

# Persisting Gender Inequalities in Employment and Working Time:

## A Unitary Perspective on Gender and Class Inequalities in the Labour Market

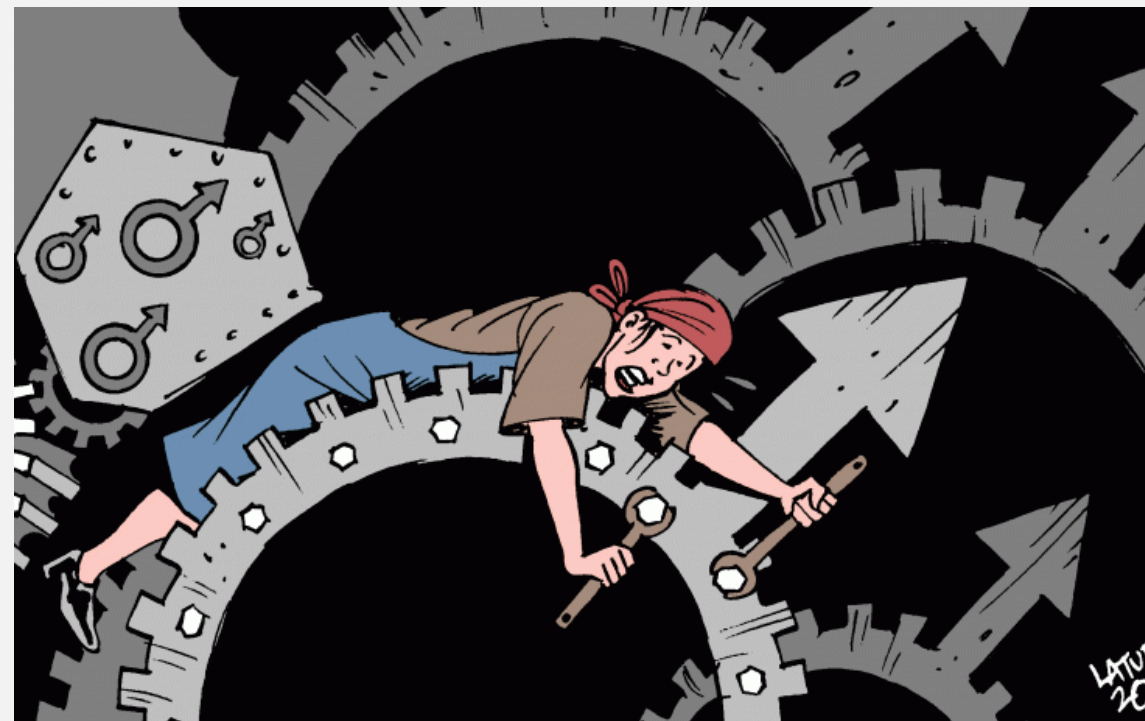
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Friday 28 June 2024 10.30-12.00  
SASE 2024 Conference, Limerick, Ireland  
Track \*C: Gender, Work and Family

