
DÓRA BARI AND PÉTER RÓBERT *

Who Benefits More from a Balanced life?
Gender Differences in Work-life Balance and
Satisfaction with Life in Eight Post-communist
Countries

Intersections. EEJSP
2(3): 21-41.
DOI: 10.17356/ieejsp.v2i3.195
<http://intersections.tk.mta.hu>

* [\[baridora@gmail.com\]](mailto:baridora@gmail.com) (Corvinus University of Budapest);
[\[Robert.Peter@tk.mta.hu\]](mailto:Robert.Peter@tk.mta.hu) (Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian
Academy of Sciences)

Abstract

The purpose of the research described in this paper is to investigate the gender differences in the relationship between perceived tension with work-life balance and satisfaction with life in eight post-communist regions (the Czech Republic, East Germany, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine). The research investigates 1) how having a balanced life contributes to the subjective well-being of individuals (measured according to level of satisfaction with life), and 2) the variability which exists on a country level with satisfaction with life and satisfaction with work-life balance, and the relationship between these two attitudes. Data from the fifth round of the European Social Survey is used in the analysis, to which only respondents active in the labor force were included (N=6410). The paper presents descriptive statistics about country differences in the level of satisfaction with life and work-life balance. Following this, OLS regression models are used to predict satisfaction with life. Results reveal that the perceived balance between work and other elements of life has a significant impact on satisfaction with life, and no gender difference is detectable in this regard. Nevertheless, more highly educated individuals have greater subjective well-being, and the impact is stronger for women than men. Between-country differences are also moderate.

Keywords: subjective well-being; life satisfaction; work-life balance; post-communist countries; gender differences.

1. Introduction

This paper brings together two research issues, work-life balance and satisfaction with life, and investigates how they interrelate in post-communist countries and how this link varies for men and women. Working life is an important part of individual living circumstances – at least during a large part of a normal life after completion of education and before retirement. Consequently, how people feel about their working life matters a lot, and satisfaction with work-life balance is an important component of general satisfaction with life (Greenhaus et al., 2003; Dulk et al., 2011; Szücs et al., 2001).

Nevertheless, work is just one component of life, though its importance varies a lot for individuals in different situations. Work plays a different role in the lives of single people and others with family obligations. The meaning of work also differs between people who have young children to take care of, and adults whose offspring have already grown up (Lippe et al., 2006). The differences in these circumstances bring about the variability in the amount of balance an individual has in their life, and, as such, make balance an important predictor of satisfaction with life.

The research places significant emphasis on gender differences. Both work-life balance and its role in satisfaction with life are hypothesized to be gendered, and thus different for men and women. The topic of this paper is completed through an investigation of these factors in the post-communist era. This approach may add most value to the analysis, since work-life balance and its correlates are as yet much more poorly analyzed in CEE countries than in Western societies. The paper deals with the following research question and tests the following assumption: How does a balanced life contribute to individual subjective well-being (defined and measured here as satisfaction with life)?

Based on ESS data we obtained information about work-life balance and satisfaction with life in eight formerly socialist regions (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Ukraine plus East Germany) and tested how balance in life predicts overall satisfaction with life for men and women. In the analysis we control for features related to work (education, job characteristics, financial situation) and family situation (family status, household composition).

The paper is structured as follows: a review of the literature opens the description of the research, moving from broader research issues to narrower ones. The variables incorporated in the analysis are then described, and some hypotheses about the expected statistical relationships are constructed. As regards findings, we display descriptive results first, followed by conclusions from the multivariate analysis. The paper ends with a discussion of results.

2. Work-life balance - main theories and approaches

Work-life balance has always been a central theme in social science research, partly from the perspective of its relationship with and effect on the quality of working life, or broader quality of life (Guest, 2002). There appears to be consensus among theorists that finding balance between work and life domains is important for individual psychological well-being, job satisfaction and satisfaction with life; however,

there exists no consensus about how work-life balance should be defined (Rantanen et al., 2011).

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature about the main approaches to work-life balance. According to Rantanen et al. (2011), based on the academic literature about the concept of work-life balance, three main approaches can be distinguished: (1) role theories, (2) an overall appraisal and components approach, and (3) theories about outcomes of work-life balance. The following sections of this chapter describe these three main approaches.

2.1 Role theories

Early studies of role theory were based on the assumption that women play multiple roles which can result in work-life conflict, or, if work and family roles are successfully coordinated, create work-life balance (Rantanen et al., 2011). One major drawback of this approach is that, according to Marks and MacDermid (1996), role balance should not only be regarded as an outcome: these authors suggest that work-life balance may be defined as a tendency which represents the individual's equal commitment to fulfilling every role within their total role system, without bringing one to the fore.

Numerous researchers have defined work-life balance in a similar way to Marks and MacDermid's (1996) definition of positive role balance, and these definitions share common elements. Firstly, these definitions highlight the equality between experiences that occur to individuals in their work role and experiences in their family role. Secondly, these definitions include two components of equality: inputs and outcomes (Greenhaus et al., 2003).

2.2 The overall appraisal approach and the component approach

The overall appraisal approach is based on how individuals evaluate their life situation in its entirety (Rantanen et al., 2011). For example, Clark (2000) defines work-life balance as satisfaction or good functioning both at work and home, with a minimum level of conflict across roles.

The component approach highlights the multiple facets of work-life balance (Rantanen et al., 2011). One prominent example is Greenhaus et al.'s (2003) definition of work-life balance. These authors hold the view that work-life balance is an 'interrole' phenomenon which refers to an individual's orientation across different roles in life. Based on this definition, a balance between work and life domains occurs when an individual is equally engaged in and satisfied with both work and family roles.

2.3 Theories about the outcomes of work-life balance

Several scholars have criticized the previous approaches, highlighting what they see as their main weakness: that they tend to overemphasize work-life balance as a psychological construct (e.g. Grzywacz and Carlson, 2007; Carlson et al., 2009). Carlson et al. (2009) construct a measure of work-life balance and suggest that balance should be distinguished from work-family conflict and enrichment. In their study, work-family balance included additional variability in several key work and family

outcomes, above and beyond those explained by work-family conflict and work-family enrichment. Since the empirical analysis in this paper deals with satisfaction with life as the main social outcome related to the success or failure of a balanced life, the literature review in the following chapters focuses on this relationship.

