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# Perceptions of Flexible Work Arrangements Among Women Researchers in Serbia: Evidence from Social and Humanities Science Research Sectors



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## ABSTRACT

*The increasing volatility and unpredictability of the business environment are encouraging organizations to implement flexible work arrangements. Starting from the assumption that such arrangements can also be beneficial in the research sector, especially in the humanities and social sciences, this study specifically focuses on gender differences in the perception and experience of flexible working arrangements among male and female researchers. The aim is to examine the relationship between gender and work model preferences, and to identify potential differences in attitudes towards flexible forms of work between women and men, with a special emphasis on the preferences of female researchers. For the purposes of this research, an empirical methodology was employed, involving data collection through a standardized questionnaire, followed by statistical analysis that included descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, the Chi-square test of*

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*independence, and binary logistic regression. Research findings indicate that gender is not a decisive factor in the choice of the primary place of work, that is, the preferred model, but they reveal certain differences in women's experiences compared to men regarding flexible forms of work.*

**KEYWORDS:** *flexible work arrangements, women, scientific research sector, benefits, challenges, preferences, hybrid work model, remote work*

## **Introduction**

Flexible work arrangements (FWAs) represent a relatively recent phenomenon, whose adoption has been accelerated by technological advancements, shifts in work habits and employee expectations, and global trends that became particularly pronounced after the Covid-19 pandemic. They encompass various work arrangements that allow employees to perform their tasks more flexibly outside traditional working hours or locations (Kurnaz, 2024) and may include remote work (from home or another location), flexible working hours, hybrid work models, shortened workweeks, job sharing, and similar arrangements.

The growing interest in new work practices stems from changes in labor market supply and demand (Kunaz, 2024), as well as from numerous positive effects that flexibility brings to employees, employers and society. Positive employee perceptions of FWA can significantly enhance engagement, including various forms of discretionary and helpful behavior (Fletcher, 2016). FWAs also have the potential to improve productivity (Ferreira, 2012; Fletcher, 2016), support work-life balance (Allen, 2015; Ferdous et al., 2023; Shanker, 2023), optimize time and resources (McKinsey & Company, 2023a), and contribute to lower stress levels and better mental health (Howington, 2023; Shimura et al., 2021). From the employer's perspective, these work models enable the reduction of overhead costs and the employment of experts without geographical restrictions, primarily members of the younger population, for whom flexibility is extremely important (Ciarniene & Vienazindiene, 2018). It is important to consider that flexible work models also have a positive impact on the environment (Roberto et al., 2023; Orzeł & Wolniak, 2022).

Even though FWAs bring numerous advantages, they also imply certain limitations. Challenges typically refer to work organisation, supervision, motivation, communication and coordination, team cohesion

and maintaining a clear boundary between personal and professional responsibilities (Klopotek, 2017; Ferreira, 2021; Yang et al., 2022).

FWAs, including remote work, are becoming increasingly popular in the scientific research sector and are increasingly perceived as a natural part of academic work (Widar et al., 2022). The trend is particularly pronounced in areas of research that rely on data processing. In this context, flexible work approaches provide a higher level of autonomy, enable a better balance between work and private life, and at the same time encourage creativity (Hunter, 2019).

Despite the growing popularity, knowledge of FWA's impact on research work and on employee attitudes, particularly among women researchers, remains very limited. However, analyzing women's preferences regarding FWA has become increasingly relevant, given the steady increase in the number of women in higher education and research institutions in Serbia, particularly in the humanities, social sciences and medical fields (Lazarević-Moravčević et al., 2023). The identified gap in the literature reveals the need for specific research that would shed light on how women in science experience different work models, their preferences, and how these arrangements affect their motivation, focus and balance between work and private life. Moreover, understanding the relationship between FWAs and gender equality is crucial for policymakers and social partners aiming to create an inclusive and equitable work environment (Kurnaz, 2024).

Building on the previously discussed arguments, this study aims to explore the relationship between gender and preferred work models (remote, office-based, hybrid), and to examine the preferences of employees in Serbia's research sector regarding flexible work arrangements, with a particular focus on women's experience and attitudes. Accordingly, the following research questions are proposed:

- Are preferences for specific work arrangements related to gender?
- How do women perceive and adopt FWAs, including associated challenges and limitations?
- Are there differences in attitudes and preferences towards FWAs between women and men?

