
How French parents working on
non-standard hours are facing their
parental responsibilities?

Blanche Le Bihan, LAPSS-ENSP
Rennes

Claude Martin, CNRS, UMR 6051,
University Rennes 1

Explicit arguments of EU institutions

- Promote gender equality (equal pay, equal opportunity, work/life balance)
 - Promote the level of fertility (which is relatively low 1,6 compared to 2,0 in USA)
 - Reduce the aging of the EU population
 - Promote a social investment strategy in childhood
-

The paradoxical French situation

- France is the EU member state with the highest level of fertility: about 2 children per woman in 2006 (830,000 births)
 - France is one of the EU country with a relatively high level of female employment (57,6% of 15-64 years old women are on the labour market)
 - France is facing the development of non-standard hours of work
-

Men/women inequality is reinforced by labour market flexibility

- European employment policies impose growing flexibility in order to guarantee productivity in a global economy
 - This flexibility concerns the working contracts (working part-time, precarious work, ...), the workers' situation (growth of poor workers), as well as working conditions (flexible hours);
 - This flexibility affects more particularly women
-

How can we define non-standard working hours?

- This notion refers to very different working conditions. The common point is that these hours are staggered which means not in phase with the standard hours of work, or with the normal opening of many public and private services, in particular childcare services
 - Two main criteria to assess the pressure on the workers concerned:
 - Regular/irregular
 - Predictable or not predictable
-

The 2002 French inquiry on Care arrangements

- A sample of 3 343 households
 - It concerns the activity of parents and the care arrangements organised for their children up to 7 years and a half.
 - Question: what are the care arrangements organised at « atypical », « non-standard » hours ?
 - Methodology:
 - The impossibility to analyse the parents' hours of work
 - The care arrangement schedule during « non standard » hours and the analysis of the caring solutions.
-

Parents concerned by « atypical » hours of work

- **Six variables:** work on Saturday morning, on Saturday afternoon, on Sunday morning, on Sunday afternoon, in the evening (more than two consecutive hours from midnight to 6 am), during the night (from midnight to 6 am). 3 possible answers: « usually », « sometimes », « never »

We considered that parents have staggered hours of work if they « usually » work in one of the six configurations identified

- **Four other variables:** work or not always work the same number of hours / day ; work or not the same number of hours / week ; work or not always work the same number of days / week; have discontinuous hours of work.

We considered that parents have irregular hours of work if they are in one of these configurations

80% of the children have parent(s) concerned by one of these configurations of « atypical » hours of work

Repartition of carers during week ends

Grand-parents	56%
Other members of the family	12%
Professionnals (day care center, childminders, baby sitters)	24%
Neighbours, friends, others...	8%
Total	100%

Repartition of carers during the night

Grand-parents	70%
Other members of the family (except brothers and sisters)	8%
Brothers and sisters	8%
Professionals (childminders)	10%
Neighbours, friends, others	4%
Total	100%