3. Satisfaction with life, and its relation to work-life balance

Having defined what is meant by work-life balance in the academic literature, we now move on to discuss the relationship between work-life balance and satisfaction with life. However, it is now inevitable that the key problem with this investigation should be stressed: that the literature includes few studies about the relationship between these phenomena. What we know about the relationship between these concepts is largely based upon empirical studies that investigated the link between the concept of work-life balance and quality of life. Thus, the relationship between individual quality of life and work-life balance is at the heart of our understanding of the relationship between life satisfaction and work-life balance.

Greenhaus et al. (2003) completed one key study which investigated the relationship between work-life balance and quality of life. These authors found that a balanced work-life situation can increase quality of life for two main reasons. These are: (1) that involvement in multiple roles can protect individuals from the impacts of negative experiences in any single role; and (2) that balanced involvement in work and family roles may reduce work-family conflict.

In another major study, den Dulk et al. (2011) created a conceptual framework for measuring the relationship between individual quality of life and quality of work. The basis of this framework relates to how increases in demands and resources connected to both work and life domains impact individual quality of work and quality of life. The model propounds the existence of a direct relationship between resources and demands and quality of life, and an indirect relationship via outcomes such as stress, work-life interface, enrichment and work-life balance. More specifically, personal quality of work and quality of life is affected by job and household characteristics, the conception of workplace and the national context.

Szücs et al. (2011) developed den Dulk et al.'s (2011) theoretical framework in order to analyze empirically the relationship between satisfaction with work-life balance and satisfaction with life. The authors distinguish between the terms 'work-life balance' and 'satisfaction with work-life balance': satisfaction with work-life balance is an *'affective reaction to an unspecified level of balance, rather than the level of balance itself'* (Szücs et al., 2011: 98). In their empirical study the authors use satisfaction with work-life balance and satisfaction with life (an indicator of quality of life) as a dependent variable and analyze the impact of job and household demands and resources on them. The research found that satisfaction with work-life balance is significantly determined by job demands and resources, while household demands – such as the number of hours spent on household chores and childcare – does not decrease the level of satisfaction with work-life balance. Satisfaction with work-life balance and overall satisfaction with life are also related: the higher the level of satisfaction with work-life balance, the higher the level of life satisfaction (Szücs et al., 2011).

Hypothesis 1 thus states that the better the perceived balance between work and other aspects of life, the stronger the satisfaction with life; the finding should hold for respondents from post-Soviet CEE countries as well.

4. Gender differences in work-life balance and satisfaction with life - Why are post-communist CEE countries different?

The following is an outline of the main gender differences in work-life balance and satisfaction with life. According to van der Lippe et al. (2006), these differences should be examined at both the individual and the contextual level. The authors hold the view that work-life balance not only depends on household characteristics and/or work-related factors, but also on the country in which the individuals live. Based on this argument, the following sections of this chapter deal with both the individual and contextual level. The first section of this chapter introduces the main gender differences in the labor market and their relationship with the balance between work and life, while the second section focuses on differences between Western European and post-communist CEE countries. Finally, the third section describes satisfaction with life in the post-communist CEE countries.

4.1 Gender, the labor market and work-life balance

In the past few decades, the dual-earner family model has become increasingly prevalent in developed societies. In addition, the engagement of high numbers of women in paid labor has caused several changes in how work and family life are reconciled (Edwards and Wajcman, 2005).

According to Lippe et al. (2006), in Western European countries men and women are currently increasingly experiencing time pressure. The more time men and women spend engaged with the labor market, the less time they have for caring for their families and doing household work. It is a widely held view that time spent working is less of a determining factor for men; however, some evidence suggests that the situation with work-life imbalance and/or work-life conflict is becoming increasingly similar for mothers and fathers. The authors highlight the fact that several factors impact how men and women are able to balance work and life which can be affected by gender: for example, the division of household tasks and the age of the children who must be cared for. The younger the children, the more time needed to care for them, and it is generally women who put in the extra time needed for such child-care-related and household tasks. The unequal division of household tasks and childcare can cause stress for women and greater work-life imbalance; however, a more equal division of such work between partners affects to a higher extent the level of balance between work and family life generally (Lippe et al., 2006).

Hypothesis 2 thus claims that women are more satisfied with life, and that maintaining work-life balance matters more for them. We test for gender-related differences in the other predictors of subjective well-being without making any further, detailed assumptions, for the purpose of control.

4.2 Gender, the labor market and work-life balance in post-communist CEE countries

As mentioned previously, work-life balance and the impact of gender on this significantly depends on the countries in which individuals live. Because of this argument, a description of the social and economic effects of the transition from state socialism to capitalism in CEE countries becomes necessary.

The transition to a new regime has greatly affected three elements of the national context: it has brought about: (1) a decrease in provisions at the level of the state (Abendroth and den Dulk, 2011; den Dulk et al., 2010), (2) an increase in economic development (Trefalt et al., 2013), and (3) an expansion in economic freedom (Trefalt et al., 2013).

The main difference between Western and the Central and Eastern European countries is that CEE countries did not witness the sudden entry of women into the labor market (Miheli, 2014). Under state socialism, the high participation of women in the labor market was common because of the ideology of gender equality and state support for women's participation in work and childcare (Miheli, 2014; Pollert, 2005). Several researchers have suggested that women have become the 'victims', or the 'losers' of the transition (Fodor, 2005; Lippe and Fodor, 1988) because one of the main changes brought in by the transition in the post-communist CEE countries was a significant increase in unemployment which has affected women's labor market position. However, Lippe and Fodor (1998) draw attention to the weaknesses of this argument. During the time of state socialism, almost everyone had a full-time job and unemployment did not (officially) exist. After the transition, it was mainly men who lost their jobs due to the radical decline in industrial production. Because of the higher share of women in the service sector, they were better protected than men from becoming unemployed (Lippe and Fodor, 1998). However, the activity rates of women decreased more than they did for men, and women have also been more deeply affected by labor market segmentation and wage inequality (Auth, 2010).