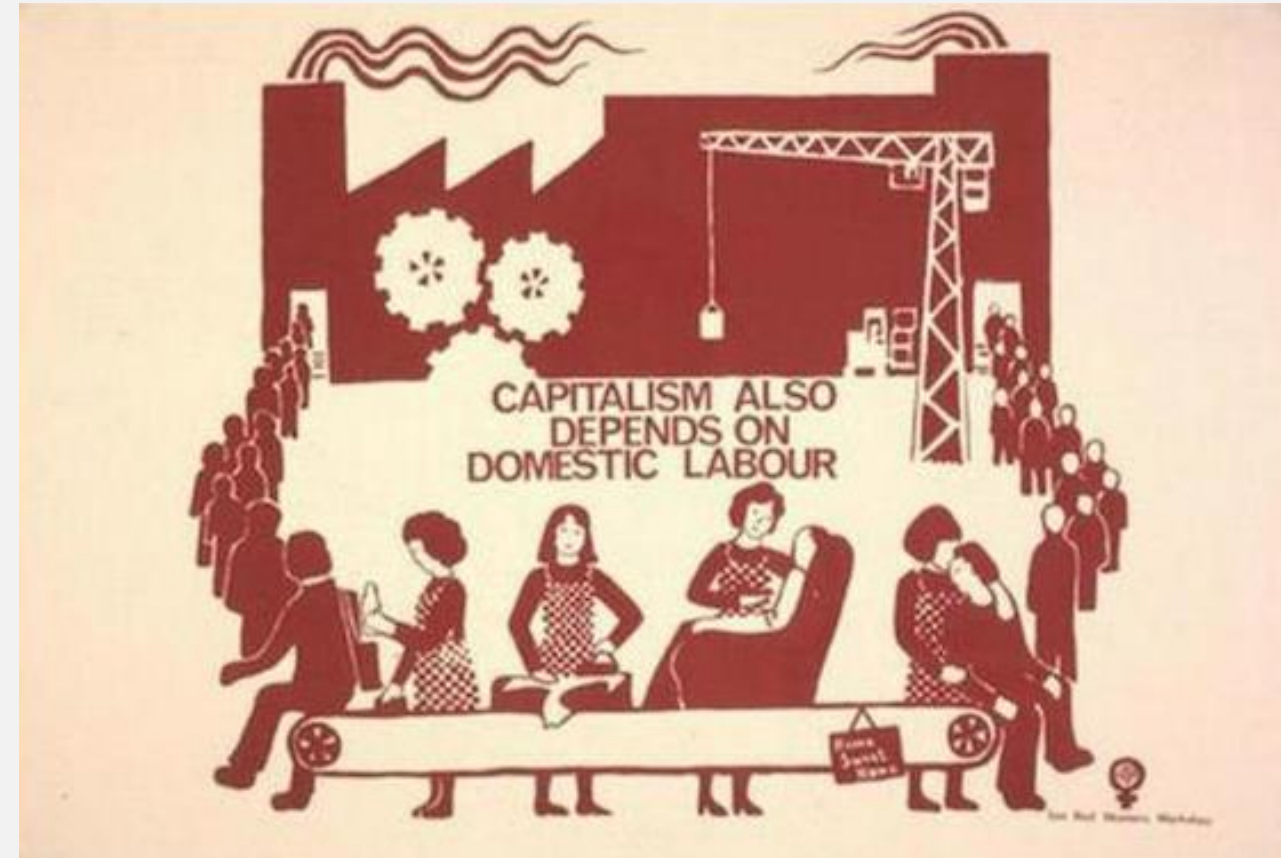


2021 – intersectoral social dialogue [www.vbo.be](http://www.vbo.be)



# Overview

- ✓ **Theories:** gender, working time regulation, social reproduction theory
- ✓ **Case study:** Belgian National Labour Council
- ✓ **Methodology:** analysis of opinions and collective agreements (1953-to-date)
- ✓ **Findings:** Four periods of gendered
- ✓ **Discussion:**



# THEORY: Gender equality & working time

## Gender & labour market inequalities:

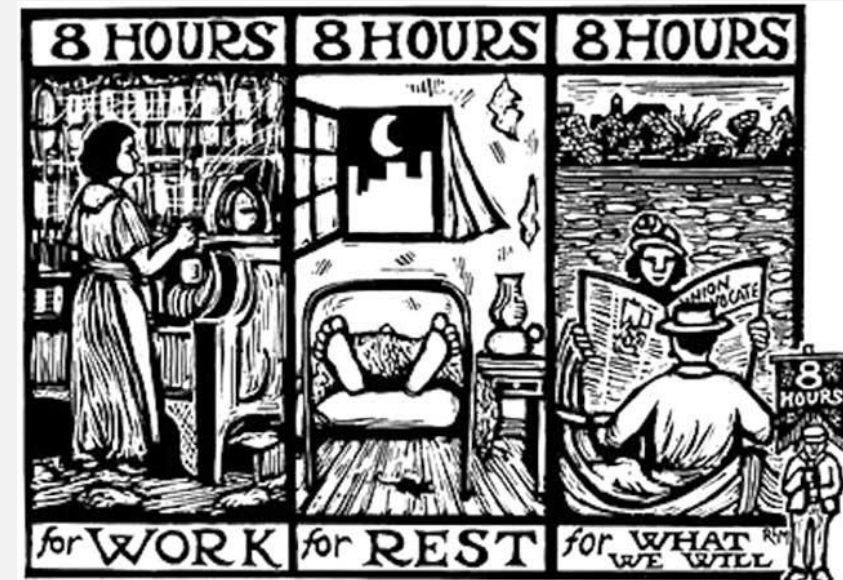
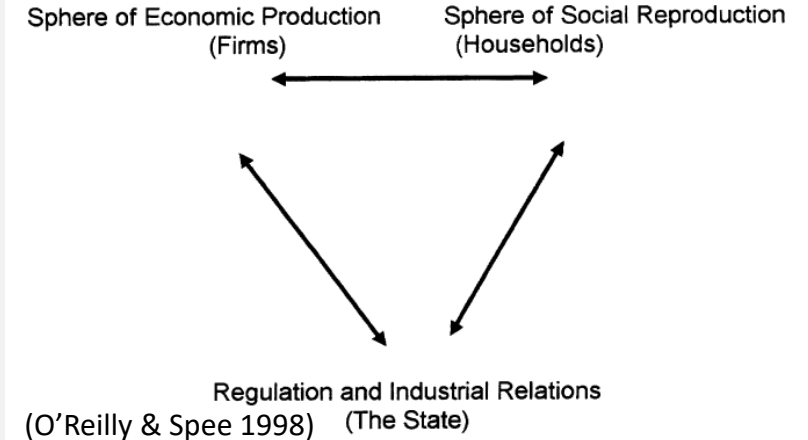
- **Sphere of economic production:** regulation of working time and employment by LM institutions & social dialogue
- **Sphere of social production:** 'gender contract'

