

Chapter 5: Additional information on three flexibility categories in Slovenia

1. Categorization and work characteristics

This chapter deals in more detail with the results of the categorization of survey respondents in three categories, which was outlined in section 2 of Chapter 1. The empirical results of this categorization into three groups, flexible employment group A, flexible employment group B and standard employment group C, have provided interesting differences among them, which will be elaborated in this chapter, showing the respective characteristics coming out of the Slovenian survey data. The results pertain to a subset of respondents, who answered that they had one or more economic activities during the last 12 months and could by this criterion be considered economically active. In the survey it seems that a number of respondents were reluctant to answer questions about their additional kinds of work and additional income, possibly being afraid of the respective tax or employment consequences, so that some of the this information might be less reliable. Thus, in this chapter we mainly deal with a subset of less than 600 economically active respondents who provided the necessary information. One of the possible subdivisions of this set into eight flexibility categories, in the first round, and into the three above-mentioned categories in the second round, is shown in Table 5.1. The rationale for this categorization was presented in section 2 of Chapter 1.

Table 5.1a Flexibility grouping into eight categories

Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
1. Full time employment, more activities, flextime	83	14.4
2. Full time employment, shift and irregular work	115	19.9
3. Part time employment	7	1.2
4. Fixed contract	60	10.4
5. Self employed	41	7.1
6. Students and retired with one or more activities	64	11.1
7. Others	27	4.7
8. Employed full time, regular schedule, one activity	181	31.3
	n=578	

Table 5.1b Flexibility grouping into three categories

Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Flexibility group A (1+5+6)	188	32.5
Flexibility group B (2+3+4+7)	209	36.2
Standard employment group C (8)	181	31.1
	n=578	

We have first grouped respondents into eight categories, the major criterion for categorization being employment status of the respondent, which was then combined with some other characteristics of flexibility. As mentioned before, the emphasis here is on ‘objective’ elements of work status and flexibility, which may or may not correspond to the subjective evaluation of the respondents with respect to these characteristics. For instance, we have considered that working in shifts or an irregular schedule is a negative element of work; while in a survey by the Statistical Office a rather large number of those working in shifts expressed their satisfaction with such a position. Of course, it is difficult to disentangle whether, in answering that question, they were satisfied that they had a job or whether they were satisfied with the shift arrangement as such. Thus the approach taken here has the advantage that such ‘objective’ elements could be compared for different social groups or different countries, but

obviously should not be considered as a statement of the difficulty or satisfaction with a particular position with respect to a given element of work.

Some of the subdivisions in Table 5.1a are self-explanatory. Part time employment and fixed contract (temporary) employment are two categories of flexible work conditions, which we could compare in time and cross nationally. The same goes for the category self-employed. The major dilemma is how to categorize those employed full-time by their flexibility characteristics, who comprise about two thirds of the subset of economically active respondents analysed in this chapter. As explained earlier, the first of the three major categories of employment comprises those employed full time, with regular working schedule and only one economic activity. This category will be labeled 'standard pattern of employment' and in the tables is labeled as 'standard employment category C'. The other two categories of those employed full time are then considered categories of flexible employment, as distinct from the above-mentioned standard employment category, as they exhibit some 'positive' or 'negative' elements of flexibility in their work situation. Category 1 in Table 5.1a comprises those employed full time that have two or more economic activities or are employed full time and have the advantage of flexitime privileges, i.e. they can start or finish their working time in a flexible arrangement. In category 2 in the table those with some 'negative' characteristics of work flexibility, here approximated by shift and irregular work schedule, are enumerated. These two categories will be the backbone of the subdivision of those with some flexibility characteristics (as distinct from the standard employment category) into flexibility group A and flexibility group B.

The grouping of respondents into three categories, presented in Table 5.1b, is done from the eight categories in the Table 5.1a in the following way. Standard employment group C is a category by itself, which could be in certain instances compared to the rest of the respondents as those with some flexibility characteristics. However, both for policy and for research considerations it is more interesting to subdivide those with some flexibility characteristics at least into the two groups used here, which could be later refined and/or amended. Flexibility group A encompasses those with some 'objective' positive characteristics of flexibility, which are in this instance a summation of categories 1, 5 and 6 from Table 5.1a. We consider that in addition to the category 1 explained above, one could add into this group also the self-employed, and students and the retired with one or more activities. One could argue that both students and pensioners do not have to engage in an economic activity for their basic status, or that economic activity is conditioned by their basic status position, respectively, so that their engagement in one or more economic activities is a voluntary decision. For the self employed in Slovenia we may consider that this position is in majority of cases a voluntary decision, aimed at more independence and flexibility in their work, rather than a consequence of being laid off and being forced into such a status. This may be very different in some other transition countries and in international comparisons one should subdivide the self-employed category accordingly.

