

Firms' contribution to the reconciliation between work and family life

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Abstract

This paper is a first attempt to provide a comparative view of voluntary family-friendly work arrangements within firms across the OECD area. It is based on detailed surveys available in Australia, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States, coupled with restricted, but more comparable evidence for the European Union. The evidence shows that the extent of family-friendly arrangements is both limited and patchy. National patterns are compared with the extent of statutory provisions to help families. Both are found to correspond with recent attempts to classify countries according to their “gender contract”. There is a discussion of four possible “motors” for family-friendly arrangements: the business case, trends in human resource management policies, gender equity programmes and developments in technology. All are found to have ambiguous implications for the work/family balance. This leads into suggestions for ways in which this balance might be improved, in the context of national legislation and values.

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1 Introduction

In an age of dual-earner families and demanding jobs, there is bound to be tension between the opportunities and claims of work and family life. The contribution of firms to this reconciliation is crucial. However, it raises a number of concerns. First, there is the concern that firms may do very little beyond legal requirements. They may regard families as unwelcome appendages of their employees, taking up time and effort which could otherwise be directed to the job. Second, there is the concern that, when firms are convinced of the merits of the business case in favour of being family-friendly, they will choose to extend the benefits to only a part of their employees, exacerbating inequalities within the workforce.

However, at present, there is sparse information about the extent of family-friendly arrangements within enterprises, and little that would allow a study of the extent to which government provision and firms' activities mesh together. This paper is designed to help to fill that gap, using an international perspective. More precisely, the questions it addresses are as follows:

- What types of firm are most likely to offer voluntary family-friendly arrangements and what types of employees are most likely to make use of them?
- Are there any factors which might lead family-friendly arrangements to become more common in the future, without the need for government legislation?
- How does the pattern of family-friendly arrangements in firms link with public provision to support the work/family reconciliation? Does extensive national legislation encourage firms to develop policies themselves – or does it simply substitute for efforts that firms would otherwise make themselves?

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 2 reviews a number of existing studies of voluntary family-friendly arrangements in four countries; Australia, the United Kingdom, Japan and the U.S.. These appear to be the only countries for which extensive national information is currently available, to the author's knowledge – though information for Canada is due to become available from the Statistics Canada Work and Employee Survey (WES) soon after this conference. Although the underlying national surveys are similar in many respects, the data

analysis is quite varied. From a positive viewpoint, this means that the existing studies offer a range of interesting perspectives on the question. However, it also makes for rather heavy reading, and so a short summary of the four country information is provided at the end of Section 2.

Section 3 offers an analysis of family-friendly arrangements in the European Union, prepared for this conference. This allows some international comparisons of the extent of family-friendly arrangements in the 15 countries of the Union. Section 4 makes the link between the statistical information presented in the first two sections, and the degree and type of public provision in the different countries. Section 5 discusses the possible effect of four “motors” which might lead to firms becoming more family-friendly in the future, regardless of public provision. These are the “business case” for family-friendly arrangements, the overall movement towards greater gender equity, the increased emphasis on “high-trust” organisations, and the greater possibilities for work at home offered by modern technology. The discussion of the strength of these motors draws both on evidence from national surveys and case study evidence, in particular, a number of studies carried out by the author in UK firms. Finally, Section 6 summarises the main findings, offers some conclusions, and suggests lines for future research.

This introduction would not be complete without some rather technical, scene-setting information, about first, the scope of what are taken to be family-friendly arrangements and, second, the nature of the available statistics. These topics are tackled in the next two sub-sections. For complementary information on relevant public provision and legislation the reader is referred to Kalisch *et al.* (1998), especially Tables 4.4 and 4.5, available on-line at <http://web.oecd.org/els/>.

1.1 What are family-friendly practices by enterprises?

Family-friendly practices by enterprises are taken to be practices designed to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life. In general, they include practices which:

- Limit the demands made on the time and energy of employees in order to leave them with sufficient resources to maintain family relationships and deal with family commitments.
- Provide economic support needed by families, including security of employment.
- Allow family members to spend time caring for children (or older people) themselves and/or assist them in securing care from other sources.

The first point highlights the fact that, if the demands of work are set too high, whether in terms of time or emotional resources, it may be impossible for family life to flourish, whatever family support systems are put into place. It thus subsumes concerns about the “long-hours culture” within the ambit of family-friendly practices. The second point is included to acknowledge the fact that, while values are important, the competitive position of the firm needs to be taken into account in the development of family-friendly practices. If this is not done, policies introduced to improve the situation of families may be abandoned on economic grounds once the initial impetus has waned.

The third point is the one most emphasised in the literature, and in the rest of this paper. A detailed list of this last group of “family-friendly” policies, drawn up by the author, is presented in Table 1. It is convenient to note that they can be divided into four main groups: leave from work for family reasons; changes to work arrangements for family reasons; practical help with child-care (and eldercare), and relevant information and training.

In most OECD countries, one-parent families are growing in number, and have special difficulties in combining work and family life. However, this paper will implicitly concentrate on the more common case of couple families. It will also look at the question of children rather than elderly people. While the problem of elderly people may well become very important in the future, we have little experience so far as to how firms can help.

1.2 Statistical information on family-friendly policies by enterprises

Information on family-friendly policies can come either from employers or employees. The information is generally rather different, and complementary.

Data from employers are generally much better for providing information about the range of provision in different types of firm – employees often know surprisingly little about the characteristics of the firms they work for. They can also include valuable insights into the reasons why employers introduce (or abandon) family-friendly arrangements, and on the costs and benefits they perceive flowing from them. However, there are some difficulties. Employer based data are likely to refer to formal policies (particularly in large firms), and leave out informal arrangements which may be of considerable importance (Dex and Scheibl, 2000). The policies that are mentioned may be unfamiliar to some employees, because of insufficient notification. In addition, they may be available to only part of the workforce, and may be subject to the agreement of the supervisors. The basic information will tend to refer to provision – though some firms may also have information on use.

A further reason for caution about statistical information on family-friendly policies derived from enterprises is that some work hours arrangements, introduced by firms to suit their production needs, may be labelled as family-friendly simply in order to put the employers in a better light (Simkin and Hillage, 1992). Of course, this is not to deny that there are situations where both firms and families can gain from flexible work arrangements, such as some types of voluntary part-time work. However, *a priori*, there is no reason to suppose that flexibility introduced to meet firm's needs will coincide with the flexibility that best suits family needs.

Employee data generally have the advantage of providing detailed information about characteristics of employees actually using family-friendly arrangements, and can illustrate the attitudes of employees and their perceived needs. However, there is the difficulty that, unless the instructions are particularly clear, employees may not know whether they should provide information about just the policies that concern them personally, or about ones which are used by, or available to, other employees in the company. For example, a man asked if extra-statutory maternity leave is available will respond that it is not, if he is thinking about his personal case, but may respond that it is, if he is thinking about the employees in the company in general. In addition, other things being equal, the proportion of employees reporting the existence of family-friendly policies in their firms will tend to be higher than the proportion of employers reporting family-friendly policies in their firms, simply because large firms tend to provide more family-friendly arrangements than small employers – large firms represent a considerable proportion of employees, but a small proportion of firms.

2 Family-friendly work arrangements in Australia, the United Kingdom, Japan and the U.S.

It is no coincidence that relatively good statistical information on family-friendly arrangements is available in these four countries. By comparison with many European countries, all have relatively low levels of public provision for child-care and relatively low levels of statutory family leave benefits, stemming largely from the belief that the State should interfere as little as possible in family life and the organisation of enterprises. A good deal thus depends upon the attitudes of firms, and it is notable that all four countries have well-known competitions for the family-friendly employer of the year. A particular target of the UK competition is the long-hours culture in that country. In fact long work hours are a feature of all of these countries, at least compared with European countries, and average hours in the United Kingdom and United States have been growing over recent years.

For Australia and the United Kingdom (and, in the future, Canada) basic information can be drawn from the national workplace surveys. For Australia, this is the 1995 Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey (AWIRS), reported in Morehead *et al.* (1997), and for the United Kingdom, the 1998 Workplace Employment Relations Survey (WERS), for which first results are available in Cully *et al.* (1999). For the United Kingdom, there is also a special suite of officially-sponsored surveys on family-friendly arrangements, reported in Forth *et al.* (1997). All the surveys just mentioned cover both employer and employees. Japan's information comes from a special employer survey (Sato, 2000). Finally, for the United States, a number of employer surveys, including the Survey of American Establishments (Osterman, 1995), contain information on family-friendly arrangements.

The next four sub-sections deal with each country in turn. As already noted, there is a summary in Section 2.5.

2.1 Australia

In Australia, there is no arrangement for statutory paid maternity or parental leave. However, provisions for unpaid leave do exist, notably the right to a year's unpaid parental leave for all workers. Child care arrangements are designed to ensure that child care is affordable to low and middle income families. In principle, the quality of care arrangements is monitored and parents are offered the choice of a number of different forms of child care.

A detailed analysis of employer-based information on family-friendly arrangements in Australia is provided by the complementary reports of the Work and Family Unit of the Department for Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business (WFU/DEWRSB) (1999) and Whitehouse and Zetlin (1999). The former report stresses the importance of flexible work hours for the reconciliation between work and family life. It argues that flexible work hours help families with all ages of children, and not just the ones with the youngest children, and can be shown to have important links with the levels of stress and satisfaction that employees experience. The report suggests that, to be family friendly, hours flexibility must allow employees some choice, must be responsive to their needs, and allow flexibility in emergencies. In addition, changes to meet employers' needs must be notified in advance.