The structure of the paper is organized as follows. The introductory part is followed by a literature review that provides a theoretical framework for research. Then, the empirical methodology based on the survey questionnaire is presented, followed by the results and discussion. Finally,

concluding remarks are presented explaining the contributions and key limitations of the research.

## **Literature Review**

### **Gender Aspects of Flexible Work Arrangements**

Numerous studies have examined the relationship between gender and employees' preferences for different work models, as well as their perceptions of the benefits of FWAs (Brulin et al., 2023; Chung, 2020; Jeffrey et al., 2008; Giménez-Nadal & Velilla, 2024). Existing research generally indicates that gender differences can influence the choice of preferred work model and expectations regarding flexible work options (Banerjee et al., 2025; Ciarniene & Vienazindiene, 2018; Marcén & Morales 2025; Eurofound and the International Labour Office, 2017). Research also suggests that when choosing a job, women value flexibility more than men, primarily flexible working hours as a form of FWA, while men more often prefer job security and high earnings (Valet et al., 2021).

The relevant literature indicates the existence of certain differences in the perception of the benefits of FWA between women and men. Agnoletto (2024) points to the fact that flexibility positively affects women's satisfaction with work and life, as well as their mental health. For men, the positive effects primarily relate to job satisfaction. According to certain studies, women primarily use flexibility to achieve a balance between personal and work responsibilities. In contrast, men tend to use these work models often to gain greater autonomy and control over work processes and to enhance their commitment to work tasks (Ko & Kim, 2018; Hofäcker & König, 2013), which may lead to a blurring of the boundaries between personal and professional responsibilities (Brulin et al., 2023).

Some authors argue that in societies with pronounced traditional gender roles, FWAs can further contribute to the deepening of gender inequality due to the uneven division of household and family responsibilities (Alfarran, 2021; Eurofound, 2017). In these societies, women are typically expected to use flexibility to meet family obligations, while men are more likely to leverage it to advance their careers. These patterns are less evident in countries with high female labor force participation and policies that support an equitable division of responsibilities between men and women (Hagqvist, 2018).

Due to often discriminatory assumptions that women use flexibility primarily for family responsibilities while men do so for professional reasons, women's requests for greater flexibility are frequently evaluated and interpreted differently by employers compared to similar requests made by men (Chung & Van der Lippe, 2020; Chung, 2020). In addition to these challenges, women's use of flexible work arrangements may also be accompanied by obstacles related to career advancement, earnings, social security and social isolation (Kurnaz, 2024). This is in line with the identified "sticky floor" phenomenon used to explain factors hindering the career path of women, especially in the early stages (Stanišić & Ječmenica, 2025) and the lack of institutional mechanisms for the achievement of gender equality, including position of women in local communities (Brnjac & Đukić, 2018).

The effect of gender on FWA use is particularly noticeable in the context of life stages. According to the findings of Jeffrey et al. (2008), in childfree life stages, men and women are similar in using and valuing flexible work options. However, differences become more pronounced at the stages when children are present and are most prominent throughout the early childhood period. Kim (2020) suggests that parenthood can significantly influence women's and men's attitudes toward FWAs. His study highlights that working from home and reduced working hours facilitate more effective interaction between mothers and their children, while flexible work schedules lead to greater participation of fathers. Augustine et al. (2024) argue that flexible working hours increase mothers' involvement in parenting activities, but that these effects are not significant for fathers.

Some studies further emphasize that access to flexibility and employees' preferences for different work arrangements depend not only on gender but also on the gender structure within the specific occupation. Although the opposite might have been expected, research shows that occupations with a predominantly female workforce are characterized by significantly lower availability of FWAs compared to professions with a higher share of men or gender-balanced occupations (Jacobi et al., 2025; Magda & Lipowska, 2022).

## **Flexible Working Arrangements from a Women's Perspective: Benefits and Challenges**

Despite inconsistent findings regarding gender differences in the use of FWAs, most studies suggest that women use them more. The findings of some studies suggest that the preference for FWA is particularly pronounced among women who have children, those with higher level of education and income, employed in the private sector, having a disability or a health problem, and not holding managerial positions (Marcén & Morales, 2025; Subramaniam et al., 2015; White & Maniam, 2020; Kurnez, 2024). Also, some authors note that women's preference for all types of FWA, especially after parenthood, increases, while men's preferences remain constant (Wang & Cheng, 2025). On the other hand, Pawar and Hipparkar (2025) prove that a positive attitude towards FWA is present among women of all ages, regardless of marital status or parentage.

