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Full-Time Schools and Gender Specialization: Time Use Adjustments in Mexican Households

Verónica Amarante¹ | Mariana Viollaz²

¹CAF-Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean.

vamarante@caf.com

²World Bank, Gender Department

mviollaz@worldbank.org

This article analyzes how extending the school day by 3.5 hours in Mexican elementary schools affected time use patterns of mothers and fathers. Using a rotating panel of households with within-individual variation in access to full-time schools (2005-2017), we find heterogeneous effects by household composition. In households with both school-age children and younger kids, both parents reduce childcare time, but mothers' share of care activities increases, strengthening specialization patterns. Importantly, extended school days do not change female labor outcomes in these households, highlighting the need for complementary interventions covering all dependent ages. In households with only school-age children, we find no adjustments in time allocated to care by any family member, but female labor force participation increases. We also find suggestive evidence of reduced hours worked by domestic workers, consistent with these families outsourcing care to non-family members prior to the policy.

KEYWORDS

time-use, gender, full-time schools, Mexico

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CAF - DOCUMENTO DE TRABAJO #2025/20

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Jornada escolar completa y especialización de género: ajustes en el uso del tiempo de los hogares mexicanos

Verónica Amarante¹ | Mariana Viollaz²

¹CAF-Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean.

vamarante@caf.com

²World Bank, Gender Department

mviollaz@worldbank.org

Este artículo analiza cómo la extensión de la jornada escolar en 3.5 horas en escuelas primarias mexicanas afectó el uso del tiempo de madres y padres. Usando un panel rotativo de hogares con variación intra-individual en acceso a escuelas de tiempo completo (2005-2017), encontramos efectos heterogéneos según composición del hogar. En hogares con niños escolares y pre-escolares, ambos padres reducen tiempo de cuidado, pero la participación materna aumenta, reforzando patrones de especialización. Adicionalmente, la jornada extendida no afecta resultados laborales femeninos en estos hogares. En hogares solo con niños escolares, no hay ajustes en tiempo de cuidado por ningún miembro, pero aumenta la participación laboral femenina. Encontramos evidencia sugestiva de reducción en horas de trabajo de empleadas domésticas, consistente con que estas familias tercerizaban el cuidado previo a la extensión de la jornada.

KEYWORDS

Uso del tiempo, género, escuelas jornada completa, México

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1 | INTRODUCTION

The competing demands of work and parenting imply complex decisions at the household level, with women most of the times facing relevant constraints to participate in the labor market or access quality jobs. The reconciliation of work and family life is especially difficult in Latin America, where family policies are still incipient and care and education services for preschool age and elementary school are either rationed or provided on an incomplete hourly basis. Additionally, gender norms regarding care in Latin America, and in developing countries more generally, constrain women's choices between paid and unpaid work (Jayachandran (2021)). Consistently, Latin American women devote much more time to unpaid household work, including child care, than men do (Calderón (2014); CEPAL (2017); Esquivel et al. (2008); among others), and the regional gender gaps in unpaid work are significantly higher than those found in the developed world (Amarante and Rossel (2018)).

The main and direct objectives of care and education services are not specifically related to achieving more gender-egalitarian patterns of time use or improving women's labor market outcomes, but rather to promoting child development and human capital accumulation. However, these services can affect both the intensive and extensive margins of female labor supply and, as we argue in this paper, they can also influence how time is allocated within households. When children attend care or education services, the time previously devoted to childcare is freed up for the primary caregiver, who is usually the mother or another—most often female—family member. The reduction in time allocated to childcare can be redirected toward labor market participation or other activities, such as domestic work or leisure.

A reallocation of care between spouses may also occur, although its direction is theoretically ambiguous. Women's share of total caregiving time will decline if their proportional reduction in care hours exceeds that of men, and remain unchanged if both partners adjust by similar proportions. Conversely, women's share may increase under two conditions. First, women may offset time freed during school hours by increasing caregiving at other times, effectively substituting for their partners in remaining care tasks. Second, women may experience a smaller proportional decline in caregiving time than men.

This paper sheds light on the relationship between availability of childcare services and time allocation decisions of mothers and fathers by examining the expansion of the Full-Time Schools program (FTS hereafter) in Mexico between 2007 and 2017. Under this program, elementary school days were extended from 4.5 to 8 hours for children aged 6 to 12. At the same time, the number of full-time schools increased from 500 in 2007 to approximately 25,000 in 2017, and this expansion took place across a major part of Mexican municipalities. Using within-individual variation in exposure to the program, defined as the share of elementary school enrollment covered by full-time schools at the municipal level, we estimate the impact of FTS on the weekly hours of unpaid care work of mothers and fathers of school-age children and the distribution of these activities between spouses. Additionally, we analyze the impacts on time allocated to other activities, including paid work, domestic work and studying, and whether other household members adjusted their time-use. With this analysis we provide the first causal evidence of the impacts of an extension of the length of the school day and, more generally, of the availability of subsidized childcare on parents' time assignment to care activities and on the distribution of childcare time between spouses.

In our analysis we combine data from the National Employment and Occupation Survey in Mexico (Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo, ENOE) from 2005 to 2017 with school censuses containing information on schools' participation in the FTS program and school enrollment. We also use data from the World Value Survey carried out in Mexico in 2000 to

construct state-level proxies for gender norms. ENOE is a rotating panel of households that contains information on time use and sociodemographic characteristics. The panel structure allows us to construct changes in time use variables that we use as outcomes and changes in exposure to the FTS program that we use as treatment variable.

Our main results indicate that women and men who have both school-age children and younger kids (children aged 0-5) reduced the time allocated to care work as a result of the FTS program with respect to those not having children 0 to 5 years old. The reduction is of 5.4 weekly hours of care work for women and 2.0 for men compared to women and men in households without children 0-5. We also find that the FTS program stressed the pattern of time-use specialization by gender: the share of care activities performed by women increases in 7.6 percentage points, with a corresponding reduction for men, in households with children aged 0 to 5 compared to households without kids in this age range. Moreover, we show that these couples did not adjust the time assigned to other activities, including paid labor, and that the increase in the women's share of care activities took place in more traditional areas, where they are expected to be the main caregivers, suggesting that prevailing gender norms shape how freed-up time is redistributed within households.

For women and men with school-age children but no younger kids, we do not find a decline in time allocated to care, yet we do observe an increase in female labor force participation. We reconcile these findings by showing that, although no other household members reduced their caregiving time, there is a decrease in the hours worked by domestic workers. This suggests that these families had been outsourcing childcare to non-household workers, with mothers supervising those activities.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the related literature and describes the implementation of the FTS program. Section 3 presents the sources of data and descriptive statistics while Section 4 introduces the methodology used in the analysis. Section 5 presents our main results and Section 6 concludes.

2 | BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This section provides the context for our analysis. We first review the existing evidence on the impacts of care and education services on labor and time-use outcomes. We then provide details about the implementation of the Full-Time Schools program in Mexico.

2.1 | Childcare services and time use: existing evidence

The existing literature on care and education services has focused primarily on female labor market outcomes, with a smaller but growing strand examining time-use patterns within households. Regarding labor outcomes, quasi-experimental evidence for the Latin American region tends to find positive effects of the availability of preschool services on maternal employment for different countries (Berlinski and Galiani (2007); Berlinski et al. (2011); Rosero and Oosterbeek (2011); Hojman and Boo (2022); among others), although null effects have also been reported (Medrano (2009); Encina and Martínez (2009); Nollenberger and Perazzo (2019); Attanasio et al. (2022)). The evidence related to the length of primary school days is less abundant, although children of primary school age also need adult supervision and care when at home. The length of the primary school day in the countries of the region is mostly not compatible with work schedules, imposing a heavy constraint on the possibility of mother's employment. Although the evidence about primary schools is less than that related to preschool education, some recent studies have examined the effects

of lengthening the primary-level school day. A direct antecedent of our work is the study of [Padilla-Romo and Cabrera-Hernández \(2019\)](#) who analyze the implementation of the FTS program in Mexico and find that longer school days increased mother's labor force participation, employment, and earnings. The program has also been found to increase grandmothers' labor force participation and employment ([Cabrera-Hernández and Padilla-Romo \(2021\)](#)), and to affect family dynamics, leading to a significant increase in divorce rates ([Padilla-Romo et al. \(2025\)](#)). In this paper, we argue that changes in children's daily school schedules may affect not only mothers' labor force participation and employment, but also the distribution of care and domestic responsibilities between spouses, shaping the time each parent allocates to these activities. These shifts may further spill over to the time-use decisions of other household members (e.g., relatives, older siblings).

Another set of studies explore the case of Chile. [Berthelon et al. \(2015\)](#) study an increase in the duration of the school day, from 5 to 8 hours per day, exploring the gradual implementation of the reform across municipalities. They find a significant increase in mothers' labor force participation and in access to more stable jobs, with strongest effects for mothers with children in the early grades. With a different dataset but similar empirical strategy, [Contreras and Sepúlveda \(2017\)](#) confirm a significant increase in access to labor market but only for single mothers without younger children, with strongest impacts at the early school grades. The effects of offering three hours of afterschool care for children aged 6 to 13 are studied through a randomized experiment in Chile by [Martínez and Perticará \(2017\)](#). They find that being offered the program (intention to treat) increases the likelihood of mothers' participation and employment. At the same time, the program increases the use of daycare for smaller children, indicating the importance of taking into consideration the existence of other institutional arrangements when designing a specific program.

