

## K6.2 Gender differences in the use of cognitive skills at work

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Gender pay gap decreased worldwide during recent decades mainly due to the increase of the average relative educational level of women compared to men and therefore women became segregated less and less into occupations with low skills and wage level (*Blau–Kahn, 2000*).

As a result of this process the gender pay gap *within* occupations is now larger than *between* occupations. *Black–Spitz–Oener (2010)* also demonstrated that the wage disadvantage of women mainly originates in the fact that women in the same occupation use their cognitive skills less than men. This is a surprising result as occupations are defined with detailed lists of tasks, which determines all tasks the employee should fulfil in the given occupation (*ISCO, 2008*). Thus, if the definition of occupations is exact, no systematic gender differences could exist in the use of skills within occupation.

In our related study (*Pető–Reizer, 2018*) we examined the possible reasons why the skills use of women at work lags behind. For this work, the survey called Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)<sup>1</sup> was used. The survey asked employees directly how often they carry out certain activities (e.g. using Excel, writing a letter etc.) and based on the answers a standardised index of skills use has been created. Based

on our results the disadvantage in the skills use of women by 0.2–0.3 standard deviation is the same as if women in the same occupation attended school 4 years less than men. This disadvantage does not disappear even if differences in demographic and other employment related characteristics are filtered out. The disadvantage in skills use of women appears in all the 16 countries assessed by PIAAC at all qualification levels. In addition, based on the outcomes of PIAAC tests in mathematics and reading it can be also proved that the reason behind the less intensive skills use of women is not the lack of the necessary skills.

Finally, we demonstrate that the gender gap in skills use disappears if we filter out the impact of the time spent with housework. Those women who do more housework also fulfil less skill-intensive tasks at their workplace than men in the same occupation, with the same educational level and with equal test results in mathematics and reading.

It follows from our outcomes, that measures aiming at decreasing segregation *between* occupations are not able to eliminate gender gaps at workplaces. Besides this, it is apparent that activities at work and at home are closely connected therefore gender distribution of tasks at work and in the free time have to be understood jointly in order to decrease gender inequalities at work.

### References

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<sup>1</sup> *Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)* is an overall international survey established by the OECD, which measures basic competencies of the adult population used in everyday life and at work in the participating countries. The internationally harmonized assessment of skills started in 2003. Hungary joined the assessment of skills in 2008 – unlike the other rounds of 2003 and 2013 in which surveys Hungary did not participate.