The increasing use of FWAs among women, especially after the pandemic, raises the question of how they perceive and evaluate these work models. Understanding their preferences provides insight into the motivations, needs, challenges and expectations associated with flexible work patterns. Identifying the factors that shape perceptions and behaviour of specific social groups represents an important focus of contemporary research in the social sciences (Krstić et al., 2019).

Previous research shows that women engaged in FWA recognize numerous advantages, such as better work-life balance, less stress, positive impact on health, and more efficient use of time and money (Ciarniene & Vienazindiene, 2018). Working in a remote work regime, they are more likely to enjoy better overall health compared to those working under standard working patterns. Among women who work in a flexible mode, feelings of nervousness, tension and anxiety are less often present, which indicates the positive impact of FWA on psychological well-being (Kurnaz, 2024). Flexible working conditions have a positive effect on women's work and life satisfaction, including their mental health (Agnoletto, 2024; Kashive & Roy, 2025). This is especially pronounced under high-workload conditions (Jamunarani & Syed, 2025).

Research performed by Alsulami et al. (2022) shows that FWAs have a significant impact on the well-being of female academics and contribute to social sustainability. However, the study also highlights that not all forms of FWA are equally important for women in this field. According to the

findings, women particularly value flexibility in work location, while placing less emphasis on flexibility in scheduling. On the other hand, Rahman (2019) shows that flexible working hours, remote work and job sharing, but not compressed workweeks, positively affect the job satisfaction of women employed in academia. Additionally, the findings suggest that, even within this activity, FWA positively affects job satisfaction and reduces women's intention to leave the job, but do not indicate a significant connection between flexibility and commitment to the organization (Zhang & Chan, 2025).

Flexible work policies, while offering benefits, can also have negative consequences for women, including professional isolation, reduced visibility, limited access to projects, blurred boundaries between work and personal life and the reinforcement of traditional gender roles. Remote work can also entail more interruptions, unpredictable schedules, and longer working hours for women, which can undermine work-life balance (Commonwealth of Australia, 2023). Certain studies indicate that the transition to flexible working regimes among women can lead to overtime work and greater engagement in childcare-related activities (Maraziotis, 2024). Women who handle most household tasks alongside flexible schedules report higher levels of work-life conflict. In contrast, men experience such conflicts mainly when they share household duties equally but work fixed hours (Leshchenko & Strauss, 2025). The need for greater flexibility may lead women to accept insecure and lower-paid jobs. Therefore, FWA options should be supported by social protection, equal pay and opportunities for professional development (Kurnaz, 2024), there were particularly evolving during Covid-19 period (Ognjenović & Đukić, 2023). Also, effective remote work relies on digital competencies, while studies among female entrepreneurs in Serbia indicate a certain gap between assessed and actual skills (Ivanović et al., 2021).

The analysis of the relevant literature indicates that FWAs can represent an adequate mechanism for supporting women in various activities, including the scientific research sector. However, the effectiveness of FWA depends on various factors. It primarily depends on the cultural framework and organizational practices that enable or limit its equitable application (Borqvist et al., 2021).

Although flexibility is often promoted as a tool to help women balance work and family responsibilities, its availability, without broader systemic support (Ajonbadi et al., 2024) and the removal of gender-based barriers

(Chung & Van der Lippe, 2020), is insufficient. In order for flexible work policies to really increase job satisfaction among women and produce concrete effects, they should be coupled with institutional support and respect for gender specificities (Kashive & Roy, 2025; White & Maniam, 2020).

## Methodology

The methodological framework of the paper is designed to enable a reliable examination of the preferences and attitudes of employees in the scientific research sector of Serbia (field of social sciences and humanities) according to FWAs. The collection of primary data was carried out through an anonymous and structured online questionnaire, in the period September - November 2024. The questionnaire covered the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents, as well as various aspects of their professional engagement, including working conditions, motivation and perception regarding FWAs. The survey questionnaire was distributed to more than 3,000 employees in Serbia's scientific research sector, with a response rate of approximately 12%. The total number of valid responses to the survey questionnaire was 353. The questionnaire consisted of 22 questions, of which 9 were analyzed in detail for the purposes of this research. The questions or answers that were relevant to the research in this paper refer to gender, age, location, time to work, number of household members, choice of primary place of work, job satisfaction, etc. Some of the questions included a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree.