Yet: pressures conceived **separately**

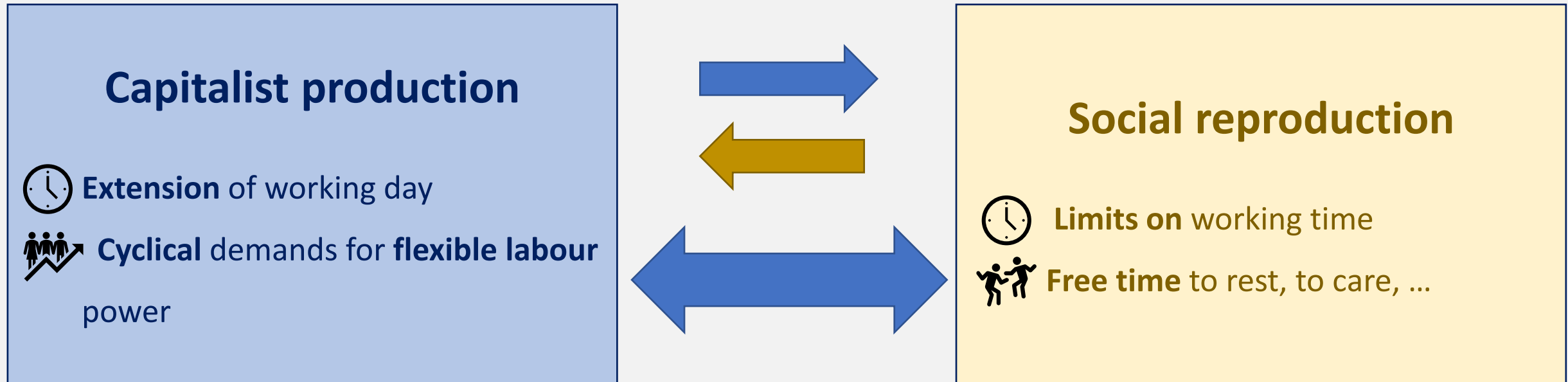
→Interconnection?