The list of key family-friendly arrangements selected by WFU/DEWRSB (1999) is shown in Table 2. It is designed to put the most emphasis on flexibility in work arrangements and excludes facilities likely to be available only in the largest companies, such as workplace crèches. The employer-based survey found that almost 60% of establishments with 20 or more employees said

that most of their employees were able to make use of special leave, or their own sick leave, to look after family members. Around a third said they could vary their work hours for the same purpose, and the same proportion reported the existence of paid maternity leave.

Table 3 provides information on the distribution of family-friendly arrangements, derived from the same source. It is based on an index, which is simply the count of the numbers of arrangements available from the list shown in Table 2. Very large firms (500 and more employees) produce the highest scores, and the public sector scores higher than the private. On an industry basis, the highest scores are achieved by Government administration and Communications services, with Finance and insurance, Education, and Personal and other services coming a little behind.

A complementary analysis of the AWIRS employer data is provided by Whitehouse and Zetlin (1999). By contrast with the previous study, these authors tended to put less emphasis on flexible work patterns, on the grounds that their intent and effects are often unclear. Their index of family-friendly firms was a composite of the following variables: access to a range of types of family leave, some aspects of hours flexibility for employees, childcare provisions, counselling services, and elder care assistance.

The results of their model of determinants of family-friendliness are shown in Table 4. They conclude that the strongest result is for the public, as opposed to the private sector. Family-friendly arrangements were slightly more likely when there were higher proportions of professional, or paraprofessional workers, and increased with average earnings. They were less likely when there was a higher proportion of non-core workers. In further work, investigating the interactions between the variables, the percentage of non-core workers was found to have a positive coefficient for the public sector. However, as the authors note, this does not imply that the non-core workers are the ones who receive the benefits – one of the functions of employing non-core workers may be to preserve the privileges of the core. Structured management and the presence of a written equal employment opportunities policy were found to make a difference, but not unionisation.

Information from the employee survey built into AWIRS95 was used by WFU/DEWRSB (1999) to generate the information contained in Table 5. It is interesting because of a number of features. The proportion of employees indicating decreased satisfaction with work/family issues over the preceding year was much greater than the proportion that were more satisfied. Gender differences between carers are marked in a number of domains. Male carers were much less

likely to consider that they could obtain permanent part-time work, but were more likely to be able to work at home occasionally if they needed to.

As well as survey data, data on family-friendly arrangements in Australia are found in a database managed by the Affirmative Action Agency (AAA). While restricted in coverage, and relating mainly to firms with 100 or more employees, this has the advantage of providing some indications of changes over time. Results extracted by WFU/DEWRSB (1999) suggest a strong increase in the proportion of private sector organisations reporting the provision of paid maternity leave. This was often coupled with arrangements to keep contact with people taking advantage of it. At the same time, the proportion of women returning to work after childbirth increased even more strongly. There were also signs of a large increase in the proportion of organisations offering permanent part-time work for employees with family responsibilities. However, there was little evidence of increases in arrangements for child-care on site.

2.2 United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has traditionally had relatively restricted maternity benefits and public child care policies compared with many other countries of the European Union. By comparison with Australia, there is statutory paid maternity leave, but no unpaid parental leave, and there has been little government support for child-care. However, there have been recent moves by the UK government to increase entitlement to maternity and parental leave, in part to bring the country into line with European Union legislation.

Employer-based, summary information on family-friendly arrangements in the United Kingdom is provided in Table 6. Both of the surveys found more extensive provision among large and unionised employers, and in the public sector. Forth *et al.* (1997) found that nine out of ten employers reported the presence of at least one family-friendly arrangement. The most common was flexible, or non-standard work, particularly part-time work. However, only 5% of employers reported provision (over and above statutory requirements) of all of four categories of family-friendly arrangements; maternity benefits, paternity leave, childcare arrangements and non-standard work hours. A similar figure was found in the WERS study.

Forth *et al.* (1997) found that employers reported mixed feelings towards family-friendly arrangements. While 54% said that there was some benefit to be gained by management from providing family-friendly arrangements, 61% indicated disadvantages of one kind or another. Taking the two sides together, 16% of all respondents considered family-friendly arrangements simply as beneficial, 22% as purely problematical, and 36% a mixture of the two. As might be

expected, employers with a relatively large number of family-friendly arrangements generally considered the advantages, especially improved morale and retention rates, to be large enough to outweigh the extra administrative burden imposed by family-friendly arrangements, as well as the practical difficulties of dealing with extra absences and discontinuities. On the other hand, those without any family-friendly arrangements were most likely to see nothing but problems. The provision of family-friendly arrangements, both extended leave and child-care benefits, was often said to be associated with increased rates of return by mothers, who made particularly heavy use of part-time work when they came back to work.

Turning to employee-based data, Table 7, derived from the PSI/BMRB Survey of Mothers, reported in Forth *et al.* (1997), shows information for child-care related arrangements, including the existence of the arrangements within the establishment concerned, the degree to which the mothers interviewed felt they were personally entitled to the benefit and the proportion saying that they had actually made use of it. Perhaps the main feature of the table is the considerable discrepancies between existence, entitlement and use, especially for career breaks. About a fifth of the mothers in the sample made use of arrangements providing special leave in the case of a family emergency. Practical help in the form of crèches or financial assistance was used only by 3 per cent of mothers, and only a tiny proportion used employer-provided care for school children after school hours or during school holidays.

From the same survey, Forth *et al.* (1997) found that the proportion of employees able to work at home if childcare arrangements broke down was small. Only a very small proportion of mothers were found to be job-sharing. Few employees of either gender reported having taken a career break. Part-time work was generally offered only to mothers. However, many mothers reported that they changed employers when moving from full-time to part-time status, presumably indicating that satisfactory part-time work arrangements were not available in the original firm. Paternity leave was available in around 30 per cent of establishments employing men, and was generally used to some extent. Overall, a quarter of men reported changing their work arrangements in some way, at least on a temporary basis, upon becoming fathers.

Mothers' entitlements to family-friendly arrangements were found to depend upon their occupation. Women working in professional, managerial and associate professional occupations were found most likely to enjoy a broad range of entitlement to family-friendly arrangements. In contrast, women in sales occupations were considerably less likely to do so. Overlaid on the differences by occupation were differences by the type of sector – family-friendly arrangements

were considerably more common in the public sector and in larger firms. In addition, entitlement was associated with union representation.

2.3 United States

Until 1993, which saw the passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FLMA) by the Federal Government, the provisions for family leave and for child care in the United States were at a particularly low level, by the standards of the OECD countries as a whole. The only Federal law addressing family leave was the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, which required firms with temporary disability programmes to treat pregnancy as they would disabilities in general. The FLMA requires public employees, and private employees with 50 or more workers, to offer job-protected family or medical leave of up to 12 weeks to qualifying employees (those who worked at least 1,250 hours for the employer in the previous year). There is no requirement to provide pay, other than a requirement to continue health insurance coverage, and no extra provision for child care benefits. [Under previous Federal legislation, tax deductions for child care are allowed as a business expense and accelerated depreciation is accorded for business-provided child care centres (Kiser, 1996).]

In 1991, prior to the Act, Waldfogel (1999) reports that only 39% of full-time employees in large- and medium-sized establishments (100 employees and over) were entitled to maternity leave. This rose to 93% by 1997. However, the proportion entitled to pay remained at only 2%. Entitlement to child care provisions remained in the 7-10% range. Part-time workers (who are ineligible for the benefits) saw a much smaller rise in family leave entitlement. On the basis of this and other evidence, Waldfogel (1999) concludes that the FLMA did have an effect, and notes that, in addition, for most groups, family leave coverage was higher in the late 1990s than in the period just after the passage of the Act. This may suggest that the Act has encouraged a more positive appreciation of family leave by employers.

National survey evidence from the United States comes from a number of employer-based surveys including Osterman (1995), who analyses the results of the 1992 Survey of American Establishments. The distribution of a range of family-friendly arrangements (which Osterman refers to as “work/family activities”) is shown in Table 8. The most common is “flexible hours”. Osterman notes that the programmes vary according both to the costs to employers and the level of benefits that they deliver to employees. In investigating the correlates of family-friendly arrangements, the variable he uses is simply the number of selected programmes that are offered.

On this basis, Osterman found that:

- The size of establishment and size of any larger organisation to which the establishment belongs had a significant positive correlation with family-friendliness.
- The union variable was not significant.
- A variable designed to capture the effects of other employee benefits was not significant, suggesting that work/family benefits formed a distinctive package.
- A variable designed to show whether the establishment paid above-market wages was found to be correlated with family-friendliness, but the correlation disappeared when a variable for “high commitment management” was included.
- Establishments whose core employees were professional and technical workers were significantly more likely to provide work/family programmes than establishments whose core employees were service workers, clerical or blue-collar employees.

Wood (1999) provides a useful review of a number of other survey analyses for the United States, including Morgan and Milliken (1992), Goodstein (1994) and Ingram and Simons (1995). They use a variety of measures of family-friendly management. Their findings are generally consistent with Osterman’s. Goodstein (1994) and Ingram and Simons (1995) find a higher incidence of family-friendly arrangements in the public compared with the private sector (Osterman’s survey covers only the private sector), and both studies conclude that, within industries, there is no evidence of differences across geographical regions of the United States. Wood (1999) bases his own analysis of Osterman’s data on a family-friendly variable derived by latent class analysis of the range of family-friendly policies within enterprises. He also finds that firms which have more highly educated workforces are more likely to have family-friendly management.