*Table 1: Variable characteristics*

Gender	Female (64.3%); Male (35.7%)
Age	25-29 (10.8%); 30-34 (14.7%); 35-39 (18.7%); 40-44 (15.3%); 45-49 (13.3%); 50-54 (13%); 55-59 (8.2%); Over 60 years (5.9%)
Time to Work	Less than 30 minutes (43.3%); Between 30 and 60 minutes (39.7%); Between 60 and 90 minutes (8.2%); Over 90 minutes (8.8%)
Household Size	Live alone (16.1%); Two members (24.9%); Three members (28.3%); Four members (22.7%); Five or more members (7.9%)

Primary Location	Office (32.6%); House (25.2%); Combination – hybrid model (40.2%); Other space (2.0%)
Job Satisfaction (Likert scale)	1 (0.6%); 2 (3.4%); 3 (15.6%); 4 (42.5%); 5 (38.0%)

*Source: Authors' calculation*

The survey data were analyzed using statistical software PSPP. Descriptive statistics, Chi-square tests of independence, correlation analysis, and binary logistic regression were employed. Table 1 presents a descriptive overview of the sample.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Key Factors Shaping Employees' Preferences for Flexible Work**

According to the results of this research (Table 2), the gender of employees does not show a statistically significant correlation with the choice of primary workplace. The results of the study indicate that gender is not a determining factor in shaping work preferences and that the choice of work location primarily depends on other circumstances. These findings suggest that flexible work models are not gender-biased, while the possible influence of gender on their outcomes depends on the specific context (Hussain et al., 2014; Ciarniene & Vienazindiene, 2018; Chung & Van der Lippe, 2020). Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients among the variables: Gender, Age, Primary Location, Household Size, Time to Work, and Job Satisfaction.

To identify additional factors that influence the preferences of employees according to different work models (choice of primary workplace), the influence of age, distance from work and household size was also analyzed.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Primary Location</b>	<b>Household Size</b>	<b>Time to Work</b>	<b>Job Satisfaction</b>
Gender	1.000					
Age	0.017	1.000				
Primary Location	-0.024	-0.090*	1.000			
Household Size	0.018	0.067	-0.014	1.000		
Time to Work	-0.025	-0.077	0.095*	0.098*	1.000	
Job Satisfaction	0.116**	0.113**	-0.010	0.009	-0.009	1.000

Note: \*, \*\* means that  $p < 0.1$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , respectively

Source: Authors' estimation

From Table 2, it can be observed that the Pearson correlation coefficient between Age and Primary Location is negative and marginally significant. Although the observed relationship is weak and marginally significant, it suggests that age may influence employees' choice of work location in Serbia's research sector, affecting their preference for office-based, remote, or hybrid work arrangements. These results replicate earlier findings (Pacheco, 2024) and indicate that younger populations (especially members of Generation Y and Z) show stronger preferences for FWA (Commonwealth of Australia, 2023; Future of Work Institute, 2012). Research shows that employees from different age and gender groups may have different expectations and priorities depending on the desired work models (Ciarniene & Vienazindiene, 2018; Valet et al., 2021).

This study confirmed a statistically significant correlation between Household size and Commuting distance with the choice of Primary work location (Table 2). The results suggest that employees from larger households and those living farther from work are more likely to choose certain work arrangements. Previous research also indicates that the possibility of working from home is greater for employees with longer commutes, and that parenthood, particularly for mothers, further shapes preferences for FWAs (Commonwealth of Australia, 2023; Kim, 2020; Augustine et al., 2024).

However, the Pearson correlation coefficient between Job Satisfaction and both Gender and Age is positive and statistically significant, with p-values below 0.05. A Chi-square test of independence, presented in Table 3, was applied to examine the relationship between Gender and the following variables: Positive Job Satisfaction, Less Stress, More Focus and Efficiency, Support from Family, The Impact of Housework, and Hybrid Mode.