Other studies have analyzed the relationship between care and education services, and time use patterns. [Kozhaya and Flores \(2022\)](#) study the impact of the FTS program in Mexico, including both primary and secondary levels, on the time-use of school-age children. They find a positive effect on time allocated to schooling activities, a decline in the probability of market work for boys and in the likelihood of excess domestic work for girls. The study also analyzes the sample of parents and siblings and finds an increase in labor force participation of mothers and no adjustment for fathers, as well as a slight increase in fathers' hours of domestic work where domestic work includes both care activities and domestic chores different from care. [Amarante et al. \(2023\)](#) document a positive association between attendance to preschool services for children aged 0 to 5 and smaller gender gaps in unpaid work at the household level, mainly through a decrease in time devoted by mothers to unpaid care work. The association only holds if all pre-school age children attended care or educational services, indicating that having at least one baby, toddler, or preschool child in the household is a binding restriction regarding the amount of time women dedicate to care work. For China, [Liu et al. \(2022\)](#) conclude that increasing prices of childcare services reduce mother's time on paid work and increase time on housework, and that access to childcare has no impact on mothers' time on activities beyond childcare.

Our analysis of the impacts of FTS on time use patterns contributes to different strands of literature. First, we add to the previous literature analyzing the impacts of preschool services and extensions of the school-day on female labor outcomes by providing estimates on the impacts in time-use variables. This literature generally finds increases in female labor force participation and employment and this has been the case for the FTS program in Mexico ([Padilla-Romo and Cabrera-Hernández \(2019\)](#); [Cabrera-Hernández and Padilla-Romo \(2021\)](#)). We complement these findings by showing whether mothers of school-age children reduce the time allocated to care activities due to the extension of the school-day, and hence increase their labor force participation, and how fathers adjust their care

time. Second, we add to the literature analyzing the time-use impacts of care and education services by focusing on the time-use adjustments of parents and on the distribution of unpaid work between spouses, distinguishing between care and domestic activities. Analyzing the effects on the intra-household distribution of unpaid work is important because it is not clear whether women's and men's shares of total parental care time will change, or in which direction. Reductions in women's caregiving time could decrease their share—for example, if men increase their involvement proportionally. Conversely, women's share could rise if they remain primarily responsible for caregiving and compensate for time freed during school hours by increasing care at other times.

2.2 | The full-time schools program

The FTS program started in the academic year 2007-2008 and represented one of the largest investments in education in the last decades in Mexico.¹ Its main aim was to expand learning opportunities by extending the school day from 4.5 to 8 hours in all public elementary schools in Mexico.

The assignment of schools to the program was made at the state level following federal guidelines provided by the Secretary of Public Education. Some of these requirements specified that schools should be located in vulnerable areas, they should operate in only one shift (morning or afternoon), and they should meet minimum infrastructure requirements and access to basic services, such as electricity and water. These guidelines, however, were not mandatory and states retained discretion in selecting the schools for the program, generating considerable variation in the type of schools included.

The FTS program was adopted by 500 schools in the academic year 2007-2008 and the coverage increased over time reaching close to 25 thousand schools in the academic year 2016-2017 across the country. The coverage in 2016-2017 represented 25 % of the elementary school enrollment in Mexico in close to 80 % of the municipalities. In Figure 1 we show how the coverage of the program evolved with the passing of time. In the academic year 2007-2008, only 7 % of the municipalities had adopted the FTS program and the share of the elementary school enrollment under this modality was less than 1 %. By 2010-2011, 28 % of municipalities participated in the program, covering 3.2 % of elementary school enrollment. The percentage of municipalities with at least one FTS continued increasing, reaching 62 % in 2013-2014 (16.3 % of school enrollment) and 74 % in 2016-2017 (26.0 % of school enrollment).

3 | DATA

We combine different sources of information throughout the analysis including survey data collected by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía or INEGI in its Spanish acronym), administrative data from the Ministry of Education, and survey data from the World Value Survey in Mexico. Combining these sources of information, we create a dataset with individual level data from the first quarter of 2005 (2005:Q1) to the third quarter of 2017 (2017:Q3). Our outcome variables are weekly hours of unpaid care activities (including care of children, older adults and sick persons)², weekly hours of unpaid domestic work, weekly hours allocated to paid work,

¹This federally funded program represented an annual investment of approximately 400 million USD from 2007 to 2018 (Gómez-Zermeño et al. (2013)). This budget was allocated to infrastructure improvements, teacher and school staff training, and educational supplies and materials.

²Unfortunately, ENOE does not disaggregate these categories; but in our sample of households with elementary-school-age children, it is reasonable to expect childcare to be the primary component.

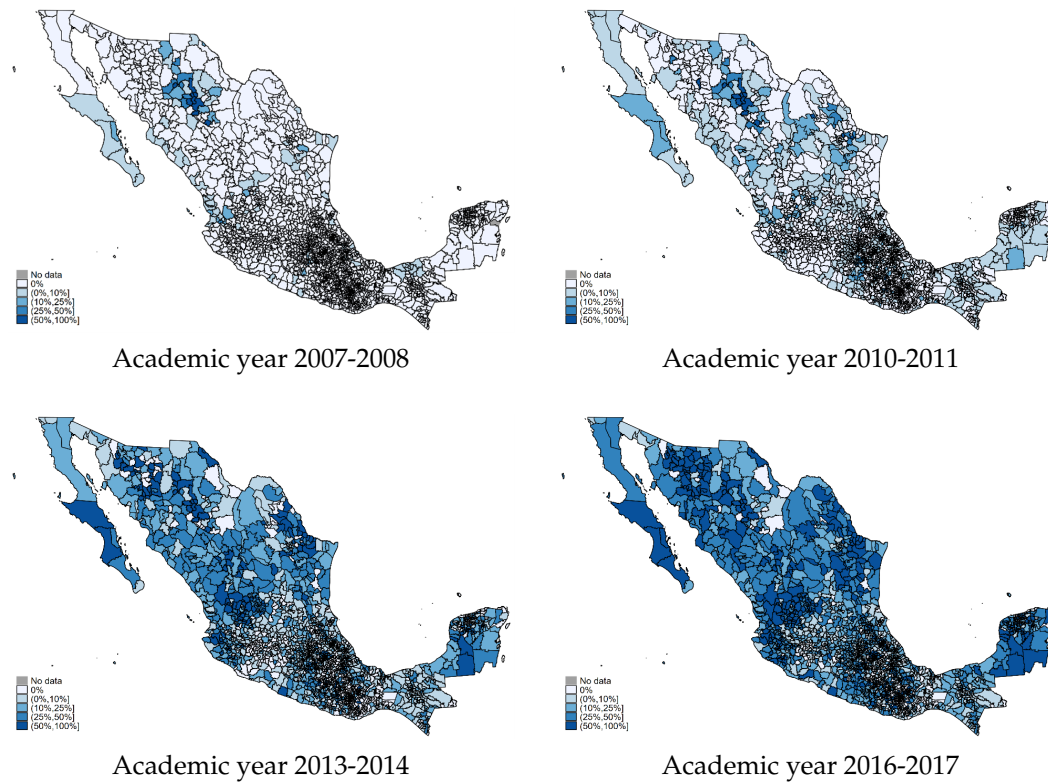


FIGURE 1 Share of elementary school enrollment covered by the FTS program at the municipality level for selected academic years

Source: Authors' elaboration based on school-census data from the Ministry of Education. *Notes:* Each panel shows the predicted share of FTS seats in each municipality (as defined in equation 1) in a given academic year.

weekly hours of studying, weekly hours assigned to household maintenance and to unpaid community services, and labor force participation of women and men who are 18 years or older, are household heads or their spouses, have elementary-school-age children (6-12 years old³, live in biparental households⁴, and do not work in the education sector when employed. Our treatment variable is the share of the elementary school enrollment that is covered by FTS in each municipality and year-quarter combination.

First, we use data from annual school-level censuses collected by the Ministry of Education. The censuses contain information on school enrollment and school participation in the FTS program that we use to construct the treatment variable following [Padilla-Romo and Cabrera-Hernández \(2019\)](#). We define the treatment as the predicted share of FTS seats in a municipality:

³In Mexico, any child who turns six years old before December 31 begins elementary school in August of that year. This means children start school at 5 or 6 years old and finish at 11 or 12 years old, depending on the month they were born. Because the youngest student in the first grade of elementary school would be 5 years old for no more than four months, we decide to use the 6-12 age range as it captures more accurately the age of students in elementary school.

