

Gender, digitalization and the gig-economy: Old inequalities in the new world of work

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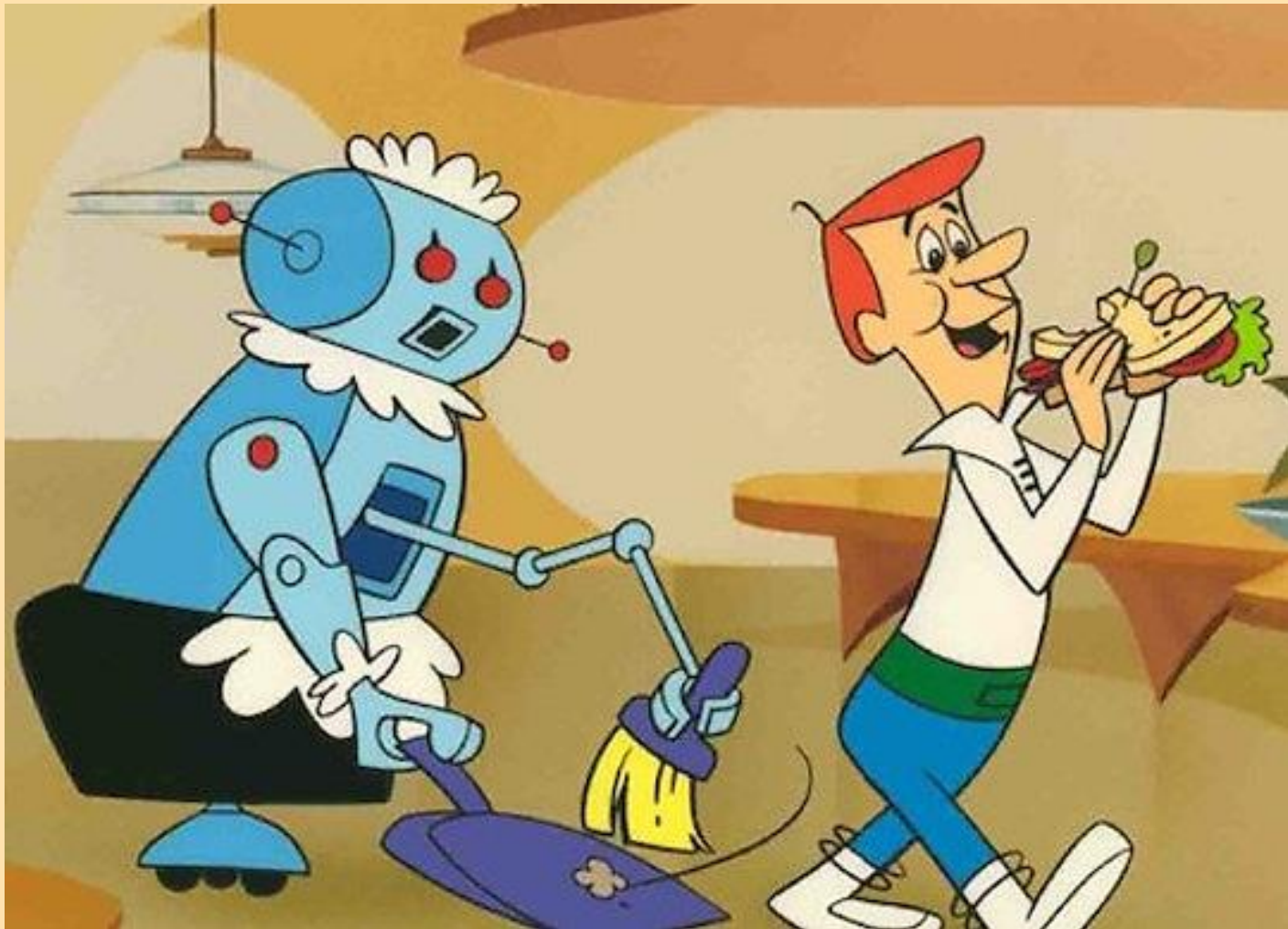
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1960s and 1980s





Holden workers operate assembly machinery, Elizabeth, South Australia
Source: <http://www.abc.net.au>

An employee works on sleeves for shirts made at the Union Line Inc. Graybear clothing manufacturing facility in Chicago, Ill.
Source: Tim Boyle | Bloomberg | Getty Images



Overview

- Changing world of work - digitalisation, automation, technological change
- Shifts in the occupational structure, place and timing of work, career patterns, as well as a further strain on a standard employment relationship
- What is the gender impact? Outcomes the same for men and women?
- Objective is to lay grounds for a discussion and introduce gender to the debate

Piasna A & J Drahokoupil (2017) Gender inequalities in the new world of work.
Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research, 23(3): 313-332.