Flexibility group B comprises four categories from Table 5.1a (adding categories 2, 3, 4 and 7). The most important component is category 2 with shift and irregular work as explained above. Part-time employment, which is rather rare in Slovenia, and fixed contract (temporary) employment are placed in this flexibility group with 'negative' objective elements on presumption that the majority of these cases are involuntary from the point of view of the employees, as they would prefer a more firm commitment from the employers. The group of 'others' comprises casual workers, unpaid workers in family businesses, the unemployed with an additional job, farmers with one economic activity and those laid off. The greatest majority

of those included in the category 'others' have 'negative' elements of flexibility associated with their work position. To sum up, there are no doubt other possible criteria for categorizing respondents by various flexibility characteristics. In this study we have made an attempt to bring attention to the 'objective' elements of flexibility to initiate a discussion on the positive and negative aspects of flexibility arrangements at work, looking from one side, that can be later connected also with the work-family situations, from the other. As the most important policy issue with respect to work flexibility we see the question of how to balance the positive and negative aspects of work flexibility from both the employees' and the employers' side. The analysis of work characteristics, personal and social characteristics, satisfaction and decisions with various aspects of work, possible work/family conflicts and personal perceptions of well-being across the three chosen flexibility groups will hopefully initiate further discussion and research on a partial aspect of the important policy issue about work flexibility.

Table 5.2 presents the percentage distribution for the three flexibility groups by the elements of some work characteristics. The number of activities in the last twelve months is distributed as expected. The standard group C is by definition involved only in one economic activity. From the flexibility group A, 40 per cent of respondents have two or more economic activities. Similarly, this group is distinctively different from both flexibility group B and even more from the standard group C in working more hours in all activities (i.e. the summation of hours worked in activities from 1 to 6); 41 per cent of them are working more than fifty hours per week. In the standard group C 76 per cent are working the 'standard' working week (the group from 37-42 hours), only 21 per cent of flexible group A are working the same hours. For all three aspects of work characteristics in Table 5.2 (number of activities in the last 12 months, hours of work in all activities and working schedule) the percentage difference distribution among the three flexibility categories is statistically significant at the 0.01 significance level of chi-square tests. Flexibility group A thus works on average in more activities, works more hours per week and has a more flexible schedule than the other two groups. As it will be shown later, it shows also higher values in income distribution and household goods distribution.

The type of contract in the main activity also differs significantly among the three groups; it is very concentrated in standard group C as expected and most diversified in flexibility group A. The prevailing type of contract in the main activity is a permanent contract at about 65 per cent of the respondents. In the standard group C the percentage of permanent contract is 95 per cent (some small percentages for this group are a consequence of the fact that the variable on employment status that was used for classification purposes was a multi-response variable), with 54 per cent for flexibility group B and 46 per cent for flexibility group A. However, the distinction between flexibility groups A and B is pronounced in the other categories of contract, self employment being the most important in flexibility group A and fixed term employment in the flexibility group B. The differences among the three categories with respect to the place of work are somewhat less pronounced: in all categories the highest share is commuting to work in a different locality. However, the flexibility group A is characterized also by the widest distribution of other cases, and it has distinctly higher percentages of people 'working at home', 'combined at home and elsewhere' and 'always changing'.

Table 5.2 Work characteristics (in per cent)

	Flexibility group A	Flexibility group B	Standard group C	n
<i>Number of activities in last 12 months *</i>				
1	60	93	100	483
2	29	6		66
3	7	1		15
4	3			5
5	1			2
6	1			1
				572
<i>Hours of work in all activities *</i>				
Less than 36 hours	15	12	2	54
From 37 to 42	21	55	76	287
From 43 to 50	23	17	19	110
More than 50 hours	41	16	4	114
				565
<i>Working schedule *</i>				
Regular working hours: Monday morning to Friday afternoons	25	16	100	257
Shift work	12	51		124
Flextime	30	3		59
Other regular schedule	6	7		25
Irregular, it varies	27	21		91
DK/NA	1			1
				557
<i>Type of contract in main activity *</i>				
No contract	9	7		29
Self employed	22	2	2	45
Permanent contract	46	54	95	359
Reduced working time contract	2	2	2	11
Fixed term	3	30		65
"on call" subject to requirements	2	2	1	9
With a temporary work agency	8	1		15
On a fee only basis	5	2	1	13
On a work experience project		1		1
DK/NA	2	2		7
				554
<i>Place of work</i>				
At home	8	6	1	28
Combined at home and elsewhere	11	2	2	26
Within the locality where you live	31	37	39	199
Commuting to different locality	36	49	50	251
Abroad	1	1	2	6
Always changing	14	5	7	47
Other situation	1			1
				558

Significance level of chi-square tests: * 0.01.