⁴The sample includes married or cohabiting household heads and their spouses. The ENOE allows an unambiguous match between parents and their offspring for household heads only. We assume the spouse of the household head is the father or mother of a child identified as son or daughter of the household head. Although this assumption may not always hold, it is likely that the spouse of the household head assigns part of his or her time to caring for the child.

$$FTS_{mt} = \frac{\sum_{sem} \bar{e}_s FT_{st}}{\sum_{sem} \bar{e}_s} \quad (1)$$

where \bar{e}_s in Equation (1) is the average enrollment of school s over the pre-program period 2001-2006 and FT_{st} takes the value one if school s is in the FTS program in academic t .⁵

Second, we use the National Survey of Occupations and Employment (Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo or ENOE by its Spanish acronym) from 2005:Q1 to 2017:Q3 collected by INEGI. ENOE follows a rotating sampling structure where each household is interviewed for five consecutive quarters allowing us to observe changes in time allocated to different activities and in labor force participation for each individual. Using this information, we define the outcome variables as the change in time use and labor force participation over five consecutive quarters. That is, if we observe a person for the first time in 2005:Q1, we construct the changes in outcomes between 2005:Q1 and 2006:Q1. ENOE also contains information on sociodemographic characteristics of individuals and households that we use to define the sample of analysis and as control variables in our econometric models. These variables include gender, age, level of education, relationship to the household head, number of sons or daughters of the household head, and number of household members. In addition, ENOE has information on the municipality where the household is located allowing us to match each person in our sample with the predicted share of FTS seats in the same municipality in each year and quarter. Because data on FTS is available at the municipality and academic year level, we define academic years in ENOE from the last quarter of a given year to the third quarter of the next year. For instance, the academic year 2008-2009 starts in 2008:Q4 and finishes in 2009:Q3.⁶ This definition implies that households interviewed in Q3 (July-September) are assigned the FTS coverage of the academic year that is ending or has just ended, rather than the new academic year beginning in August. While this creates a potential timing mismatch for interviews conducted in late August and September—when the new school year has already started—this affects only a subset of our sample and is unlikely to bias our estimates systematically.

Time use variables in ENOE capture weekly hours assigned to: (i) care of children, older adults or sick persons without pay, (ii) domestic work, (iii) studying or taking training courses, (iv) household maintenance or construction, and (v) unpaid community service. We are aware that survey questions may be limited in their ability to capture time use (Lentz et al. (2019)), but different studies have validated the congruence of survey questions to capture time use, as well as their general consistency when compared to diary information (Kan and Pudney (2008); Schulz and Grunow (2012); among others). Although diaries are still seen as the most reliable sources of time budgets, they are not used in Latin America, mainly because of their higher costs when compared to survey questions (Kitterød and Lyngstad (2005)). In the case of ENOE, while all questions capture time assigned to activities that can be performed simultaneously, the question about care refers to hours allocated to this activity exclusively. This means that the answers are probably a lower bound for the

⁵Our treatment differ from Kozhaya and Flores (2022) in that we use the share of school enrollment affected by the program instead of the share of schools that are full-time.

⁶In Mexico, an academic year begins the third Monday of August and ends in July after 200 days of instruction. We follow Padilla-Romo and Cabrera-Hernández (2019) and define the starting date of an academic year in the fourth quarter because the third quarter contains all summer vacation. FTS administrative data are only available at the municipality-by-academic-year level with no monthly breakdown, precluding a more granular temporal alignment. We assign Q3 to the preceding academic year because most Q3 interviews occur during summer vacation (July-early August) or in the first weeks of the new school year.

total hours assigned to care activities over a week.

In 2013, the survey started including two additional questions about time use. These variables capture weekly hours assigned to grocery shopping and household errands and weekly hours allocated to driving a household member to school, medical appointments, or other activities. These new questions led to a drop in the reported hours allocated to care and domestic activities mentioned above (Figure 2). Because our econometric model uses the annual changes in time use variables, we eliminate from the analysis the comparison between hours reported in 2012 and hours reported in 2013.

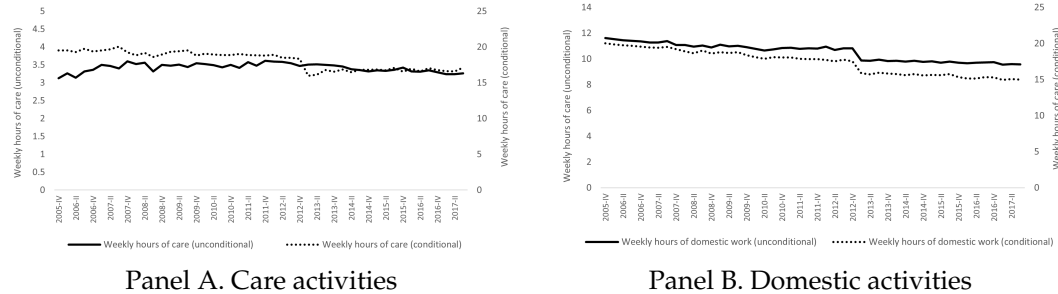


FIGURE 2 Weekly time allocated to care and domestic activities

Source: Authors’ elaboration based on ENOE. Notes: Average of weekly hours assigned to care and domestic activities. Conditional statistics consider the sample of persons assigning at least one hour a week to the corresponding activity. Sample of persons 12 years old or more.

Finally, we construct state-level proxies for gender norms using data from the World Value Survey collected in Mexico in 2000, that is, before the roll-out of the program. Specifically, we use data from three variables capturing people’s level of agreement with statements indicating that: (i) being a housewife is as fulfilling as having a paid job; (ii) when women work, the children suffer; and (iii) men are better political leaders than women. Using this information, we create indicators of whether a person has traditional attitudes about gender roles (a proxy for gender norms) and then calculate the state-level average for each of these indicators separately. We consider that a person has traditional attitudes about gender roles if they agree or strongly agree with the statements indicated above. We combine these three state-level proxies of gender norms with the individual-level dataset described before, using information on the state of residence of each person. We conduct three separate heterogeneity analyses, one for each proxy. For each proxy, we split the sample at the state-level median value: observations in states above the median are classified as living in areas with traditional attitudes about gender roles for that dimension, while observations in states below the median are classified as living in areas with non-traditional attitudes.

3.1 | Sample and descriptive statistics

The main sample of interest include women and men who are 18 years or older, are household heads or their spouses, have elementary-school-age children (6-12 years old), live in biparental households, and are not employed in the education sector. We also distinguish between couples who have or do not have younger children (0-5 years old). This distinction is important because couples who also have younger children will still need to allocate time to care activities for younger children despite the longer school hours.

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for the academic years 2005-2006 to 2007-2008, that is, prior to the FTS program implementation. Men in the sample are older and more educated

than women and their labor force participation and employment rates are more than twice the rates for women, and these findings hold for households with or without children aged 0 to 5. The gender gaps in labor market variables are particularly large in the subsample of women and men who have children aged 0 to 5 due to the reduced participation and employment rates of women compared to those not having children in this age range.

TABLE 1 Sociodemographic, labor market and time use variables before the Full-time School program implementation

	All		Without children 0-5		With children 0-5	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
<i>Sociodemographic variables</i>						
Age	35.94	39.20	38.47	41.72	32.49	35.77
Up to primary educ level	0.39	0.36	0.40	0.36	0.39	0.36
Secondary level	0.48	0.46	0.47	0.44	0.50	0.49
Tertiary level	0.12	0.17	0.13	0.19	0.10	0.15
<i>Labor market variables</i>						
LFP	0.41	0.98	0.46	0.97	0.34	0.98
Employment	0.40	0.96	0.45	0.96	0.33	0.97
<i>Time use variables</i>						
Share performing care activities	0.61	0.27	0.50	0.19	0.78	0.37
Weekly hours of care	13.81	2.75	9.52	1.93	19.65	3.88
Share of care time	0.86	0.14	0.87	0.13	0.86	0.14
Share performing domestic work	0.98	0.44	0.98	0.44	0.99	0.45
Weekly hours of domestic work	31.70	3.18	32.08	3.16	31.20	3.22
Share of domestic work	0.91	0.09	0.91	0.09	0.91	0.09
Share working for a pay	0.38	0.92	0.43	0.92	0.31	0.93
Weekly hours of pay work	12.22	44.29	14.29	43.94	9.41	44.77
Share studying	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02
Weekly hours of study	0.25	0.19	0.29	0.20	0.20	0.19
Share performing maintenance activities	0.01	0.13	0.02	0.14	0.01	0.13
Weekly hours of maintenance	0.12	0.85	0.13	0.89	0.10	0.80
Share performing community service activi	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02
Weekly hours of community service	0.09	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.07	0.10

Notes: The sample includes women and men who are 18 years or older, are household heads or their spouses, have elementary-school-age children, and live in biparental households in the academic years 2005-2006 to 2007-2008. Hours allocated to care capture time used in care activities exclusively. *Source:* Authors' elaboration based on ENOE.