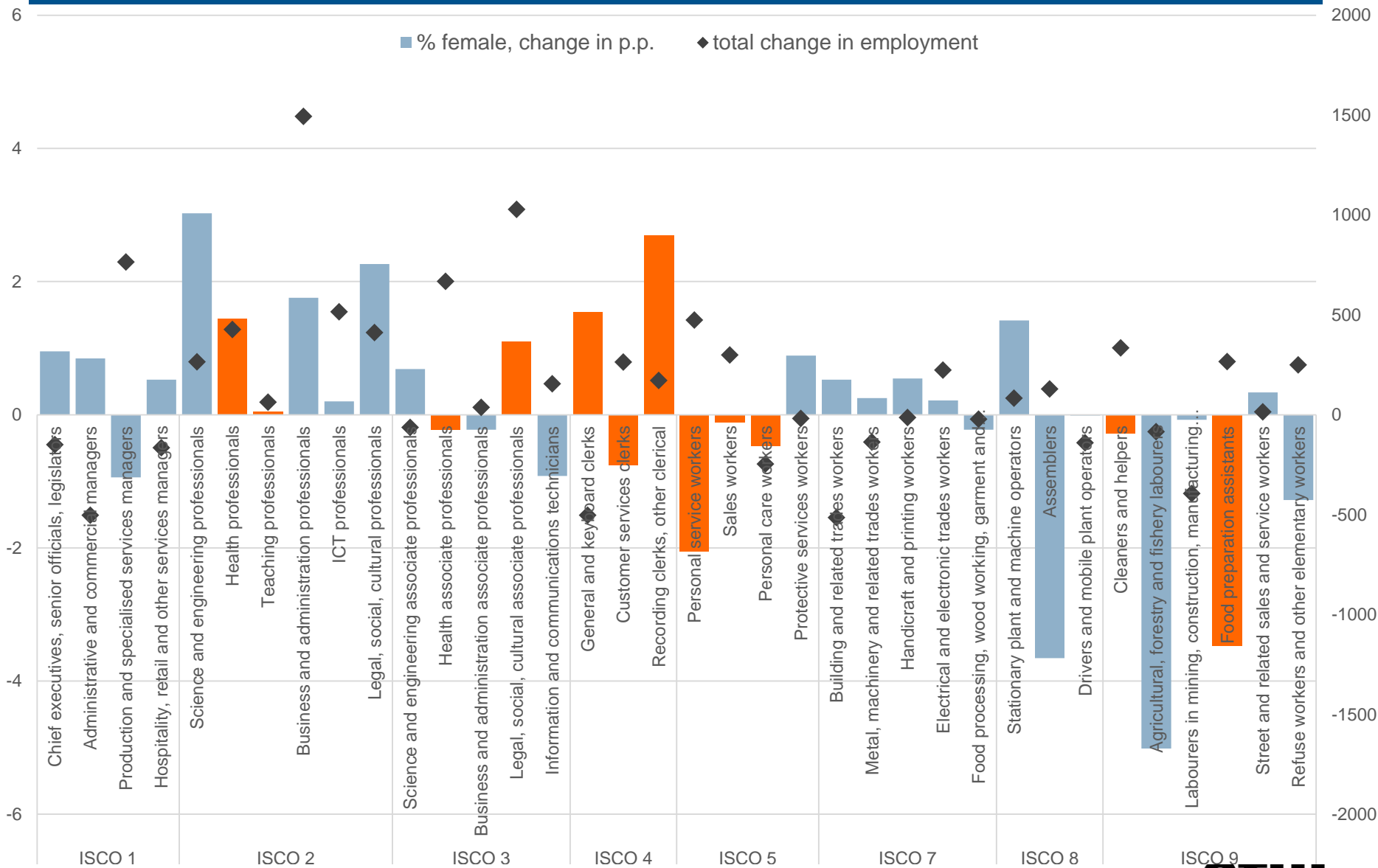
Theoretical framework

- Changing employment relations interact with existing social inequalities and gender segregation in paid and unpaid work; mutually shaped (Feldberg and Glenn, 1979; Gornick et al., 2009; Lewis, 1992; Vosko, 2000).
- Gender and segmentation theory perspective
- Two areas of change:
- Structure of employment → skill- or routine-biased technological change
 - Occupational structure
 - Task content of jobs
- Forms of work → flexible (timing and place) and non-standard work
 - Employment relationship
 - Work organisation

