

# Caregiving time costs and trade-offs with paid work and leisure: Evidence from Sweden, UK and Canada

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## Extended abstract

*Background:* Population ageing places increased pressure on pensions and extra demands on health and caring services. This has created an imperative to extend working lives, through policies such as increasing the statutory pension age and removing the default retirement age. Alongside this, there has been increased political emphasis in Europe and elsewhere on the provision of care in the home. At an individual level many older people are therefore increasingly likely to be challenged by the twin responsibilities of caring for sick, disabled and elderly relatives and participating in labor market activities. The broad aims of this paper are to investigate the potential conflicts that arise from this. More specifically, this paper addresses the questions of what the time costs of unpaid care are and how caregiving time is traded-off against time in paid work and leisure time among men and women?

*Theoretical considerations and previous research:* The analysis explores informal caregiving from a time allocation perspective (Becker, 1965; Becker & Ghez, 1975; Gronau, 1977), focusing on the time costs and trade-offs between time spent in informal care, paid work, and leisure as people age. Previous analyses using cross-sectional Canadian (Michelson & Tepperman, 2003) and Dutch (Hassink & van den Berg, 2011) time use data will be extended to explore time costs and trade-offs associated with informal caregiving in a Nordic, British and Canadian context. Sweden features a universal and comprehensive welfare state with high levels of female labor force participation and institutional support for gender equality and work-family balance, while the UK and Canada adhere to the liberal Anglo-Saxon welfare model with much

less of such support. We are particularly interested in gender differences in time inputs to caregiving and how these have changed and traded-off over time in different countries.

The trade-off between employment and caring, is supported by a large body of international evidence consistent with substitution between the provision of care and labor supply (Lilly *et al.*, 2007; Bolin *et al.*, 2008; Van Houtven *et al.*, 2013) and a tendency for lower-income earners to take on time-intensive caring responsibilities (Carmichael *et al.*, 2010). Given the projected increases in the demand for informal care (Pickard *et al.*, 2007; Wittenberg *et al.*, 2011) such conflicts are likely to intensify. These conflicts are important since unpaid, informal care has been found to be a significant substitute for formal long-term care (Van Houtven & Norton, 2004). This should not be surprising since unpaid, informal carers look after relatives or friends who need support because of age, physical or learning disability or illness, including mental illness. In addition to increasing the need for costly formal care, conflicts between time in work and time caring for a loved one are likely to accentuate negative impacts of caregiving on health and well-being (Pinquart & Sorensen, 2003; Phillips *et al.*, 2009).

*Rationale and added contribution:* As women have increased their time in paid work, conflicts between employment and family responsibilities have grown. The main focus in the work-family balance literature has, however, been on childcare (Ackers, 2003; Crompton & Lyonette, 2006) rather than care for the elderly and disabled. This development has led researchers to more fully explore the role that caregiving responsibilities play in mothers' time choices (Dribe & Stanfors, 2009) rather than time choices of older women past child-rearing ages. Men's caregiving responsibilities have generally received much less attention. Time diaries have been under-utilized in the study of informal care, but they may provide more valid estimates of time spent on caregiving than survey data (Van den Berg & Spauwen, 2006). Time use data allow detailed analyses of patterns of time use, throughout the day and between days, as well as the trade-offs between caregiving and paid work, leisure or other activities, with obvious implications for the income and well-being of the caregiver. Unlike retrospective survey data, time use data tell us when during the day the care is provided. While the total time devoted to informal care has been found to affect paid work (Carmichael & Charles, 2003; Heitmueller, 2007), variations with respect to *when* caregiving takes place may also impact paid work and leisure in ways yet to be discerned. Informal care of adult dependents is in many ways different than childcare and the way the care needs to be provided at certain times of the day (i.e., meals, naps, and bedtime) is

disruptive and may bar caregivers from labor market participation. This paper will contribute to the existing literature by focusing on how both the total hours of caregiving, as well as the timing (i.e., when during the day caregiving is provided) may impact paid work and leisure. As these effects are not necessarily equal for all groups (e.g., gender, education, and social class) and across countries, we will also extend the existing literature by making cross-country comparisons.

*Methodology:* Our main data source are the Swedish, British and Canadian Time Use Surveys. We will use data from time diaries from 1990 to present. The data include several socio-demographic background variables and more than 100 primary activity variables indicating how respondents spent their time over a 24-hour period (weekdays and weekend days). The multivariate analyses will be performed on individual countries and from a pooled country dataset. Our analytical strategy is to document patterns of informal caregiving and test for significant differences according to gender (within country and year) and across time. We also study how caregiving responsibilities affect time choices among women and men. We perform multivariate regression analyses, including estimating simultaneous equation systems in which the dependent variables are the number of minutes in a day that an individual devotes to home production, leisure, market work, and caregiving to determine if caregiving responds to prices and demographics like time in home production or leisure. We also extend on the existing time use literature by estimating structural time use models in order to estimate wage and caregiving price elasticities. We estimate models for both women and men and test gender differences through interactions. In another set of analyses, we consider fluctuations in the provision of informal care during the day. We will assess the extent to which the daily rhythm of informal caregiving and the type of care provided affect the day-to-day activities of women and men in different country contexts.