Regarding time allocation, the statistics confirm previous results from the time-use literature. First, women specialize in domestic work and care activities, while men focus on paid work (Apps (2004); Sevilla et al. (2010); Berniell and Sánchez-Páramo (2011); Ferrant et al. (2014); Grossbard et al. (2014); Campaña et al. (2018); Rubiano-Matulevich and Viollaz (2019)). This finding appears in both subsamples of couples. The share of women performing exclusive care activities is approximately twice the share of men. The weekly hours women assign to unpaid care work are, on average, 9.5 (without children 0-5) and 19.7 (with children 0-5), while the hours of men are below 4 per week. These gaps translate into a highly unequal within-couple distribution of care activities. On average, women are responsible for 86%

of total caregiving hours within couples, where the within-couple share is defined as each woman's caregiving hours divided by the total caregiving hours of the couple, averaged across couples. A similar pattern appears for unpaid domestic work. Almost all women assign at least one hour a week to domestic housework, while less than half of men do the same. While women assign, on average, 32 hours of their weekly time to these activities, men allocate only 3.2 hours. The within-couple distribution of housework shows that 91% is women's time. Regarding paid work, more than 90% of men assign at least one hour a week to this activity, while only 43% (without children 0-5) and 31% (with children 0-5) work for pay. Additionally, men work for pay approximately 44 hours a week and women less than 15 hours.

Second, women work more hours in total than men when paid work, domestic work and care are considered altogether (Ilahi (1999); Berniell and Sánchez-Páramo (2011); Rubiano-Matulevich and Viollaz (2019)). Despite assigning fewer hours to paid work, the gender gap in time allocated to unpaid work –i.e., domestic and care activities– results in women working more hours in a week than men. In the subsample of couples without children aged 0 to 5, women work 56 hours a week and men 49; in the subsample with children in this age range, women work 60 hours and men 52.

For the remaining activities –i.e., studying, household maintenance and community service—the percentage of women and men assigning at least one hour a week to them is low and the time allocated is also low. As these activities are not central to the lives of the individuals in our sample, the collection of information about these uses of time through survey questions probably presents important weaknesses.

These statistics show that women and men in couples that live together and have school-age children specialize in different activities. Regardless having children 0 to 5 years old or not, women assign a higher share of their time to care and domestic activities than men, and men allocate most of their time to paid work (Figure 3). This pattern of specialization is stressed in households having children aged 0 to 5, where women increase the share assigned to care activities and reduce the shares of domestic and paid work. Men also assign more of their time to care activities, but their highest share continue being for paid work.

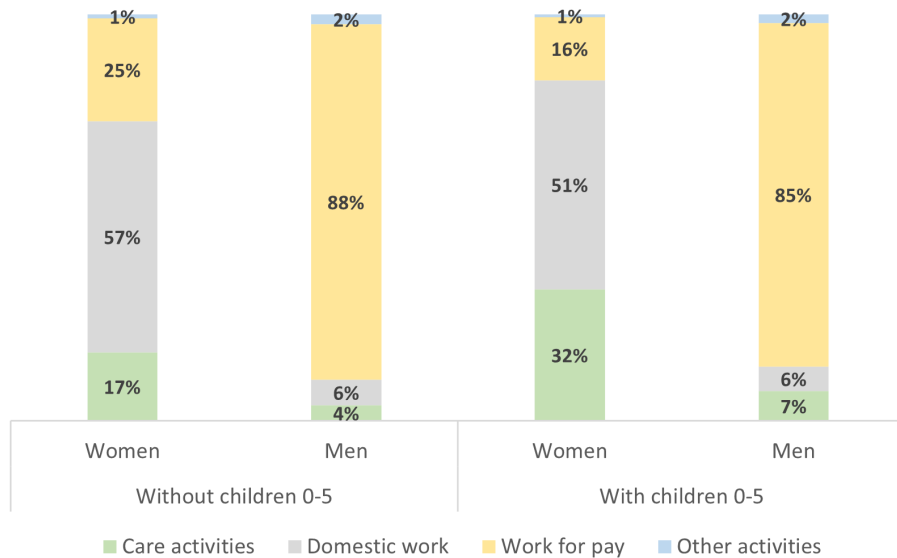


FIGURE 3 Weekly time allocation before the Full-time School program implementation

Source: Authors' elaboration based on ENOE. *Notes:* Women and men who are 18 years or older, are household heads or their spouses, have elementary-school-age children, and live in biparental households in the academic years 2005-2006 to 2007-2008. Hours allocated to care activities capture time used exclusively in care tasks. Other activities include weekly hours of study, household maintenance and community service.

4 | IDENTIFICATION STRATEGY

Our empirical strategy closely follows [Padilla-Romo and Cabrera-Hernández \(2019\)](#). We estimate the effects of extending the elementary school day on parents' time use using a difference-in-differences design that exploits within-individual variation in access to FTS. We define access to FTS as the predicted share of FTS seats in a municipality using equation (1). With this strategy, we compare changes in time use of parents in municipalities that differ in their FTS implementation intensity.

We analyze a range of time use outcomes, but focus primarily on two: weekly hours allocated to care activities and the within-couple share of care work. Together, these measures capture both the absolute burden of care work and its distribution between spouses, which is central to understanding how the FTS program affects gender patterns in time allocation.

To better interpret our main results, we also analyze additional time use outcomes: weekly hours allocated to domestic work, paid work, studying, household maintenance, and unpaid community service, as well as labor force participation. These complementary analyses help us explore how individuals reallocate time when childcare demands change and whether adjustments in care work translate into labor market outcomes.

We define changes in all outcome variables and in the predicted share of FTS seats from the first to the fifth quarter each person is observed in the ENOE panel. The reason for using these long differences is that the predicted share of FTS seats in a municipality changes only once a year when new schools adopt the program. Using these long differences, we estimate the following model:

$$\Delta Y_{imt} = \Delta FTS_{mt} \delta + X_{imt} \beta + \gamma_t + \vartheta_s + u_{imt} \quad (2)$$

where ΔY_{imt} represents one of the time use outcomes described above for person i in municipality m in quarter t and Δ is the change between quarter t of the first year person i is observed and the same quarter of the next year. FTS_{mt} is the predicted share of FTS seats in municipality m in quarter t and ΔFTS_{mt} is the yearly change. X_{imt} includes individual and household level characteristics of person i in quarter t of the first year the person is observed to control for differential trends across these characteristics. More specifically, X_{imt} includes age and its square, indicator variables for the education level of person i and of his or her spouse, the number of household members, the number of children younger than 13 and the age of the youngest child.

The model includes year-quarter γ_t and state ϑ_s fixed effects, u_{imt} is an error term, and standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. This specification controls for individual observed and unobserved characteristics that are constant over time and for shocks to time use variables that are constant across all observations—i.e., nationwide shocks. The coefficient δ in equation (2) identifies an intention-to-treat effect and can be interpreted as the cumulative effect of the FTS policy on the change in time use over the five-quarter period each person is observed.

We expect adjustments in time use by couples having younger children (0 to 5 years old) to be different from changes for couples with school-age children but without younger kids. This is because couples will still need to assign time to care activities despite the longer school hours when having children in the 0 to 5 age range. To capture these potentially different adjustment patterns, we extend equation (2) and include an interaction term between the FTS policy variable and an indicator of having children 0 to 5 years old, as follows:

$$\Delta Y_{imt} = \Delta FTS_{mt} \delta_1 + \Delta FTS_{mt} \times D_{imt}^{0-5} \delta_2 + X_{imt} \beta + \gamma_t + \vartheta_s + u_{imt} \quad (3)$$

We conduct several robustness checks, presented in Section 6, to validate our identification strategy. These include tests for pre-treatment parallel trends using lead terms of the FTS variable, placebo tests on samples without elementary-school-age children, and specifications controlling for concurrent policies.

5 | RESULTS

This section presents our main findings on how the FTS program affected parental time use. We focus primarily on time allocated to care activities and its distribution between spouses, distinguishing between households with and without children aged 0-5 in addition to school-age children. We then analyze adjustments in other time use variables, explore heterogeneity by gender norms, and present robustness checks.

5.1 | Adjustments in time allocated to unpaid work

Our main estimation results appear in Figures 4 and 5 and Table 8 in the Appendix. Figure 4 shows that the FTS policy reduced the time allocated to care activities for both women and men in households where, in addition to elementary-school-age children, there are younger kids. The estimated differential effect of going from none to all schools being full time—that

is, the additional reduction for households with children aged 0-5 relative to households without young children—is 5.4 weekly hours for women and 2.0 hours for men.⁷ If we alternatively consider an increase in the predicted share of FTS seats of 25 percentage points, the differential effect is a decline of 1.3 hours per week for women and 0.5 hours for men when comparing households with and without children in the 0 to 5 age range.

