-.05	-.02
Male partner in CO, other	-.05	.11 *	-.06	.00
Female partner in CO, many working from home	-.04	-.01	.00	.04
Both partners in CO, many working from home	-.08 *	.17 ***	-.09 *	.00
Both partners in CO, female partner in CO with many working from home	-.08	.03	-.03	.09
Female partner in CO, other	.02	.00	-.07 (*)	.05 (*)
Both partners in CO, female partner in other CO	-.03	.12 *	-.11 *	.02
Both partners in CO, other	-.04	-.03	.05	.02
<b>(C) Female earnings share among dual-earner couples with earnings data</b>				
Max. 25%	.02	.06	-.01	-.07 **
Above 25% but max. 34%	-.04	.04	.01	-.01
Above 34% but max. 45%	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Above 45%	-.08 *	-.06	.03	.10 **

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