During the communist era, a high level of social security was guaranteed by the state (free education, health and cultural services and generous state-funded family provisions), while the process of transformation brought about changes in this regard. There is also some evidence to suggest that after the transition attitudes towards gender roles became more conservative, which is part of the reason that women lost some of the rights that they had had during the Soviet era. The emergence of a more conservative ideology and traditional gender norms has created intensive discussion about the obligatory choice between family and career. Childcare policies have also had an impact on working mothers. The accessibility of long parental leave, especially in the case of the Czech Republic and Hungary, does not support the combining of work and private life and reinforces traditional gender roles (Křížková et al., 2010).

4.3 Satisfaction with life in post-communist CEE countries

In the academic literature there is not much research into life satisfaction in post-communist countries. Still, studies that deal with different components of satisfaction may be identified. Authors of a special issue of the *International Journal of Sociology*

investigated material well-being and satisfaction with living standards in four post-communist countries: Hungary, Poland, Ukraine and Georgia, each representing a different degree of success with the process of transformation. The authors claimed that Hungary and Poland had much higher levels of life satisfaction than Georgia and Ukraine, and that intercultural differences contributed to this situation (Zagorski, 2011). 'Over-aspirations', or the feeling of being under-rewarded, as well as reference group theory, play an additional role in determining satisfaction with life under post-communism. In this regard, Sági (2011) concludes that the change in respondents' reference points from former Soviet bloc times negatively and strongly affects satisfaction with current material conditions and living standards. In general, Selezneva highlights the fact that the populations of transitional countries '*paid with their happiness for the transition from communism to capitalism*' (Selezneva, 2010: 1).

After 2004, some of the post-communist Central and Eastern European countries became part of the European Union, which also affected people's subjective well-being. In a study by Bălțătescu (2007), the author focuses on life satisfaction in the new EU member states and finds that levels of subjective well-being are almost the lowest among this group. The results show that the level of satisfaction with life in these countries between 1989 and 2005 follows a U-shaped trend, bottoming out at around 1996-1997. In addition, there are significant differences between these countries - even if the overall level of subjective well-being is generally quite low in new EU member states. Of these societies, only Slovenia's well-being comes close to the level of life satisfaction of countries with the highest levels. Moreover, the level of satisfaction with life also increased most impressively in Slovenia. Based on data collected between 2001 and 2005, the countries/regions which were able to catch-up in terms of life satisfaction (Czech Republic, Poland and East Germany) have a more optimistic perspective than Greece or Portugal.

A closer look at the *World Happiness Report 2015* indicates that post-communist CEE countries are less happy than Western European countries. However, there are large differences between these countries: people in the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Slovakia are happier than in Hungary and the Ukraine (Helliwell et al., 2011).

What is the country variability in satisfaction with life and satisfaction with work-life balance and in the relationship between these two attitudes? In terms of wellbeing, Hypothesis 3 states that satisfaction with life will be lower in Hungary and Ukraine compared to the other countries under investigation.

5. Data and variables

5.1 Sample and procedure

The data used in the research come from the European Social Survey (ESS), an academically driven cross-national and cross-sectional survey that has been conducted across Europe every two years since 2001. For this study, datasets from the fifth (2010) round were analyzed. The unit of the sample is based on individuals aged 15 and over who are resident in private households, regardless of their nationality, citizenship, language or legal status, in the participating countries. The ESS surveys involve strict

random probability sampling, a minimum target response rate of 70% and rigorous translation protocols. The ESS dataset is weighted; this weighting is included in the current analysis.¹

In our analysis we use data only from eight post-communist CEE countries: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Ukraine and East Germany. For the purpose of our research, one obvious further restriction should be applied. The analysis contains only those respondents who reported that their ‘main activity last week’ was paid work. The file does not contain information on work-life balance for other respondents because the question would be redundant for those not in work. After this selection step, the size of the sample was 6410 in the weighted sample, including 3469 males and 2937 females (information about gender is missing in 4 cases).

5.2 Measures

The purpose of this study is to explore how work-life balance predicts satisfaction with life for men and women in eight post-soviet countries. Consequently, *overall level of satisfaction with life* is the dependent variable in the analysis. To examine this issue, participants were asked to answer the following question: ‘*All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays?*’ A 0-10-point answer scale was used, where 0 means extremely dissatisfied and 10 means extremely satisfied. *Overall level of satisfaction with work-life balance* was measured by asking ‘*And how satisfied are you with the balance between the time you spend on your paid work and the time you spend on other aspects of your life?*’. A 0-10-point response scale was used where 0 means extremely dissatisfied and 10 means extremely satisfied. The analysis also contained demographic control, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Description of the independent control variables.

Demographic indicator	Description of the variable
Gender	female = 1 vs. Male = 0
Age	from 18 to 65
Place of residence	urban = 1 vs. rural = 0
Subjective income	living comfortably on their income or at least coping on it = 1 vs. difficult or very difficult situation as regards income = 0
Sector of work	State / public sector = 1 vs. private sector = 0
Working hours	total hours normally worked per week in main job including overtime

¹ For more details see www.europeansocialsurvey.org

Family situation	respondent lives without partner and has no children (dummy) respondent lives without partner and has children (dummy) respondent lives with partner and has no children (dummy) respondent lives with partner and has children (dummy) - reference in the statistical model
Age of children	younger than 5 years old (dummy); between 6 and 14 years old (dummy); between 15 and 18 years old (dummy); older than 19 years (dummy); Only children who live with the respondent in shared household were taken into account.