→Perspective: **Social reproduction theory (SRT)**

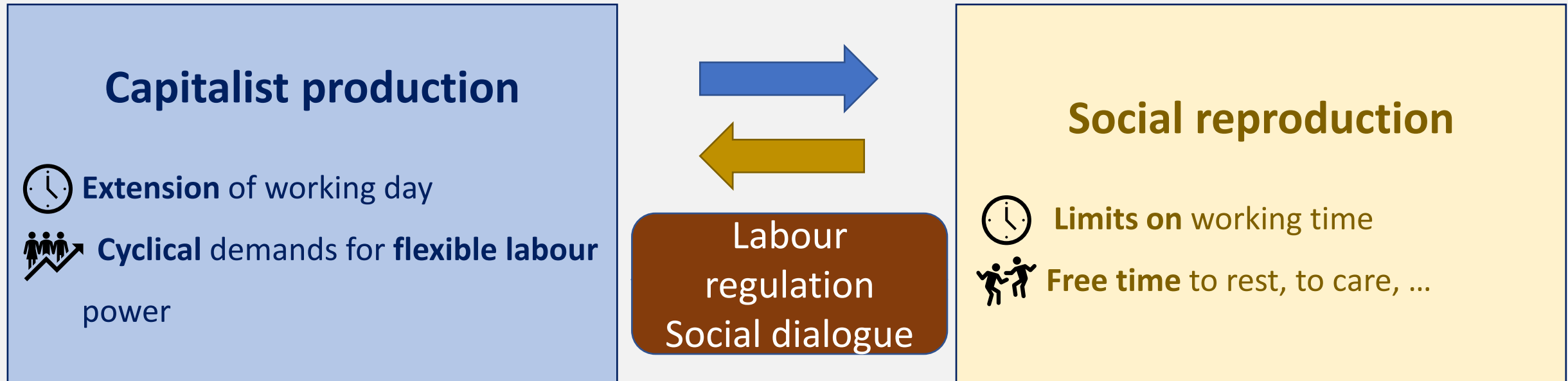
FIG. 1. Gendered Employment Systems



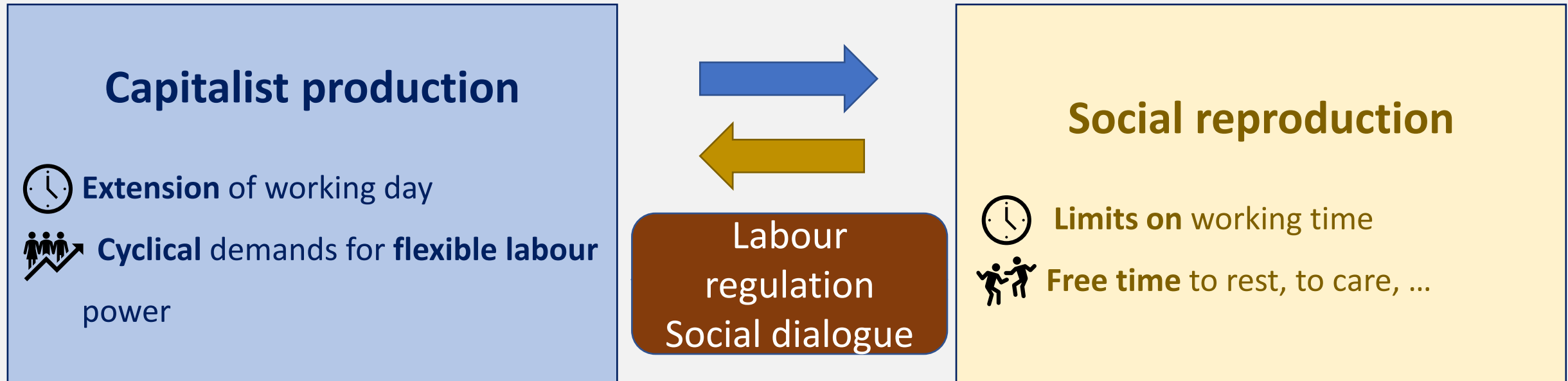
# Social reproduction and gender inequalities in capitalist society



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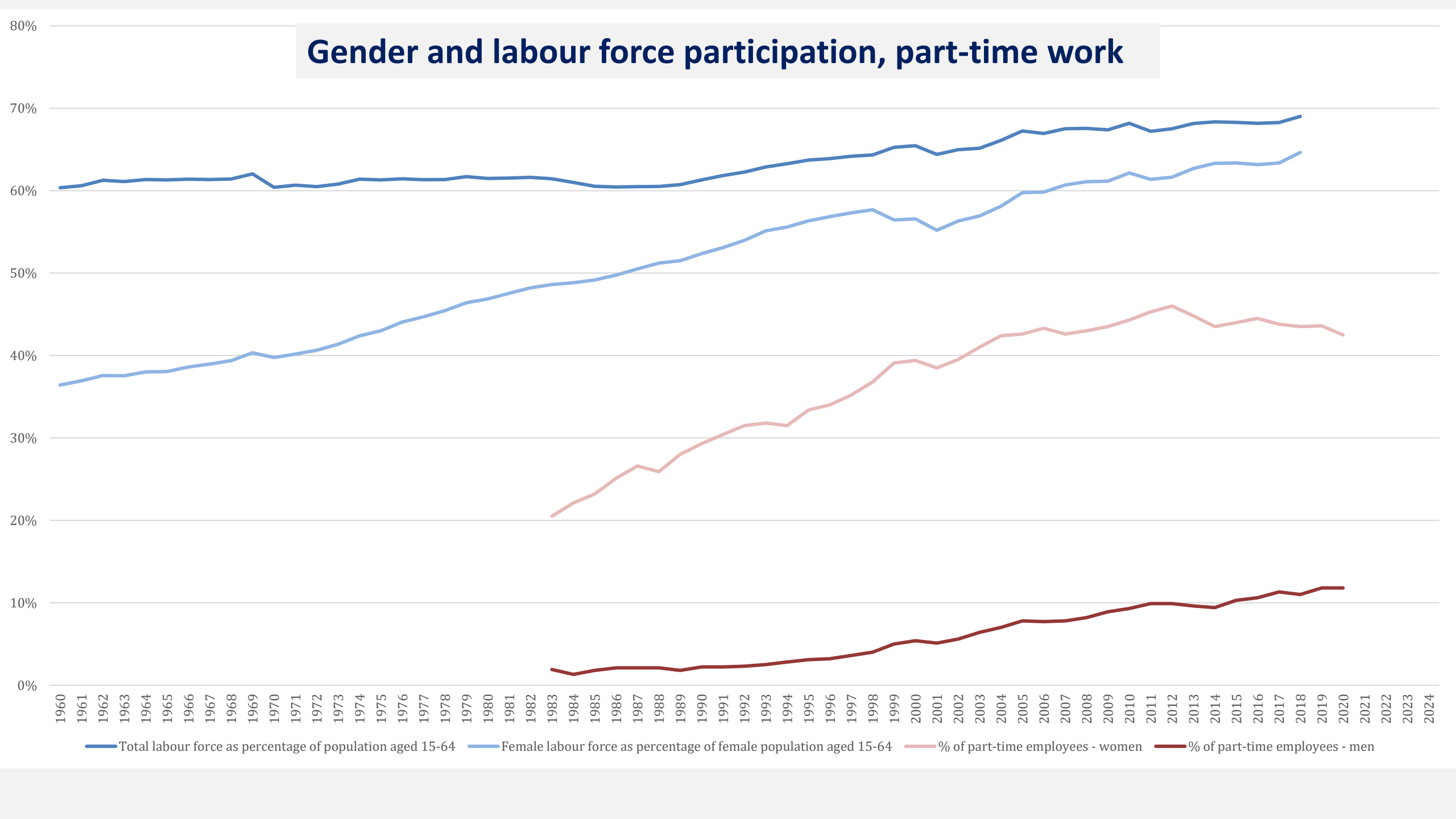
- How did social partners' **gendered employment and working time arrangements** respond to the **labour force demands** of capital accumulation over time?
- How have these arrangements **reshaped social reproduction over time**?
- With which **effects on gender equality**?