Theoretical framework

- More jobs for women ...
 - Non-automatable tasks involve inter-personal contact (female dominated personal services, care) but also creative, critical thinking (male dominated high-skilled professionals). Possible polarisation.
- .. but of lower quality
 - Expansion of atypical work (self-empl., contractors, freelancers) outside SER
- Any trade-offs?
 - More flexibility in time and place: better WLB, labour market integration of women / marginalised groups
 - Less personal contact with employer: less discrimination

Occupational structure -- change 2011-2015, EU28



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Platform work – small but exponentially growing

Gender composition highly dependent on the type of work, platform and region. Overlap with gender segregation in traditional sectors.

Deliveroo in Belgium:

- Food delivery
- Bikers



	Women	Men	N (contracts, 2 weeks)
Salaried	8.4%	91.6%	4,150
Student	11.0%	89.0%	18,548
Total	10.5%	89.5%	22,698

Task content of jobs

	Repetitive hand or arm movements	Short repetitive tasks of less than 1 minute	Short repetitive tasks of less than 10 minutes	Complex tasks	Learning new things
	gender gap W-M	gender gap W-M	gender gap W-M	gender gap W-M	gender gap W-M
Managers	8.7	-1.8	2.0	-9.6	-2.6
Professionals	-3.4	2.9	4.4	-4.7	0
Technicians and associate professionals	7.9	2.9	9.8	-5.8	-1.7
Clerical support workers	7.3	-0.7	0.3	2.8	5.6
Service and sales workers	7.8	2.4	0.2	-7.0	-0.1
Craft and related trades workers	17.8	5.1	11.1	-21.2	-6.2
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	17.5	20.0	10.2	-10.3	-0.3
Elementary occupations	3.9	8.9	4.0	-10.0	-18.0

EU28, 2015

Source: European Working Conditions Survey (Eurofound), own calculations.

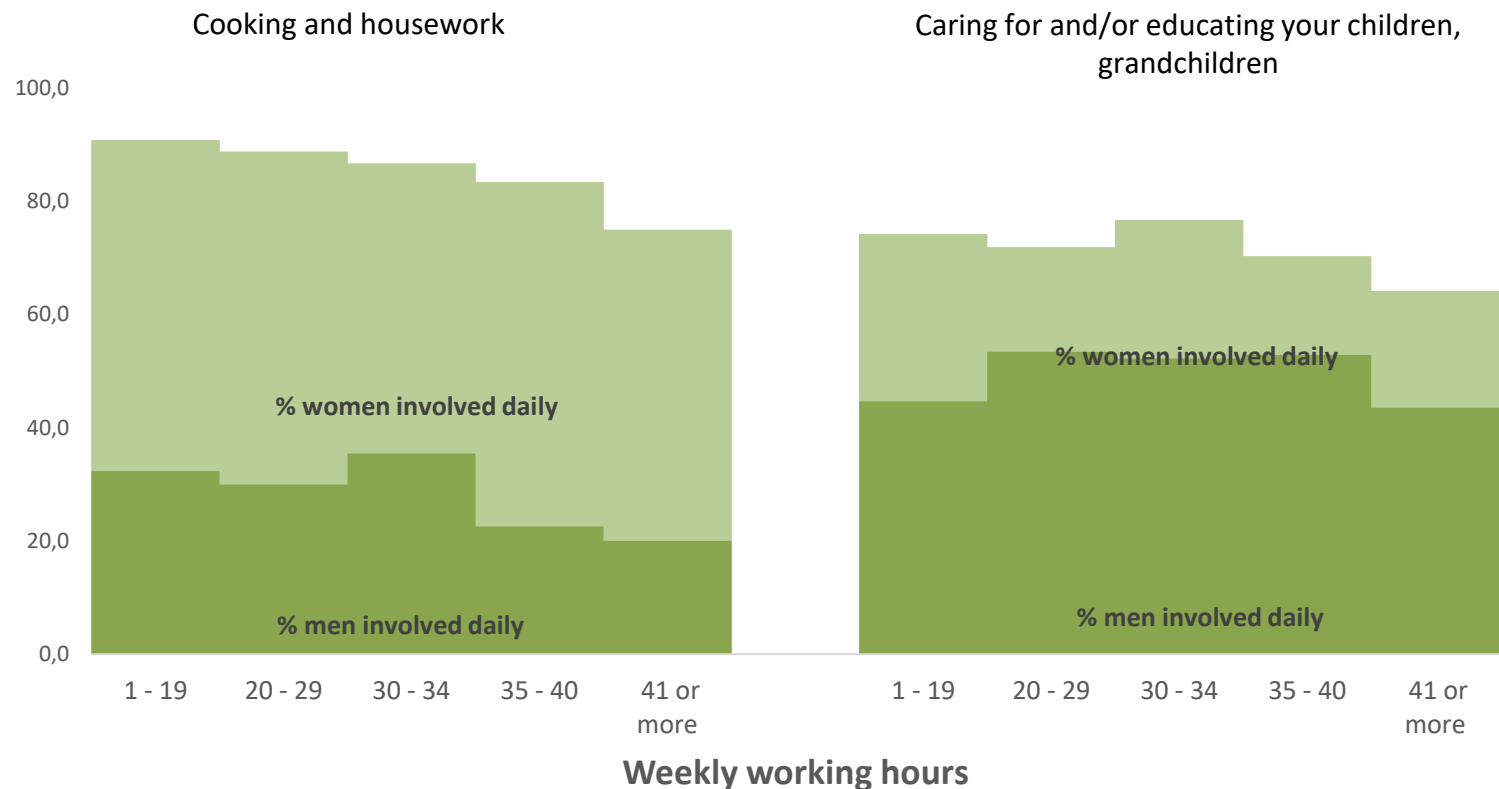
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Employment relationship