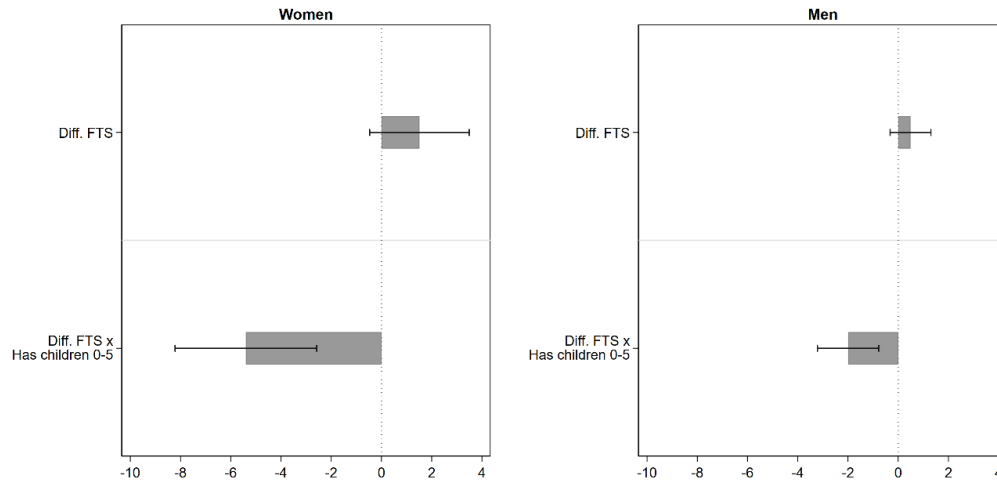


FIGURE 4 Estimated effects of the share of seats in FTS on weekly hours allocated to care activities

Source: Authors' elaboration based on ENOE and Ministry of Education. *Notes:* The table shows the results from estimating equation (3) in Section 4. Confidence intervals at 90% level. Sample includes women and men who are 18 years or older, are household heads or their spouses, have elementary-school-age children, and live in biparental households in the academic years 2005-2006 to 2017-2018. Hours allocated to care activities capture time used exclusively in care tasks. All models include year-by-quarter and state fixed effects. Other controls correspond to the first period a person is observed and include age and its square, indicator variables for education level and number of household members, number of children younger than 13 and age of the youngest child. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. Δ FTS is the yearly change in the share of FTS seats at the municipality level. Δ FTS \times child 0-5 is the interaction between the Δ FTS variable and an indicator for having children younger than 6 years old.

In Figure 5, we examine whether the decline in time allocated to care activities among households with children aged 0 to 5 (relative to those without children in this age range) led to an adjustment in the distribution of these activities between spouses. We find that, although the reduction in weekly hours is larger for women, the share of care activities performed by women increases by 7.6 percentage points, with a corresponding decline for men in households with children aged 0 to 5 compared to households without young kids.⁸ This result shows that when (time) constraints are relaxed, women assume a disproportionate share of the remaining caregiving responsibilities, suggesting a weakening in their bargaining position. According to the descriptive statistics discussed in Section 3.1, couples

⁷The total effects (addition between the Δ FTS coefficient and the interaction between Δ FTS and the indicator of having children 0-5) are declines of 3.9 and 1.6 hours a week for women and men, respectively, and statistically significant in both cases.

⁸The total effects (addition between the Δ FTS coefficient and the interaction between Δ FTS and the indicator of having children 0-5) show an increase of 3.5 percentage points for women and corresponding reduction for men but are not statistically significant.

having both elementary-school-age children and younger kids have a more accentuated pattern of time-use specialization compared to couples without children aged 0 to 5. What our findings indicate is that this pattern is reinforced by the FTS policy.

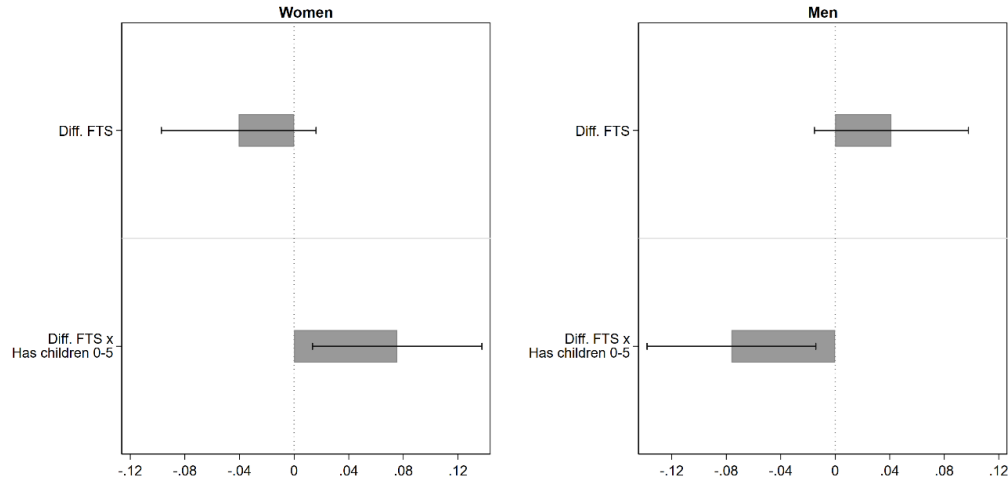


FIGURE 5 Estimated effects of the share of seats in FTS on the within-couple distribution of weekly hours allocated to care activities

Source: Authors' elaboration based on ENOE and Ministry of Education. *Notes:* The figure shows the results from estimating equation (3) in Section 4. Confidence intervals at 90% level. Sample includes women and men who are 18 years or older, are household heads or their spouses, have elementary-school-age children, and live in bi-parental households in the academic years 2005-2006 to 2016-2017. Hours allocated to care activities capture time used exclusively in care tasks. All models include year-by-quarter and state fixed effects. Other controls correspond to the first period a person is observed and include age and its square, indicator variables for education level and number of household members, number of children younger than 13 and age of the youngest child. Estimated point effects and confidence intervals correspond to seemingly unrelated regressions. Δ FTS is the yearly change in the share of FTS seats at the municipality level. Δ FTS \times child 0-5 is the interaction between the Δ FTS variable and an indicator for having children younger than 6 years old.

In households with elementary-school-age children but without children aged 0-5, we do not find any significant adjustment in the weekly hours of care activities for either women or men, nor in the distribution of these activities between spouses. We speculate that these households were outsourcing care activities related to children aged 6-12 before the policy intervention. We investigate this hypothesis in Section 5.3 below.

Regarding time allocated to domestic work, results in Table 2 show that there is no adjustment in the time assigned to this activity by either women or men, regardless of whether the household has children aged 0-5.

TABLE 2 Estimated effects of the share of seats in FTS on weekly hours allocated to domestic work and on the within-couple distribution

	Weekly hours of domestic work		Share of domestic work within the couple	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Women				
Δ FTS	-0.282 [1.046]	-0.245 [1.195]	0.0158 [0.0118]	0.0102 [0.0149]
Child 0-5* Δ FTS		-0.0899 [1.426]		0.0129 [0.0186]
N	154,868	154,868	151,547	151,547
Men				
Δ FTS	-0.480 [0.403]	-0.105 [0.461]	-0.0158 [0.0118]	-0.0102 [0.0149]
Child 0-5* Δ FTS		-0.876 [0.577]		-0.0129 [0.0186]
N	154,868	154,868	151,547	151,547
Year*Quarter FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: Authors' elaboration based on ENOE and Ministry of Education. *Notes:* The table shows the results from estimating equations (2) and (3) in Section 4. Sample includes women and men who are 18 years or older, are household heads or their spouses, have elementary-school-age children, and live in in biparental households in the academic years 2005-2006 to 2016-2017. All models include year-by-quarter and state fixed effects. Other controls correspond to the first period a person is observed and include age and its square, indicators of level of own education level and education level of the spouse, number of household members, number of children younger than 13 and age of the youngest child. Estimated robust standard errors in brackets are clustered at the municipality level. *, **, *** significant at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

5.2 | Adjustments in time allocated to other activities

In the previous section, we showed that women and men in households having school-age children and younger kids reduce the weekly hours allocated to care activities compared to households without children aged 0 to 5. The next question is to which activities couples assign the freed-up time. To answer this question, we estimate model (2) using as outcome variables the change in weekly hours dedicated to studying, household maintenance, community service, and paid work.

Table 3 presents the results. We find statistically significant estimates in a few cases. For women and men with children aged 0 to 5, we do not find any statistically significant adjustment in time allocated to other activities different from care. We speculate that for these couples —i.e., those who reduce the time allocated to care—, the main margin of adjustment is time allocated to leisure. Unfortunately, our data is not exhaustive in its collection of time-use, and we do not have a rigorous measure of leisure time.

Women in households without children aged 0-5 allocate fewer hours to community service (a decline of 0.2 hours per week when going from no schools to all schools being full-time) and increase their labor force participation (increase in 5.5 percentage points of going from none to all schools being full time), with no change in the intensive margin of

labor market adjustment. The increase in labor force participation among women without young children and the absence of an effect for those with children aged 0–5 are consistent with the idea that mothers of very young children continue to face binding care needs. The positive effect for those without children in the 0 to 5 age range is in line with previous evidence showing that the FTS program in Mexico increased the labor force participation of mothers of school-age children (Padilla-Romo and Cabrera-Hernández (2019)).

Importantly, the rise in labor force participation among women without young children occurs without a corresponding reduction in their own caregiving time. This pattern suggests that these women were not caring for their children in an exclusive manner. Instead, their caregiving likely involved supervisory roles, such as overseeing other family members or childcare providers.

