

SPLIT SHIFTS AND THE FRAGMENTATION OF WORKING LIVES (SPLITWORK)

Abstract

Split shifts are a working time model in which the workday is interrupted by one or more hours of an unpaid break. Split shifts can imply **long total workdays**, involving alternating shifts of paid and unpaid work (e.g., paid employment, care work, domestic work) and multiple travel times. Yet little is known about how workers experience and organise their everyday lives shaped by split shifts.

The research project SPLITWORK aims to provide a **comprehensive study of split-shift work**, studying it on three levels: the worker level, the organisation level, and the level of legal and political regulation. The **main research questions** are: (1) How do **split-shift workers** experience and organise split shifts in their everyday lives; how do they integrate paid work, unpaid work, and non-work time? (2) Why and how do **companies** and other employing organisations use split shifts? What part do the clients play? (3) How are split shifts regulated and bargained on the **legal and social partnership level**?

The project will focus on two service sectors in Austria where split shifts are widespread: the cleaning sector, with a focus on **office cleaning**, and the care sector, with a focus on **domiciliary elderly care**.

The research questions will be investigated by a large **qualitative study** within the methodology of grounded theory. It will comprise interviews and participant observation with split shift workers, case studies of cleaning companies and care providers, analyses of collective agreements and other documents, and interviews with experts and sector stakeholders. In addition, the study will include **quantitative data** analyses on split shifts based on new data from Statistics Austria.

In order to compare the situation in Austria with other ways to organise split shifts, two **international case studies** will be conducted: These regard (1) a successful transition from split-shift work outside office hours to a pattern of **uninterrupted daytime work** that took

place in the **Norwegian cleaning sector**; and (2) **the abolition of split shifts in public elderly care** which the **Swedish municipality of Norrköping** implemented in 2015.

The research will provide important contributions to current discussions on the **sociology of work**, emphasizing the position that both **paid employment and unpaid work** need to be addressed in work research. Furthermore, the project aims to provide a scientific basis for **policy-making** with regard to the regulation and design of split shifts.

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Funded by: Austrian Science Fund (FWF): V-598
Project leader: Karin Sardadvar
Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU Wien)
Welthandelsplatz 1, 1020 Wien
Tel: +43 1 31336 4745
E-Mail: karin.sardadvar@wu.ac.at