## Case study: National Labour Council (1953-2022)

- **Bipartite** composition (private sector)
- 2.311 **opinions** since 1953
  - 83,4% *unanimous*
  - 16,6% *divided* (NAR 2021)
- 160 collective agreements (Law of 1968)
- On **social policy** questions  
(labour law, social security, social dialogue,...)



# Gender and labour force participation, part-time work



# METHODOLOGY:



**Data selection** of opinions and agreements (1953-to-date)  
**Additional** sources: documents, expert interviews

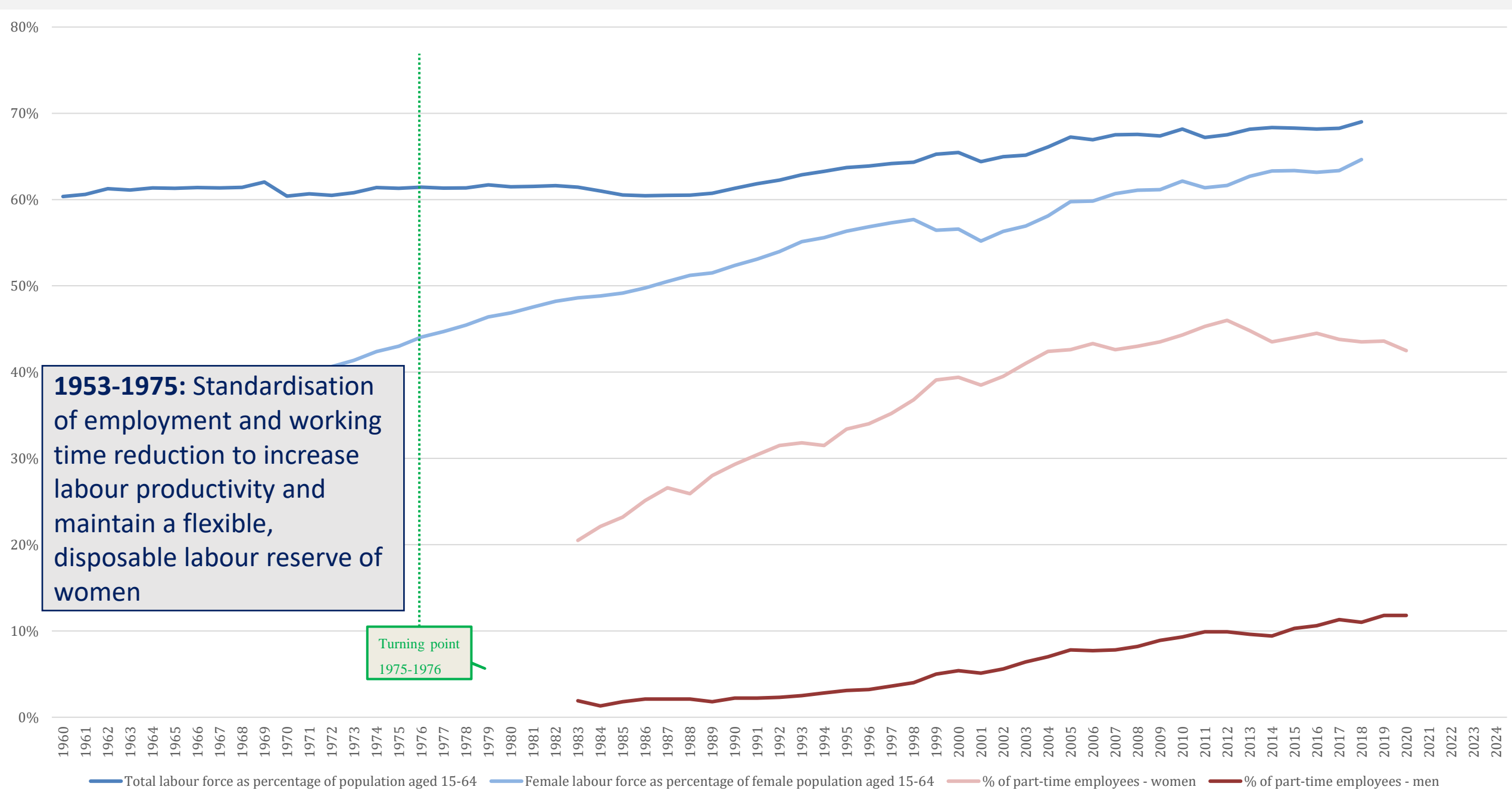


**Data analysis**  
Alterations in topics of arrangements, problem definitions  