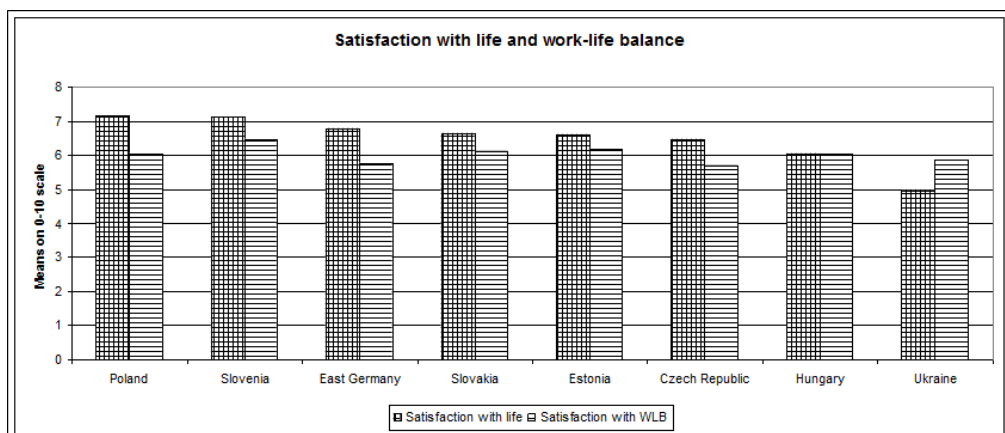
Table 3 in the Appendix contains information about all the variables in the analysis.

6. Findings

6.1 Descriptive Results

As shown in Figure 1, the level of satisfaction with life is highest in Poland and Slovenia, followed by the former East Germany, while the lowest is found in Ukraine in 2010. Hungary is in second-to-lowest position. The level of satisfaction with work-life balance is highest in Slovenia too. In this respect, however, Czech Republic reports the lowest level and East Germany the second-from-last. Poland and Hungary take the middle positions in satisfaction with work-life balance.

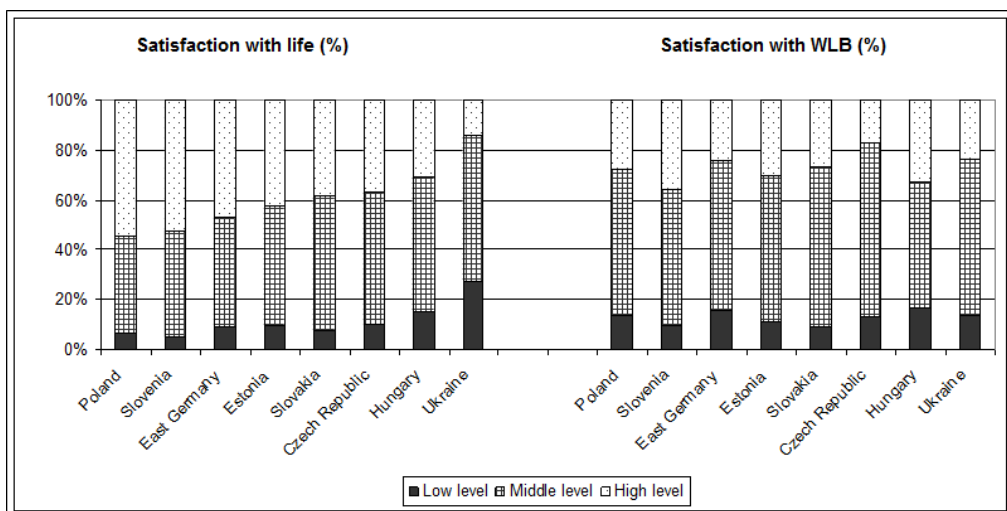
Figure 1. Overall level of satisfaction with life and work-life balance in post-communist CEE countries (means). Source: European Social Survey - Round 5, author's calculation



Both satisfaction scales have been investigated from a gender perspective as well. As regards satisfaction with life, men are more satisfied than women in Hungary and Ukraine (the two countries in which satisfaction is lowest in general). However, the difference is not significant according to the variance of analysis (Anova). Women are more satisfied with life than men in Poland, Slovenia, East Germany and Slovakia. According to the variance of analysis, the difference is significant only in Poland. For satisfaction with work-life balance, men value their situation more highly than women in Slovenia and Slovakia; the difference is significant in the latter. In all other countries women are more satisfied with their work-life balance than men, but the difference is significant only for Hungary (5.86 for men vs. 6.27 for women).

Since the means are sometimes misleading, standard deviations may also be interesting. Figure 2 provides further information about satisfaction with life and work-life balance from a different perspective of measurement. Here, three levels of satisfaction are distinguished; a low level means 0-3 points, a middle level means 4-7 points, and a high level of satisfaction means 8-10 points, using the original scale. The rank order of the countries does not change significantly for satisfaction with life. However, in respect of satisfaction with work-life balance, Hungary occupies a higher place in the ranking of countries for 'high level of satisfaction'. However, the proportion of those reporting 'low level of satisfaction' is also pretty high for Hungary; in fact it is the highest of all countries, together with East Germany. The explanation for this is that the standard deviation around the mean is also the highest for Hungary (2.5) from the eight countries. Accordingly, opinions about work-life balance are least clear-cut in Hungary.

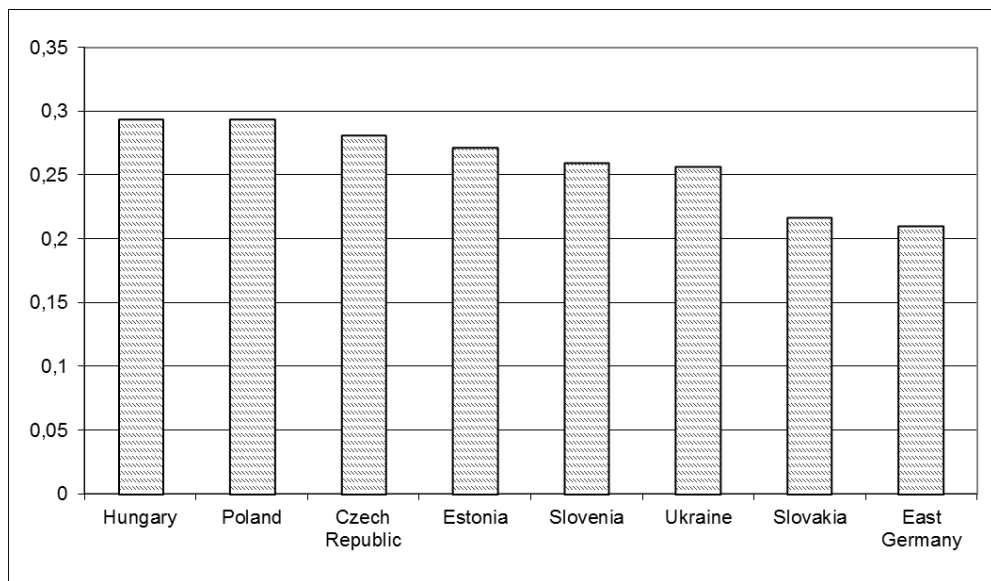
Figure 2. Overall level of satisfaction with work-life balance in post-communist CEE countries (%). Source: European Social Survey - Round 5, author's calculation



