

## Women's Contingent Work and the Gender Division of Housework in Korea

Bargaining theory posits that women's resources are important predictors of the unequal division of housework, yet much of the literature focuses on wage income. This study considers women's contingent employment—positions with high instability, lower pay, and fewer benefits—and housework allocation in Korea, a highly dualist economy with a sharp divide in the pecuniary and non-pecuniary rewards of regular and contingent employment. We use longitudinal data from a nationally representative study of 5000 Korean women and fixed-effects analysis. Controlling for relative income and relative work hours between spouses, results show that women's share of housework increases approximately 4.3% when they transfer from regular to contingent work. Interestingly, there is no association between women's transition between part-time and full-time regular employment. These findings support the view that contingent employment, not part-time work and attendant wages, lowers women's bargaining power in terms of their domestic labor.

### Introduction

Bargaining theory, or economic exchange theory, posits that women's employment resources (i.e. wage and occupational prestige) are important contributors to the unequal division of housework [1]–[5]; however these perspectives failed to account for diversity in employment resources beyond income and occupations. The effects of non-wage components, such as contingent employment characterized by limited access to fringe benefits, high job instability, and limited career advancement, on the gender division of housework has been under-studied. Therefore, this study examines the relationship between women's transition into contingent employment and the re-distribution of housework in marriage, independent of wage differentials between spouses.

Scholars studying contingent employment have emphasized the differences in the pecuniary and non-pecuniary employment benefits between contingent workers and regular workers [6], [7]. In many industrialized societies, labor policies strictly mandate social insurance for regular (permanent) workers, meaning that contingent workers who are on fixed-term contracts receive less pay, fewer fringe benefits, and statutory entitlements compared to regular employees with similar skills and characteristics [6]–[9]. Non-wage compensation, such as health insurance and pension benefits, is an important individual resource since private health insurance and pension plans can be costly. Thus, a spouse in a contingent position is more likely to depend on the other spouse who generally has such benefits [10]. Moreover, high job instability and limited career advancement negatively affect one's potential to contribute to the household economy, which makes their employment less valuable, regardless of their income contribution. In this regard, the following hypothesis is proposed: Women's contingent employment may promote an unequal division of housework by creating unequal

employment resources between spouses beyond wage penalties.

This study empirically focuses on Korea, a highly dualist economy in which there is a sharp divide in the pecuniary and non-pecuniary rewards between regular and contingent employment [9], [11], [12]. Despite the governmental effort to improve the employment quality for contingent work, national statistics continuously report that contingent workers have lower wages and less coverage by health insurance and national pensions, as compared to regular workers [7], [13]. More importantly, women are strikingly over-represented in contingent employment in Korea. Despite significant improvements in women's education and economic standings, the proportion of contingent work among women is almost twice as high as that of men, with more than 40% of working women in the contingent labor force [13], [14]. Unlike other industrialized societies in the United States and Japan, where part-time is the dominant form within contingent employment [8], the proportion of full-time contingent employment in Korea is higher [13]. This indicates that the majority of Korean women in contingent employment spend as much time at the workplace as regular workers but receive lower pay, fewer fringe benefits, and less statutory entitlements.

I use the panel data (2007–2016) from a nationally representative sample of Korean women and estimates the relationship between women's shift into contingent work and the re-distribution of housework burden in marriage. I also test how much of the association between contingent work and the housework allocation is explained by wage and non-wage components, such as fringe benefits packages. Given the reciprocal relationship between women's employment outcomes and domestic responsibilities, I address the potential impact of the endogeneity process inherent in this study.

## **Method**

### *Data and Samples*

I use data from six waves (2007-2016) of the Korean Longitudinal Survey of Women and Families (KLoWF). The KLoWF is a panel survey of a nationally representative sample of 9,997 Korean women aged 19-64 years in 2007. The KLoWF was specifically designed to gather information on women's economic activities and family life to evaluate the effectiveness of policy tools (KWDI 2010). Thus, the KLoWF includes detailed information on women's employment characteristics and family lives, including fertility histories, gender division of housework, and marital relationships.

The focus of this study is women's housework burden in marriage, and therefore I limit the sample to women who are married with husbands living in the same household at wave 1 (n=5,723). I further limit the sample of women of both spouses are under the age of 60 and over 25 to avoid including individuals who are still in tertiary education and who are retired from work (n=5,569). Finally, I excluded women who are missing in more than four waves (out of six waves). The final sample includes 5,083 women.