**Changes in production context**

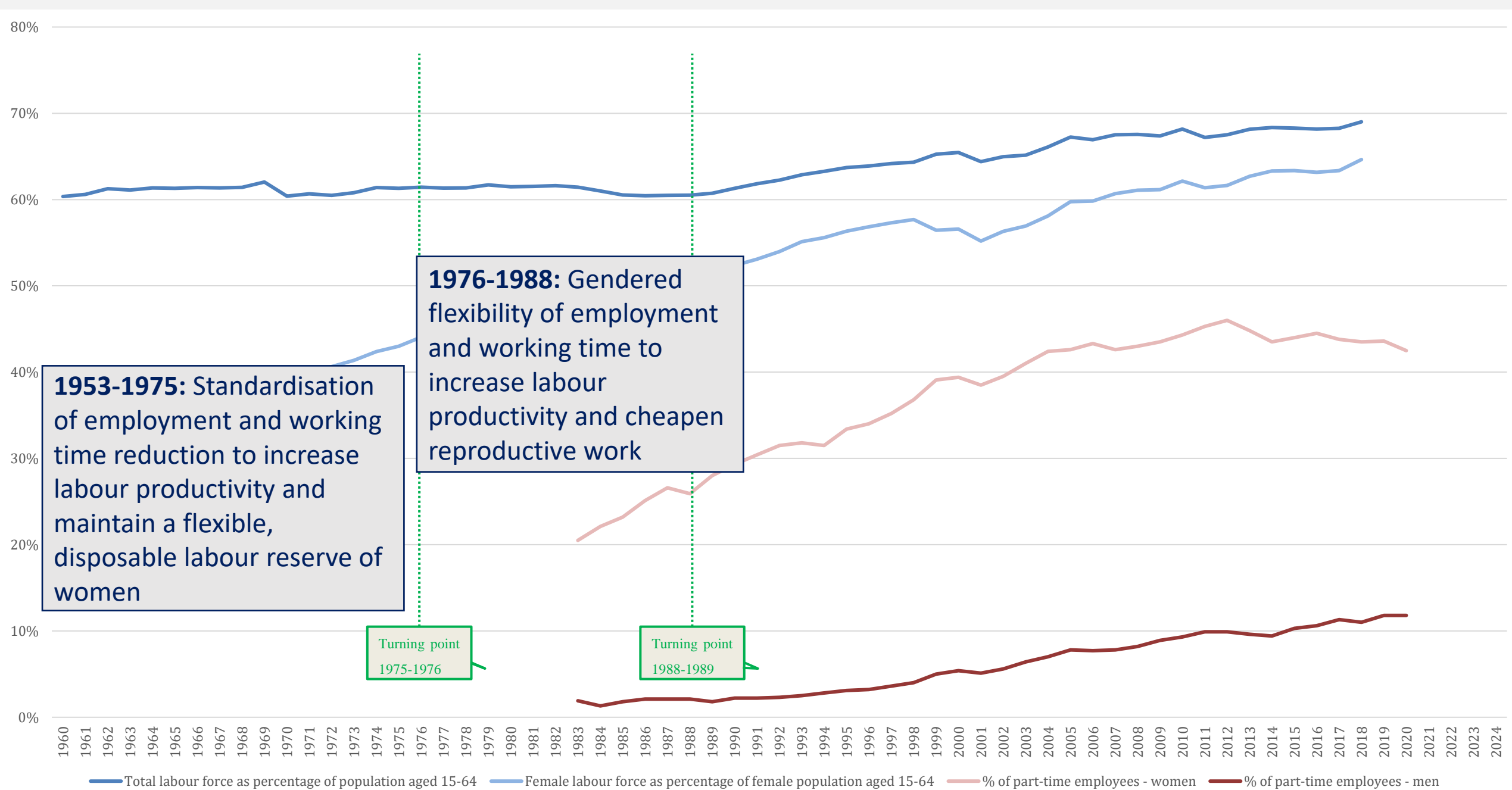


**Interpretation**  
Informed by needs of **production**?  
Impact on **social reproduction** and **gender equality**?

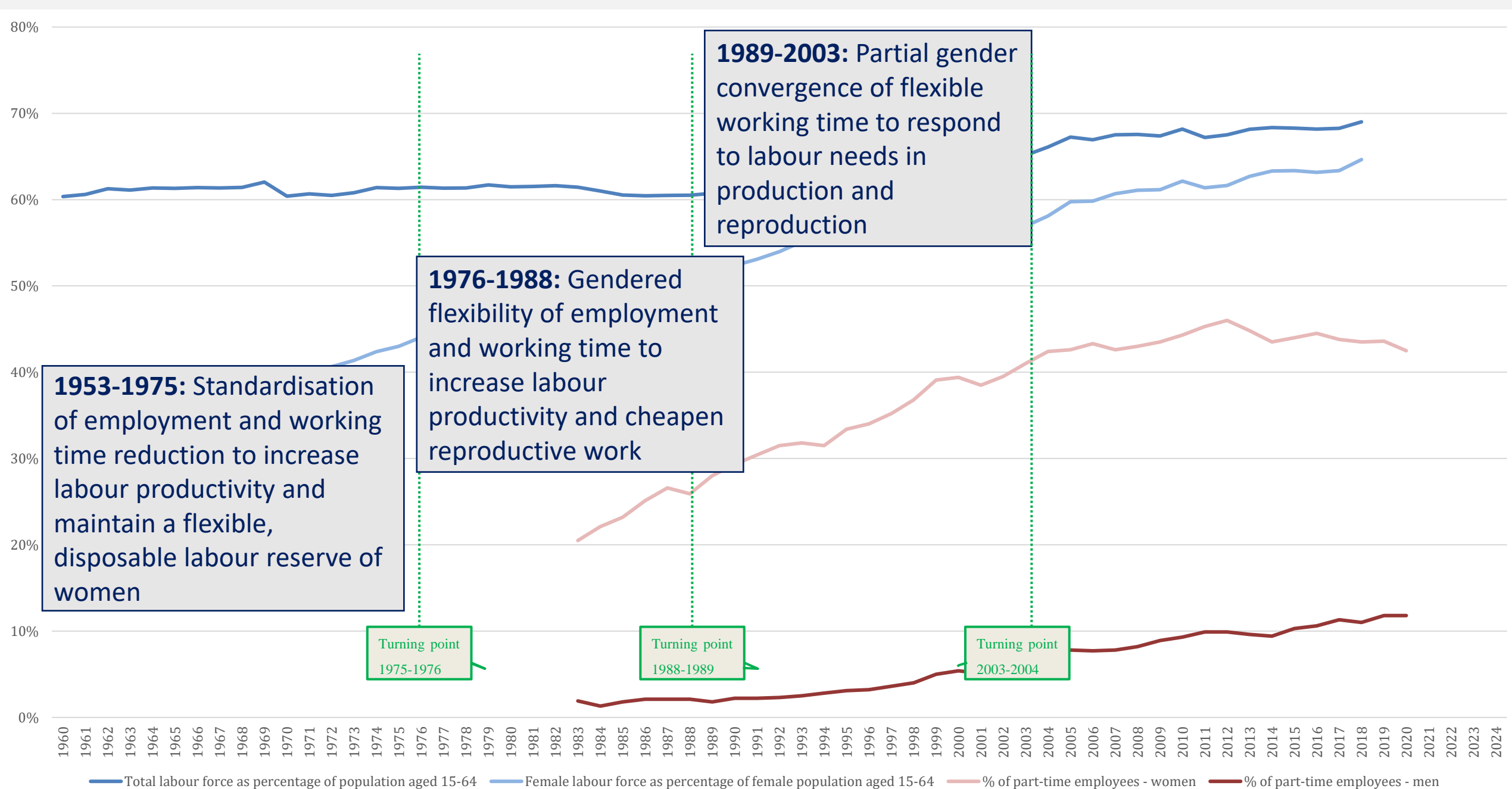
Topics of opinions and agreements	
<b>Standard and non-standard employment</b> (full-time, part-time) <b>General working time regulation</b> (daily and weekly limits, holiday provisions)	
<b>Flexible working time</b> (night work, shift work, overtime)	
<b>Work-life arrangements for reproductive activities</b>	
<b>Total documents</b>	<b>266</b>