Osterman (1995) also reviews a number of repeated surveys of the incidence of family-friendly arrangements in the United States. These included the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics Survey of Benefits in Medium and Large Firms, which found a figure of 5% of employees receiving child-care support from their employers in 1989 as opposed to 1% in 1985 (Hyland, 1990). He concludes that the evidence, albeit limited, is strongly suggestive of an overall growth in the provision of family-friendly benefits.

2.4 Japan

Minimum levels of maternity leave in Japan are not particularly high, either in terms of their duration or the proportion of earnings that is received. However, paid parental leave (child care

leave) is available at 25% of earnings during the first year. In addition, a wide-ranging program, the “Angel Plan”, was launched in 1994 to promote day care programmes. They will be promoted further in the future through a revision to the Child Welfare Law.

Large firms in Japan are well known for providing a wide range of services for the employees, as part of their “life-time employment system” and the high degree of reciprocal commitment between large firms and their employees. Various types of assistance for families have traditionally been part of this (Dore, 1973; Lincoln and Kalleberg, 1990). Schemes for child care leave and family care leave are now covered by the Child Care and Family Care Leave Law. Child care leave has been mandatory for enterprises with more than 30 employees since 1992, and all enterprises since 1995. In July 1996, it became a duty for enterprises to “endeavor to provide” Family Care Leave. However, in practice, the implementation of such schemes depends largely on the existence of relevant company regulations and there is concern that current arrangements are no longer adequate (Sato, 2000). In Japan, attitudes towards women’s involvement in paid work have changed dramatically in recent years.

In 1996, the Japanese Women’s Bureau, Ministry of Labour, conducted a survey of extra-statutory family-friendly arrangements in private establishments with 5 or more employees (Table 9). Many of the supportive measures mentioned most frequently are related to changes in work hours. The installation of a crèche, or financial help with child-care is much less common. The incidence of family-friendly arrangements in large firms is roughly three times the overall average. Despite the laws mentioned above, only a relatively small proportion of firms offer systems of leave to allow employees to take care of family members. The relatively strong, long-term attachment between firms and their workers is reflected in the proportions of firms offering re-employment for workers who leave the company to look after children or family members.

Some other conclusions from Sato (2000) are as follows:

- The Electricity, gas, thermal supply and water industry, and Financing and insurance, show high levels of family-friendly arrangements, while Construction, Mining, and Manufacturing lag behind.
- Very few men take advantage of the existing schemes.
- The appreciation of the importance of these schemes varies between managers, and they are not well-accepted for workers at the managerial level.

- Job-sharing and term-time work are not available in Japan.

2.5 Summary of survey results for the four countries

The analyses available for Australia, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States reviewed above cover a lot of common ground. When they do, they tend to produce similar results.

Regarding the type of firms which are most likely to offer family-friendly arrangements, all studies find that the prize goes to very large firms, especially in Japan. Within industries, there is some variation, but the public sector always outstrips the private sector. Public utilities come out well, as might be expected, as does the financial services industry. The effect of unionisation varies: it is positive in the United Kingdom, but makes little difference in analyses for Australia and the United States. Results for these countries (not available for Japan) show higher rates of provision of family-friendly arrangements in firms with higher proportions of professional and technical workers. For Australia, it was found that family-friendly arrangements were more common where there was a written Equal Employment Opportunities statement, and when there was a structured hierarchical management system. For the United States, one study found a link between family-friendly arrangements and a “high commitment” style of management.

According to employers, the most commonly-provided type of family-friendly arrangements come under the category of non-standard work arrangements, notably part-time work, and variable work hours. Very few employers provided a range of benefits wide enough to include extra family leave and help with child care as well. Overall, United Kingdom employers judged family-friendly working arrangements in their firms to have positive effects on morale and on retention. Employee-based data brings out the considerable differences between entitlement to benefits and the use made of them. This applies, for example, to career breaks, which were a fairly common entitlement in the United Kingdom, but were hardly ever used.

There is evidence for significant growth in family-friendly arrangements in at least Australia and the United States, particularly as regards the provision of part-time work in Australia, and paid maternity leave in the United States, following the passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act. In Australia, however, this has not stopped employees from becoming less content, overall, with the reconciliation between their work and family lives.

3 An Analysis for the European Union

Efforts to document the extent of firm-based family-friendly arrangements in Europe have generally been confined to listing examples of selected, exemplary firms – as done, for example, by Hogg and Harker (1992). There is therefore a considerable gap in our knowledge of the actual extent of family-friendly arrangements put into place by European firms. The information available from the Second European Survey of Working Conditions (SESWC), managed by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions is thus all the more valuable, limited as it is (see European Foundation, 1997*a* for details of the survey). All 15 countries of the Union were covered in the SESWC. Consistency of the questionnaires was assured by an international expert group. Separate samples were drawn for the western and eastern Länder of Germany and this distinction is maintained in the analysis here. The survey was one of employees, rather than firms.

The four types of extra-statutory family-friendly arrangements covered in the survey were:

- Sick child leave (time the employee can stay at home to take care of his or her sick child)
- Maternity leave
- Parental leave (time a mother or a father can stay at home to take care of a very young child)
- Child day care (provision or subsidy of day care for the employee's child).

The precise questions used are to be found in the Annex. Like the rest of the survey, they primarily concern respondents' impressions of their own working conditions. The caveats mentioned in the Introduction relating to employee-based data apply. In particular, there is the ambiguity as to whether the data refer to practices to which the employees concerned are personally entitled, or to ones which exist in their establishments. However, as well as the category, "don't know", the survey designers also included a category, "non-applicable". This provides some check on the significance of the responses.

3.1 Average incidence of extra-statutory family leave and child day care arrangements

Table 10 shows the basic results for the four types of family-friendly arrangements. The first panel concerns women with a child in their household and the second, men with a child in their household. The numbers replying "don't know" are fairly small for both men and women. For

men, the “non-applicable” responses are often quite large – rising to 19% on average for the European Union for maternity leave – though only 11% for lower for parental leave. However, for women, the “non-applicable” response is generally small, as might be expected. Women employees with a child in the household would be expected to see most family-friendly working arrangements of these kinds as applying to them. This provides some justification for using the figures for women employees with a child in the household for basic international comparisons of the incidence of family-friendly working arrangements in establishments employing such women.

Table 11 presents the same results for a number of sub-populations of women, for the European Union as a whole. Those for all women at work (which includes those on apprenticeship and training schemes, as well as self-employed women) are lower than those for employees. Those for full-time employees are similar to those for all employees. Excluding the smaller firms increases the incidence slightly, and there is a larger increase when the sample is restricted to the public sector. These patterns are explored further in the logit analysis in Section 3.2 below, which also shows that standardising for a large number of variables makes little difference to the pattern of results across countries.

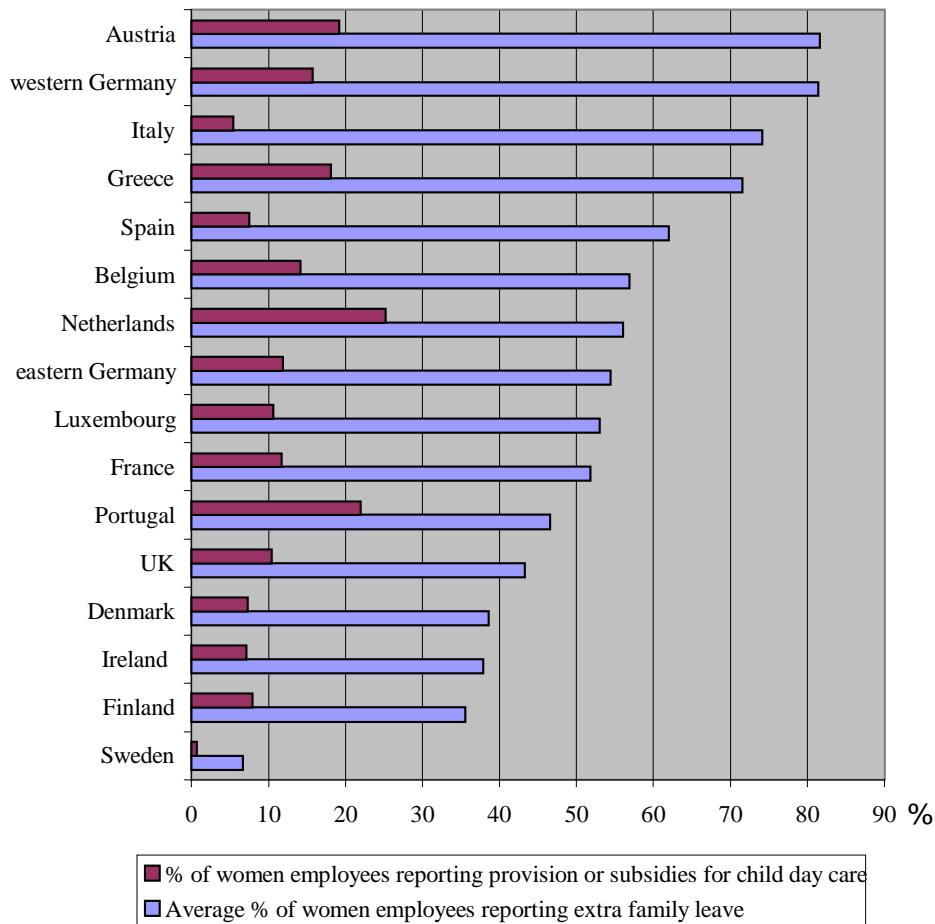
As the United Kingdom was included in this European survey, it was possible to make some comparisons between the levels of family-friendly arrangements indicated here and the levels indicated by the UK surveys used to compile Table 6. The results appear roughly similar as regards sick child leave, parental leave and help with day care. It is not straightforward to make comparisons of maternity leave. Owing to the design of their survey, Forth *et al.* (1997, fn.16) say they were unable to use it to calculate the proportion of mothers working for employers who operated extra-statutory maternity leave arrangements. However, the impression is that the level of extra-statutory maternity leave found in their results is lower than that obtained from the SESWC.