- Standard employment relationship gradually dismantled
- Male-centred, so fostering gender equality? But replaced by non-standard jobs, precariousness of employment traditionally also highly gendered
- Increasing fragmentation of work – multiple ‘gigs’, juggling self-account work for more than one employer/ client
- Growing risk of deepening gender-related workforce segmentation because of differences in women’s position, relative to men, in the occupational structure, the family and welfare policy, all of which render them more vulnerable to market pressures

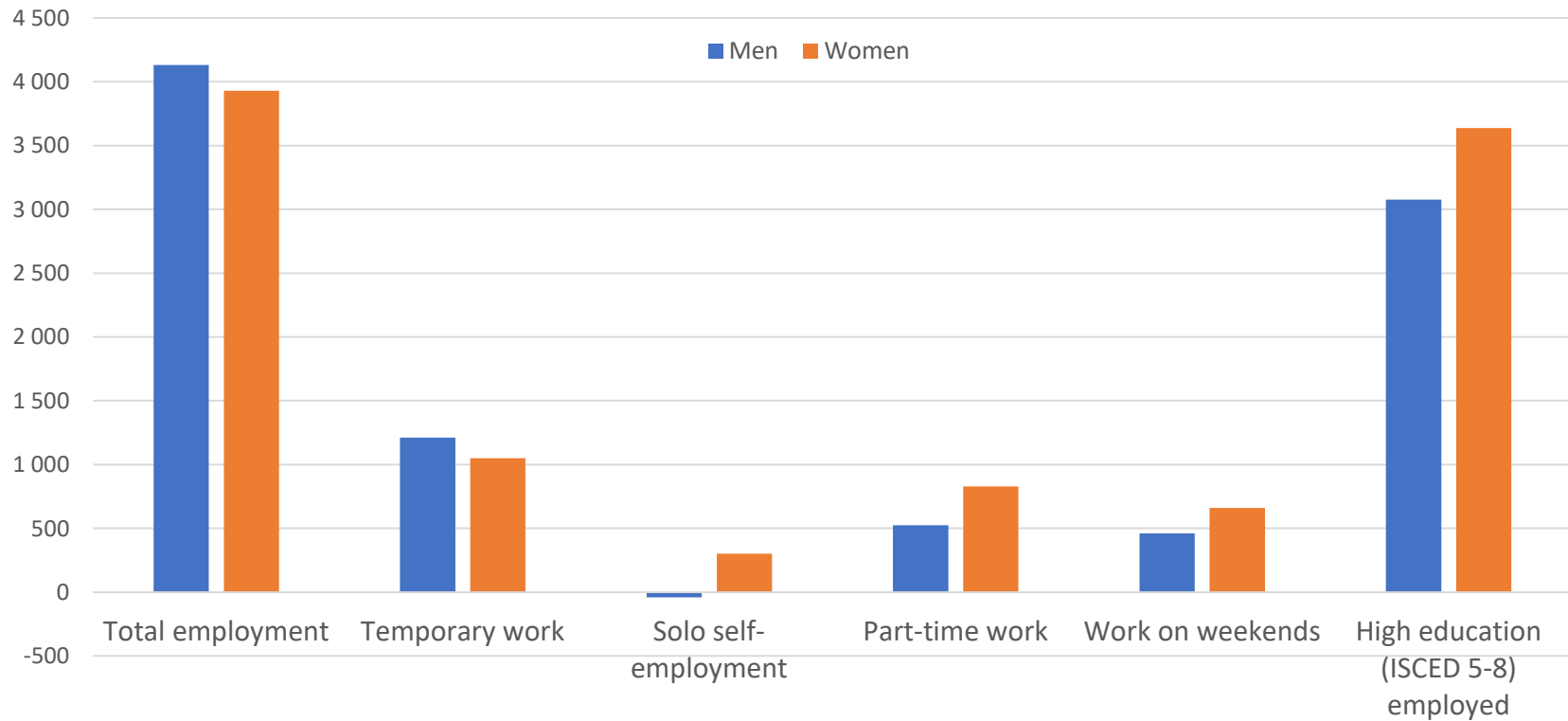
Gendered division of unpaid work

Gender differences in time spent on childcare and household activities, employed people only with at least one child living in the household, EU 28, 2015. (Source: European Working Conditions Survey)

