

Work time control in Sweden: Findings from a representative cohort

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Introduction

Two aspects of work time control (WTC) can be distinguished: an individual's autonomy regarding the duration of the working day (number of hours worked and start and finish times) and the distribution of working time (taking work breaks and vacation).^[1] We examine whether this structure, often neglected in past research, can be seen in a representative sample of Swedish workers.

Differences exist in the degree to which workers have control over their working time. Women and shift workers have often reported low control over scheduling and time off. In regard to age and family situation, findings are inconclusive.^[2,3] However, the latest European research is now a decade old.

Aim

The present study aimed to

1. replicate the two-dimensional structure underlying WTC (control over scheduling and control over time off),
2. investigate differences in the levels of control over scheduling and over time off by gender, age, family situation, occupational sector, and work schedule.

Methods & Materials

The study was based on the 2014 data collection of the Swedish Longitudinal Occupational Survey of Health (SLOSH; n=14 974) which is a follow-up of a representative sample of the Swedish working population. WTC was measured using an adapted 6-item index developed by Ala-Mursula et al. differentiating between two factors: control over daily hours and control over time off.^[2] Differences in WTC by work and demographic characteristics were examined with independent sample t-tests, one-way ANOVAs and gender-stratified logistic regressions.

Results

Women, shift and public sector workers reported lower control in both factors (Figure 1 & 2). Age showed small associations with WTC while a stronger link was suggested for civil status and family situation. Night, roster and rotating shift work were the most influential factors on reporting low control over daily hours and time off.

Conclusions

Women, shift and public-sector workers perceived lower levels of control over daily hours and time off. Public health implications should be examined in future research, in particular if increased levels of either factor of WTC can decrease health problems associated with unfavourable working schedules.

References

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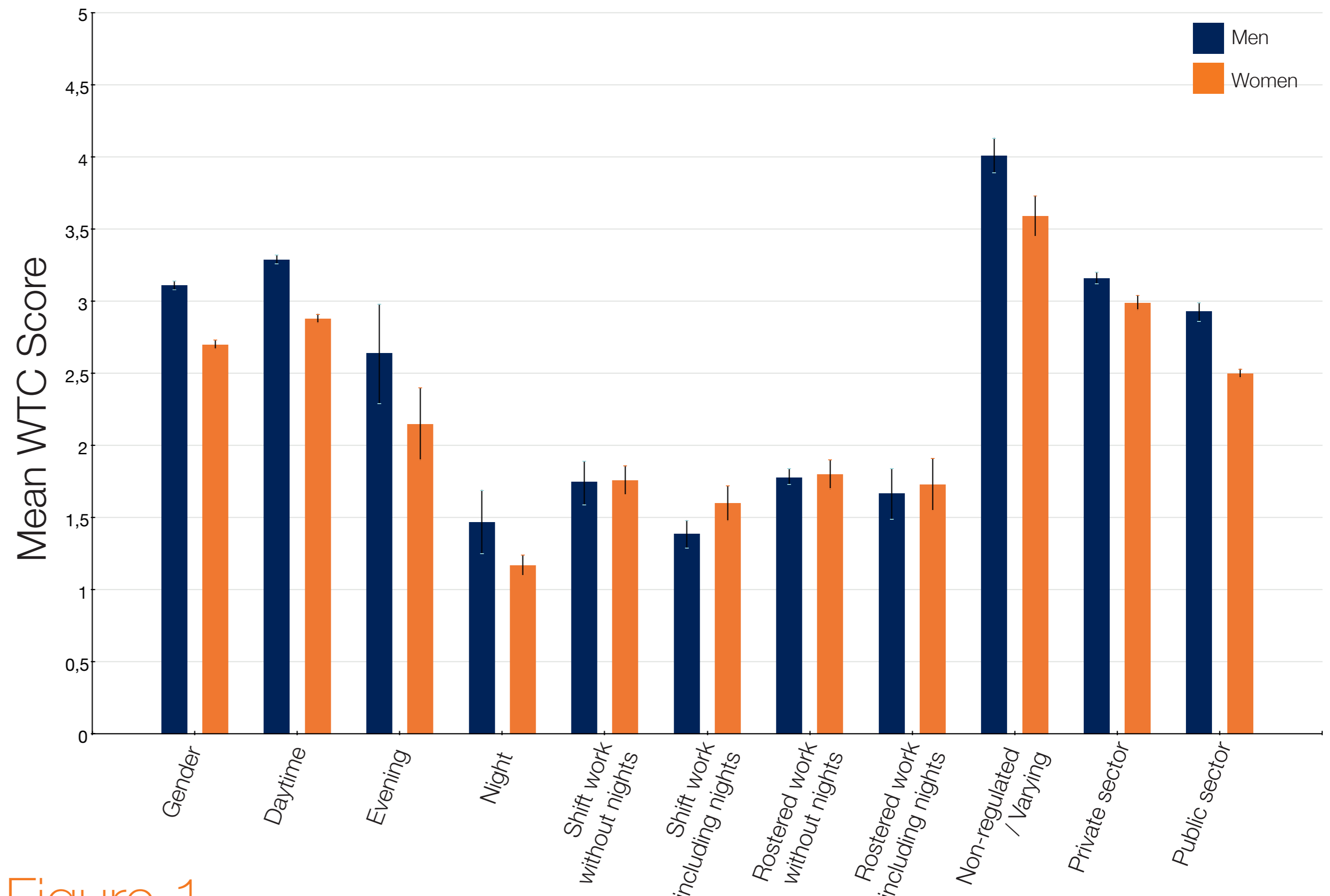