Across countries, there is a strong correlation between the different types of extra-statutory leave, though the correlations with child day care are lower (Table 12). Approaching the issue from the individual level, and counting the frequency of occurrence of the different combinations of arrangements, it can be seen that the two most frequent combinations of practices are none at all and the first three policies together. For the European Union as a whole, these account for 34% and 24% of employees with at least one child in the household, respectively. It is comparatively rare to have all four arrangements in place (6% only for the European Union).

Owing to the strong correlations between the three different leave measures, it seems legitimate to summarise the information along just two dimensions, as shown in Chart 1. Overall, the highest

figures are seen for Austria and western Germany, followed by three of the Southern European countries. France, the Benelux countries and Portugal occupy the middle position, while the Nordic countries, the United Kingdom and Ireland are at the bottom. The Netherlands and Portugal stand out for having particularly high levels of firm-provided day-care relative to the amount of extra-statutory leave that their firms provide.

Chart 1. Extra-statutory employer-provided family-friendly practices, European Union, 1995/96



Source: Author's calculations using the Second European Survey on Working Conditions, referring to women employees with a child under 15 in household.

Notes: Figures in the lower bars are the average, for the country concerned, of the proportions reporting extra-statutory sick child leave, maternity leave and parental leave. The terms, "western" and "eastern" Germany, refer to the western and eastern Länder.

3.2 Logit analysis

Table 13 presents the results of a simple logit analysis, designed to show the relationship between the perceptions of employees about the family-friendly arrangements available in their establishments, and a number of variables relating both to the characteristics of the employees, and of their establishments. The sample was the 5300 employees with at least one child in their household.

The following points emerge from the table:

- Permanent employees tend to report more family leave arrangements than other employees (though temporary employment agency personnel report more child day care provision).
- The part-time/full-time split generally makes little difference to the results (although full-timers have the advantage for child day care, as might be expected).
- The question asking whether the person concerned is responsible for running the home, listed under “Home responsibility”, makes a positive difference only for sick child leave and child day care.
- Employees in large companies, with 500+ employees, seem to have the most advantages. There is some tendency for the incidence of maternity and parental leave to increase gradually with the size of the company.
- Public enterprises have more family-friendly arrangements than private.
- Within industries, Financial intermediation stands out as generous from the point of view of leave arrangements, and Electricity, gas and water is also good. Employees in Construction, Wholesale and retail trade, and Hotels and restaurants tend to report the lowest incidence.
- Employees reporting that there are equal opportunities in their establishments tend to report the presence of maternity and paternity leave as well, though they are less likely to report sick child leave and child day care.
- The number of people an employee supervises appears to make little difference to the responses.
- The pattern by countries is very similar to that shown in Table 9 – the correlation coefficients between the proportion saying “yes” as recorded in Table 9 for women employees in

households with at least one child under 15 and the coefficients in Table 12 are 0.95, 0.97, 0.96 and 0.93, respectively.

- The most highly-skilled professions generally have higher scores on the first three family-friendly arrangements – though professionals do not appear to do so well for sick child leave. People who classed themselves as in an elementary occupation, craft or related trades, or plant and machine workers, generally tended to say that there were comparatively few family-friendly arrangements available in their companies.
- Finally, tenure made a fairly large difference – those with a tenure of under one year were considerably less likely to say that extra-statutory leave policies were available.

Overall, the pattern of these results is consistent with that observed in the four-country review above.

3.3 The link to national institutional arrangements

It is possible to see some correspondence between the indicators of family-friendly arrangements shown in Chart 1 and the “social contract” between the sexes, as it has been explored in several recent analyses, notably Fouquet *et al.* (1999). These authors develop their categorisation of countries along three dimensions, drawing on the seminal work of Esping-Andersen (1990, 1997) and his critics. The dimensions are: the form of the social protection regime; the importance given to the family as an institution; and the work patterns of women. There are four major groups in the classification.

The first group is the “Nordic” model, covering Sweden, Denmark, and Finland. In these countries, the family is seen primarily as a living arrangement. There are well-developed public systems for child-care, particularly extensive parental leave and family leave benefits, and rules to allow rearrangements of work time. The justification for public intervention is not the protection of the family, but the development of the well-being of citizens, and of children, in particular. According to the data shown in Chart 1, the first three of these countries have relatively low provisions for extra family leave and child-care provided by firms, presumably because this is seen as the responsibility of the State. Fouquet *et al.* (1999) suggest that the former East Germany showed many similarities to the Nordic model. It is noticeable that, in 1995, even several years after unification, extra-statutory family-friendly arrangements were apparently less common in the eastern than the western Länder of Germany.

The Nordic countries are also characterised by their comparatively low average annual hours of work, linked to the high incidence of part-time working. Sweden is one of the few OECD countries to have legislation to favour the transition from part-time work to full-time work and back again for family reasons, and is also the only large European country for which such transitions are known to be common (OECD, 1999, Ch.1).

The second model is the “Continental” model (Germany, Austria, Netherlands). Here the family is seen as having an important value as an institution, and the worker is seen in his/her family context. The social protection systems are founded on paid work. The large-scale social security and pension systems are financed by employee and, especially, employer contributions. The work/family reconciliation is eased through arrangements which are specific to each firm, occurring especially through part-time work or parental leave. State arrangements for child-care are much less than in the Nordic countries. Both Austria and Germany have competitions for the “Family-friendly Enterprise of the Year” (Kränzl-Nagl *et al.*, 1998). These three countries are all towards the top of Chart 1 for extra family leave. Between 1990 and 1994, just before the survey was taken, employers in the Netherlands were eligible to receive subsidies for workplace childcare provision, as well as partial relief on their childcare costs. This may explain why the Netherlands figures for employer support for child day care are so high. In Germany, where they are also above average, childcare allowances have been tax deductible since 1992. The Netherlands has among the lowest annual hours of work in all OECD countries – reflecting the fact that it has the highest proportion of part-time working.

The third model is the “Insular” model (United Kingdom, Ireland), marked by a mixed liberal/redistributive model of social security. There is a strong emphasis on market and individual freedom, with little interference by the State, either in the company or the family. Women were traditionally expected to place high priority on the home. There are no systems for parental leave. Part-time work is common in the United Kingdom, and is one of the main methods of reconciling work and family life. According to the figures in Chart 1, the lack of public support for the work/family interface has been matched by a comparative lack of extra support within firms. However, it must be noted that recently the Labour Government has launched a series of initiatives designed to help families.

The fourth model is the “Southern European” model (Italy, Greece, Portugal and Spain). Here, the extended family is still a very important part of social life. Young people stay in contact with their families for a long time. Part-time work is relatively rare. Women’s participation rates are still low, and working women tend to work full-time. There is comparatively little public

provision to support the work/family reconciliation, reflecting the fact that women tend to be seen as family members rather than paid workers. These countries occupy a fairly high position in Chart 1 as regards extra family leave, with the exception of Portugal, where the situation is rather different. Here women have been active in the labour market at all ages for a long time.

Finally, there are a number of other countries, France, Belgium and Luxembourg, which are not easily classified according to the system outlined above. For example, France has traditionally sought to assist women both as mothers and as paid workers, and has a plethora of public measures in consequence. These countries occupy positions in the middle of Chart 1.

4 Four motors for family-friendly arrangements?

This section discusses a number of issues which are relevant to the case for government intervention. It draws on the evidence presented above, as well as on a range of ten short case studies, carried out by the author in 1997, in different types of medium and large firms located in London, UK, all of whom were known to be interested in “family-friendly” issues. A full report on these case studies is available from the author. Further, recent case study evidence for the United Kingdom is to be found in Dex and Scheibl (1999 and 2000).

4.1 The business case

A number of authors (including Opportunity 2000, undated) have suggested that family-friendly arrangements are often justified by financial considerations – the “business case”. There are a large number of elements to take into account, including the following (drawn from a number of studies).

On the positive side:

- Reduction in the stress caused by overlaps between work/family roles. This can come not just from time demands (which in turn can come from excessive hours and demands for inconvenient, or unannounced flexibility from the employee) but also from the emotional demands of work-intensification (Duxbury *et al.*, 1999).
- Lower staff turnover, with the benefits of retention of experienced staff, reduction in time and money spent on recruitment, induction and training of replacement staff. Turnover costs often represent a high proportion of staff costs [a television company surveyed by the author

said their rule of thumb was that replacing a staff member leaving permanently for family reasons cost the equivalent of a year's pay]

- Better recruitment possibilities, through the attraction of a wider range of employees – offering better skills and/or lower costs.
- Greater range of diversity, interests and experience among staff.
- Greater overall flexibility in deploying staff.
- Increased sales through improved public image of the company.
- Company staff profile kept closer to that of customers, leading to greater understanding of their needs.
- Possible higher levels of investment (due to spread of “ethical investment”).