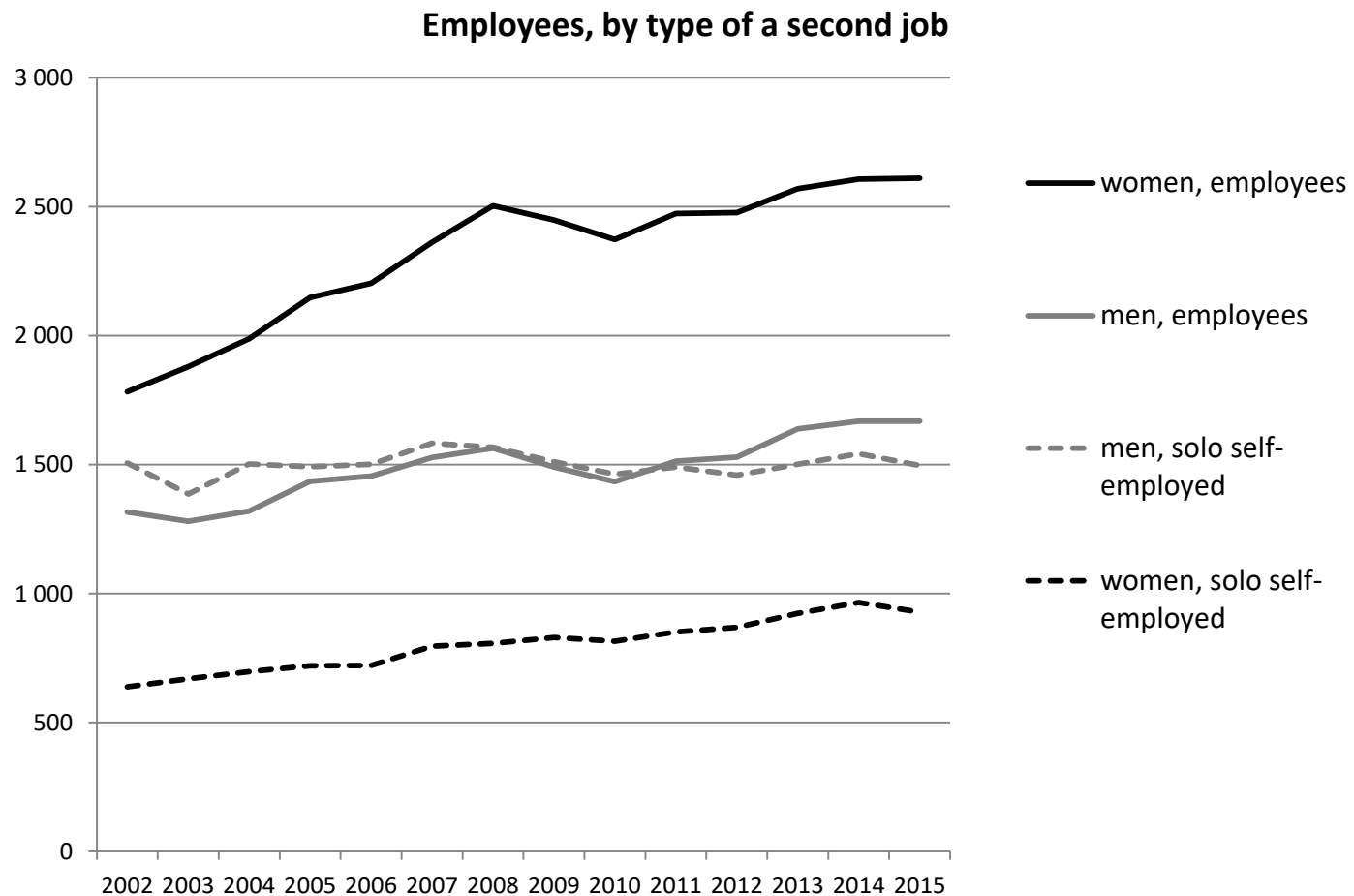


Gendered growth in nonstandard work

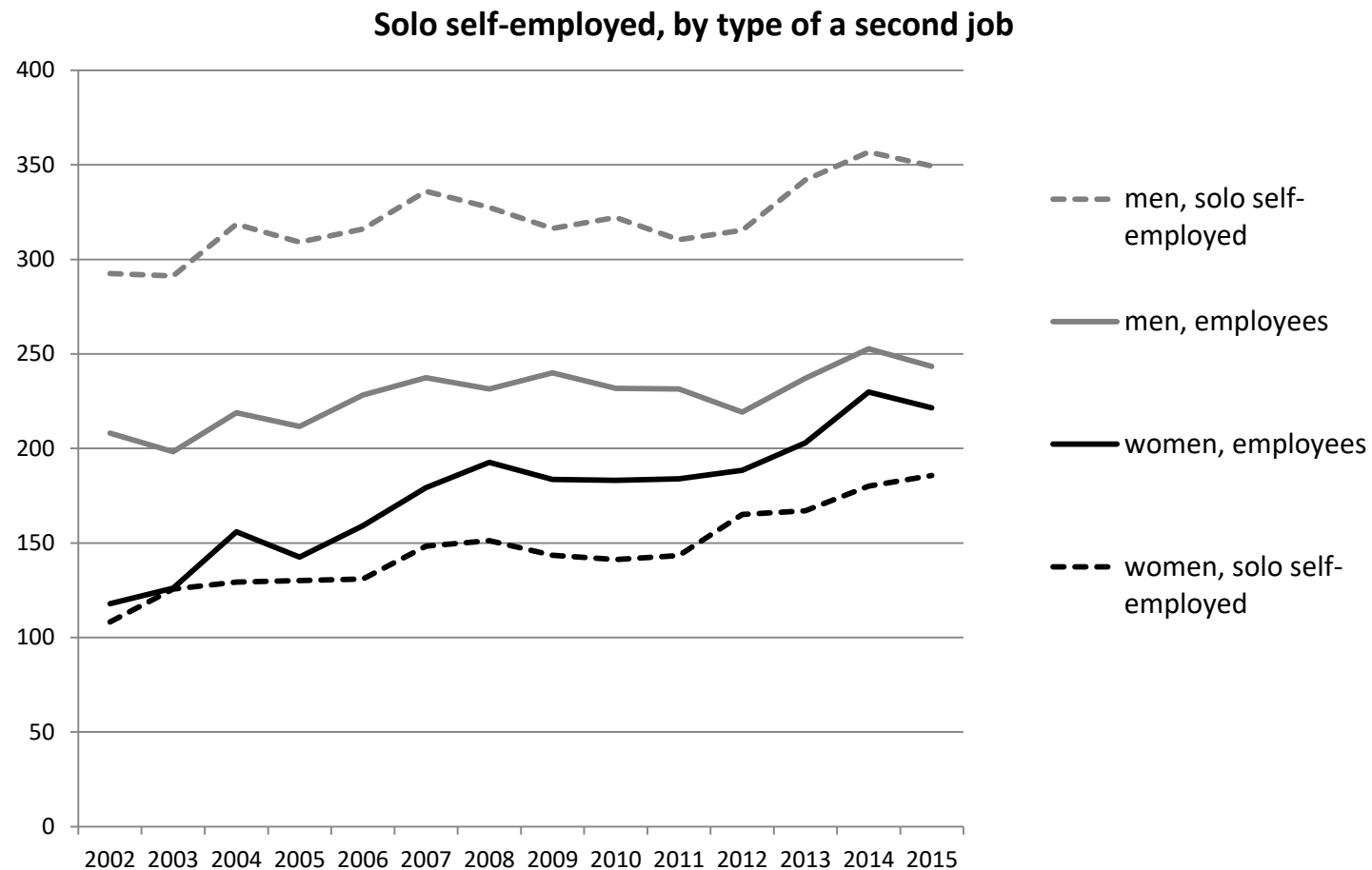
Job growth by gender, 2013-2016, EU28