This analysis places particular emphasis on the relationship between satisfaction with life and satisfaction with work-life balance. Consequently, the correlation between these two indicators is important information at a descriptive level. On the whole, Spearman's r is 0.276 between these two indicators. On the one hand, variability

according to gender is important but minor (0.287 for men and 0.264 for women). Later, in the section which describes the multivariate analysis, more detail about the level of significance for gender differences is provided. On the other hand, country differences in terms of the correlation between level of satisfaction with life and level of satisfaction with work-life balance are displayed in Figure 3. What is interesting in these results is the relatively similar level of correlation across the societies under investigation. There is hardly any difference in Spearman's r between the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Ukraine and Estonia. A weaker correlation appears with Slovenia, while the highest levels both for satisfaction with life and satisfaction with work-life balance are also found in this country. The weakest correlation appears in East Germany and Slovakia (just above 0.2).

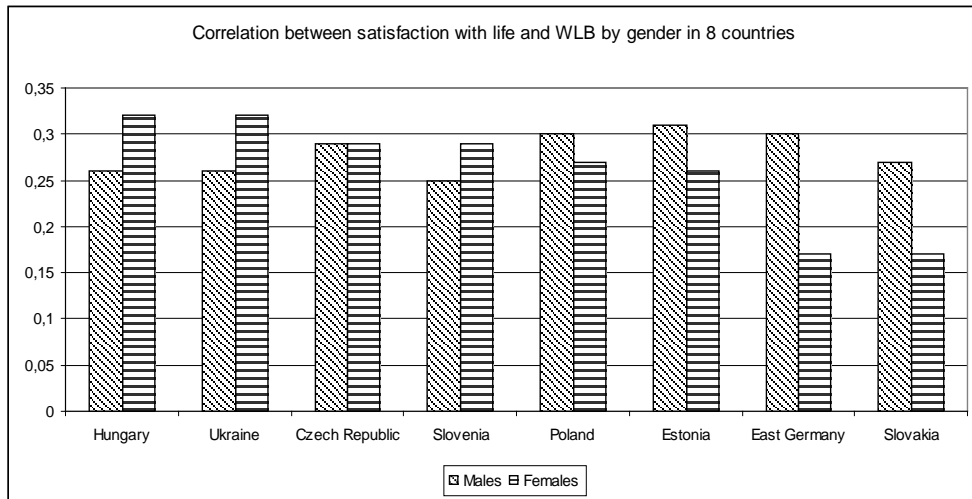
Figure 3. Correlations* between satisfaction with life and satisfaction with work-life balance.
Source: European Social Survey - Round 5, author's calculation



*Spearman r

The two parameters (gender differences and country differences) are combined in Figure 4. Countries are ordered using the Spearman r coefficients for females. The strongest correlations exist for Hungary and Ukraine, followed by the Czech Republic and Slovenia. In Hungary, Ukraine and Slovenia correlation between satisfaction with life and satisfaction with work-life balance is stronger for women than men. In contrast, in Poland and Estonia, and in particular in East Germany and Slovakia, the same correlation is stronger for men than women. Correlations are statistically significant (except in East Germany for women) and - at least for women - there is a stronger correlation for Hungary and Ukraine where the general level of satisfaction with life is the lowest.

Figure 4. Correlations* between satisfaction with life and satisfaction with work-life balance by gender and country. Source: European Social Survey – Round 5, author's calculation



*Spearman r

6.2 Results of multivariate models

The multivariate analysis is based on the use of OLS regression models. This method was applied because the dependent variable, satisfaction with life, was measured on a scale of 0-10. Independent variables were added to the equation in several steps. Consequently, as we proceeded with the models and included more and more independent variables which served to control for the direct effect of perceived work-life balance on satisfaction with life, the correlation between these predictor variables also influenced the results. Regression analysis was performed using Stata, and the *nestreg*² procedure was applied. The findings are presented step by step; the estimates, the robust standard errors and the related levels of significance appear in the relevant columns of Table 2.

Model 1 in the regression model includes overall level of satisfaction with work-life balance as the only independent variable. In accordance with the descriptive results presented about the correlation between these two variables in Table 2, the perception of having a balanced life significantly increases satisfaction with life in this model, when no control variables are applied. The coefficient of satisfaction with work-life balance is 0.282, which indicates a relatively strong relationship with the overall level of satisfaction with life. So, for every unit increase in the level in perceived work-life balance, an increase in the level of satisfaction with life of 0.282 units is predicted by the model.

Model 2 in the regression analysis adds the main demographic control variables to the model: female (the reference category is male), age, and years of education.

² *'Nestreg'* is a regression method included in the Stata program which can be used to test the significance of blocks of predictors by building the regression model by adding one block at a time.

According to this model the direct impact of a balanced life remains significant; however, its coefficient decreases. This may be caused by the correlation between work-life balance and education: the connection is not strong, but more educated respondents are slightly more satisfied with their work-life balance.³ In this model, years of education have the highest coefficient (0.109); years of schooling is thus a strong determinant of subjective well-being. We also tested whether the effect of education is linear because the quadratic term for schooling was insignificant. However, what is even more important in this model is that gender is not a significant predictor, there being no difference between men and women in terms of satisfaction with life. This result was found at a descriptive level too; the results of multivariate analysis seem to agree. Age has a negative impact: the model predicts a -0.019 unit decrease in the level of satisfaction with life for every increase in age of a year. Age also appears to be a linear predictor because its quadratic term is not significant.

Model 3 of the regression analysis firstly includes indicators related to the working status of respondents. The most obvious of these, the nature of the job, was omitted because we included education in the model and these two variables are interrelated. Thus, this model adds two other variables to the equation: work for a state-owned organization (the reference category is working for a private organization) and working hours per week. The level of satisfaction with life for those who work for a state-owned organization is higher than for those who work for a private company, although the finding is not statistically significant. Working hours, however, have a statistically significant impact on satisfaction with life. This effect is positive, which means that longer working hours increase life satisfaction.