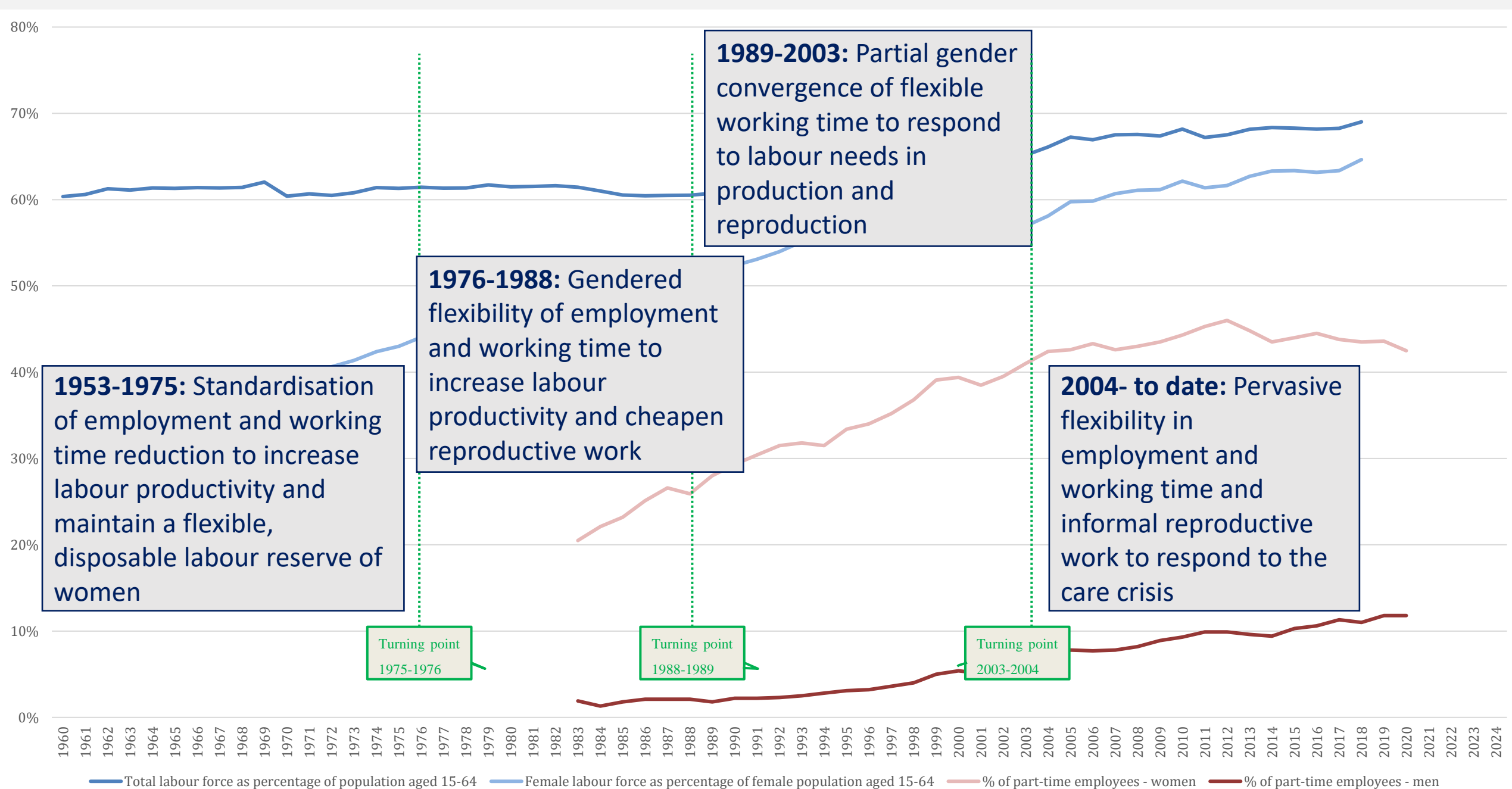
**TURNING POINTS: Alterations in content of working time regulation, changes in production context**



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## DISCUSSION:

### Gendered employment and working time regulation:

- to **reconcile conflicting demands** between economic production and social reproduction,
- mainly to respond to **labour force demands** of production

### Integration of **women**:

- from **reserve labour** to **more stable labour force** (equalisation) & work-life arrangements

But also increased **production-oriented flexibility** of working times and **non-standard employment**

-> **Increased tensions** in the sphere of social reproduction, mostly felt by women workers (low-skilled, migrant, single parents)



Thank you for listening!

Questions? Suggestions?  
Remarks?

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