Employment relationship



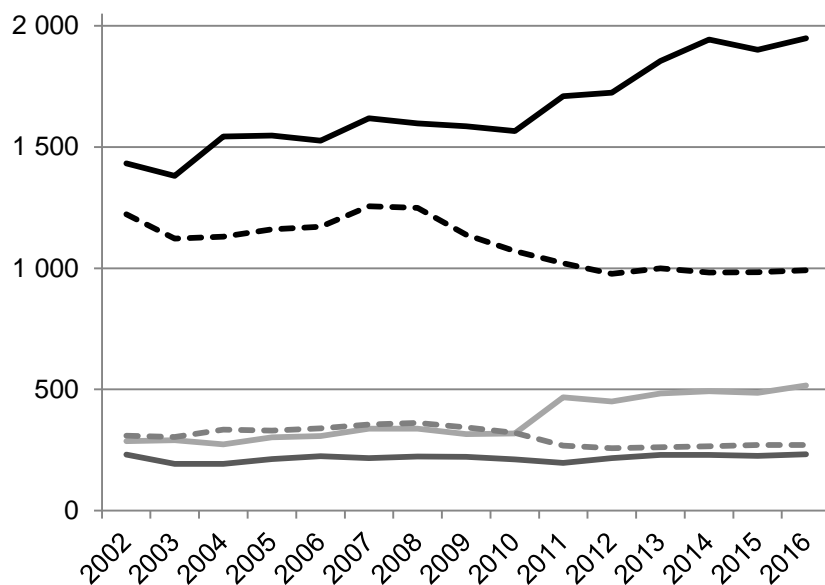
Employment relationship



Employment relationship

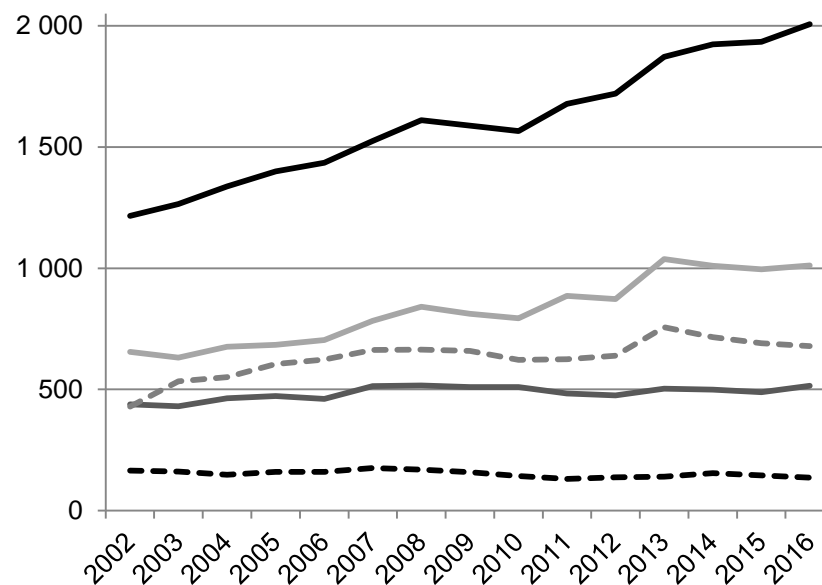
Employed persons having a second job
in ths, EU28, 2002-2016

Men



— Professionals, technicians and associate professionals
— Clerical support workers

