
Why Workplace Flexibility Matters:
A Global Perspective

Government Policies
Supporting Workplace Flexibility

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US workers spend exceptionally long hours at work each year.

- We “outwork” our counterparts across Europe and even in Japan.
- We work longer hours each week and (even more so) more weeks per year.
- Are we productive? The US ranks 8th in the OECD in output-per-worker-hour.

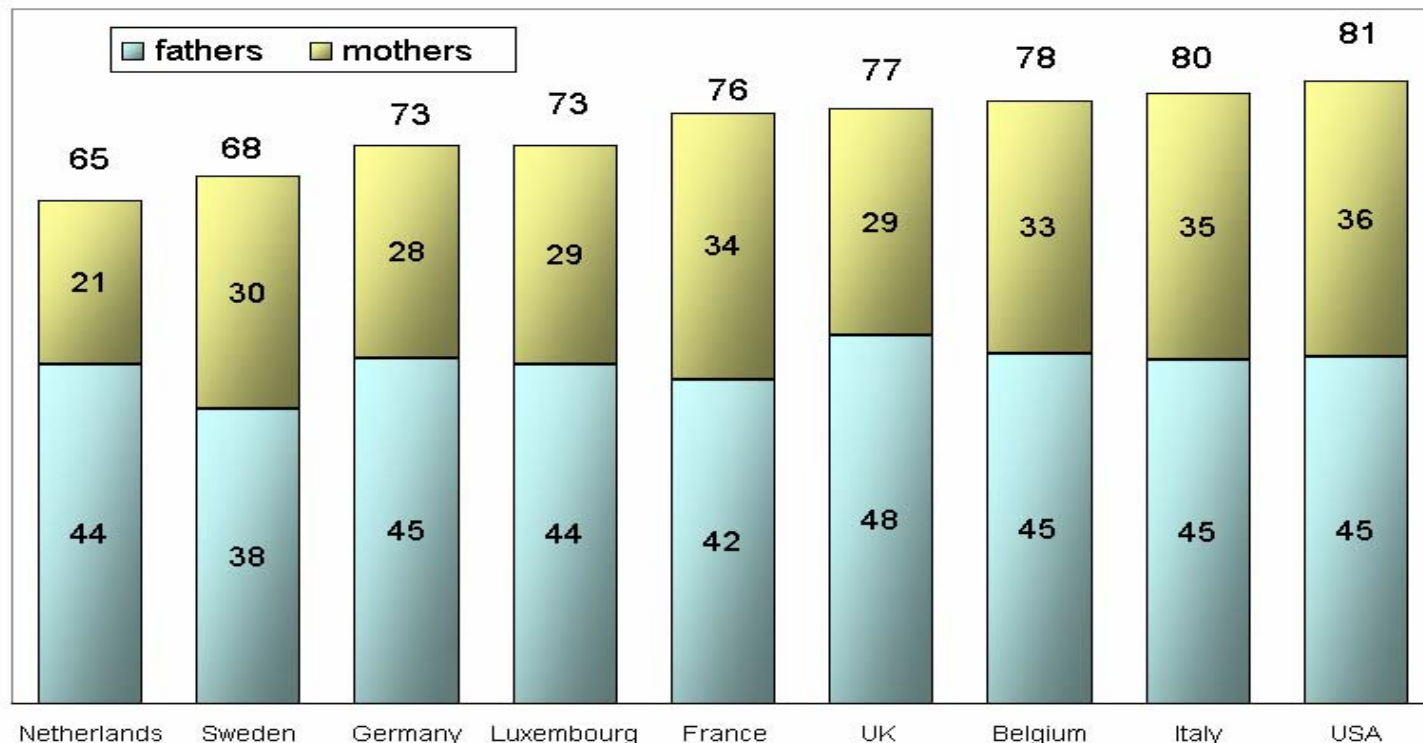
Workers' Average Annual Hours in Paid Work



US parents are no exception.

- US fathers AND mothers have comparatively high employment rates.
- US dual-earner couples with children work the longest hours: 81 on average.
- 2/3 of US dual-earner couples work, jointly, more than 80 hours per week.

**Average Weekly Work Hours:
Couples, With Children, and Two Employed Parents**



Workers in several other industrialized countries are protected by measures that limit working time, ensure compensated breaks to care for young children, and raise the quality and availability of employment with reduced-hour and flexible schedules.