The benefits have to be weighed against the costs, which may include:

- Direct costs, such as the need for extra work-space caused by an increase in the total number of people working in the enterprise, or the costs of space within the enterprise for breast-feeding facilities or a day-care centre, or the costs of retraining or refresher courses for staff members upon re-entry into the workforce, or the equipment needed to facilitate work at home.
- Supervision costs, for example, in arranging for continuous cover when staff are working reduced hours, coping with disruptions caused by temporary absences, or overcoming demotivation of those not receiving benefits.
- Administrative costs, including framing the policies, informing staff about the existence of the benefits, and advising on how to claim them, and making decisions about who is eligible for benefits; dealing with issues of pension rights, holiday leave, overtime rights and health and safety issues. In general many family-friendly arrangements need experience to make them work successfully.

The way that the benefits and costs balance out in practice is extremely complex, and will depend upon the characteristics of the business and the job. This may be one of the reasons for the common pattern seen in the analyses by industry. Large firms are often able to re-organise work more easily than small ones [for example, a large retail trade firm surveyed by the author said that

the size of their operation permitted them to offer an extensive choice of working hours].

Financial sector firms [such as one surveyed by the author] may have particularly incentives to keep the gifted people on whom they depend, as well as the resources they need to pay for the family-friendly arrangements.

For a given firm, the case is likely to vary with the vagaries of the economic cycle. It is likely to be weaker in times of recession and/or downsizing (Dickens, 1994). In times of financial difficulty, family-friendly benefits may be targeted for cuts relatively early on, especially if they are visible costs, such as a day care centre. There is also the danger that, in times of financial stringency, a generous set of family-friendly policies may provide an economic rationale for discrimination against people with, or likely to have, family responsibilities.

In addition, there are likely to be differences according to the skills and rank of the employee. For a “model” company in the United States, Kiser (1996) found that some ethnic minority groups were less likely to know about policies for flexi-time, compressed work week and work at home arrangements, and more likely to be turned down by supervisors when they asked to take advantage of them. In general, the business case for policies designed to facilitate recruitment and retention rates, such as extensions to maternity leave and career breaks, can be expected to be particularly cogent for employees with more valuable skills (and this pattern is evident in the empirical analysis above). High-value skills will generally mean higher level, or scarce skills, but may also stem from long service with the company [a financial services company surveyed by the company said they would try hard to retain experienced, competent secretaries through family-friendly arrangements].

On the other hand, the case for short-hours and part-time work, is likely to be perceived as weaker for more highly skilled and specialised staff, and also for managers and those in direct contact with customers. Bielenski (1994) has shown that European employers tend to prefer their part-time workers to be matched with low-skilled jobs. Managers and professional workers are, for the most part, effectively paid by the year, and employers are likely to see it as beneficial if they work for as much of the year as possible. This is consistent with the evidence from the logit analysis, which showed a smaller number of professional staff reporting that sick child leave was made available to them. A number of authors have challenged the view that part-time managers are ineffective (Boyer, 1993) and case study evidence shows that many of the perceived problems can be overcome [for example, a retail trade human resources manager surveyed by the author said that she felt she was able to keep good contact with her company on the telephone when at

home from her reduced hours job]. Nevertheless the perceptions remain, and may be hard to change.

Analyses of the costs and advantages of family-friendly working arrangements also need to be informed by a consideration of the likely preferences of different categories of staff, as pointed out by Hakim (2000, forthcoming). Based on extensive analysis, she suggests that, partly as an analytical device, it is useful to consider women as falling into three groups: those whose main preference is for fulfilment *via* home-based activities; those who seek fulfilment primarily from their careers (each of these two categories being perhaps a fifth of women in most OECD countries); and those who are uncertain about the exact combination that would suit them best. On this basis, women whose main orientation is their careers are unlikely to be attracted by schemes which offer long breaks from work if they feel such breaks might harm their future careers (Judiesch and Lyness, 1999, conclude that American women would have some justification for thinking this, although Datta Gutta and Smith, 2000, reach a more optimistic conclusion for the Denmark). Thus they may be unwilling to accept such benefits even if employers offer them. This was the case in an accountancy company surveyed by the author, where the two-year career break scheme offered to highly promotable women employees had received no takers. The same may be true for part-time work, which also tends to imply lower hourly wages and training, and so reduced career prospects (OECD, 1999, Ch.1). Kiser (1996) found that women with supervisory status in her “model” US company were generally reluctant to use flexible work arrangements, and this was also found in the Japanese survey.

Overall, it is impossible to reach a general judgement about the salience of the business case. In practice, many of the elements of the case, as listed above, are very difficult to quantify, such as the costs of the absence of experienced staff, or the costs of moving staff from full- to part-time, or the value of improved morale (Holterman, 1995). Some of the companies interviewed by the author said that decisions about family-friendly arrangements would be taken primarily for reasons of values – for example a belief in the value of family life, or that employees with an active life outside the office were more productive [the desire to treat employees in a “holistic” way, as one HR manager interviewed by the author put it]. The attitudes of top managers were likely to be of great importance. Costings might be foregone, or made simply for presentational reasons. However, there is no doubt that the reduction of turnover costs has been an important argument in some cases – such as United Kingdom banks in the 1980s (Business in the Community, 1993).

4.2 Gender equity policies

In many ways it is natural to link family-friendly policies with gender equity policies. According to Duxbury *et al* (1999), women tend to suffer more than men from the tensions between work and home. This may well affect their performance at work, giving employers an economic incentive to promote men ahead of more highly-talented women. Policies which alleviate these tensions are thus likely to improve the access of women with family responsibilities to senior jobs. Another possible link between the two sets of policies lies in the fact that both are concerned with increasing the diversity of the workforce. This is an argument which is sometimes put forward as the strongest card to play on behalf of family-friendly arrangements (Dickens, 1994), though it runs the risk of treating family responsibilities as just one of a large number of factors to be taken into account.

However, family-friendly policies have been under attack precisely because they are generally taken up by women (Cooper and Lewis, 1995). At present, men and women continue to share home responsibilities unequally and there is not much sign of change (Baxter,). Family-friendly benefits are mainly used by women, who risk being placed on the “mommy-track”, with lower career prospects (see Lommerud and Vagstad, 2000, for an interesting discussion of the mommy-track and measures to combat it). If granting family-friendly policies to women with children is perceived to increase the costs of employing such women, it will also increase the potential costs represented by other women of child-bearing age, even if they have no intention of having children. The proportion of women in this latter category is presumably increasing. Current estimates are that a fifth of young women in advanced OECD countries are likely to remain childless (Hakim, 2000, forthcoming). For these women, family-friendly arrangements within the enterprise may be both irrelevant and indeed a disadvantage to them as they seek to maximise their career possibilities.

In addition, too strong a link between family-friendly arrangements and gender equity considerations may mean that men find it harder to support family-friendly arrangements. This is both because the link will tend to cause family-friendly arrangements to be seen as a “women’s issue” and because, in some situations, men feel threatened by gender equity policies.

4.3 Trends in business and human resource practices

Over recent years, there has been considerable discussion over the extent to which human resource management has been moving towards what is variously called “high-commitment” or “high-trust” management, involving greater mutual commitment between employers and

employees. The argument is that the complexity of modern business methods requires practices such as more complex jobs, more team-work, and increased delegation, and that these practices require higher levels of trust between managers and workers to make them work properly. Evidence from a number of countries is now building up that such practices are becoming more common, particularly in larger firms (OECD, 1999, Ch.5).

Moves towards high-commitment management might well be expected to have a positive effect on the incidence of family-friendly arrangements. Employees will only provide the necessary levels of commitment, and be willing to share their knowledge with management, if they are treated with sufficient consideration in return. One of the ways in which this might well be done is through the provision of family benefits. For the United States, Osterman (1995) finds “considerable support” for a link between family-friendly arrangements and high-commitment work systems. Wood (1999), in a re-examination of the same data set, questions this result, in some respects. Nevertheless, he finds that family-friendly policies tend to be introduced by firms whose management is family-friendly, in the sense that it places a high value on employees’ welfare in respect to their family situation, perceives a bottom-line benefit from providing family-related benefits, is careful to consult with the workforce, and also gives a high priority to the achievement of employee commitment.

However, at the same time as the moves towards high commitment management, there are other trends in human resource management that are not likely to be so favourable for the development of family-friendly arrangements. One such change has been the increased importance of economic and accounting criteria in the management of companies, and the decrease in the importance of personnel rules and practices. For companies in the United Kingdom, Armstrong (1995, p.144) notes a “spectacular increase in the sophistication and prominence of accounting control” over the last two decades, while Storey (1995, p.7) observes a “notable” decrease in the importance of personnel rules and practices. Companies have sought cost reductions by means of staff cuts and intensification of work. Some senior managers have tended to stress the importance of “employability” security over employment security (Handy, 1994). Temporary employment contracts have become more common in many countries. A “long-hours culture” has been allowed to develop in many professional and managerial jobs, even in those with relatively low average working hours [OECD, 1998, Ch.5].