2. Personal characteristics and social groups

Percentage distributions for the three flexibility groups by their personal characteristics and the respective social groups are presented in Table 5.3. Again the flexibility groups are significantly different with respect to the age distribution. For the standard group C, 75 per cent belong to the age group 26-50 years, 67 per cent for flexibility group B and 54 per cent for flexibility group A. Flexibility group A has the widest distribution over the age groups. This is most probably a consequence of inclusion of students and retired people with one or more activities in the group A. It also shows that some flexibility characteristics can be fruitfully used at both ends of the age distribution. Gender differences are not so pronounced and are not statistically significant. If we compare the distribution of men between the three categories, the percentage differences are not large. With respect to women the differences are larger with under representation of women in flexibility group A category.

With respect to social class the differences are statistically significant. We use two definitions of social classes. One is the definition from the SJM questionnaire (survey of the public opinion in Slovenia by the Faculty of Social Sciences), from which we use the distinction between working class, middle class and upper middle class. Flexibility group A respondents on the average belong distinctly in the middle and the upper middle class, 67 per cent and 13 per cent respectively. The greatest disparity is between flexibility group A and flexibility group B, where the corresponding percentages are 52 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively, with 45 per cent of the latter group belonging to the working class. Likewise, if one uses as an approximation of social classes the occupational status (ISCO 1 digit), the differences are statistically significant. Here, the distinction is not very pronounced between flexibility group A and standard group C, but rather between them and flexibility group B, which is heavily concentrated in ISCO groups 5 and 8 (service workers, market sales workers and plant and machine operators). As far as education is concerned, a similar pattern appears. Flexibility group A and standard group C show similar distributions; while flexibility group B shows an under representation with respect to tertiary education. There are two characteristics with respect to which the differences among the three flexibility categories are not statistically significant. This is 'type of settlement'; the urban/rural distribution is very even in this respect. The family composition, defined as having children aged 14 and less and not having children of that age, is also not statistically significant between the three flexibility categories. In sum, age, social class, occupational status and education exhibit statistically significant differences for the three categories, gender differences exist but are not very pronounced, while the urban/rural classification and family composition with respect to children are not significantly different among the three flexibility categories.

3. Satisfaction with various aspects of work

It is of interest to confront the 'objective' differences among the three applied flexibility categories with respect to work characteristics, personal characteristics and social groups with the expressed satisfaction with various aspects of work in the survey. These results are presented in Table 5.4. The first aspect asked was the general satisfaction with work. The differences are significant at the 1 per cent significance level if we group the answers into three categories, and are significant at the 5 per cent level if the answers are grouped into five categories. As discussed before, the percentage of satisfied or very satisfied appears to be very high in all categories, so it may be difficult to draw a firm conclusion from this set of answers. However, the level of satisfaction with various aspects of work is more informative in this respect.

Table 5.3 Personal characteristics and social groups (in per cent)

	Flexibility group A	Flexibility group B	Standard group C	n
<i>Age groups *</i>				
18-25	26	22	6	105
26-50	54	67	75	378
51-65	15	11	19	85
More than 65	5		1	10
				578
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	36	33	31	319
Female	28	40	32	259
				578
<i>Social class *</i>				
Working class	20	45	34	182
Middle class	67	52	62	321
Upper middle class	13	3	4	36
				539
<i>Education (ISCED 1 digit)</i>				
Pre-primary education (ISCED 0)	1	1	1	5
Primary education (ISCED 1)	1	2	1	9
Lower secondary education (ISCED 2)	10	18	14	81
Secondary education (ISCED 3)	67	68	61	73
First stage of tertiary education (5)	20	10	23	181
Second stage of tertiary education (6)	1	1	1	127
				578
<i>Occupational status (ISCO 1 digit) *</i>				
Legislators, senior officials and managers (ISCO 1)	5	2	4	20
Professionals (ISCO 2)	14	9	17	70
Technicians and associate professionals (ISCO 3)	17	10	15	75
Clerks (ISCO 4)	15	6	21	75
Service workers and shop and market sales workers (ISCO 5)	12	28	9	93
Skilled agricultural and fishery workers (ISCO 6)	6	6	1	24
Craft and related trade workers (7)	15	6	21	75
Plant and machine operators and assemblers (ISCO 8)	9	19	11	72
Elementary occupations (ISCO 9)	4	8	4	31
				547
<i>Type of settlement</i>				
Urban	56	54	56	319
Rural	44	46	44	259
				578
<i>Family composition</i>				
Without children (aged 14 and less)	68	60	57	355
With children (aged 14 and less)	32	40	43	223
				578