*Table 3: Chi-square test between Gender and different variables*

<b>Variable</b>	<b><math>\chi^2</math></b>	<b>p-value</b>
Positive Job Satisfaction	12.03**	0.017
Less Stress	9.06*	0.060
More Focus and Efficiency	6.30	0.178
Support from Family	2.25	0.690
The Impact of Housework	14.04***	0.007
Hybrid Mode	9.63**	0.047

Notes: \*\*\*, \*\*, \* is p-value smaller than 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively

Source: Authors' calculation

The Chi-square tests between Gender and More Focus and Efficiency ( $\chi^2 = 6.30$ ,  $p = 0.178$ ) and between Gender and Support from Family ( $\chi^2 = 2.25$ ,  $p = 0.690$ ) are not statistically significant. So, between these variables, there are no associations, meaning that we cannot reject the null hypothesis that Gender and More Focus and Efficiency, Gender and Support from Family are independent.

The Chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 12.03$  with  $p = 0.017$ ) indicated a statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) association between Gender and Positive Job Satisfaction, meaning that the observed differences in positive job satisfaction between genders are unlikely to be due to random chance. A low p-value (less than 0.05) leads to rejecting the null hypothesis that gender and positive job satisfaction are independent. Thus, this test indicates that there is a real difference in positive job satisfaction levels between men and women, and this is not just a random fluctuation. This result is also confirmed by the binary logistic regression presented in Table 5.

## Experiences and Perspectives of Women on Work Flexibility in Serbia's Scientific Research Sector

The findings of this research did not confirm the existence of a connection between gender and preferred location of work (Table 2). Previous research also shows that the orientation towards flexible work practices is nearly equal across all employees in Serbia's research sector (social sciences and humanities), regardless of gender, with the hybrid work model being the most widespread (Lazarević-Moravčević, 2025).

*Table 4: Employee perceptions of the benefits and challenges of remote work: ranking factors by frequency of selection*

<b>Key benefits of remote work</b>			
<b>Rank</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Men</b>
1	Flexibility in working hours	1	Flexibility in working hours
2	Efficiency through less commuting	2	Efficiency through less commuting
3	Better focus with fewer office distractions	3	Better focus with fewer office distractions
4	Work-Life balance	4	More autonomy over work
<b>Key challenges of remote work</b>			
<b>Rank</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Men</b>
1	Work-life boundary challenges	1	Work-life boundary challenges
2	Reduced colleague interaction	2	Reduced colleague interaction
3	Focus and motivation issues	3	Focus and motivation issues
4	Loneliness and isolation	4	Loneliness and isolation

*Source: Authors' research*

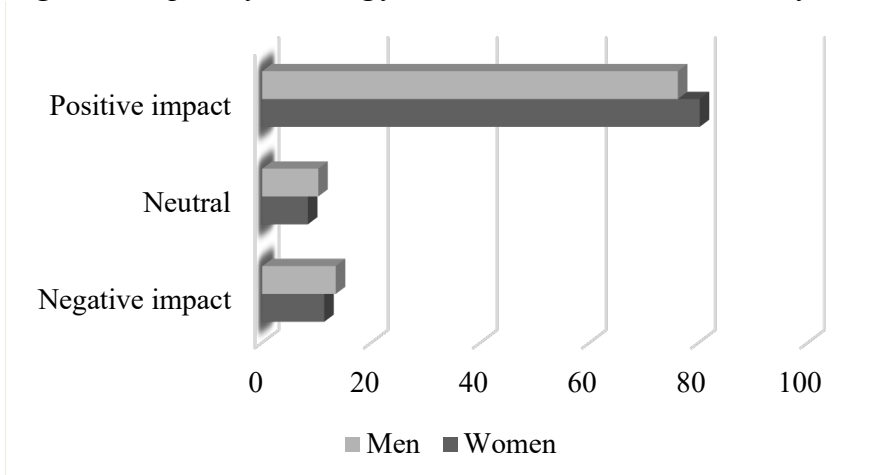
On the other hand, a detailed analysis of respondents' answers reveals differences in the perception of key remote-work benefits between women and men. While both genders recognize the same three main benefits, their focus on specific aspects differs. The benefits of remote work identified in this study by both women and men (flexibility in working hours, more efficient use of time due to the absence of daily commuting and greater focus resulting from fewer office related distractions) have also been confirmed by numerous studies (Ferreira et al., 2021; Hill et al., 2008;

Russell et al., 2009; Kurnaz, 2024; Lazarević-Moravčević, 2024). On the other hand, compared to women, men more often highlight the benefits of control and autonomy in scheduling work activities as a benefit of remote work, while women emphasize achieving a work-life balance (Table 4). This finding suggests the existence of gender-differentiated perspectives in experiencing the benefits of flexible forms of work and has been confirmed in other studies (Ko & Kim, 2018).