The demand for higher levels of more up-to-date skills has ambiguous implications for the development of family-friendly policies. On the one hand, training is a relatively more important part of the total work time of a part-time worker or someone on reduced hours. This implies that

employers have less reason to offer training (OECD, 1999, Ch.1). People on extended leave will tend to find that their skills become out-of-date faster – and this was a reason why two firms surveyed by the author said they did not offer career breaks. On the other hand, if family-friendly policies can promote longer overall tenures, this may encourage the development of human capital within an organisation. Relatively long tenures should result in more of an incentive for individual staff members to acquire training, and more incentive for the firm to provide it, as both will reap the benefits over a longer period.

The impact of team work is also not clear. The increase in team-work, and in particular in autonomous or semi-autonomous teams, with the responsibility of covering for each other's absences, raises the possibility that such teams may be able to take joint responsibility for part of their family care arrangements. Such family-friendly team work has been noted in a number of studies, including Holt and Thaulow (1996) for Denmark, Erler (1993) for Germany, and Fletcher and Rapoport (1996) for the United States. On the other hand, Conti and Warner (1994) argue that teams have often been introduced to create the commitment needed to cope with the highly interdependent nature of Just-In-Time production. They may then be regarded as an extension of management control and of work intensification and will be less likely to be family-friendly.

4.4 Increased possibilities for home-work.

Modern communications technology, including the mobile telephone and the Internet, allows easier and faster communications between off-site employees and their enterprises. This may allow more work to be shifted back to the home, potentially aiding work/family reconciliation. Home-work has its special advantages and disadvantages, which have been investigated in a number of studies (see, for example, Brannen *et al.*, 1994, for a review for the United Kingdom). An instructive comparison of views is to be found in Check (1996) and Wallis (1996), the former author arguing that technology will strengthen the traditional family, and the latter that it may lead to the dominance of work over family. Certainly, developing forms of home work carry with them the danger that work will intrude into family relationships within the home. However, there is considerable potential here, even if the increase in telework has been smaller than expected.

5 Summary and conclusions

This paper began by reviewing the experience of family-friendly arrangements by enterprises in four countries, Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States and Japan, where national legislation provides comparatively little infra-structure to support people combining their work and family obligations. The review was based on published, national studies, and one obvious direction for further research would be to use the micro-data now available for Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States, and soon to be available for Canada, from the Work and Employee Survey, to provide a more detailed comparative analysis.

The evidence currently available shows that many firms in these countries go beyond the legal minimum in their provision of family-friendly arrangements. However, those that do appear to implement the arrangements in a patchy way. Very few firms appear to offer a range of family-friendly arrangements wide enough to include changes in working hours, extra family leave and help with child care. The most popular arrangement, changes in working hours, may be introduced in a way that primarily benefits companies, and may sometimes harm the careers of employees taking that use it. In addition, some groups appear to be favoured over others. Firms in some sectors, and large firms, will be more likely to provide family-friendly arrangements, and much will depend upon the values of top management. More highly skilled workers, and those with longer tenures, will tend to be offered more family-friendly benefits. In addition, all these four countries are ones with relatively long working hours, which have recently been increasing in the United States and the United Kingdom.

The restricted, but more easily comparable data available for the European Union confirm the differences in provision and use between different types of firm, and different types of employees. They also suggest considerable differences between countries, which remain after standardising for a wide range of characteristics of firms and their employees. While more research is needed to reach definite conclusions, it appears that extra-statutory arrangements for family leave provided by firms follow a hoop-shaped pattern with respect to public provision. They are least common both in countries where the legislation is relatively weak (such as the United Kingdom) and where it is relatively strong (the Nordic countries). They are most common in some countries where there is a medium level of support (Austria and Germany). One explanation for this could be that national legislation tends to encourage private provision up to a point, and then tends to displace it. However, it must also be remembered that both the national legislation and the behaviour of firms are conditioned by cultural attitudes towards the family. In

the United Kingdom, for example, there is a tradition of non-interference in the family, which is regarded as important, but outside the public domain. In Sweden, the State has taken over a good deal of the caring role of the family, which is seen primarily as a living arrangement. In Germany, by contrast, where family-friendly arrangements by firms appear quite common, the family is accorded high importance as a social institution.

The paper has considered a number of factors, common to all OECD countries, which might help voluntary family-friendly arrangements to develop in firms. These include: an increased awareness of the business case in favour of family-friendly policies; shifts in human resource management with an increased emphasis on “high-commitment” strategies; the drive for greater gender equity in the workplace; and the increased possibilities for home working offered by the new communications technologies.

None of these trends have unambiguously positive implications for families. The business case is likely to lead to differentiation within the workforce, with more valued employees being offered more, or more valuable, arrangements. While modern “high-commitment” management styles are associated with a greater consideration of family-life, they may be only a means to securing greater commitment by employees to the company. These policies have not prevented the emergence of long-hours cultures in many firms in the United Kingdom and the United States. Gender equity policies do not always fit well with family-friendly policies, simply because of the enduring asymmetry between the sexes in family involvement, even in dual earner couples. When family-friendly policies exist, they tend to be used to a disproportionate extent by women, and this can work against gender equity in the workplace, particularly in terms of access to senior positions. Finally, while modern communications systems may be developed to allow an easier combination of work and home activities, they can also extend the reach of the company into the home in unhelpful ways, for example by subverting efforts to reduce working hours.

There is thus a case for continuing efforts by national authorities to support the work/family reconciliation, in particular by encouraging firms to act in family-friendly ways. There are many examples of successful national legislation to control economic behaviour which is harmful to family life, and to encourage firms to support families. Many countries have been able to reduce the proportion of the workforce working very long hours through policy action – for example, average hours in Japan appear to have fallen substantially following the legislation in favour of the 40-hour week, and average hours of work in France have now begun to decline, as the 35-hour week legislation takes gradual effect. The United States Family and Medical Leave Act was effective in introducing extra maternity leave for employees, and may also have encouraged

further, extra statutory provision. Tax benefits in Germany and the Netherlands for firms offering child care arrangements may well be one reason for the relatively high levels of such arrangements in those countries. The Swedish legislation in favour of movement from full-time working to part-time working, with the right of return to full-time working, is no doubt one of the reasons why these transitions are often used by family carers in Sweden, unlike other large European countries.

At the same time, both evidence from individual countries, and the international comparisons in this paper, point to the importance of values. The policies just mentioned could not have been introduced successfully if they had not been in line with values. Indeed, recent initiatives to make Japanese firms more family-friendly through legislation appear to have run into difficulties precisely because they were not in line with what firms saw as appropriate behaviour. Efforts to encourage pro-family values within companies have been undertaken in a number of countries, through competitions for the “family-friendly employer of the year”. Sometimes these have been done on a private basis, sometimes with government support. It would be interesting to investigate these initiatives on a comparative basis, in order to assess the impact of different approaches. These competitions are justified by, and feed upon, case-study material showing that family-friendly attitudes can indeed be economically justified in many situations. Governments should have a role to play here in funding such research and disseminating the results.

Finally, in some countries, there may be a case for increased national provision to help the reconciliation of work and family life. This is not simply to call for more publicly provided child-care and increased rights to maternity, paternity and parental leave. Rather, there is a need to put the accent on helping women and men to enjoy the most fulfilling life courses they can, through both work and family life. One element of this may be through a redefinition of careers, loosening the link between age and career progression, and valuing a wider range of career patterns for both men and women. A second element will be developing structures to promote life-long learning.

Table 1. A list of “family-friendly” practices by firms

Leave from work for family reasons

Emergency leave (e.g. to deal with sick child, or when there has been a problem with child care, at short notice), counted as:

- paid special leave
- unpaid special leave
- sick leave, or
- time to be made up later.

Extension to maternity leave beyond statutory period either paid, or unpaid.

Paternity leave, paid or unpaid

Parental leave (extension to maternity or paternity leave to look after children), paid or unpaid

Career break

Leave to care for elderly relative

Other extended leave for family reasons

Changes in work arrangements introduced for family reasons

Reduced **work** week for full-time workers, of 4.5 days, or fewer

Flexi-time weekly hours

Term-time only contracts

Switching from full-time to part-time, on permanent or temporary basis.

Job-sharing schemes

Work at home for family reasons

Practical help with child care and elder care

Workplace or linked nursery

Financial help/subsidy to parents for child care (child care allowance or voucher)

Child care provisions in holidays (e.g. play scheme)

Breast-feeding facilities

Workplace parent support group

Assistance with costs of looking after elderly relatives

Relevant information and training

Maternity packs—information on maternity pay and leave

Policy of actively informing staff of the benefits available and encouraging use

Additional supportive information, e.g. on local childcare

Contact during maternity leave

Contact during career breaks

Refresher courses, retraining, workshops on, or as preparation for, re-entering work

Source: Compiled by the author from various sources.

Table 2. Family-friendly arrangements in Australia

(Employer-based data, workplaces with 20 or more employees, excluding those in agriculture, forestry and fishing)

	% of workplaces where statement applies
Employees in the largest occupational group have some or a lot of influence over the time they can start and stop work each day	32
Employees in the largest occupational group could make and receive a personal family call during work time	93
Most employees could use family, carer's and/or special leave if they needed time off work to look after family or household members	58
Most employees could use flextime or make the time up later if they needed time off work to look after family or household members	37
Most employees could use sick leave, if they needed time off work to look after family or household members	59
Paid maternity leave available	34
Paid paternity leave available	18

Source: WFU/DEWRSB (1999), derived from AWIRS95 employee relations management questionnaire.