Women



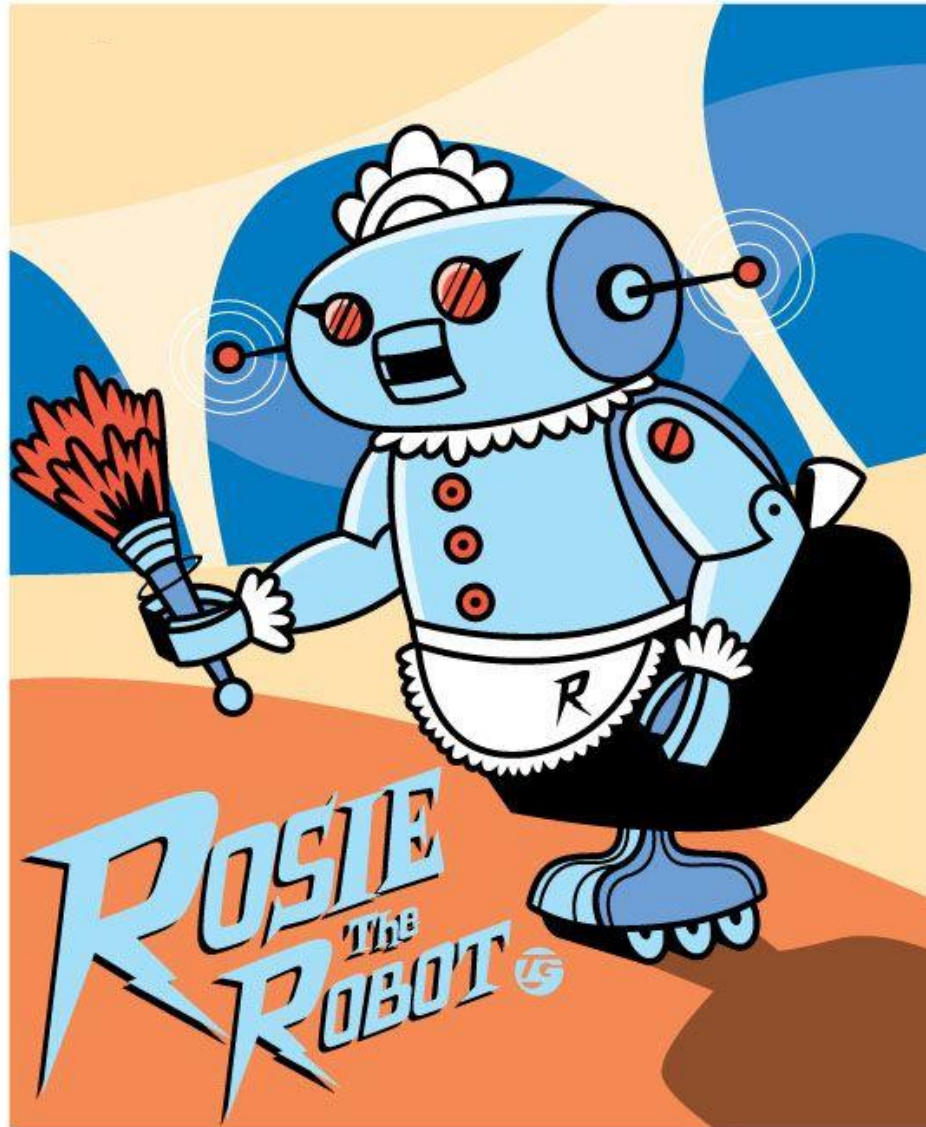
— Service and sales workers
--- Manual skilled workers
--- Elementary occupations

Gender effects?

- While it can be argued that such downward pressure on labour standards will apply across the entire workforce engaged in new forms of work, gender differences are likely to be reproduced because of women's more vulnerable position vis-a`-vis employers
- Can women benefit from flexibility? Acknowledging, not questioning, their unequal position in the household and labour force. Precariousness and uncertainty hardly compatible with inflexible care provision.
- Requirement of constant availability and instantaneous (on-demand) responsiveness is not employee-flexibility. Blurring home-work boundaries.
- New forms of work largely escape traditional labour and social protections, not covered by CB. Secondary earner assumption, but rather growing disadvantage.
- Invisible employer discriminates less?
- Organisation of social reproduction in a society is key to understanding the gendering of precarious employment and the constraints forcing women to enter such forms of work

Conclusions

- Labour market vulnerability, inter alia gender-related, as supporting and reinforcing placement of certain workers in the secondary and more precarious labour market segments
- Women's employment might expand in the new digital economy due to the continued existence of disadvantages (e.g. women are more likely to work in non-standard employment, with lower wages) which make women a more attractive (i.e. more flexible and cheaper) source of labour.
- But this expansion will not necessarily lead to the creation of secure and adequately paid employment.
- Flexibility (if any) is often welcome but must not be at the expense of wages and working conditions.
- As long as technological change leaves social relations of gender unchanged, a continuity and reproduction of gender inequalities is to be expected.



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