At each wave, women reported information on current socioeconomic characteristics, housework minutes of each spouse, and their employment status. Using this data structure, I created a person-wave data file for each women in the analytic sample, resulting a total of 31,501 person-waves. Missing rates were very low. I imputed missing data using the multiple imputations, then deletion (MID) procedure.

### *Key Variables*

The outcome measures are women's share in total housework. At each wave, women reported the number of minutes they and their husbands completed in routinized household tasks (preparing meals, washing dishes, doing laundry, shopping, and cleaning ) and childcare activities per day. I calculated wives' share as the percentage of the total amount of housework done by both spouses per day. Thus, women's housework share ranges from 0 to 100.

The key independent variable in this study is women's employment types. At each wave, respondents reported whether they are employed, self-employed or not working. Women who are employed are asked whether their employment type is regular or contingent. Also, women who are employed are asked whether their employment type is full-time or part-time. Some literature view part-time work as a "mommy track," i.e., a type of employment primarily used by working mothers to reconcile work and family duties [15], [16]. This indicate that part-time work arrangements may have different implications for women's domestic responsibilities compared to full-time work arrangements. Therefore, I differentiate between full- and part-time regular and contingent employments. Hence, I created five categories of women's employment type: *regular full-time*, *regular part-time*, *contingent full-time*, *contingent part-time*, and *not working*.

I include time-varying employment characteristics of which relationship with the housework time were extensively discussed in the previous literature. I include continuous values of women's relative earnings in marriage. I also include spousal time differences in time at paid labor. At each wave, women also report whether their employers provide a package of fringe benefits, including health insurance, national pensions, and employment insurance. I created dummy variable indicating women's accessibility to fringe benefits packages or not.

I also control for the same set of time-varying covariates in all models that may be correlated with both employment types and the amount of housework each spouse performs. I included a measure of numbers of co-residing dependent children to account for the level of housework demands. I also included a measure of additional domestic support from grandparents and employed nannies who spent at least one hour per week taking care of housework responsibilities or no assistance.

### *Analytic Strategy*

I estimate individual-level fixed effects models, which allow us to control for time-

invariant unobserved heterogeneity in housework hours that may be correlated with employment types. Contingent employment may not be an exogenous shock, and there may be important women's or households' characteristics that are correlated with both traditional housework share and contingent employment (e.g. traditional gender attitudes, and career trajectories). Fixed-effect models measure within-individual variations, therefore, eliminate the potential influence of stable women's or household confounders or selection effects that are not accounted for in the analyses. In addition, any consistent upward or downward bias in housework reported by women- even if the amount of bias varies across women – will be absorbed by the fixed effects. Therefore, if all women underestimate husbands' housework time, and some women underestimate more than others, the coefficients will remain unaffected, provided that the extent of underestimation is constant for any given women.

## Results

### *Descriptive statistics*

Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics of person-wave by women's employment types. I also report women's employment characteristics, which are not included in the analysis, including women's housework time, monthly income, and time in paid labor. Korean women shoulder most of the domestic responsibilities in marriage regardless of their employment types. The proportion of housework share is the lowest at 80% among full-time regular workers and the highest at 86% among full-time contingent workers. Interestingly, part-timers in regular work positions shoulder less housework share in marriage at 80% compared to full-timers in contingent work positions at 86%.

Women's economic contribution in marriage varies by women's employment types. In general, women in regular employment (both full-time and part-time) earn more than women in contingent employment (both full-time and part-time). The mean monthly income is the greatest among regular workers in part-time arrangements at 278. Their economic contribution in marriage is also the most egalitarian at 46%. On the contrary, monthly income is the lowest and income share in marriage is the lowest among full-time contingent workers.

Spousal differences in labor time is much smaller than the differences in housework hours. Spousal gap in labor time is smaller for full-time workers than for part-time workers. Full-time regular workers spend on average 528 minutes (8.9 hours) per day in workplace. Part-time regular workers spend similar amount of time doing paid labor as full-time workers at 500 minutes (8.3 hours) per day. Full-time contingent workers spend only 6 minutes less per day than full-time regular workers doing paid labor at 522 minutes (8.7 hours).

Women's access to fringe benefits packages substantially varies by employment types. Majority of regular workers at 90-92% have access to fringe benefits packages

which include health insurance, national pensions, and employment insurances provided by the employers. However, less than half of contingent workers at 44-46% receive these benefits. Despite being part-timers, regular workers have the highest coverage rates of fringe benefits packages at 92%.