Table 3. Distribution of workplaces according to a family flexible index, Australia

		Mean scores on WFU family flexible index^a
Sector	All workplaces	3.2
	Private	3.0
	Public	3.8
Employment size	20-49	3.2
	50-99	3.3
	100-199	3.4
	200-499	3.4
	500+	3.7
Industry	Mining	3.2
	Manufacturing	3.0
	Electricity, gas and water supply	3.5
	Construction	2.8
	Wholesale trade	3.2
	Retail trade	2.7
	Accommodation, cafes and restaurants	2.5
	Transport and storage	2.9
	Communication services	4.4
	Finance and insurance	3.9
	Property and business services	3.4
	Government administration	4.4
	Education	3.8
	Health and community services	3.4
Cultural and recreational services	3.1	
Personal and other services	3.7	

Note:

a). The highest possible score on the WFU family flexible index was 7. The family-friendly arrangements whose presence was used to construct the index are those shown in Table 2.

Source: WFU/DEWRSB (1999), taken from AWIRS 95 employee relations management questionnaire, main survey. Population is all workplaces with 20 or more employees, excluding those in agriculture, forestry and defence.

Table 4. Determinants of workplace family-friendliness, Australia

Independent variables	OLS Regression Coefficients (standardised)
Average workplace weekly earnings	0.121***
Paraprofessional/professional	0.178***
Clerical/sales	0.195***
Plant/labourers	0.094*
Percentage of non-core workers	-0.083**
Structured management	0.126***
Number of employees	0.104***
Active union	0.020
Written EEO policy	0.131***
Public sector	0.251***
<i>Adj R²</i>	<i>0.267</i>
<i>Number of observations</i>	<i>1177</i>

***p<0.001; **p<0.01; *p<0.05

Source: Whitehouse and Zetlin (1999), based on the 1995 AWIRS employee relations management questionnaire.

Table 5. Employee responses relevant to work family reconciliation, all employees and carers, Australia

	Employees			
	% of all employees	% of all carers ^a	% of male carers	% of female carers
Use of telephone at work for family reasons	74	74	75	73
Satisfaction with work/family has decreased in the last year	27	32	33	31
Satisfaction with work/family has increased in the last year	14	15	13	17
Could get permanent part-time work at this workplace if wanted it	61	57	43	74
Have the chance to work at home sometimes if needed to	19	21	25	16
Have a lot or some control over start and finish times	50	52	53	49
Have no control over start and finish times	34	33	32	35
Happy with hours worked	75	73	71	75
Would prefer more hours	9	8	8	9
Would prefer less hours	16	19	21	16

Note:

a). Carers are defined as those who had children and/or had responsibility for sick, disabled or aged members of their family.

Source: WFU/DEWRSB (1999), on basis of AWIRS 95 employee survey, covering employees at workplaces with 20 or more employees.

Table 6. UK establishments with family-friendly arrangements

	WERS 1998 (Non-managerial staff)		PSI/BMRB Survey of Employers, 1996
	All firms with 10 employees and over (1)	Firms with 10-499 employees (2)	
	%	%	(3) %
Special, short-term child-care leave	63
Parental Leave	55	23	..
Extra-statutory maternity leave benefits, or paternity leave	27
Career breaks	17
Work at/or from home	14	11	23
Flexi-time	18	7	36 ^b
Job-sharing	45	21	..
Term-time work	19	5	7
Change from full-time to part-time	52	37	22 ^a
Workplace nursery	5	4	2
Financial help with childcare	6	4	2

Notes: Adapted from Dex (1999).

a). Refers to temporary change – figures for permanent change were 22%.

b). Full-timers only.

Sources:

(1). Cully *et al.* (1999).

(2). Dex and Scheibl (2000).

(3). Forth *et al.* (1997).

Table 7. Child-care related arrangements in UK establishments: existence, entitlement and use among mothers
(percentage of employed mothers)

	Existence	Personal entitlement	Personal use
Time off work for family reasons	77	53	20
Telephone at work to use for family reasons	68	50	30
Career breaks for family reasons	33	16	1
Workplace nursery or crèche	13	9	3
Help in finding childcare facilities away from the workplace	6	3	1
Financial help for the cost of childcare	5	4	3
Other nurseries supported by the employer	5	3	0
Care for school children after school hours or during school holidays	5	2	1

Source: Forth *et al.* (1997, Table 5.8), based on PSI/BMRB Survey, covering 1219 mothers who had returned to employment after childbirth.

Table 8. Distribution of family-friendly arrangements in the United States
 (% of all establishments covered by the survey)

	Offer now	Definite plans to offer within 2 years	May offer	Have decide not to offer
On-site day care paid or subsidised by employer	2.0	4.1	5.1	88.6
Off-site day care paid or subsidised by employer	4.6	3.1	8.4	83.7
Day-care subsidies paid by employer to employees	4.1	5.3	9.0	81.4
Day-care referrals	13.6	6.7	10.9	68.5
A full-time work/family staff employee	14.6	2.0	3.6	79.6
Workshops on work/family issues	24.3	5.1	6.9	63.5
Elder-care referral	9.4	5.9	8.7	75.8
Flexible hours	40.2	7.3	7.4	44.9

Source: Table 1 of Osterman (1995), based on the Survey of American Establishments

Table 9. Family-friendly arrangements in Japan

	All establishments	Establishments with 500 or more employees
	%	%
Measures to help workers handle both childcare and work		
1. Shorter work hours	17.5	48.6
2. Flexi-time	5.6	12.1
3. Starting or finishing work at a later or earlier time	14.1	23.6
4. Exemption from work in non-scheduled work hours	14.5	37.9
5. Installation of a crèche at the workplace	0.3	5.7
6. Financial assistance for expenditure on child care	0.9	3.9
7. More than one measure out of 1-6	28.2	75.1
Measures to help workers handle both family care and work		
8. Shorter work hours	5.2	31.9
9. Flexi-time	1.0	6.0
10. Starting or finishing work at a later or earlier time	2.2	7.2
11. Subsidies for costs on family care	0.8	3.0
12. More than one measure out of 8-11	5.9	37.0
Other measures		
13. Care leave for dependent family members ^b	7.6	15.2
14. Re-employment ^c	16.4	25.7

Notes:

a) The survey covered private establishments with five or more employees.

b) A scheme for care leave for family members is a system to enable employees to take leave to look after a family member. Types of leave in this scheme include paid holidays, leaves of absence, and various other forms.

c) Under a re-employment scheme, a company re-employs workers who have left the company due to child or family care, either in their own company or in company in the same group.

Source: Sato (2000), extracted from a 1997 publication of the Women's Bureau, Japanese Ministry of Labour.

Table 10. Extra-statutory family leave and child day-care policies: perceptions of employees, EU, 1995/6
(sample restricted to employees with child under 15 in household, row percentages)

	Sick child leave				Maternity leave				Parental leave				Child day care			
	yes	no	n.a.	d.k.	yes	no	n.a.	d.k.	yes	no	n.a.	d.k.	yes	no	n.a.	d.k.
Women																
Austria	74	13	2	12	85	6	5	5	87	7	3	4	19	67	8	6
Belgium	62	28	4	5	65	23	8	4	43	35	7	15	14	70	11	5
Denmark	38	52	5	6	40	52	4	5	38	54	3	5	7	85	6	2
w. Germany ^a	65	22	3	10	92	3	2	3	87	7	3	4	16	70	6	8
e. Germany ^a	45	38	7	10	61	16	14	9	57	17	15	11	12	62	18	8
Finland	37	49	1	13	36	50	2	11	34	51	1	13	8	82	2	9
France	47	44	3	6	58	38	2	3	51	39	2	8	12	80	3	5
Greece	65	26	6	3	81	11	7	1	69	21	6	4	18	67	11	5
Ireland	24	51	11	14	68	15	9	9	22	46	10	21	7	74	11	9
Italy	72	17	10		81	11	8		69	18	13		5	88	7	
Luxembourg	35	45	12	7	82	7	3	7	41	42	6	11	11	67	11	12
Netherlands	40	43	6	12	75	15	7	3	53	24	10	12	25	66	5	4
Portugal	48	31	17	5	49	25	23	3	43	33	17	7	22	63	12	3
Spain	62	25	3	10	69	19	5	8	55	26	5	14	7	81	5	7
Sweden	6	80	8	6	7	76	11	6	7	77	10	6	1	85	11	3
United Kingdom	41	48	4	8	61	20	5	14	28	53	4	15	10	82	4	4
EU	51	37	5	7	66	22	5	6	53	33	6	9	12	77	6	5
Men																
Austria	66	16	12	6	50	15	27	8	57	18	17	8	6	65	18	11
Belgium	44	36	9	12	35	21	37	6	33	40	13	14	7	73	13	7
Denmark	40	52	5	4	37	50	5	7	32	55	4	8	6	88	6	1
w. Germany ^a	50	24	16	11	56	16	17	11	57	21	15	7	9	62	16	13
e. Germany ^a	24	29	24	24	24	15	34	26	28	19	26	26	6	43	31	20
Finland	31	61	2	6	26	53	15	6	33	60	1	6	5	87	4	4
France	42	44	11	4	35	29	26	10	36	41	11	11	8	71	14	7
Greece	52	33	9	6	57	13	24	6	53	31	9	7	15	69	10	6
Ireland	23	47	22	8	42	20	34	3	23	49	20	8	4	67	22	7
Italy	48	39	13		41	44	15		44	37	19		5	84	11	
Luxembourg	30	36	9	25	47	18	20	16	27	48	5	20	7	64	9	20
Netherlands	47	37	4	12	51	20	26	3	50	31	8	12	23	63	8	6
Portugal	50	24	12	15	34	30	13	23	44	27	11	18	21	41	18	20
Spain	56	33	1	10	39	39	3	19	39	42	1	18	4	85	3	8
Sweden	11	72	9	8	7	59	25	9	12	72	10	6	1	82	12	5
United Kingdom	28	54	5	13	51	28	14	7	32	49	4	15	5	85	4	6
EU	42	39	10	9	43	28	19	10	41	37	11	11	8	72	12	8

Notes: n.a. = "not applicable", d.k. = "don't know".

a) western and eastern Länder of Germany, respectively.