Figure 1

Gender-stratified averages in **control over daily hours** regarding working time and sector (95% confidence intervals).

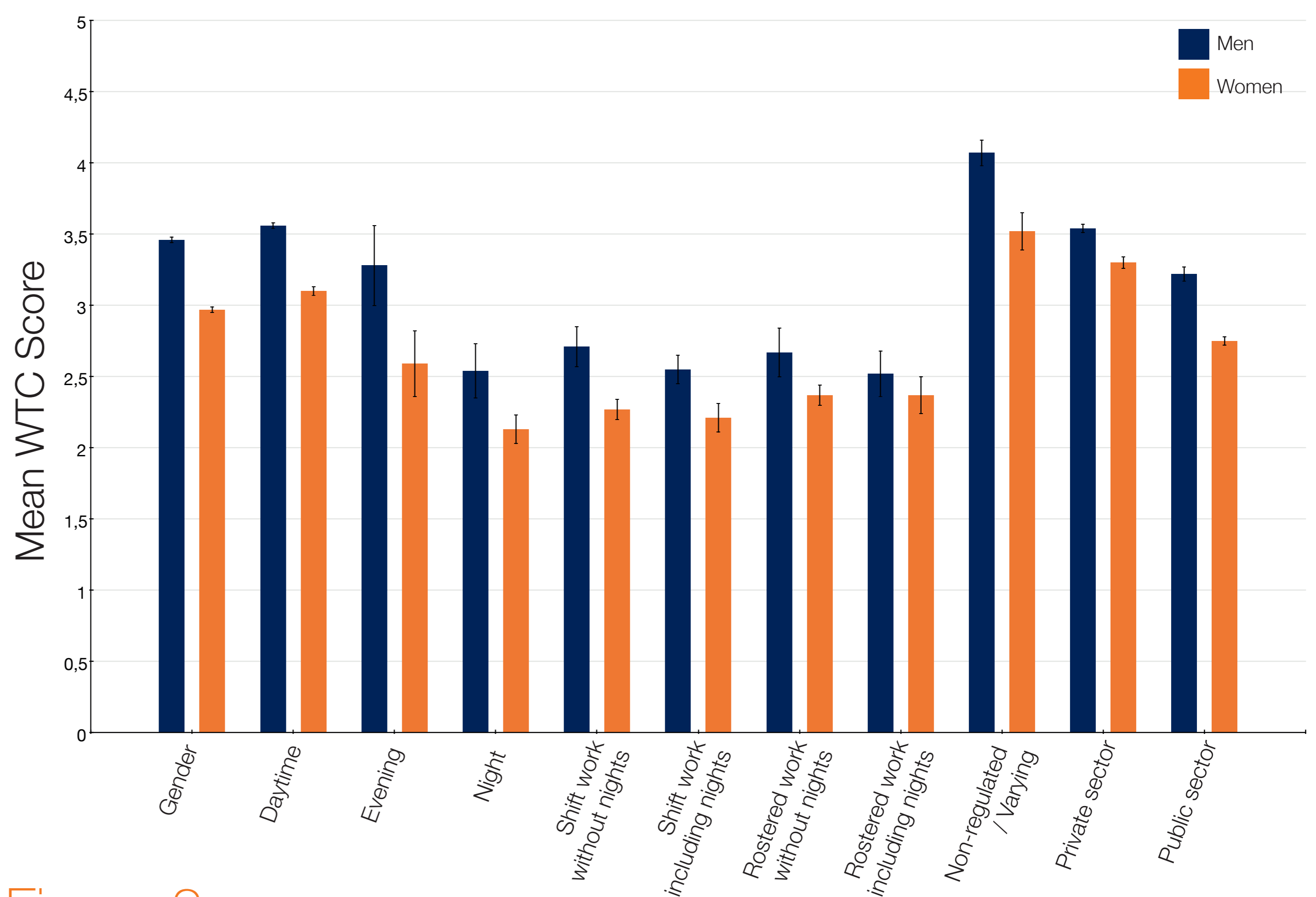


Figure 2

Gender-stratified averages in **control over time off** regarding working time and sector (95% confidence intervals).

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