Secondly, in Model 3 the urban dummy variable (reference category rural) and the dummy variable corresponding to the feeling that the income of the household is enough for living comfortably is also included in the analysis. The urban variable has a negative impact, and its coefficient is statistically significant. This negative effect implies that respondents in rural areas are more satisfied with their lives. The perceived adequacy of household income has a strong impact: those who reported that their household income is enough for them to live comfortably had a level of satisfaction with life more than one and half points higher than those who believed they were in a difficult or very difficult situation as regards their income. In this model, the impact of working in the state or public sector, as opposed to the private sector, is strengthened.

In Model 4 we turn to family circumstances and introduce the dummy variables that represent the variety of familial arrangements of the respondent: single, living without a partner but with children, and living with a partner but without children. Living with a partner and having children is the reference category. As can be seen from this model, the first two situations lead to a lower level of satisfaction with life (negative estimates): being single or living in a one-parent family with children significantly reduces satisfaction compared to being one of a couple with children, while living with a partner with no children does not lead to significant differences in

³ In fact, analysis of variance reveals that the relationship is curvilinear because less-educated respondents are also satisfied with their work-life balance. There is no significant correlation between age and the perception of having a balanced life.

satisfaction compared to being one of a couple with children. It is important to note that controlling for the family situation makes work-life balance a stronger and more significant predictor of subjective well-being. Model 4 extends the analysis further as regards family conditions by adding the four dummy variables based on the potential age of children: 0-5, 6-14, 15-18 and 19+. The estimates are positive in the case of the first three variables but significant only in the case of children aged 0-5. Living with children who are older than 19 has a negative impact on satisfaction with life. The interaction between the dummy variables based on a child's age and family situation were also tested but there is no significant relationship between them.

Finally, in the last step of the regression analysis (Model 5) the dummy variables for countries are included, using Ukraine as the reference. Estimates show that satisfaction with life is significantly higher in every other country. At the descriptive level, respondents from Ukraine, Hungary, Estonia and the Czech Republic comprised the group least satisfied with life, while Poland, Slovenia, East-Germany and Slovakia were the 'more satisfied' half (see Figure 1). Multivariate analysis indicates that this finding definitely holds for Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia, and the magnitude of the estimates is similarly high for East Germany as well (above 1).

Table 2. Multivariate analysis of determinants of satisfaction with life. (Unstandardized regression estimates, robust standard errors in brackets). Source: European Social Survey - Round 5, author's calculation

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Satisfaction with work-life balance	0.282*** (0.02)	0.277*** (0.02)	0.216*** (0.02)	0.218*** (0.02)	0.221*** (0.02)
Socio-demographic variables					
Female (reference category: male)		-0.046 (0.06)	0.086 (0.06)	0.117 (0.07)	0.102 (0.06)
Age		-0.019*** (0.00)	-0.018*** (0.00)	-0.018*** (0.00)	-0.020*** (0.00)
Years of education		0.109*** (0.01)	0.066*** (0.01)	0.062*** (0.01)	0.065*** (0.01)
Working in public sector (ref. category: working in private sector)			0.047 (0.07)	0.054 (0.07)	0.091 (0.07)
Working hours per week			0.007* (0.00)	0.008* (0.00)	0.005 (0.00)
Urban residence (ref. category: rural)			-0.140* (0.06)	-0.123 (0.06)	0.001 (0.06)
High household income (ref. category: low household income)			1.640*** (0.08)	1.612*** (0.08)	1.325*** (0.08)
Family composition					
Lives without partner and has no children				-0.318* (0.13)	-0.405** (0.13)
Lives without partner and has children				-0.353** (0.12)	-0.370** (0.12)
Lives with partner and has no children (ref. category: lives with partner and has child)				0.056 (0.13)	-0.022 (0.13)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Ages of Children					
Has children, between 0 and 5 years old				0.335** (0.12)	0.241* (0.12)
Has children, between 6 and 14 years old				0.012 (0.10)	-0.037 (0.10)
Has children, between 15 and 18 years old				0.022 (0.10)	-0.012 (0.10)
Has children, older than 19 years old				-0.068 (0.12)	-0.105 (0.11)
Countries					
Czech Republic					0.999*** (0.14)
East Germany					1.057*** (0.16)
Estonia					0.980***
Hungary					0.603*** (0.15)
Poland					1.335*** (0.15)
Slovenia					1.147*** (0.15)
Slovakia (ref. category: Ukraine)					1.124*** (0.15)
Constant	4.771***	4.148***	3.601***	3.710***	3.114***
N	5372	5372	5372	5372	5372
Model improvement (Change in R-square)		0.0302	0.1131	0.0094	0.0246
R-square	0.072	0.102	0.212	0.222	0.246

7. Conclusion and discussion

The research this paper described was designed to investigate the relationship between work and family life, on the one hand, and individuals' subjective well-being on the other. One further research objective was to study the gender differences in this regard. Thirdly, analysis was undertaken of societies from Eastern Europe with a communist past which had gone through transformation to a market economy. European Social Survey data, collected in 2010, were used in the analysis to investigate the three research questions and test three related hypotheses.

The starting point and the first assumption of the analysis was that work-life balance has a substantial influence on satisfaction with life. Given that working life is an important part of an individuals' life in general, in particular in Eastern European societies where the low level of post-communist salaries force people to have multiple jobs and spend more time working, the perception of work-life balance and its influence on the general opinions of well-being may have a more substantial impact on various mechanisms in society. Individuals' economic performance, as well as choices and decisions in their private lives related to family formation, getting married or childbearing, are the outcomes of successfully finding and maintaining the balance

between different spheres of life. Empirically speaking, the analysis described in this paper does not go so far: neither economic activity nor family behavior is investigated as a dependent variable. The focus is instead on subjective well-being, about which *statistical analysis proves that satisfaction with work-life balance has a significant and direct impact on satisfaction with life*, confirming our first hypothesis. Accordingly, the results of the analysis are in line with previous studies which also found that work-life balance influences satisfaction with life (Szücs et al. 2011, Greenhaus 2003).