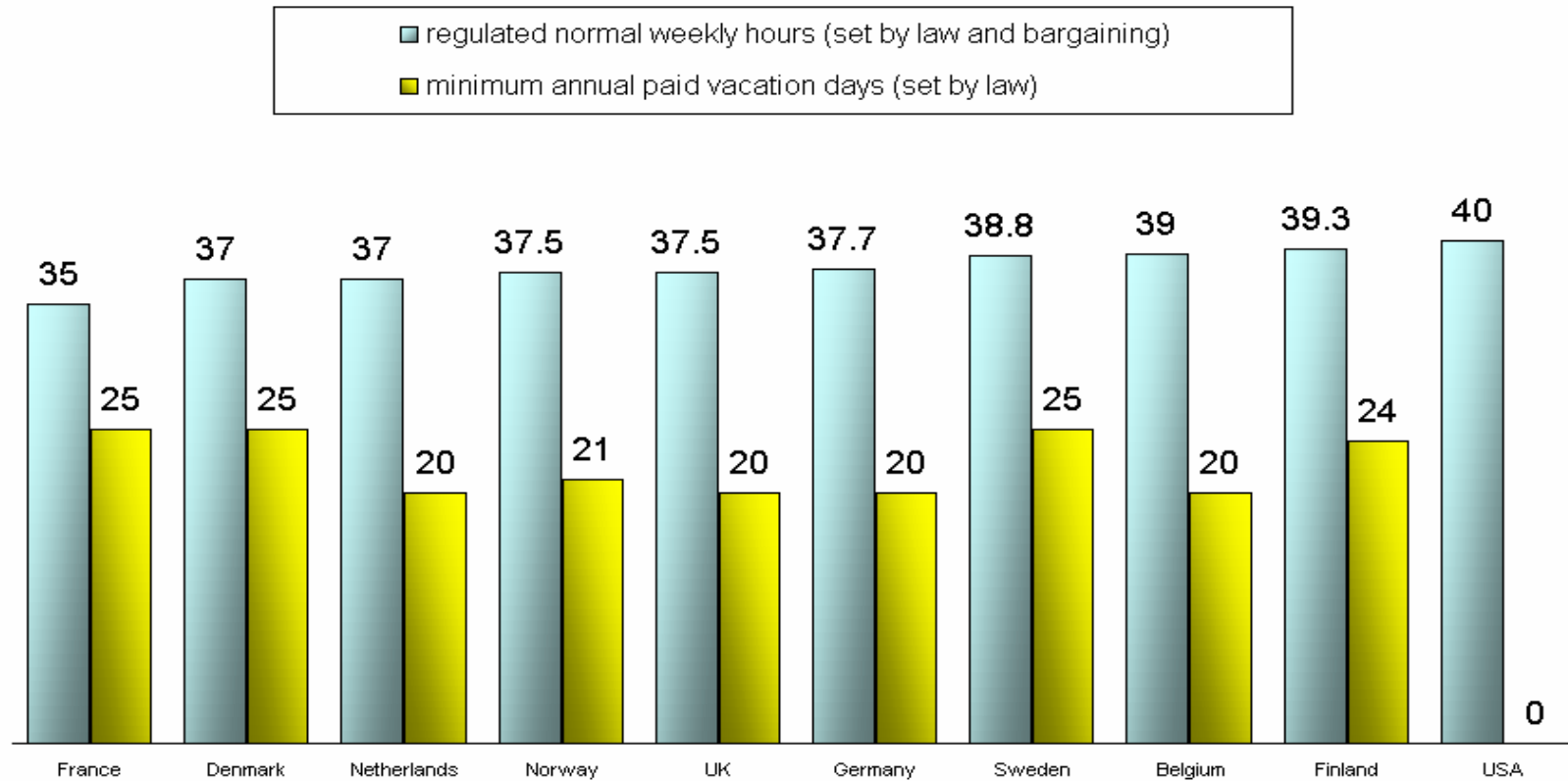
A variety of policy levers are in place:

- regulation of “standard work week”
 - paid holiday entitlements (EU mandated)
 - family leave rights & benefits (EU mandated)
 - part-time parity measures (EU mandated)
 - rights to part-time and flexible schedules
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Public policy shapes workers' weekly hours and annual work days.
Regulated hours are a strong predictor of actual hours.

-- US public policy sets a long work week, and is silent on paid vacation..