TABLE 3 Estimated effects of the share of seats in FTS on weekly hours allocated to other activities

	Weekly hours of study		Weekly hours of house maintenance		Weekly hours of community service		LFP		Weekly hours of paid work	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Women										
Δ FTS	-0.0956	-0.251	-0.0395	-0.0474	-0.14	-0.207	0.043	0.0548	-0.056	-1.008
	[0.134]	[0.192]	[0.0993]	[0.0895]	[0.0686]**	[0.0865]**	[0.0263]	[0.0329]*	[0.933]	[1.146]
Child 0-5* Δ FTS		0.363		0.0187		0.158		-0.0272		2.233
		[0.272]		[0.172]		[0.125]		[0.0490]		[1.606]
N	154,872	154,872	154,871	154,871	154,872	154,872	154,850	154,850	154,865	154,865
Men										
Δ FTS	-0.0827	-0.110	0.17	-0.0921	0.00362	-0.0401	0.00721	-0.000926	1.454	1.248
	[0.123]	[0.130]	[0.216]	[0.275]	[0.128]	[0.150]	[0.0131]	[0.0167]	[1.333]	[1.465]
Child 0-5* Δ FTS		0.0631		0.613		0.102		0.019		0.484
		[0.214]		[0.408]		[0.172]		[0.0210]		[1.974]
N	154,872	154,872	154,871	154,871	154,872	154,872	154,850	154,850	154,865	154,865
Year*Quarter FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: Authors' elaboration based on ENOE and Ministry of Education. *Notes:* The table shows the results from estimating equations (2) and (3) in Section 4. Sample includes women and men who are 18 years or older, are household heads or their spouses, have elementary-school-age children, and live in in biparental households in the academic years 2005-2006 to 2016-2017. All models include year-by-quarter and state fixed effects. Other controls correspond to the first period a person is observed and include age and its square, indicators of level of own education level and education level of the spouse, number of household members, number of children younger than 13 and age of the youngest child. Estimated robust standard errors in brackets are clustered at the municipality level. *, **, *** significant at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

5.3 | Adjustments for other household members

Our main results show that parents of school-age children who also have younger kids reduced the time allocated to care activities due to the FTS program, but parents without children aged 0 to 5 did not adjust their care time. A plausible explanation for this pattern is that school-age children in these families were cared for by other household members (e.g., siblings, grandparents). Extended family arrangements remain common in Mexico (Shin (2012)), and interventions affecting parental time allocation may therefore have spillover effects on co-resident relatives. In this section, we investigate this hypothesis by analyzing the effect of the FTS program on care time of household members other than the household head and their spouse.

Table 4 presents the results for different samples. The first (second) sample includes household members between 15 and 24 years old (25 years or older) other than the household head and spouse of the household head and who live in the same households analyzed before. The third sample includes grandparents of school-age children. This sample com-

bins two groups: (i) parents or in-laws of the household head who live in the same three-generation households analyzed in our main specifications, and (ii) household heads who live with school-age grandchildren (typically grandparent-headed households where parents are absent or play a secondary role). We pool these groups because both represent potential caregivers for school-age children who are one generation removed from the parents, though we acknowledge they may face different constraints. The former group corresponds most directly to our hypothesis that care responsibilities might shift to co-resident grandparents in the main sample households, while the latter captures an alternative household structure where grandparents are primary caregivers. The estimates in Table 4 show that neither group adjusted their time allocated to care activities in response to FTS expansion, regardless of the presence of children aged 0 to 5 in the household, indicating that care responsibilities were not reallocated to extended family members.

TABLE 4 Estimated effects of the share of seats in FTS on weekly hours allocated to care activities by other household members

	Other members 15-24		Other members 25+		Grandparents	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Women						
Δ FTS	-0.0389	0.118	-0.738	-1.633	1.533	1.693
	[1.140]	[1.177]	[2.385]	[3.000]	[1.430]	[1.496]
Child 0-5* Δ FTS		-0.683		2.654		-1.866
		[2.264]		[5.050]		[3.952]
N	35,352	35,352	8,349	8,349	40,760	40,760
Men						
Δ FTS	0.252	0.432	-2.307	-2.307	0.544	0.56
	[0.444]	[0.435]	[1.641]	[1.889]	[0.746]	[0.763]
Child 0-5* Δ FTS		-0.797		0.027		-0.425
		[0.885]		[2.964]		[2.876]
N	39,576	39,576	4,937	4,937	25,664	25,664
Year*Quarter FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: Authors' elaboration based on ENOE and Ministry of Education. *Notes:* The table shows the results from estimating equations (2) and (3) in Section 4. All models include year-by-quarter and state fixed effects. Other controls correspond to the first period a person is observed, and include age and its square, indicators of level of education, number of household members and number of children younger than 13 and age of the youngest child (only in models for other members). Grandparents identified as mother, father, mother- or father-in-law of the household head in the same households analyzed before and household heads who live with school-age grandsons or granddaughters. Estimated robust standard errors in brackets are clustered at the municipality level. *, **, *** significant at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

The lack of adjustment in time allocated to care activities by other household members could still be reconciled with our previous findings for women and men without children in the 0 to 5 age range if these families were outsourcing care activities to other persons, such as babysitters, or enrolling their children in after-school activities. We explore this possibility by analyzing the impact of FTS expansion on domestic workers' labor market outcomes. Results are presented in Table 5. It is important to note that we estimate the

average effect of municipal-level FTS coverage on domestic workers in those municipalities without being able to control for whether these workers are employed in households with or without children aged 0-5, as this information is not available in our data. Table 5 shows that domestic workers, who are predominantly women, did not adjust their labor force participation and employment rates but show a reduction in their hours of paid work, although this estimate is imprecisely estimated. The point estimates are consistent with a mechanism in which families who have school-age children but no younger kids outsourced childcare to non-household members, with mothers supervising these activities. Under this interpretation, when the school day is extended, mothers would not reduce the time allocated to care activities (measured in an exclusive manner) but would be able to increase their labor force participation.

TABLE 5 Estimated effects of the share of seats in FTS on labor outcomes and weekly hours allocated to care and domestic activities by domestic workers

	Labor market outcomes			Time use outcomes	
	LFP (1)	Employment (2)	Weekly hours of work (3)	Weekly hours of care activities (4)	Weekly hours of domestic work (5)
Δ FTS	-0.00941 [0.0464]	-0.0196 [0.0494]	-5.782 [2.263]**	-0.0684 [1.555]	-2.03 [2.147]
N	41,743	41,743	25,005	25,005	25,003
Year*Quarter FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: Authors' elaboration based on ENOE and Ministry of Education. *Notes:* The table shows the results from estimating model (2) in Section 4. The sample includes women 18 years or older who are employed as domestic workers in the first observation of the panel in columns 1 and 2, and women 18 years or older who are employed as domestic workers in both observations of the panel in columns 3, 4 and 5. All models include year-by-quarter and state fixed effects. Other controls correspond to the first period a person is observed and include age and its square and indicators of level of education. Estimated robust standard errors in brackets are clustered at the municipality level. *, **, *** significant at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

5.4 | The role of gender norms

The estimated impacts of the FTS program on time allocated to care activities suggest that, in households with both school-age children and younger kids, a new bargaining process emerges around the distribution of caregiving tasks within couples, ultimately penalizing women. In this section, we investigate whether this adjustment varies by how traditional gender norms are in different areas. Previous studies have reported that more egalitarian countries in terms of gender norms exhibit higher levels of equality in the gendered distribution of total work, including both paid and unpaid work (Campaña et al. (2018)). More traditional gender norms dictate that women bear the heaviest burden of total work because men may feel certain tasks undermine their status (norms of masculinity) or because women may insist on caring for others due to their own internalized sense of self-worth (norms of femininity) (Sevilla et al. (2010)). In this line, we expect the increase in the share of care activities performed by women to be an adjustment present in more traditional areas.

Using state-level proxies for gender norms from the World Value Survey collected in

Mexico in 2000, we conduct three separate heterogeneity analyses corresponding to the three dimensions of gender norms described in Section 3: (i) being a housewife is as fulfilling as having a paid job; (ii) when women work, the children suffer; and (iii) men are better political leaders than women. For each dimension, we split the sample at the state-level median of variables showing the percentage of agreement with the corresponding statement, classifying states above the median as having traditional attitudes about gender roles and states below the median as having non-traditional attitudes. Figure 6 and Table 9 in the Appendix present results for all three proxies, showing that across all three dimensions, the FTS program increased the share of care activities performed by women who also have children aged 0 to 5 (with respect to women without children in the same age range), with a corresponding decline in the male share, in more traditional areas.

