



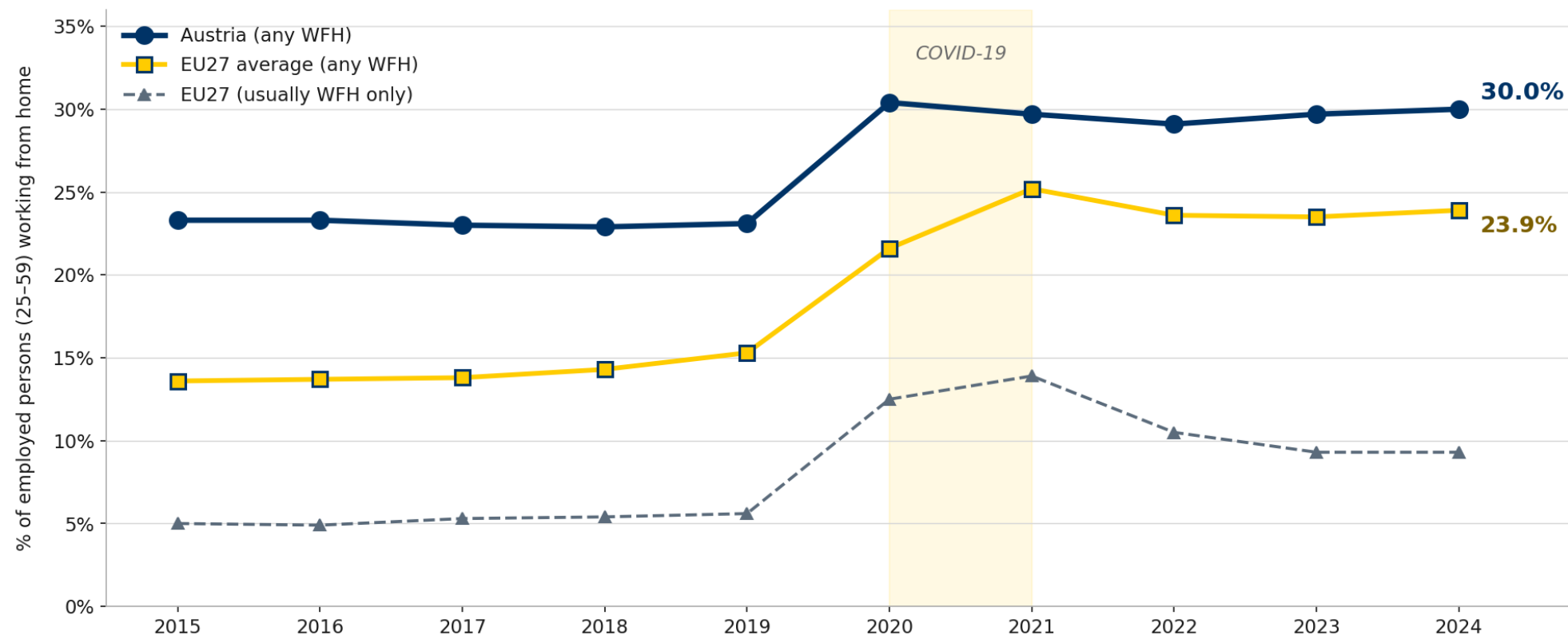
Stream 2, Session IV: **Flexible Work & the Gender Division of Childcare in Austria**

Marco Santacroce
Lisbon, ESPAnet 2026
27 August 2026



This work is supported by ERC grant FLIN,
project no. 101125392.