**Working Time Regulations:
Institutionalizing Hours Worked Per Week and Days Worked Per Year**



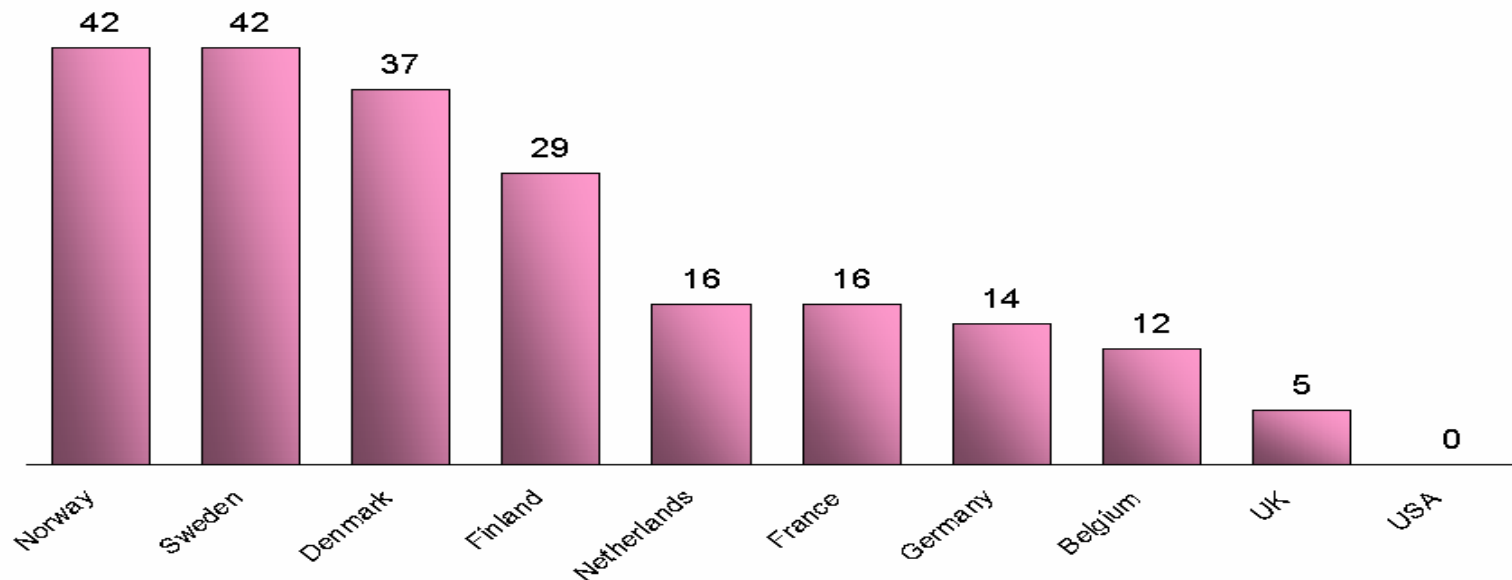
Public policy is a crucial vehicle for securing working parents time for caregiving, especially during children's earliest years.

-- US family leave policy is exceptionally meager.

-- The lack of paid leave restricts American parents' options. Many must choose between losing their pay or placing their newborns in child care.

**Paid Family Leave:
Fully Paid Weeks Allowed, Following Birth or Adoption**

includes: national social insurance programs, earnings-related benefits



In the European Union countries, national measures require pay and benefit parity for part-time workers.

- US law offers very few protections for part-time workers.
- In the US, many are poorly paid and receive no benefits.

COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 97/81/EC of 15 December 1997

concerning the Framework Agreement on part-time work

concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Clause 1: The purpose of this Framework Agreement is:

- (a) to provide for the removal of discrimination against part-time workers and to improve the quality of part-time work;
- (b) to facilitate the development of part-time work on a voluntary basis and to contribute to the flexible organization of working time in a manner which takes into account the needs of employers and workers.

Clause 4: Principle of non-discrimination:

1. In respect of employment conditions, part-time workers shall not be treated in a less favourable manner than comparable full-time workers solely because they work part time unless different treatment is justified on objective grounds.
 2. Where appropriate, the principle of pro rata temporis shall apply.
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Several countries grant workers the right to alter their work hours; some grant workers the right to *request* changes to their work hours.

Key examples:

The gold standard:

- Sweden: The Child Care Leave Act, 1978.

And the so-called soft-touch laws:

- The Netherlands: The Working Time Adjustment Act, 2000.
- Germany: The Part-Time and Fixed-Term Employment Act, 2000.
- United Kingdom: The Right to Request Flexible Working, 2002 (Employment Act amendments).

(see, e.g., Hegewisch issue brief, 2005)

Public policy influences parents' ability to manage their time demands by providing early childhood education and care.

- US provides very little publicly-subsidized child care before kindergarten.
- The quality of private child care is highly variable and often poor.

**Early Childhood Education and Care:
Enrollment in Publicly-Provided or Publicly-Subsidized Care.**