Moreover, the link between these variables is studied in more detail by including various control variables, representing both working conditions and family situation, into the statistical model. In terms of labor-market-related indicators, human capital investments appear to be playing an important role. Level of education turns out to be a strong predictor of subjective well-being; *more educated respondents are more satisfied with their lives*. This result is also in agreement with the general literature on subjective well-being. Furthermore, the number of hours worked is a significant predictor in the multivariate analysis. We interpret it to mean that having a full-time job is an important predictor of satisfaction with life. This may be a feature specific to the Eastern European situation where having a full-time job is necessary for supporting a better quality of life. This is not necessarily the case in Western societies where a part-time job may improve both work-life balance and subjective well-being, in particular in the case of women (e.g. Hill et al., 2001).

Turning to family circumstances, the analysis investigated the role of various family arrangements, as well as the impact of having children of differing ages. Interestingly, the connection between family situation and subjective well-being is not as strong as one might imagine. In terms of the various types of family composition, the main result is far from surprising: *living without a partner or being a single parent and living with children is difficult and significantly decreases satisfaction with life*. In addition, satisfaction with work-life balance is also lower in such families. However, the perception of having a balanced life is no more positive in families in which a couple live together with children. Moreover, examination of the impact of children on subjective well-being indicates that *there is no significant difference in satisfaction with life between families composed of a couple living with, or without children*. To some extent, it holds true that living alone without a partner and children leads to a lower level of satisfaction with life, but this association is much less persistent.

Two further control variables in the model were age and the urban vs. rural character of the place of residence. Age is significant predictor of subjective well-being, with a negative sign. This means that *younger individuals are more satisfied with life*. In terms of domicile, living in a rural settlement appears to increase satisfaction with life, but this effect is not significant when family circumstances and age of children are controlled for. Several previous studies about subjective well-being found the age effect to be in the form of a U-shape: younger and older individuals are generally more satisfied with life (e.g. Mercy et al., 2015). This may hold true for Western societies, but given the material circumstances and the health of the older population in Eastern Europe, it is plausible that age has a linear effect in our analysis of post-communist societies. Last but not least, and unsurprisingly, perhaps the strongest determinant of subjective well-being is the perception of the family's financial situation. *Respondents who think they can live comfortably on their incomes, or at*

least cope on them, are much more satisfied with life than those who feel that it is difficult or very difficult to do so.

The second research question in the analysis referred to gender differences. For this variable, we expected to find some variation. Women were assumed to be more satisfied with life and it was hypothesized that perceived work-life balance would play a larger role in affecting their subjective well-being. This assumption was based on a previous study of ‘female optimism’ (Arrosa and Gandelman, 2016). This hypothesis could not be confirmed: the analysis reveals very few gender-based dissimilarities. Firstly, *there is no significant difference between men and women as regards satisfaction with life.* Both descriptive analysis and multivariate statistical models led to this same conclusion. Secondly, examination of the interaction terms between gender and perceived work-life balance proves their insignificance as predictors of satisfaction with life. *Having a balanced life matters for subjective well-being, but gender does not alter the strength of this effect* in a multivariate context. This finding is in line with the results of the empirical study of Szücs et al. (2011). At a descriptive level when zero-order correlations are displayed between satisfaction with life and with work-life balance without any other control variables (in Figure 4), some variability according to gender appears to be present. There may be a stronger association between these two variables for women in Hungary and Ukraine, where the general level of subjective well-being is lowest. However, when the various controls are added to the model in the statistical analysis, the difference disappears. Other interaction terms seem to be similarly statistically insignificant. There is only one exception to this, which concerns the role of education. *Higher levels of investment in human capital result in greater increases in satisfaction with life for women than men.*⁴

The third component of the analysis was country variation. A major part of the descriptive analysis was devoted to revealing the differences among the eight countries under investigation. It is well-known that Hungarians score low on all measures of subjective well-being in a comparative perspective; the country is characterized by a kind of ‘culture of complaining’. Indeed, only Ukraine appears to have an even lower level of satisfaction with life, while Hungary takes second place (see Figure 1 or 2). Multivariate analysis confirmed the ranking of the countries: i.e., the higher level of satisfaction of Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia and East-Germany. *Hypothesis 3 concerning the ranking of the countries in terms of subjective well-being is thereby confirmed.* In terms of satisfaction with work-life balance, the ranking of the countries is different – in particular, when the correlation between the two forms of satisfaction is revealed for the eight countries (Figure 4).

In sum, this paper fills a gap in the literature concerning the relationship between work-life balance and satisfaction with life in the context of post-communist countries. Nevertheless, the research described in this paper leaves several issues open to further research. Changes over time were not investigated: our findings offer a cross-sectional picture of the issue. The European Social Survey data would allow the inclusion of other subjective opinion questions in the modeling, but we believe that further research should start by investigating the influence of structural mechanisms.

⁴ The interaction terms are not presented in Table 2, because none of them were significant, except for education. Details are available from the authors upon request.

Using an even broader analytical framework, the former communist countries ought to be compared to Western societies as well.

References

- Arrosa, M. L. and N. Gandelman (2016) Happiness Decomposition: Female Optimism. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 17 (2): 731-756.
doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10902-015-9618-8>
- Abendroth, A. K. and L. den Dulk (2011) Support for the work-life balance in Europe: the impact of state, workplace and family support on work-life balance satisfaction. *Work, Employment & Society*, 25 (2): 234-256.
doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0950017011398892>
- Auth, D. (2010) Welfare states and gender in Central and Eastern Europe: the current state of research and prospective research. In Christina, N. and S. Leiber (eds.): *Welfare states and gender inequality in Central and Eastern Europe: Continuity and post-socialist transformation in the EU Member States*, Brussels: ETUI. 33-55.
- Bălăţescu, S. (2006) Life Satisfaction of the new EU Members: Recent Trends and Future Prospects. In Muravska, T. (ed.) *European Union Enlargement of 2004 and Beyond: Responding to the Political, Legal and Socio-Economic Challenges*. Riga: University of Latvia. <http://www.lu.lv/jmconference2006/abstracts.html>
Accessed: 19-09-2016.
- Carlson, D. S., J. G. Grzywacz and S. Zivnuska (2007) Is work-family balance more than conflict and enrichment? *Human Relations*, 62 (10): 14-59.
doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0018726709336500>
- Clark, S. C. (2000) Work/family border theory: a new theory of work/family balance. *Human Relations*, 53 (6): 747-770.
doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0018726700536001>
- Den Dulk, L., M. Bäck-Wiklund, S. Lewis and D. Redai (2011) Quality of life and work in a changing Europe: a theoretical framework. In Bäck-Wiklund, M. et al. (eds.) *Quality of Life and Work in Europe. Theory, Practice & Policy*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 17-31.
doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/9780230299443>
- Edwards, P. and J. Wajcman (2005) *The politics of working life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fodor, É. (2005) *Women at Work The Status of Women in the Labour Markets of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland*. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. Occasional Paper, No. 3.
[http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/\(httpPublications\)/655D60DC55B78527C1257011003866BA?OpenDocument](http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/(httpPublications)/655D60DC55B78527C1257011003866BA?OpenDocument) Accessed: 05-06-2016