Although achieving a work-life balance is recognized as a key benefit of remote work (especially by women), both genders identify maintaining clear boundaries between work and personal responsibilities as a major challenge (Table 4). This contrast between the perceived benefits and challenges of remote work has also been recognized in previous research. FWAs facilitate work-life balance but also blur the boundaries between them (Aczel et al., 2021; Russell et al., 2009). Other difficulties reported by respondents include reduced colleague interaction and communication challenges, problems with focus and motivation and feelings of loneliness and isolation (Lazarević-Moravčević, 2024).

Consistent with previous research (Agnolotto, 2024; Ko & Kim, 2018; Alsulami et al., 2022; Zhang & Chan, 2025; Rahman, 2019), the findings of this study also confirm that FWAs have a positive effect on employee satisfaction.

*Figure 1: Impact of Working from Home on Overall Job Satisfaction*



*Source: Authors' research*

In the context of gender differences, satisfaction with remote work is more pronounced among women (Table 5). About 80.2% of women fully or partially agree with the view that the possibility of working from home has a positive effect on general job satisfaction. Only 11.4% of women recognize a negative influence. Similar findings can be observed in the male population (Figure 1). This finding is also demonstrated by the results shown in Tables 3 and 5.

Table 5 presents the binary logistic regression, with Gender as the dependent variable. Table 5 shows that the estimated coefficient for Job Satisfaction is positive and statistically significant at the 0.05 level. However, the odds ratio (Exp(B)) of 1.35 indicates that job satisfaction is more important to women than to men (35%).

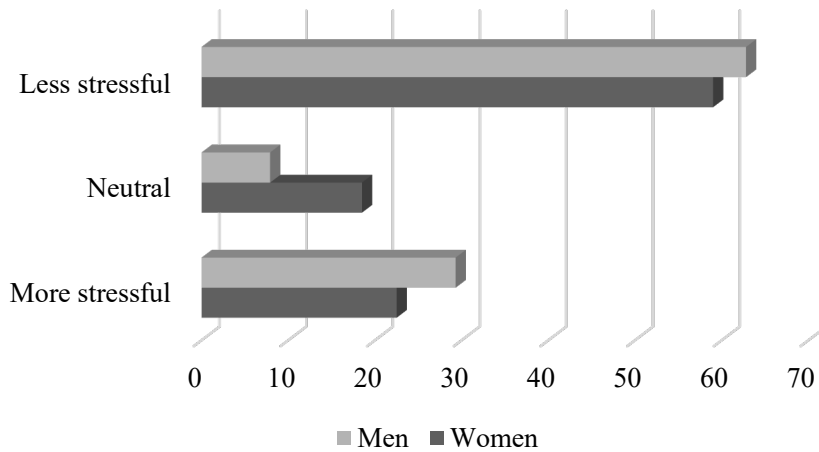
*Table 5: Binary Logistic Regression: dependent variable is Gender*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>Wald</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Exp(B)</b>
Household Size	0.03	0.09	0.12	0.730	1.03
Time to Work	-0.06	0.12	0.21	0.648	0.94
Primary Location	-0.05	0.13	0.14	0.711	0.95
Job Satisfaction	0.30**	0.14	4.67	0.031	1.35
Constant	-1.74**	0.73	5.73	0.017	0.18

Notes: \*\* means that  $p < 0.05$ .

Source: Authors' calculation

Based on the data analysis, both women and men perceive remote work as less stressful (Table 3). However, the Chi-square test for Gender and Less Stress is marginally significant, indicating that the degree of this reduction in stress differs between the two groups (Table 3 and Figure 2). Compared to men, women in the scientific research sector have a more balanced, cautious attitude toward this factor. About 18.5% have no clear opinion on the relationship between stress and working from home, while around 22.5% of women believe that the relationship is significant and negative (Figure 2). A more cautious stance may be explained by the fact that women, due to carrying a greater share of professional and family responsibilities, may experience higher levels of stress when working remotely (Weinreich et al., 2023).