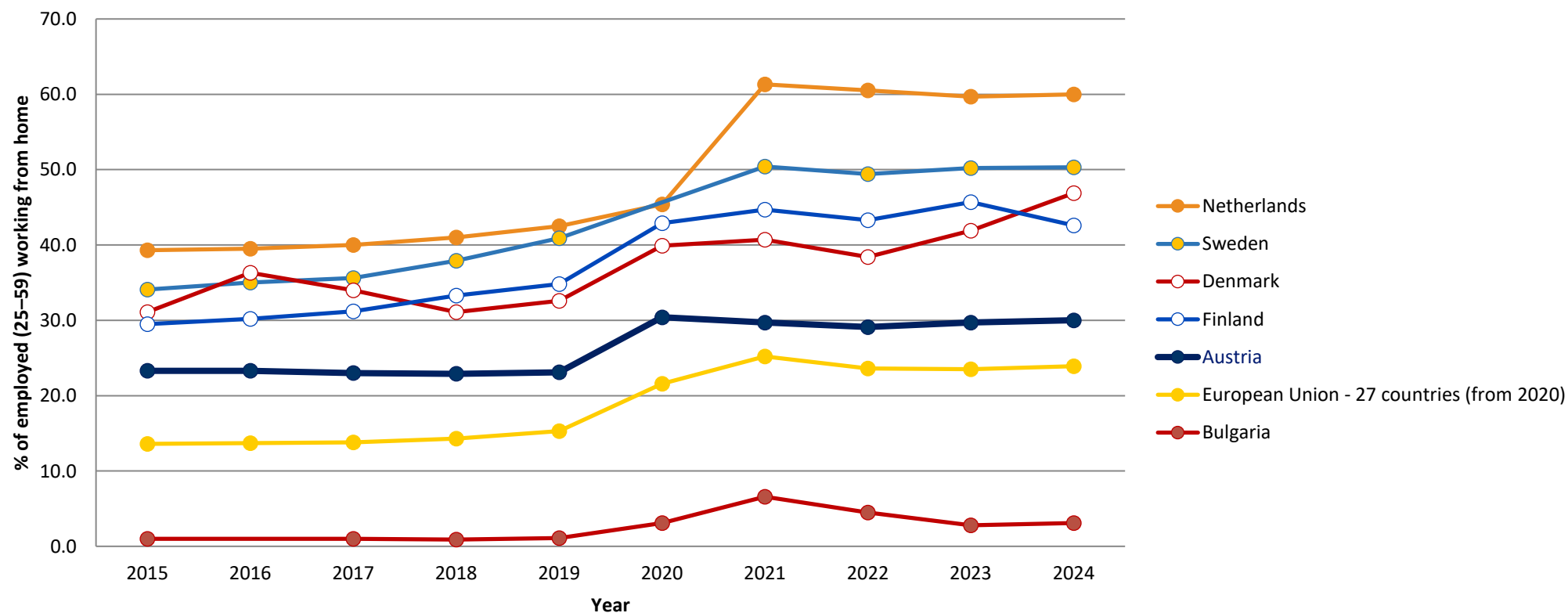
Context: The rise of WFH in Europe



Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey (lfsa_ehomp), ages 25-59. "Any WFH" combines 'sometimes' and 'usually'.

Cross-country differences are large

Working from home across Europe, 2015–2024



Motivation: Flexible work for achieving gender equality

- Since arrangements such as WFH are now structural rather than emergency responses, what are their effects?
- Flexiwork: tool for achieved gender equality.
- European Commission Gender Equality Strategy names flexible work as a potential driver of gender equality.
- Intuition: more control over when and where one works should enable a more equal sharing of domestic responsibilities

Question: Does flexible work actually deliver equality, or does it intensify it?

Redistribution

Time-availability theory (Coverman 1985)

Flexibility loosens workplace constraints. Men with FWAs take on more domestic work, the share of care performed by women falls, and the division of labor becomes more equal.

Intensification

Intensive-mothering framework (Hays 1996)

Flexibility draws women further into high-investment, child-centered care. The total amount of care grows, but the gendered division does not change or worsens.

Austria: attitudes ahead of behavior

- Attitudes have become substantially more egalitarian in recent decades.
- Behavior has shifted much more slowly: widespread part-time work among mothers, domestic work is heavily feminised, persistent male-breadwinner pattern in families with children.
- If constraints are institutional, FWAs should equalize care. If constraints are cultural, FWAs will not redistribute care.

Data: Austrian Time Use Survey 2021/22

4,236

Employed adults, aged 20–59 years

1,334

Dual-earner couples

2

FWAs: Work from Home (WFH) and Schedule Control (SC)

8

Outcomes: Housework & 7 Childcare

Outcomes: housework & childcare

HOUSEWORK (1 measure)

Primary HW

Cooking, cleaning, laundry,
shopping, gardening, DIY

CHILDCARE (7 measures)