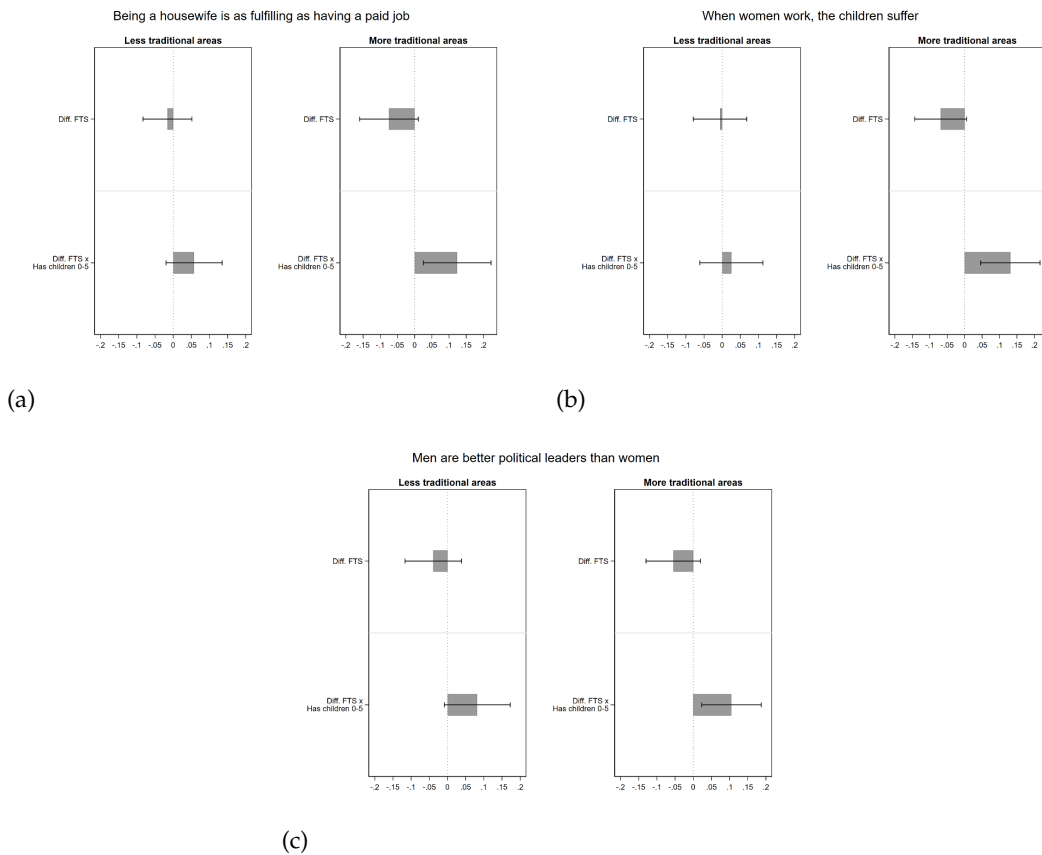


FIGURE 6 Figure 6. Estimated effects of the share of seats in FTS on the within-couple distribution of weekly hours allocated to care activities by intensity of social norms. Sample of women

Source: Authors' elaboration based on ENOE, Ministry of Education and 2000 World Value Survey.
Notes: The figures show the results from estimating equation (3) in Section 4 separately for areas with less/more traditional gender norms, as defined in Section 3, and for the sample of women. Confidence intervals at 90% level. Sample includes women who are 18 years or older, are household heads or their spouses, have elementary-school-age children, and live in in biparental households in the academic years 2005-2006 to 2016-2017. Hours allocated to care activities capture time used exclusively in care tasks. All models include year-by-quarter and state fixed effects. Other controls correspond to the first period a person is observed and include age and its square, indicators of level of own education level and education level of the spouse, number of household members, number of children younger than 13 and age of the youngest child. Estimated robust standard errors are clustered at the municipality level.

This result could arise, for instance, if couples decide that men reallocate the hours freed from childcare to paid work and increase their weekly labor supply by more than what would be required to maintain the pre-existing within-couple distribution of care responsibilities. Another possibility is that women also increase their paid work or enter the labor market; in the process of reallocating care tasks, they could end up with a higher share than before the FTS program. However, our estimates show that neither women nor men with school-age children and younger kids adjust their labor market outcomes or the time allocated to other activities. As a result, the observed increase in women's share of care activities is likely a penalty. Although both partners reduce the total number of hours spent on care because school-age children now spend more time at school, women in contexts

where they are expected to be the primary caregivers compensate by performing a larger share of the remaining care tasks.

5.5 | Robustness checks

The identifying assumption underlying the identification strategy is that in the absence of the extension of the school day, changes in time use patterns in municipalities with a high predicted share of FTS seats would have been similar to those in municipalities with a lower share in the same state. We formally test for divergence in time use outcomes between municipalities with high and low treatment intensity by adding lead terms of the change in the fraction of predicted FTS seats a year and two years prior to treatment in equation (2). Table 6 shows that our main results on weekly hours of care time and on the within-couple shares of care activities remain after including lead terms.

TABLE 6 Estimated effects of the share of seats in FTS on weekly hours allocated to care activities and on the within-couple distribution including leads

	Weekly hours of care activities		Share of care time within the couple	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Women				
Δ FTS	0.829 [1.219]	0.811 [1.219]	-0.0428 [0.0334]	-0.0493 [0.0336]
Child 0-5* Δ FTS	-5.779 [1.702]***	-5.695 [1.734]***	0.102 [0.0381]**	0.117 [0.0383]***
1 year after	1.495 [1.155]	1.450 [1.190]	-0.00844 [0.0214]	-0.00565 [0.0213]
2 years after		0.398 [1.189]		-0.00417 [0.0232]
N	160,962	155,839	79,258	76,833
Men				
Δ FTS	0.449 [0.532]	0.462 [0.544]	0.0434 [0.0334]	0.0498 [0.0336]
Child 0-5* Δ FTS	-2.623 [0.830]***	-2.889 [0.841]***	-0.104 [0.0380]**	-0.118 [0.0383]***
1 year after	0.314 [0.477]	0.173 [0.488]	0.00864 [0.0214]	0.00587 [0.0214]
2 years after		0.367 [0.538]		0.00430 [0.0232]
N	160,963	155,840	79,259	76,834
Year*Quarter FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State FE	Yes	No	Yes	No

Source: Authors' elaboration based on ENOE and Ministry of Education. *Notes:* Results from estimating equation (3) in Section 4. Sample includes women and men who are 18 years or older, are household heads or their spouses, have elementary-school-age children, and live in in biparental households in the academic years 2005-2006 to 2016-2017. Hours allocated to care activities capture time used exclusively in care tasks. All models include year-by-quarter and state fixed effects. Other controls correspond to the first period a person is observed an include age and its square, indicators of level of own education level and education level of the spouse, number of household members, number of children younger than 13 and age of the youngest child. Estimated robust standard errors in brackets are clustered at the municipality level. *, **, *** significant at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

In another check we analyze the effect of the extension of the school day on the group of the population that should not be directly affected by the policy. We work with three different samples. The first one includes women and men who are 18 years or older, are household heads or their spouses, live in biparental households, but do not have elementary-school-age children. The second one also excludes school-age children who are grandchildren of the household head. The last one excludes all school-age children, regardless of the relationship with the household head.

Results in Table 7 show that, across all three samples, women and men reduce the

weekly hours they allocate to care activities when there are children aged 0 to 5 in the household. The estimated coefficients are similar across samples and close to our main estimates. However, we do not find an adjustment in the within-couple shares of care work. The absence of changes in the relative distribution of care responsibilities suggests that for couples without school-age children, the reduction in time devoted to care takes place without altering the relative bargaining position of spouses.

TABLE 7 Estimated effects of the share of seats in FTS on weekly hours allocated to care activities and within-couple shares for women and men without school-age children

	Sample 1: No sons/daughters 6-12		Sample 2: No sons/grandsons or daughters/granddaughters 6-12		Sample 3: No children 6-12	
Panel A: Weekly hours of care activities						
Women						
Δ FTS	0.675 [0.626]	0.683 [0.627]	0.471 [0.578]	0.48 [0.579]	0.499 [0.578]	0.508 [0.579]
Child 0-5* Δ FTS	-5.474 [1.855]***	-5.474 [1.856]***	-5.353 [1.869]***	-5.353 [1.870]***	-5.384 [1.881]***	-5.384 [1.882]***
N	296,834	296,752	272,489	272,412	271,286	271,209
Men						
Δ FTS	0.287 [0.210]	0.287 [0.210]	0.286 [0.209]	0.285 [0.209]	0.283 [0.210]	0.282 [0.210]
Child 0-5* Δ FTS	-2.453 [0.911]***	-2.443 [0.912]***	-2.49 [0.910]***	-2.479 [0.911]***	-2.471 [0.917]***	-2.461 [0.918]***
N	296,834	296,752	272,489	272,412	271,286	271,209
Panel B: Share of care time within the couple						
Women						
Δ FTS	-0.034 [0.0391]	-0.034 [0.0391]	-0.022 [0.0425]	-0.022 [0.0424]	-0.0199 [0.0427]	-0.0198 [0.0427]
Child 0-5* Δ FTS	0.0415 [0.0422]	0.0409 [0.0423]	0.0316 [0.0453]	0.0309 [0.0453]	0.0316 [0.0455]	0.0308 [0.0455]
N	53,976	53,955	48,612	48,592	48,259	48,239
Men						
Δ FTS	0.0344 [0.0391]	0.0343 [0.0390]	0.0224 [0.0424]	0.0223 [0.0424]	0.0203 [0.0426]	0.0202 [0.0426]
Child 0-5* Δ FTS	-0.0417 [0.0422]	-0.0411 [0.0422]	-0.0319 [0.0453]	-0.0311 [0.0453]	-0.0319 [0.0455]	-0.0311 [0.0454]
N	53,976	53,955	48,612	48,592	48,259	48,239
Year*Quarter FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Estancias Infantiles	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

Source: Authors' elaboration based on ENOE and Ministry of Education. *Notes:* The table shows the results from estimating equation (3) in Section 4. All models include year-by-quarter and state fixed effects. Other controls correspond to the first period a person is observed and include age and its square, indicators of level of education, number of household members and number of children younger than 13 and age of the youngest child. Sample 1 includes women and men who are household heads or their spouses in households without school-age sons or daughters of the household head; sample 2 excludes from sample 1 women and men in households where there are grandsons/daughters of the household head; sample 3 excludes from sample 2 women and men in households where there are school-age children regardless the relationship with the household head. Estimated robust standard errors in brackets are clustered at the municipality level. *, **, *** significant at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

The finding that parents without elementary-school-age children also reduce care hours when exposed to higher FTS coverage requires careful interpretation, as it has direct implications for how we understand our main estimates. We consider three possible explanations for this pattern, which differ in their implications for the causal interpretation of our results.