Source: Author's calculations from Second European Survey of Working Conditions.

Table 11. Extra-statutory family leave and child day-care policies: perceptions of selected categories of women, EU totals, 1995/96

(sample restricted to women with child under 15 in household, row percentages)

	Sick child leave				Maternity leave				Parental leave				Child day care			
	yes	no	n.a.	d.k.	yes	no	n.a.	d.k.	yes	no	n.a.	d.k.	yes	no	n.a.	d.k.
All women at work	45	34	12	9	58	21	13	8	46	30	13	10	10	69	13	7
Women employees	51	37	5	7	66	22	5	6	53	33	6	9	12	77	6	5
Women full-time employees	49	38	6	7	65	25	5	5	53	34	6	8	13	74	7	6
Women employees in the public sector	57	33	4	6	69	21	5	5	53	34	5	8	16	74	5	5
Women employees in firms with at least 10 employees	52	38	4	7	69	22	4	6	53	34	4	9	12	78	4	6

Notes: n.a. = "not applicable", d.k. = "don't know".

Source: Author's calculations from Second European Survey of Working Conditions.

Table 12. Cross-country correlations for 4 family-friendly arrangements, employees, EU, 1996.

	Sick child leave	Maternity leave	Parental leave
Sick child leave			
Maternity leave	0.72		
Parental leave	0.88	0.77	
Child day care	0.42	0.53	0.53

Source: Author's analysis of the Second European Survey on Working Conditions.

Table 13 Summary of results of logit model for family-friendliness, EU, employees with child under 15 in

Variable	Topic	Categories	Logit coefficients for questions:			
			Q30a	Q30b	Q30c	Q30d
Constant			0.19	0.10	0.01	-0.60
Q1(1)	Sex	male [female]	-0.21	-1.15	-0.61	-0.52
Q7	Employment status	[temp agency]	-0.06	0.24	0.12	-0.46
Q7(1)		permanent	0.08	0.33	0.30	-0.39
Q7(2)		fixed term	-0.20	0.16	-0.06	-0.53
FULLTIME(1)	Part-/full-time	part-time [full-time]	0.15	-0.06	-0.03	-0.73
D19A(1)	Home responsibility	responsible [not resp.]	0.30	0.03	-0.05	0.28
Q5_JE	Size of company	[500 employees and over]	-0.41	-0.33	-0.43	-0.31
Q5_JE(1)		works alone	-1.02	-0.40	-0.76	0.61
Q5_JE(2)		1 to 9 employees	-0.34	-0.58	-0.45	-0.65
Q5_JE(3)		10 to 49 employees	-0.27	-0.36	-0.49	-0.37
Q5_JE(4)		50 to 99 employees	-0.02	-0.23	-0.26	-0.31
Q5_JE(5)		100 to 499 employees	-0.42	-0.10	-0.19	-0.81
Q6	Public/private	[don't know]	-0.01	-0.07	-0.29	-1.14
Q6(1)		public sector	0.17	0.02	-0.22	-0.85
Q6(2)		private sector	-0.19	-0.15	-0.36	-1.43
Q8RRR	Industry	[other services]	0.01	0.14	0.07	-0.19
Q8RRR(1)		agriculture and fishing	-0.45	0.40	-0.20	0.56
Q8RRR(2)		mining and quarrying	-0.11	0.09	0.02	-0.20
Q8RRR(3)		electricity, gas and water	0.58	0.34	0.23	-0.11
Q8RRR(4)		construction	-0.28	-0.10	-0.50	-0.10
Q8RRR(5)		wholesale and retail trade	-0.42	-0.11	-0.22	-1.18
Q8RRR(6)		hotels and restaurants	-0.15	-0.33	-0.13	-0.35
Q8RRR(7)		transportation and communication	-0.05	0.36	0.20	-0.45
Q8RRR(8)		financial intermediation	0.64	0.44	0.68	0.32
Q8RRR(9)		real estate and business activities	0.20	0.30	0.31	-0.61
Q8RRR(10)		public administration	0.19	0.01	0.27	0.24
Q28_ISY	Equal opportunities	[other/no response]	-0.47	-0.06	0.54	1.69
Q28_ISY(1)		equal opportunities	-0.29	0.13	0.64	1.87
Q28_ISY(2)		more opportunities for men	-0.33	-0.40	0.45	1.85
Q28_ISY(3)		more opportunities for women	-0.80	0.10	0.54	1.36
Q9	Numbers supervised	[don't know]	1.02	0.87	0.75	-1.28
Q9(1)		none supervised	1.14	0.87	0.78	-1.40
Q9(2)		1 to 5 supervised	1.03	0.81	0.57	-1.49
Q9(3)		6 to 9 supervised	1.02	0.80	0.88	-1.03
Q9(4)		10 and over supervised	0.87	0.98	0.76	-1.20
COUNTRYL	Country	[Austria]	-1.35	-0.83	-1.34	-0.37
COUNTRYL(1)		Belgium	-0.87	-0.70	-1.38	-0.16
COUNTRYL(2)		Denmark	-1.54	-1.41	-1.65	-0.74
COUNTRYL(3)		West Germany	-0.61	0.36	0.02	0.50
COUNTRYL(4)		Greece	-0.51	0.26	-0.27	0.57
COUNTRYL(5)		Italy	-0.55	-0.33	-0.66	-1.03
COUNTRYL(6)		Spain	-0.33	-0.38	-0.87	-0.62
COUNTRYL(7)		France	-1.11	-0.92	-1.14	-0.08
COUNTRYL(8)		Ireland	-2.11	-0.50	-2.26	-1.04
COUNTRYL(9)		Luxembourg	-1.65	-0.20	-1.66	-0.42
COUNTRYL(10)		Netherlands	-1.17	-0.27	-0.90	1.33
COUNTRYL(11)		Portugal	-0.86	-1.11	-1.04	0.99
COUNTRYL(12)		United Kingdom	-1.76	-0.50	-1.85	-0.38
COUNTRYL(13)		East Germany	-1.66	-1.07	-1.14	-0.35
COUNTRYL(14)		Finland	-1.89	-1.86	-1.87	-1.04
COUNTRYL(15)		Sweden	-3.64	-3.79	-3.49	-3.01
Q4RR	Occupation	[elementary occupations]	0.35	0.45	0.29	0.07
Q4RR(1)		legislators and managers	0.59	0.41	0.43	-0.03
Q4RR(2)		professionals	0.16	0.81	0.43	0.05
Q4RR(3)		technicians	0.53	0.73	0.57	0.18
Q4RR(4)		clerks	0.25	0.39	0.35	0.45
Q4RR(5)		service and sales workers	0.32	0.48	0.24	0.20
Q4RR(6)		agricultural and fishery workers	0.77	0.40	0.34	-0.73
Q4RR(7)		craft and related trades workers	0.01	0.28	-0.02	0.33
Q4RR(8)		plant and machine operators	0.20	0.12	0.00	0.09
ANCIENNT	Tenure	[don't know]	-0.40	-0.50	-0.53	0.37
ANCIENNT(1)		under 1 year	-0.74	-0.64	-0.86	0.29
ANCIENNT(2)		1 year or over	-0.06	-0.37	-0.20	0.45

Notes: Categories in brackets are omitted.
All results significant at the 10% level, almost all at the 1% level.

Source: Author's calculations from the Second European Survey of Working Conditions.

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Annex: The Second European Survey on Working Conditions

This survey is described in European Foundation (1997a). It was conducted in the fifteen countries of the European Union (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom) between 27 November 1995 and 19 January 1996, in close collaboration with Eurostat and National Statistical Institutes, many of which conduct similar surveys on a national basis. The survey is also known as EUROBAROMETER 44.2. The survey was specifically designed to monitor working conditions as perceived by respondents, rather than attempting to define them objectively.

The multi-stage random sampling design was designed to be representative of the employed population (employed and self-employed, including people with jobs from which they were temporarily absent). All people aged 15 and over were included in the sampled population, with the exception of retired people, unemployed people and housewives. The target number of interviews was 1 000 cases per country, with the exceptions of 500 for Luxembourg, 1 000 for the former western Germany and 1 000 for the former eastern Germany. The figures achieved were close to these targets, giving a total of just under 16 000 interviews for Europe as a whole. The samples were found to over-represent Services and Public Administration, while under-representing Agriculture, and some Industry sub-sectors, causing the grouping of NACE categories “Mining and quarrying” and “Manufacturing”.

The precise questions used to investigate the incidence of family-friendly policies by enterprises were as follows:

Q30. Over and above and statutory requirements, does your company/employer additionally provide for? (yes, no, not applicable, don't know)

- Sick child leave that is, amount of time you can stay at home to take care of a sick child
- Maternity leave that is, that amount of time a woman can stay at home before [and after] the birth of a child
- Parental leave that is the amount of time a mother or a father can stay at home to take care of a very young child
- Child Day Care that is, your company/employer provides or subsidizes day care for your child.