*Results:* Preliminary results indicate that both gender and educational differences in caregiving (for the elderly and disabled as for children) and trade-offs differ across contexts with respect to the extensiveness of the social infrastructure for caring and how it is financed. Informal caregiving in Sweden amounts to less time than in other contexts, it follows a less disruptive pattern during the day (see Figures 1 and 2), and is more equal with respect to gender than elsewhere<sup>1</sup>, indicating the importance of social infrastructure not only for reducing the burden of informal caregiving but also gender inequities.

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<sup>1</sup> Unlike in the UK and Canada, there are no significant gender differences in Sweden.

Figure 1. Care episodes during the 24-hour day (weekdays, all individuals performing informal caregiving, SWETUS 1990/91, 2000/01 and 2010/11).

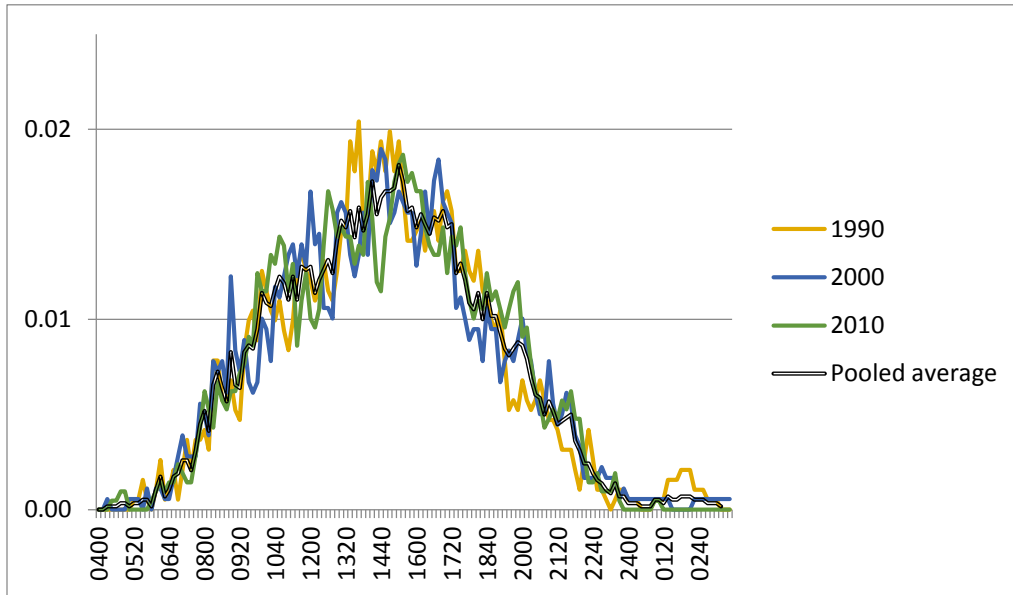
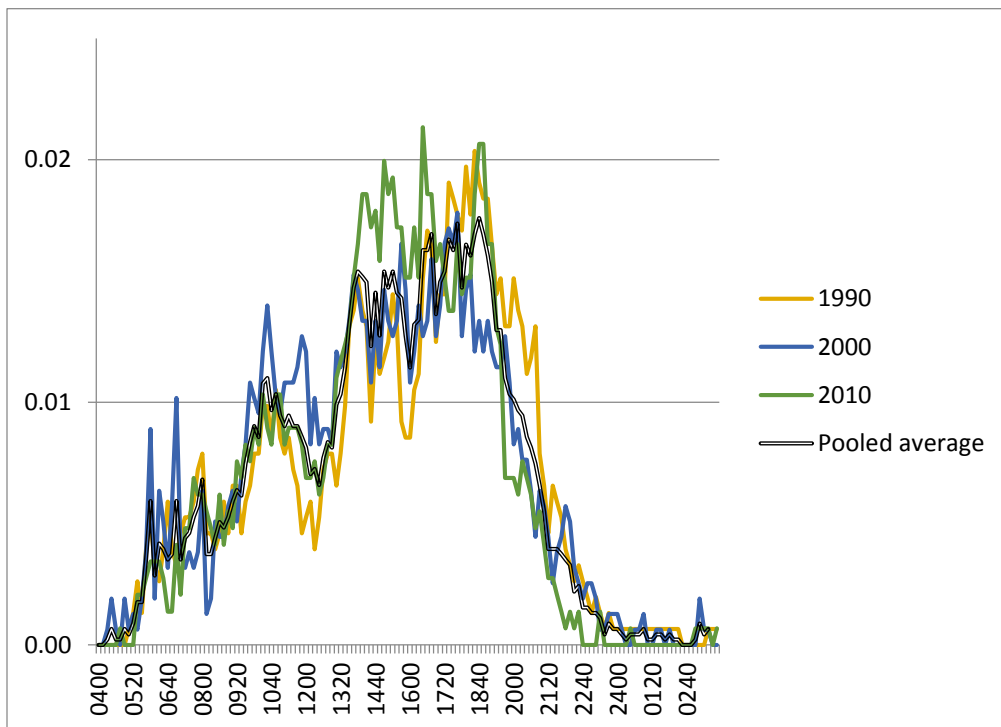


Figure 2. Care episodes during the 24-hour day (weekends, all individuals performing informal caregiving, SWETUS 1990/91, 2000/01 and 2010/11).



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