First, these effects could reflect genuine spillovers or anticipation effects of the FTS program. Parents with children aged 0-5 but no school-age children may adjust their time use in anticipation of future enrollment in full-time schools, or they may benefit from

spillover effects through changes in childcare markets, similar to the spillovers documented by Padilla-Romo and Cabrera-Hernández (2019) for women's labor force participation. Under this interpretation, the estimates in our main analysis capture the total impact of the FTS expansion, including both direct effects on parents of enrolled children and broader equilibrium effects on the local childcare environment. This would not invalidate our causal estimates but would suggest they reflect a composite policy impact rather than only the direct effect of school schedule changes.

Second, the correlation could arise from other municipality-level policies or trends that coincide with FTS expansion and specifically affect parents of young children. To address this concern, we control for changes in the share of children enrolled in *Estancias Infantiles* at the municipality level, a federal daycare program for working mothers that expanded during our study period. The persistence of the placebo effects after including this control rules out confounding from this specific policy but does not eliminate the possibility of other unobserved municipal trends correlated with FTS intensity.⁹

Third, and related to the second explanation, the placebo effects could indicate that municipalities with higher FTS coverage differ in ways that independently affect time use for all parents of young children, not just those with school-age children. This would weaken the causal interpretation of the level effects (coefficients δ in equations 2 and 3) by suggesting that our treatment variable proxies for broader municipal characteristics.

We view the first explanation—genuine policy spillovers and anticipation—as most plausible for three reasons. First, the similarity in coefficient magnitudes between the main and placebo samples is consistent with a common underlying force (FTS expansion) affecting both groups, rather than spurious correlation. Second, the fact that we control for the main competing childcare policy (*Estancias Infantiles*) and still observe these effects supports a FTS-related mechanism. Third, and most importantly, the absence of changes in within-couple care shares in the placebo samples, combined with the significant shifts in these shares in our main sample, provides a crucial distinction. If the placebo effects were driven by confounding municipal trends unrelated to FTS, we would expect those trends to also affect the relative bargaining position of spouses and thus alter within-couple shares. The fact that shares change only in households with elementary-school-age children—those directly exposed to the program—strongly suggests that the specialization effects we document are causally driven by the FTS program itself, even if the absolute level of care hours is affected by broader equilibrium effects.

This interpretation has two implications for our conclusions. First, while the precise magnitude of the level effects on weekly care hours should be interpreted with some caution due to potential equilibrium effects, the direction and statistical significance of these effects remain credible estimates of the FTS program's impact. Second, and more importantly, our key findings regarding the within-couple distribution of care work and the reinforcement of gender specialization patterns are robust to these concerns, as these effects appear exclusively in households directly affected by the program.

6 | CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of the Full-time School program at the elementary level in Mexico had effects on intrahousehold time allocation, generating changes in time devoted to care activities and in labor market participation. There is, however, no uniform pattern of change, but rather the responses depend on household composition.

⁹Estancias Infantiles is a federal daycare program for working mothers which subsidizes community and home-based daycare to facilitate employment of low-income mothers.

Women and men living with school-age children as well as children younger than six reduce the time they dedicate to care. But although the care burden on women decreases in absolute terms, female share of care activities increases, strengthening the previous patterns of specialization that prevailed in households. Moreover, the availability of FTS does not change labor outcomes for women in these households. Even if the school schedule for children in the elementary level becomes compatible with labor market activities, these women continue to face care requirements from their younger children. Due to the constraints imposed by their younger children, they are not able to take advantage of the opportunities implied by the extension of the elementary school day. This underlines the importance of implementing complementary interventions attending children in all dependent ages to foster positive impacts in terms of labor market outcomes. Removing the barrier of childcare for school age children but not affecting the constraints implied by pre-school age children does not result in improvements in labor market outcomes, but rather in a more specialized pattern of allocation of care time between parents, at least in the case of FTS in Mexico. Our analysis of heterogeneity by gender norms reveals that this reinforcement of specialization patterns is particularly pronounced in areas with more traditional attitudes about gender roles. In states where norms dictate that women should be the primary caregivers, the FTS program leads to a larger increase in women's share of care activities compared to areas with more egalitarian norms. This finding suggests that the impact of childcare policies on gender equality in time use depends not only on the design of the policy itself, but also on the cultural context in which it is implemented.

Responses in terms of labor market participation are only found for those mothers who do not have younger children at home. However, the result indicating that these women do not change the time they allocate to care is puzzling. We find some suggestive, though statistically imprecise, evidence that may help interpret these findings: although no other family members reduced their time assigned to care, domestic workers in treated municipalities show a reduction in hours of paid work. This pattern is consistent with families outsourcing childcare to non-household members, with mothers supervising these activities, though the statistical weakness of these estimates means this remains a plausible interpretation rather than a firmly established mechanism. Further research with more detailed data on household expenditures and childcare arrangements is needed to fully understand these responses.

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7 | APPENDIX

TABLE 8 Estimated effects of the share of seats in FTS on weekly hours allocated to care activities and on the within-couple distribution

	Weekly hours of care activities		Share of care time within the couple	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Women				
Δ FTS	-0.801 [1.141]	1.512 [1.203]	0.00699 [0.0220]	-0.0406 [0.0344]
Child 0-5* Δ FTS		-5.399 [1.713]***		0.0755 [0.0377]**
N	154,869	154,869	73,911	73,911
Men				
Δ FTS	-0.365 [0.498]	0.489 [0.493]	-0.00672 [0.0219]	0.0413 [0.0343]
Child 0-5* Δ FTS		-1.996 [0.741]***		-0.0762 [0.0377]**
N	154,869	154,869	73,911	73,911
Year*Quarter FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: Authors' elaboration based on ENOE and Ministry of Education.

Notes: Results from estimating equations (2) and (3) in Section 4. Sample includes women and men who are 18 years or older, are household heads or their spouses, have elementary-school-age children, and live in biparental households in the academic years 2005-2006 to 2016-2017. Hours allocated to care activities capture time used exclusively in care tasks. All models include year-by-quarter and state fixed effects. Other controls correspond to the first period a person is observed and include age and its square, indicators of level of own education level and education level of the spouse, number of household members, number of children younger than 13 and age of the youngest child. Estimated robust standard errors in brackets are clustered at the municipality level. *, **, *** significant at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

TABLE 9 Estimated effects of the share of seats in FTS on the within-couple distribution of weekly hours allocated to care activities by intensity of social norms proxies

	Being a housewife is as fulfilling as having a paid job		When women work, the children suffer		Men are better political leaders than women	
	Less traditional	More traditional	Less traditional	More traditional	Less traditional	More traditional
Women						
Δ FTS	-0.0157 [0.0409]	-0.0747 [0.0518]	-0.00586 [0.0447]	-0.0689 [0.0452]	-0.0393 [0.0471]	-0.0553 [0.0454]
Child 0-5* Δ FTS	0.0577 [0.0469]	0.124 [0.0598]**	0.0254 [0.0528]	0.131 [0.0517]**	0.0818 [0.0550]	0.105 [0.0497]**
N	44,819	37,866	41,576	41,109	43,848	38,837
Men						
Δ FTS	0.0169 [0.0408]	0.0744 [0.0518]	0.00664 [0.0446]	0.0696 [0.0452]	0.0403 [0.0471]	0.0549 [0.0454]
Child 0-5* Δ FTS	-0.059 [0.0468]	-0.123 [0.0598]**	-0.0264 [0.0528]	-0.132 [0.0516]**	-0.0831 [0.0551]	-0.104 [0.0497]**
N	44,819	37,866	41,576	41,109	43,848	38,837
Year*Quarter FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: Authors' elaboration based on ENOE, Ministry of Education and 2000 World Value Survey.

Notes: The table shows the results from estimating equation (3) in Section 4 separately for areas with less/more traditional gender norms, as defined in Section 3. Confidence intervals at 90% level. Sample includes women and men who are 18 years or older, are household heads or their spouses, have elementary-school-age children, and live in in biparental households in the academic years 2005-2006 to 2016-2017. Hours allocated to care activities capture time used exclusively in care tasks. All models include year-by-quarter and state fixed effects. Other controls correspond to the first period a person is observed and include age and its square, indicators of level of own education level and education level of the spouse, number of household members, number of children younger than 13 and age of the youngest child. Estimated robust standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. *, **, *** significant at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.