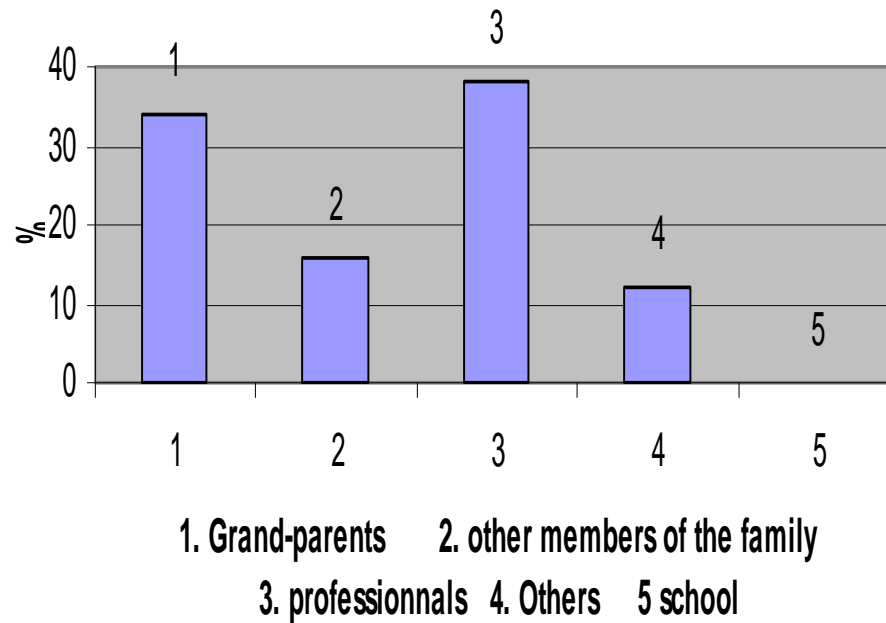
The problem of long days of work

- 29% of the children with both parents working are cared for at least once a week between 6 am and 8 am.
- 17% of the children are cared for, at a moment or another, during 7 pm and 10 pm.

Only professionals	59%
Only grand-parents	24%
Both	5%
others	12%

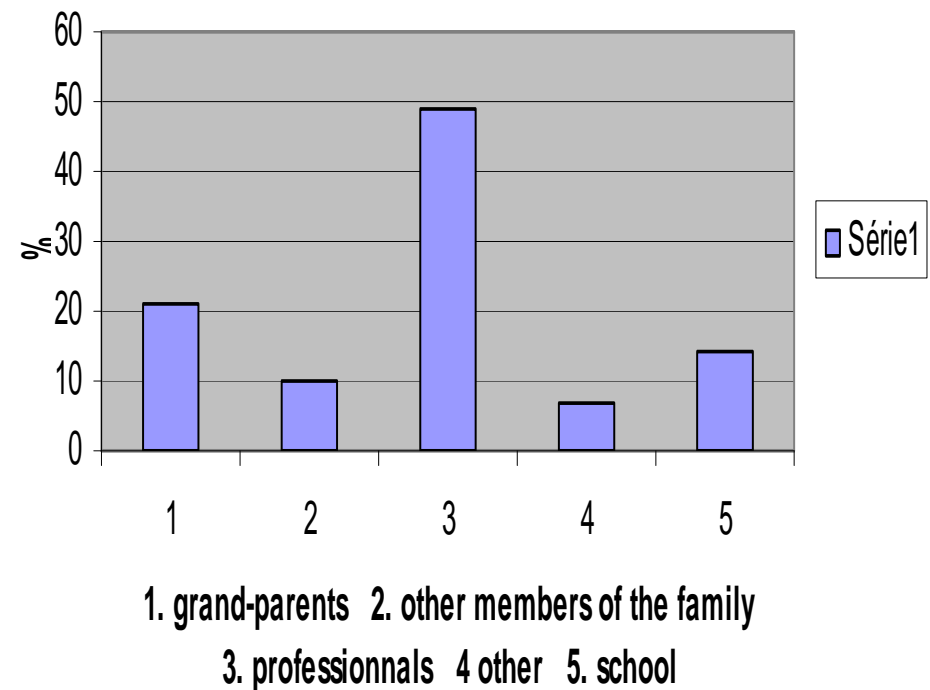
Repartition of carers early in the morning

Mean repartition of the different carers in the morning (between 6 and 7:30)



■ Série1

Mean repartition of the different carer in the morning (between 7:30 and 8 am)



■ Série1

Conclusion: two main informal solutions

- **Grand-parents** are the main carers during week ends and also during the nights
- **The shift-parenting solution:**

if 80% of the children have at least one parent concerned by atypical hours of work, more than 50% of them are never cared for by someone else than their parents early in the morning, late in the evening, during the nights and during week ends.

In fact parents arrange their time schedule, so that at least one of them is available for the children.

Example: if we take the period 7 pm-10pm:

- in cases when both parents have declared that they do not work during that period, they assume 98% of the caring time.

- This proportion is the same when the mother works during the evening and not the father. Or when the father works and not the mother.

- Finally, in situations when both parents usually work during the evening, the shift parenting system enables them to assume 85% of the caring period.
