



# New Ways of Working and Work-Family Interaction among Croatian Employees: Do All Benefit from Flexible Work Design the Same?



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## Introduction & Aim

New ways of working (NWW) represent one mode of adaptation to rapid changes in today’s workplace. Digitalization allows employees to work more flexibly, i. e. to choose when, where, and by which communication tool to do their work. This flexible work design promises and already has showed advancements not only in work efficiency, but also in employees’ well-being. However, mixed findings were reported on the impact on work-family interaction, calling for future studies to examine the consequences of NWW among persons varying in individual differences (Demerouti et al., 2014). Scarce research on this topic among Croatian employees has not yet examined representation of NWW in different groups of employees. Therefore, the goal of this study was to examine the benefits that new ways of working have on employees’ well-being and work-family interaction, in various groups of Croatian employees.

## Method

### Participants and procedure

A heterogeneous samples of 320 participants, employed in Croatian organizations in various sectors on various positions, participated in the study. Data were collected by an on-line questionnaire, distributed through researchers’ social network, with a help from their psychology students. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous.

### Instruments

The on-line questionnaire consisted of several previously validated scales (Table 1). The questionnaire also included questions on participants’ sociodemographic, family-related and work-related characteristics. Detailed sociodemographic data can be seen in Figures 1-7.

Table 1. Psychometric properties of the applied scales.

Instrument	k	Item example	Response scale	α	M (SD)
<b>The New Ways of Working Scale</b> (Ten Brum, 2011)				.90	2.75(0.99)
• Control over work <b>content</b>	4	<i>I can decide the content of my work.</i>	1 (totally disagree) – 5 (totally agree)	.81	2.49 (1.38)
• Control over <b>location</b> for work	4	<i>I can choose at which location I work</i>		.87	2.23 (1.35)
• Control over work <b>time</b>	4	<i>I work at a time schedule that I plan myself</i>		.89	3.26 (1.00)
• Control over <b>communication</b> used for work	4	<i>I can decide as to when I send or reply to emails.</i>		.66	3.03 (1.14)
<b>The Job Affective Well-Being Scale</b> (Van Katwyk, Fox, Spector, Kelloway, 2000)	20	<i>My job made me feel inspired.</i>	1 (never) – 5 (extremely often)	.93	3.33 (0.64)
<b>Satisfaction With Life Scale</b> (Diener, Enmons, Larsen i Griffin, 1985)	5	<i>In most ways my life is close to my ideal.</i>	1 (strongly disagree) – 7 (strongly agree)	.86	4.57 (1.31)
<b>The Recovery Experience Questionnaire</b> (Sonnentag i Fritz, 2007)	16	<i>(During time after work) I get a break from the demands of work.</i>	1 (I do not agree at all) – 5 (I fully agree)	.90	3.47 (0.72)
<b>Work–Family Conflict scale</b> (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996)	5	<i>The demands of my work interfere with my home and family life.</i>	1 (strongly disagree) – 7 (strongly agree)	.91	3.05 (1.51)