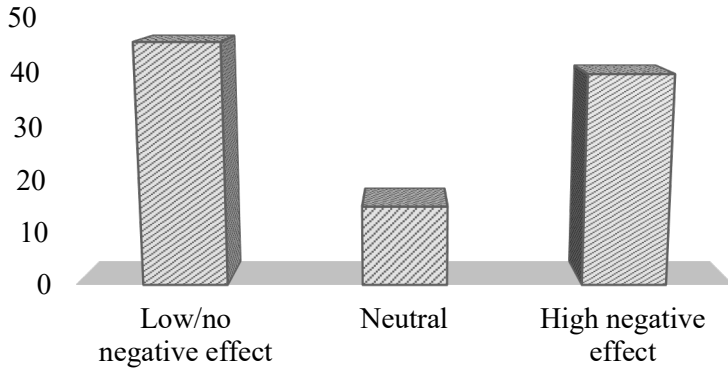
*Figure 2: Perceived Stress of Employees Working from Home*

*Source: Authors' research*

Based on the reported experiences of women researchers in the sample, which indicate the presence of stress related to remote work and difficulties in balancing private and professional obligations, perceptions of the impact of housework on productivity and family support while working from home were additionally examined (Figure 3). Furthermore, the Chi-square test between Gender and the Impact of Housework ( $\chi^2 = 14.04$ ;  $p = 0.007$ ) indicates a statistically significant difference between women and men in their perceptions of this impact (Table 3). This Chi-square test was highly statistically significant, and the low p-value (less than 0.05) leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis that Gender and the Impact of Housework are independent. The analysis shows that about 45.4% of women believe that household responsibilities do not negatively affect their research work when working remotely. However, a considerable proportion holds a different or uncertain view: 39.6% disagree with this statement, while 15% remain neutral.

The findings indicate heterogeneity in women's experiences and perceptions regarding the impact of family obligations on their research work. This suggests that a significant number of women in the sample struggle to effectively balance family and work responsibilities, with housework posing a potential obstacle to productive research.

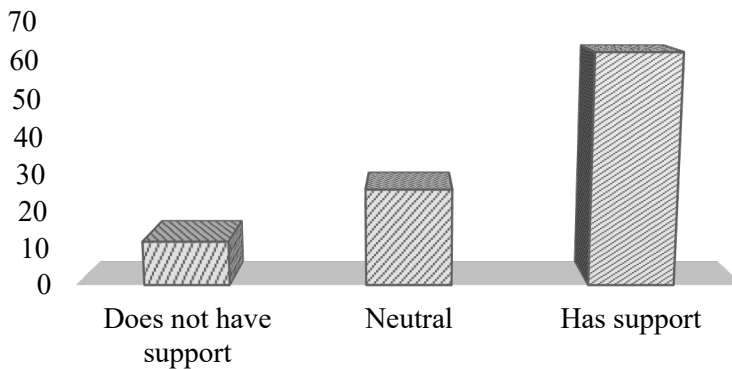
Figure 3: Women’s Assessment of the Effect of Household Tasks on Remote Work Productivity



Source: Authors’ research

Research results indicate a complex interaction between working from home and the distribution of household responsibilities, confirming that gender norms and housework can limit the benefits of working from home and negatively affect women, especially when the social context is not considered (Zvavahera & Chirima, 2023).

Figure 4: Women’s Perceived Family Support While Working from Home

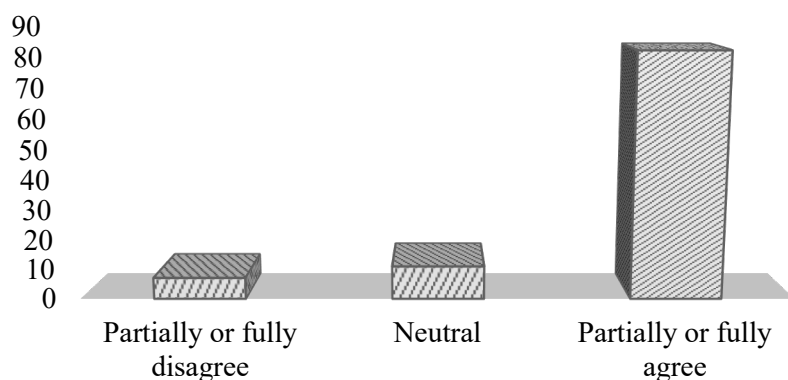


Source: Authors’ research

In fact, the results indicate that family support, although present for most of the respondents (Figure 4), is insufficient to fully offset the obstacles posed by women’s personal responsibilities. In other words,

support from other family members can reduce the burden on female researchers, but cannot eliminate it. Taking into account all the analyzed factors, i.e. the benefits and threats that women face when working from home, including the burden of housework, the division of responsibilities in the family, the support of family members, it is not surprising that women in the scientific research sector perceive the hybrid work model as the most suitable solution for scientific research work (Figure 5). This observation is consistent with the Chi-square test between Gender and Hybrid Mode ( $\chi^2 = 9.63$  with  $p = 0.047$ ). This test is statistically significant, indicating a real difference in practice Hybrid Mode between men and women (Table 3).