Significance level of chi-square tests: * 0.01.

Table 5.4 Satisfaction with various aspects of work (in per cent)

	Flexibility group A	Flexibility group B	Standard group C	n
<i>General satisfaction with work *</i>				
Dissatisfied / very dissatisfied	8	12	3	44
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	20	23	19	117
Satisfied / very satisfied	72	65	78	397
				558
<i>Stability of work *</i>				
Dissatisfied / very dissatisfied	9	23	7	71
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	20	20	15	98
Satisfied / very satisfied	72	57	78	368
				537
<i>Duration of contract *</i>				
Dissatisfied / very dissatisfied	2	19	2	37
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	11	11	3	36
Satisfied / very satisfied	87	70	95	375
				448
<i>Hours of work *</i>				
Dissatisfied / very dissatisfied	18	17	10	83
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	24	13	18	99
Satisfied / very satisfied	59	70	72	373
				555
<i>Location of work</i>				
Dissatisfied / very dissatisfied	3	6	3	24
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	13	12	7	59
Satisfied / very satisfied	84	82	90	472
				555
<i>Earnings *</i>				
Dissatisfied / very dissatisfied	21	34	32	160
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	28	31	35	172
Satisfied / very satisfied	51	35	33	217
				549

Significance level of chi-square tests: * 0.01.

The differences with respect to satisfaction with the stability of work are statistically significant. As expected, the dissatisfaction is much higher in the flexibility category B, where also temporary jobs and part-time jobs are included, together with a pronounced share of ISCO categories 5 and 8. This is an indirect confirmation of a plausible element for a distinction between flexibility categories A and B. The ‘objective’ elements for such distinction are here confirmed by ‘subjective’ opinions about satisfaction with this aspect of work. Similarly, the differences in satisfaction with duration of contract are statistically significant and again very pronounced in the percentage of dissatisfaction in flexibility group B.

Satisfaction with respect to hours of work is again statistically significant, but with a different position of the three flexibility categories. In this case, the least satisfaction is expressed in flexibility group A, which as we saw earlier, are working substantially more hours. The reverse position is observed with respect to satisfaction with earnings, where differences are statistically significant, but here the level of satisfaction is distinctly higher in the flexibility group A category. Thus, flexibility category A is more satisfied with respect to earnings and less satisfied with respect to hours of work than the other two categories. The differences with

respect to location of work are not significant; the high percentage in the groups 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' (between 82 per cent and 90 per cent) is again rather surprising.

4. Decisions about various aspects of work

With respect to decisions about various aspects of work, there are again statistically significant differences in percentage distribution of cases within a given question for the three flexibility groups. Results are presented in appendix, Table A5.1. For all four aspects asked, decisions about number of hours of work, general working schedule, overtime and place of work, flexibility group A is very different from the other two groups. In all the items, 34 per cent to 41 per cent of respondents from flexibility group A decide themselves, and in another 15 per cent to 32 per cent they decide about this together with the employer. For the other two categories, standard group C and flexibility group B, the employer decides about these four aspects with 55 per cent for overtime work and 78 per cent for general working schedule. The freedom of decision making with respect to the analysed aspects of work is thus distinctly higher for flexibility group A.

5. Possible work/family conflicts

The analysis above has shown that for practically all analysed aspects of work characteristics, personal characteristics and social groups, satisfaction with various aspects of work, and decisions about various aspects of work, the differences among the three flexibility categories were statistically significant. Of the important aspects where the differences are not statistically significant, type of settlement (urban/rural) and family composition (defined as families with or without children aged 14 and less) should be mentioned; the differences in gender and education are greater, but still not statistically significant in comparing the three aggregate flexibility categories. Thus on the side of work issues, the applied categorization has proved to be very relevant in bringing up the major differences between the three flexibility categories.