## Results

### Descriptive analysis: NWW in various employees’ subgroups

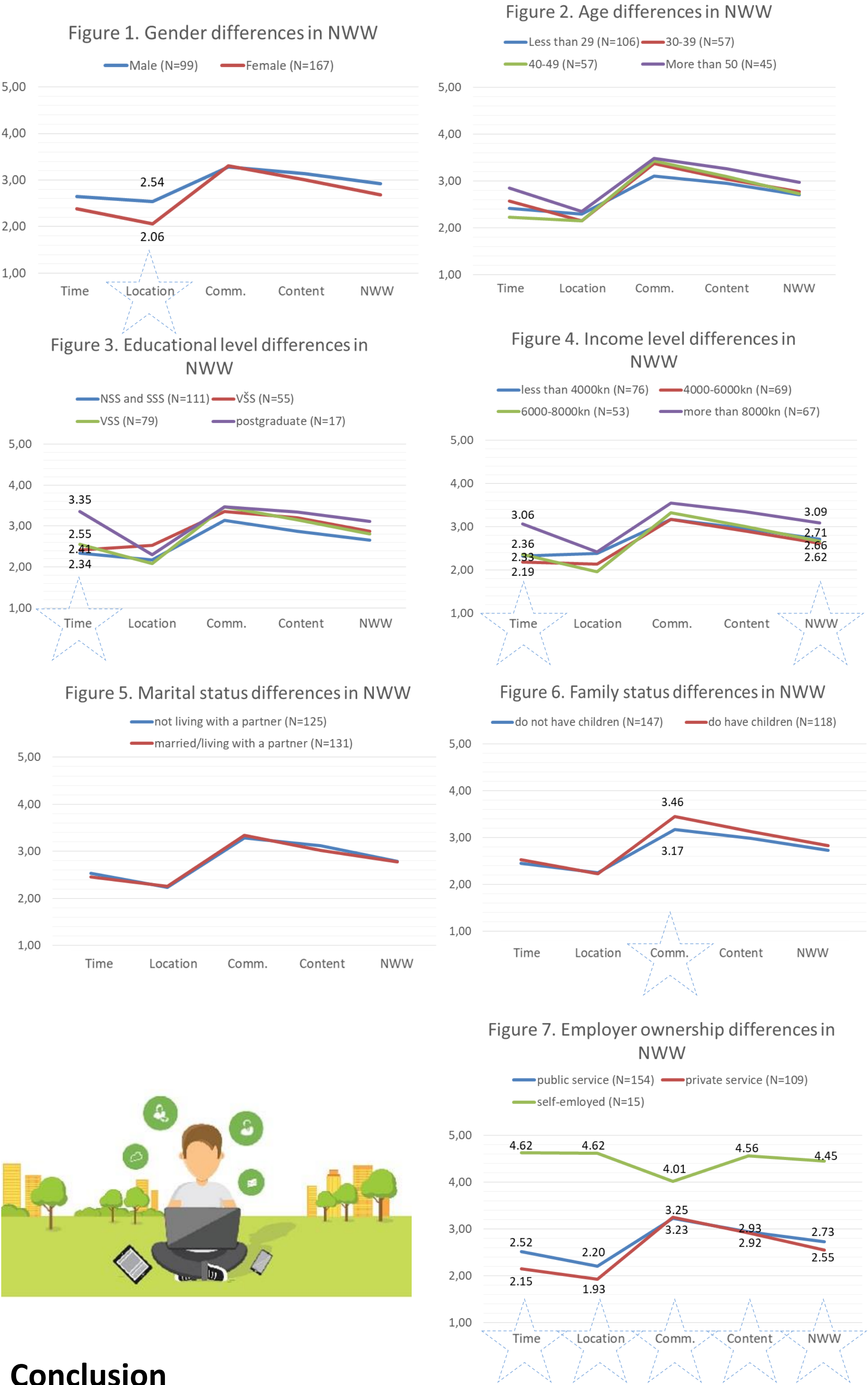
One-way ANOVA results showed significant differences in representation of NWW (and its subscales) in groups of employees’ varying in demographic, family- and work-related characteristics (Figures 1-7). At least one subscale of NWW was significantly different between subgroups of employees varying in gender, educational level, income level, family status and ownership of the employer. No significant differences in NWW were found in subgroups varying in age and marital status.

### Correlation analysis: Relation between NWW and employees’ well-being in various groups of employees

We used four well-being criteria: work-related affective well-being, work-family conflict, satisfaction with life and recovery from work. A correlation analysis was done separately for each subgroup of interest: female vs. male participants; aged below/above median of the sample; high-school degree vs. graduate and postgraduate degrees; with personal income less than 6000kn vs. more than 6000kn; married/living with a partner vs. not married; having vs. not having children. Some of the subgroups visible in Figures 1-7 had to be merged to increase the statistical power of analyses. Categories that could not be merged were dropped from analyses. The findings of correlation analyses are summed in Figure 8.

job affective well-being	satisfaction with life	recovery from work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>correlated with NWW in subgroups:</li><li>• male (.28)</li><li>• female (.41)</li><li>• both younger (.38) and older (.37) employees</li><li>• both less (.38) and more (.34) educated employees</li><li>• income less than 6000kn (.41),</li><li>• income higher than 6000kn (.29)</li><li>• both married (.39) and not married employees (.40)</li><li>• having children (.28)</li><li>• not having children (.43)</li><li>• public sector (.46)</li><li>• private sector (.20)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>correlated with NWW in subgroups:</li><li>• male (.24)</li><li>• employees with postgraduate degree (.25)</li><li>• income higher than 6000kn (.26)</li><li>• not having children (.17)</li><li>• public sector (.21)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>correlated with NWW in subgroups:</li><li>• female (.17)</li><li>• employees older than 34 (.33)</li><li>• employees with postgraduate degree (.18)</li><li>• income higher than 6000kn (.20)</li><li>• married employees (.18)</li><li>• having children (.19)</li><li>• public sector (.19)</li></ul>

Figure 8. Correlations between NWW and employees’ well-being in various groups of employees



## Conclusion

Even though this study design does not justify causal interpretation, based on findings some practical interventions can be suggested for encouraging NWW and enhancing employees’ well-being. Correlations with family- and subjective well-being criteria indicate that not all employees’ groups benefit from flexible work design in the same way and to the same extent. For example, our descriptive analyses show that NWW are more present in the employees’ subgroups working on the jobs with more autonomy, however, correlation analyses show they might enhance employees’ well-being on less paid jobs in public sector, as well. Hence, organizational support for encouraging work flexibility should be customized to better suit every employee.