*Figure 5: Distribution of Responses among Women: The Hybrid Work Model is Most Suitable for Research Work*



*Source: Authors' research*

A hybrid work model can be particularly beneficial for women because it provides a higher level of flexibility while also neutralizing certain challenges of remote work. With this work model, it is possible to harmonize professional and family obligations more efficiently, use time more effectively, and maintain professional visibility and involvement. Additionally, hybrid work arrangements have a positive impact on stress, motivation, and overall job satisfaction, thereby further enhancing employee engagement and productivity. Due to these benefits, hybrid work is becoming an increasingly common practice in many organizations (McKinsey & Company, 2023b; Wigert et al., 2023; Lazarević - Moravčević, 2025).

## **Conclusion**

The study examined the existence of a relationship between gender and the choice of preferred work model (working from home or another location, working from office and hybrid work), as well as differences in employees' perceptions of FWA between women and men. A standardized questionnaire was used for this study. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, the Chi-square test of independence, and binary logistic regression are all components of our empirical approach. The results show that gender is not a statistically significant factor in the choice of primary work location, indicating that employees' preferences in Serbia's scientific research sector (social sciences and humanities) are largely independent of gender. At the same time, factors shaping the choice of work model to a greater extent were identified, including age, the distance of the office from the place of residence, and household size.

A detailed analysis of employees' attitudes towards FWAs shows that both genders generally report high job satisfaction and recognize a better work-life balance as a key advantage of remote work. This is particularly pronounced among women, who simultaneously perceive balancing work and private life as a significant advantage, but also as the main challenge of working remotely. Also, men, before emphasizing life balance, generally cite greater autonomy over their work schedule and environment as a key advantage of remote work. The analysis shows that women and men perceive the impact of household duties on their work engagement differently. Most women report that they have significant family support when working remotely; however, this support is not sufficient to fully alleviate the pressures arising from daily private responsibilities. Overall, despite family support, women still face significant challenges in balancing work and private life while working remotely.

The findings indicate that women in the research sector prefer flexible work arrangements, which are perceived as less stressful and as having a positive effect on job satisfaction, with the hybrid work model being particularly favored. Nevertheless, the experience of flexible work appears to be influenced by household responsibilities, while family support may partially mitigate related challenges.

These findings highlight the importance of considering flexible work models in a broader context, which is crucial for improving organizational policies in the scientific research sector. Considering the challenges that the

sector is experiencing due to the changed relationship between supply and demand in a dynamic environment, as well as intense competition (Mosurović-Ružičić et al., 2023; Marjanović et al., 2023), there is a need for changes that will adapt the sector to modern market requirements (Marković et al., 2015). The changes are largely related to improving work policies to create a stimulating work environment. Overall, the findings underscore the need for work policies in the research sector to better accommodate individual preferences, family obligations, distance from the workplace, and age, while maintaining alignment with organizational priorities. Developing such balanced and flexible policies is essential for fostering a supportive and effective research environment.

The results provide a significant contribution to the shaping of human resource management strategies in the scientific research sector. The identified attitudes of employees, especially perceptions among women, can provide relevant guidelines for harmonizing the work environment with employees' needs and demands regarding the desired level of flexibility at work.

In addition to its significant contribution, this paper also faces certain limitations. The analysis primarily focuses on the analysis of employee preferences, without a detailed consideration of all the factors that shape them. The analysis takes into account gender, age, household size and distance from work, but does not include the effects of other significant determinants, such as infrastructural support, leadership style and organizational culture. One of the limitations of this study refers to the relatively small sample size, which may affect the reliability of the results. Additionally, the findings cannot be fully generalized or used as a universal basis for human resource management policies across all sectors. The identified limitations raise additional questions while also providing valuable guidance for future research efforts.

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