Primary CC

Care as main activity

Total CC

Primary + secondary

Basic CC

Feeding, bathing,
supervising

Developmental CC

Playing, reading, teaching

Contact time

Any moment with the child

Solo CC

Without anyone else

Care for children <10

Total for families with
young children

Methods: OLS by day & FWA type

OLS

**Individual (Min by Gender)
& Couples (Female Share)**

Main Analysis

**Weekdays
Weekends
Pooled**

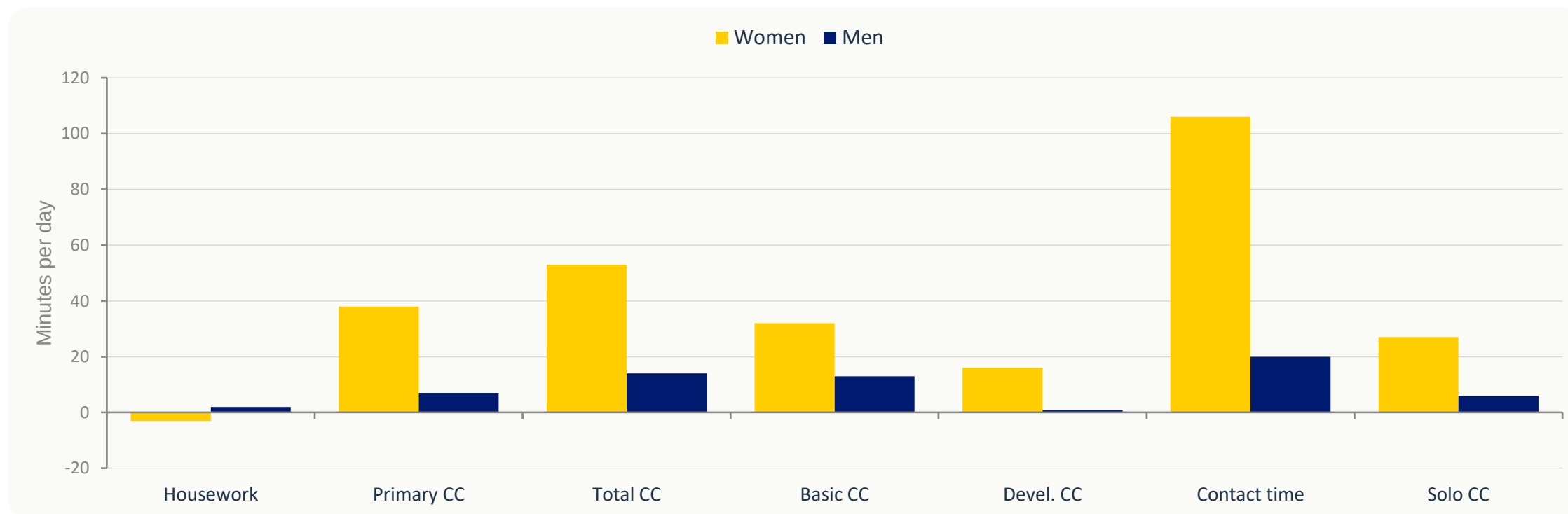
WFH & SC

Separately

**FE, AIPW,
Interaction**

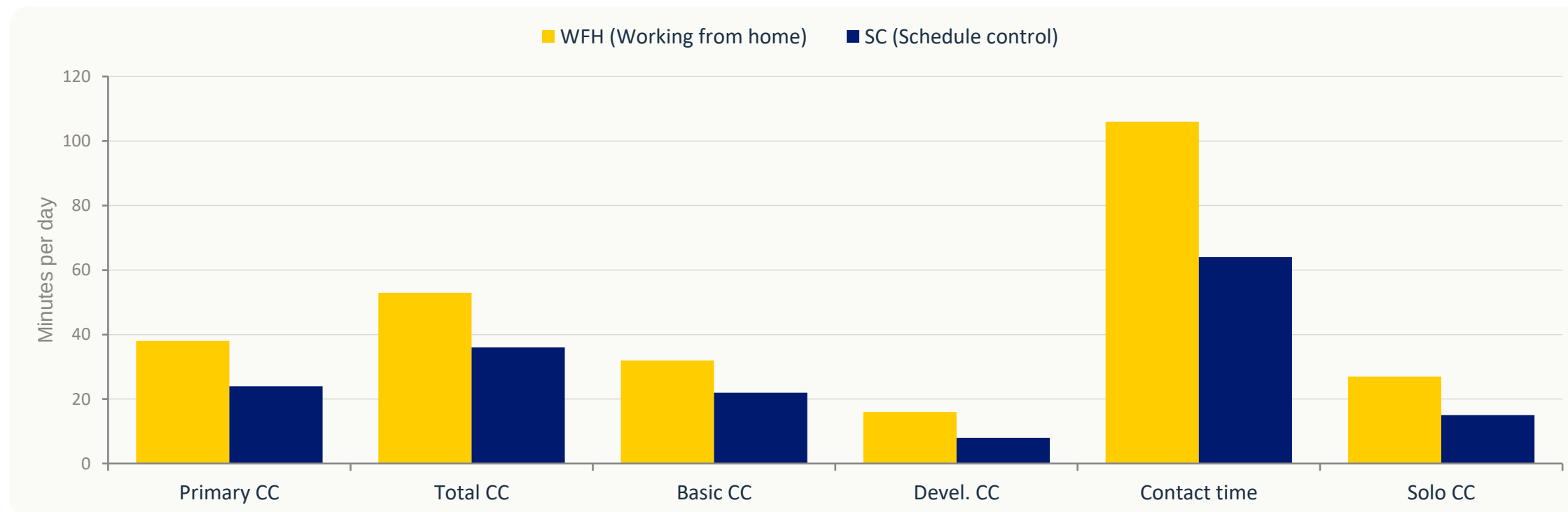
Robustness Checks

Finding 1: Childcare moves, housework does not; large gender differences



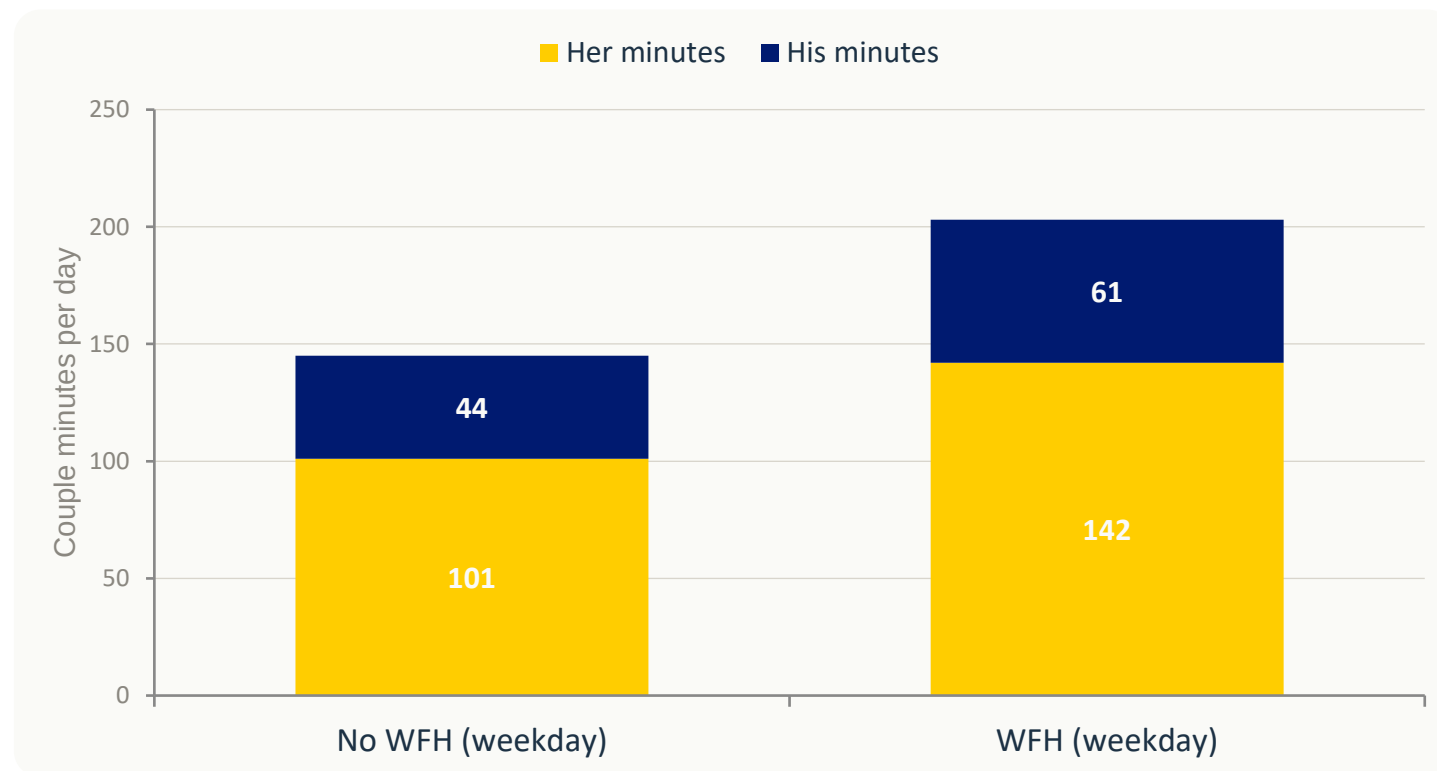
Effect of WFH on minutes per day, by gender and activity, pooled sample

Finding 2: WFH affects care more than SC



Effect on women's minutes per day, by FWA and activity, pooled sample

Finding 3: Total care grows, but the share does not change



Primary childcare on a weekday

Total childcare grows from

145 → 203 min

Her share stays at roughly

70 / 30

Both partners gain time in proportion to their baseline involvement

Robustness: pattern holds across estimators

- Couple fixed effects (xtreg): control for couple-level unobserved heterogeneity.
- Matching estimator (AIPW): correcting for selection into flexible work on observables.
- Coefficients are stable in sign and magnitude across all three checks.

Couple FE
(xtreg fe)

Matching
(AIPW)

**Interaction
Model**
(OLS)

Conclusion: Flexibility expands care, it does not equalize it

- FWAs do not affect housework, but increase childcare, especially among women.
- WFH effects are larger than SC.
- Inequality is concentrated on weekdays, weekends are more equal regardless of FWA.
- The 70/30 gender division is preserved because both partners gain time in equal proportion.