- Greenhaus, J. H., K.M. Collins and J.D. Shawc (2003) The relation between work-family balance and quality of life. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 63 (3): 10-31. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S00018791\(02\)00042-8](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S00018791(02)00042-8)
- Grzywacz J. G., D. S. Carlson (2007) Conceptualizing work-family balance: implications for practice and research. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 9 (4): 455-471. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1523422307305487>
- Guest, D. E. (2002) Perspectives on the study of work-life balance. *Social Science Information*, 41 (2): 255-279. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0539018402041002005>
- Helliwell, J., R. Layard and J. Sachs (2015) *World Happiness Report 2015*. New York: The Earth Institute Columbia University.
- Hill, E., A. Hawkins, M. Ferris and M. Weitzman (2001) Finding an Extra Day a Week: The Positive Influence of Perceived Job Flexibility on Work and Family Life Balance. *Family Relations*, 50 (1), 49-58.
- Jacobs J. and K. Gerson (2004) *The Time Divide: Work, Family, and Gender Inequality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Křížková, A., B. Nagy and A. Mrčela Kanjuo (2010) The gender implications of labour market policy during the transformation and EU accession. A comparison of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia. In Klenner, Ch. and S. Leiber (eds.) *Welfare states and gender equality in Central and Eastern Europe*. Brussels: ETUI. 329-361.
- Lippe, van der T. and É. Fodor (1988) Changes in Gender Inequality in Six Eastern European Countries. *Acta Sociologica*, 41 (2): 131-149. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/000169939804100203>
- Lippe, van der T., A. Jager and Y. Kops (2006) Combination Pressure: The Paid Work: Family Balance of Men and Women in European Countries. *Acta Sociologica*, 49 (3): 303-319. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0001699306067711>
- Marks, S. R. and S. M. MacDermid (1996) Multiple Roles and the Self: A Theory of Role Balance. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 58 (2): 417-432.
- Mercy, J. L. et al. (eds.) (2015) *Quality of life - facts and views*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2785/59737>
- Miheli, K. K. (2014) Work-family interface, job satisfaction and turnover intention. *Baltic Journal of Management*, 9 (4): 446-466.
- Pollert, A. (2005): Gender, Transformation and Employment in Central Eastern Europe. *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 11 (2): 213-230. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0959680105053964>

-
- Rantanen, J., U. Kimmunen, S. Mauno and K. Tillemann (2011) Introducing theoretical approaches to work-life balance and testing a new typology among professionals. In S. Kaiser, M. J. Ringlsetter, D. R. Eikhof, and M. Pina e Cunha (eds.) *Creating balance?! International perspectives on the work-life integration of professionals*. Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer.
- Robinson, J., and G. Godbey (1997) *Time for Life: The Surprising Ways Americans Use Their Time*. University Park: Penn State University Press.
- Sági, M. (2011) Determinants of Satisfaction with Living Standards in Transition Societies, *International Journal of Sociology*, 41 (4): 55-78.
doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2753/IJS0020-7659410403>
- Selezneva, E. (2011) Surveying transitional experience and subjective well-being: income, work, family. *Economic Systems*, 35 (2): 139-57.
doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ecosys.2010.05.002>
- Szücs, S., S. Drobnič, L. den Dulk and R. Verwiebe (2011) Quality of Life and Satisfaction with Work Life Balance. In Bäck-Wiklund, M. et al. (eds.) *Quality of Life and Work in Europe. Theory, Practice & Policy*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 95-117.
- Špela, T., M. Drnovšek, A. Svetina-Nabergoj and R. Valentina Adlešič (2013) Work-life experiences in rapidly changing national contexts: Structural misalignment, comparisons and choice overload as explanatory mechanisms. *European Management Journal*, 31 (5): 448-463.
doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2013.04.006>
- Zagórski, K. (2011) Living Conditions and Satisfactions. *International Journal of Sociology*, 41 (4): 17-32. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2753/IJS0020-7659410401>

Appendix

Table 3. Description of the variables. Source: European Social Survey – Round 5, author's calculation

Variable	Observation	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Satisfaction with life	6262	6.472054	2.233767	0	10
Satisfaction with work-life balance	6180	6.005502	2.148396	0	10
Female	6283	0.4897342	0.4999344	0	1
Age	6198	41.82204	11.19449	18	65
Years of education	6132	13.39905	2.753995	0	20
Working in public sector	6029	0.3265882	0.4690041	0	1
Working hours per week	5946	43.30558	11.056	0	80
Urban residence	6269	0.6584782	0.4742579	0	1
High household income	6246	0.6930836	0.4612513	0	1
Lives without partner and has no children	6267	0.235503	0.4350779	0	1
Lives without partner and has children	6267	0.0816978	0.2739256	0	1
Lives with partner and has no children	6267	0.1969044	0.3976912	0	1
Has children between 0 and 5 years old	6286	0.131085	0.3375201	0	1
Has children between 6 and 14 years old	6286	0.2125358	0.4091344	0	1
Has children between 15 and 18 years old	6286	0.1301304	0.3364737	0	1
Has children older than 19 years old	6286	0.2286032	0.4199665	0	1