In sum, the descriptive statistics show that regular workers tend to have greater employment resources (wage) and more egalitarian division of housework compared to contingent workers. Interestingly, regular workers in part-time arrangements tend to have the greatest employment resource while contingent workers in full-time arrangements tend to have the lowest employment resource.

### *Housework share*

Table 2 reports individual fixed-effect model estimates for wives' share in housework. All models control for wives' and husbands' occupations, the number of dependent children, home ownership, and extra childcare help. Model 1 shows that, compared to full-time regular work, both full-time and part-time contingent work are associated with greater amount of housework share for women.

Model 2 reports outcomes of wives' housework share when wives' relative earnings are adjusted. The results show that contingent work is associated with more unequal housework allocation independent of spousal differences in wages. However, the size of coefficients of contingent full-time work decreased from 4.29 to 4.22 when relative income is adjusted. As expected women's higher earnings are associated with women's lower share of housework.

Model 3 shows that access to fringe benefits partially explains the relationship between contingent work and an unequal housework share. The results show that access to fringe benefits is associated with the decrease of housework share by 1.19%. When women's access to fringe benefits are considered in the model, the coefficient sizes of contingent work decreased. The coefficient sizes of full-time contingent work decreased from 4.22 to 3.71 and part-time contingent work decreased from 4.17 to 3.66. The relationship between contingent work and the increase in women's housework share remains robust after accounting for wage and non-wage components.

Across all models, I found no statistically significant differences in women's housework share between full-time regular work and part-time regular work.

I illustrate the predicted values of women's housework share by women's employment type in Figure 1. Other covariates are held at their means or modes. Figure 1 shows that the predicted values of housework share is the lowest among regular workers in full-time arrangements at 83.9%. Part-timers who are also in regular position shoulder slightly more housework share at 84.5%. Contingent work position (both full-time and part-time) are expected to shoulder more housework share compared to regular work positions. Contingent workers in full-time positions are expected to carry out 88.2% of housework in marriage and contingent workers in part-time work are expected to carry out 87.2% of

housework share.

## **Discussion and Next Steps**

This is the first study to empirically test the relationship between contingent work and housework allocation in marriage. Contingent employment, which is defined by the fixed-term nature of the contract, is associated with multiple poor job qualities, including lower wages, limited career advancements, and limited access to social security benefits. I found that women's transition into contingent work is associated with an increase in housework share, independent of spousal differences in wages and labor hours. Women's transition into part-time jobs with permanent contract (regular work) from full-time regular work is not associated with the changes in housework share. These findings support the view that contingent employment, not part-time work and attendant wages, lowers women's bargaining power in terms of their domestic labor.

Finally, these findings propose the diverse capital perspectives that extends earnings centered assessments of housework bargaining.

As next steps, I will complete a more through explanation of the theoretical framework on the bargaining theory and relevant literature pertaining to these topics. More importantly, I will elaborate distinctive duality in the Korean labor market between regular and contingent works. In addition, I will conduct several robustness checks that address potential endogeneity process between employment outcomes and domestic responsibilities.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Person-Wave by Women's Employment Types

	<b>Regular Full-time (N=1,117)</b>	<b>Regular Part-time (N=1,116)</b>	<b>Contingent Full-time (N=7,491)</b>	<b>Contingent Part-time (N=2,157)</b>
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Wives' housework share%	80.18 (23.61)	80.26 (25.38)	86.13 (22.49)	85.44 (21.04)
Wives' housework time (minutes/day)	180.01 (148.26)	162.30 (112.05)	167.70 (107.42)	181.39 (119.32)
Wives' income share%	41.68 (12.08)	45.82 (13.68)	29.04 (13.14)	36.87 (14.93)
Wives' income (KRW/month)	166.80 (172.42)	277.68 (494.39)	115.27 (65.33)	117.59 (86.92)
Time differences in paid labor (absolute)	15.92 (229.08)	35.79 (201.18)	21.81 (302.16)	149.75 (270.81)
Wives' labor time (minutes/day)	528.19 (101.17)	500.62 (94.05)	563.90 (149.47)	378.75 (156.46)
Fringe benefits <sup>1</sup> %	0.90	0.92	0.46	0.44
Wives' occupation	%			
Professional/manager	0.39	0.43	0.16	0.21
Office/sales	0.43	0.45	0.46	0.55
Manual	0.18	0.12	0.38	0.24
Husbands' occupation	%			
Professional/manager	0.25	0.27	0.15	0.16
Office/sales	0.32	0.35	0.27	0.29
Manual	0.36	0.30	0.48	0.44
Not working	0.08	0.08	0.10	0.11
No of dependent children	%			
0	0.17	0.22	0.30	0.26
1	0.21	0.24	0.20	0.21
2	0.50	0.45	0.40	0.43
3 or more	0.11	0.09	0.10	0.10
Extra childcare help%	0.18	0.20	0.08	0.08
Home ownership%	0.64	0.68	0.68	0.70