The next important stage of analysis is to look into the question of whether the applied categorization implies also significantly different situations with respect to the work/family conflicts as asked about in the questionnaire. Table 5.5 shows the results for the five aspects of work/family conflicts asked, whether such conflicts appear always, often, sometimes, rarely or never. There are two surprising outcomes in analyzing this part of the questionnaire. First, on the general level a surprisingly high level of answers indicate that such conflicts never appeared (see Chapter 4 where perceptions of family/work arrangements are discussed). Second, of the five aspects of possible work/family conflicts only one, whether one takes work home to finish, shows significant differences among the three flexibility categories, in all other four the differences are not statistically significant.

In addition, the same pattern is observed in Table A5.2 in the appendix, where the degree of agreement about household finances, about allocation of household tasks, about time spent together and about time spent at work, also do not show statistically significant differences among the three flexibility categories. Also in this case, the degree of agreement is rather high. According to the answers in the survey, the three flexibility categories show very significant differences in ('objective') characteristics related to work and practically no

significant differences in ('subjective') opinions about possible work/family conflicts or agreement on various household issues.

Table 5.5 Possible work/family conflicts (in per cent)

	Flexibility group A	Flexibility group B	Standard group C	n
<i>Work / some household task</i>				
Never	42	43	43	239
Rarely	11	13	16	76
Sometimes	30	31	28	168
Often	12	10	11	63
Always	5	2	2	18
				564
<i>Work / family responsibilities</i>				
Never	33	36	36	199
Rarely	9	12	20	75
Sometimes	42	36	33	209
Often	12	14	10	67
Always	4	2	2	15
				565
<i>Family responsibilities / adequate work</i>				
Never	61	67	73	373
Rarely	22	18	19	110
Sometimes	15	13	7	66
Often	1	2	1	8
				557
<i>Take work home to finish *</i>				
Never	57	84	74	395
Rarely	14	5	11	55
Sometimes	20	5	7	57
Often	7	3	5	27
Always	2	2	3	14
				548
<i>Prefer to spend more time at work</i>				
Never	71	80	82	425
Rarely	11	8	10	51
Sometimes	14	10	6	55
Often	4	0	2	11
Always	1	1		5
				547

Significance level of chi-square tests: * 0.01.

6. Personal perception of well being

Another set of subjective opinions in the survey was related to the personal perception of well being. The results are presented in Table A5.3 in the appendix. Four issues were asked: how the respondent is satisfied with the way of living, with the economic situation of the household, how he/she compares the economic household situation to that of five years ago, and what are his/her expectations about the economic household situation for the next year. Two sets of conclusions follow. First, with respect to the satisfaction with the way of living and the economic situation of the household, the differences among the three flexibility

categories are not statistically significant. As in the earlier questions about the level of satisfaction, the level of satisfaction is rather high here too, higher still when we take into account the economic situation of the household. Second, also for the comparison with the situation five years ago and the expectations for the next year, the differences are not significant. For both questions, the category ‘stayed the same’ comprises the highest percentage of answers.

7. Household income and durable goods

One of the important characteristics associated with the three flexibility categories is also the economic characteristics of the household of the respondents. These characteristics represent important additional information to the information shown in the sections on work characteristics, personal characteristics and social groups. Table 5.6 presents the distribution of respondents from the three flexibility categories into sextiles. The differences are statistically significant and show that the household income is the highest for the flexibility group A and lowest for flexibility category B. A similar conclusion holds for personal income by sextiles (see Table A5.4 in the appendix).

Table 5.6 Household income in sextiles by flexibility typology (n=445)

Sextiles	Flexibility group A	Flexibility group B	Standard group C
First	7	12	11
Second	11	16	14
Third	12	26	21
Fourth	15	15	16
Fifth	36	24	28
Sixth	19	8	10

Table 3.5 in chapter 3 shows that for the three categories of permanent household goods where the differences among households are still important (second house or flat, Internet access and PC) the relationship is the same. Both for income and for these durable goods the ranking is the same: flexible employment group A occupies the most favourable position, followed by standard group C, while flexible group B shows the lowest average income and lowest possession of these household goods. Again, it is interesting to see that the ‘objective’ indicators show significant differences among the three flexibility categories, while the ‘subjective’ indicators represented by personal perception of well being (satisfaction with the way of living and satisfaction with the economic situation of the household) in section 6 do not show significant differences among the three flexibility categories.