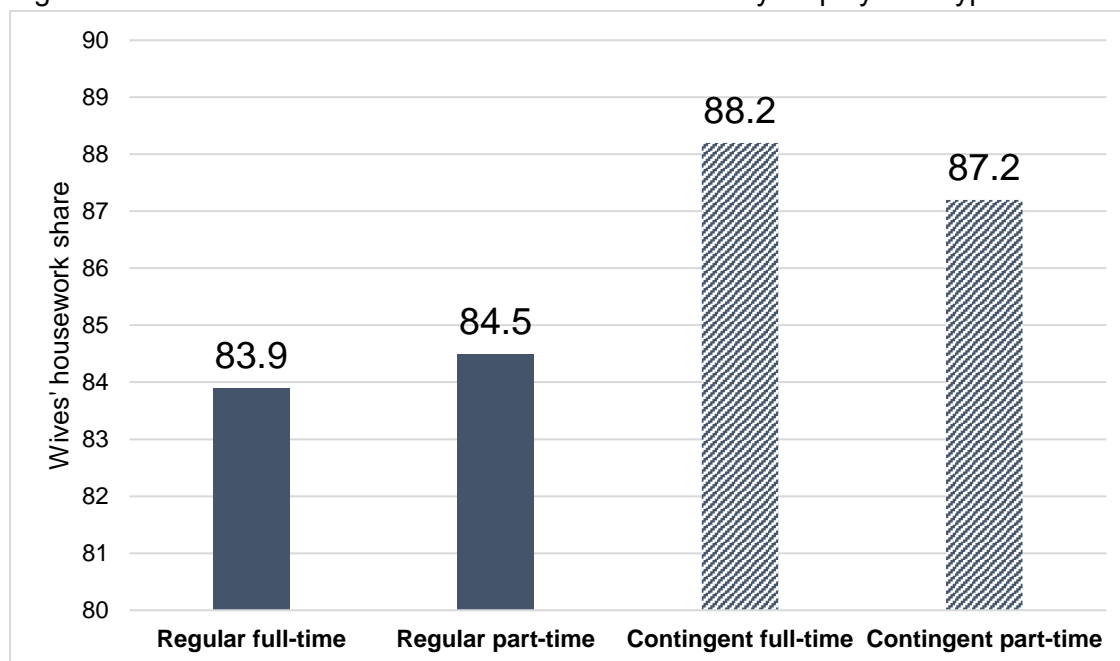
Notes. <sup>1</sup>Fringe benefits include health insurance, national pension, and employment insurance provided by employers.

Table 2. Individual Fixed-Effect Estimates for Wives' Housework Share

	Model 1: Basic		Model 2: Relative income		Model 3: Fringe benefits	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
<b>Employment type (ref: Regular &amp; full-time)</b>						
Regular & part-time	0.17	0.75	0.67	0.75	0.59	0.76
Contingent & full-time	4.29 ***	0.60	4.22 ***	0.61	3.71 ***	0.63
Contingent & part-time	4.23 ***	0.69	4.17 ***	0.69	3.66 ***	0.71
Not working	1.42	2.03	-0.28	0.25	-0.68	2.51
<b>Wives' income share (ref: lowest)</b>						
Second			-2.96	2.56	-2.86	2.56
Third			-3.28 †	1.93	-3.01	1.94
Highest			-5.54 **	1.95	-5.28 **	1.96
Fringe benefits <sup>1</sup>					-1.19 **	0.43
Spousal gap in labor hours	0.01 ***	0.001	0.01 ***	0.001	0.01 ***	0.001
Variance explained by fixed-effects	0.46		0.47		0.47	

Notes: ref indicates reference group. <sup>1</sup>Fringe benefits include health insurance, national pension, and employment insurance provided by employers. All models include wives' and husbands' occupation, number of dependent children, home ownership, and extra childcare help. † p<0.1, \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\*<0.001.

Figure 1. Predicted values of women's housework share by employment types





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