



**University of  
Zurich** <sup>UZH</sup>

**Institute of Sociology**

# **Firstborn, Sandwich Child, and Nestling: Birth Order Fairness and Inequality in Intergenerational Solidarity in Europe**

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Inequalities, Fairness and Solidarity Across Generations – Measurement and Analysis

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## Outline

Project & Research Question

Theoretical Background

Data & Methods

Empirical Results

Conclusions



## Project “Generations in Adulthood”

Research Group **L**Abour, **G**eneration, **S**tratification (**AGES**)

University of Zurich and Swiss National Science Foundation

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### Current Members:

Bettina Isengard, Ronny König, Klaus Preisner, Marc Szydlik (Head), Christoph Zangger

### Former Members:

Ariane Bertogg, Martina Brandt, Christian Deindl, Corinne Igel, Franz Neuberger, Tina Schmid

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### Main Topics:

Demography, distance, coresidence, contact, help, care, grandparenting, closeness, conflict, norms, types, quality of life, regular transfers, inheritance



## Research Question

Family generations: generally characterized by strong and lifelong relationships

Strong cohesion and support between generations

But: question of reciprocity, inequality and fairness in intergenerational solidarity

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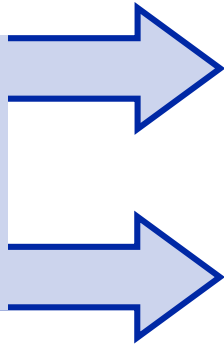
→ Differences in intergenerational solidarity according to birth order  
in European families with three adult children?



## Types of Intergenerational Solidarity

Preconditions:

- Family structures
- Solidarity norms
- Living distances



### **Affectual Solidarity**

Emotional closeness of the relation

### **Associational Solidarity**

Contact and common activities

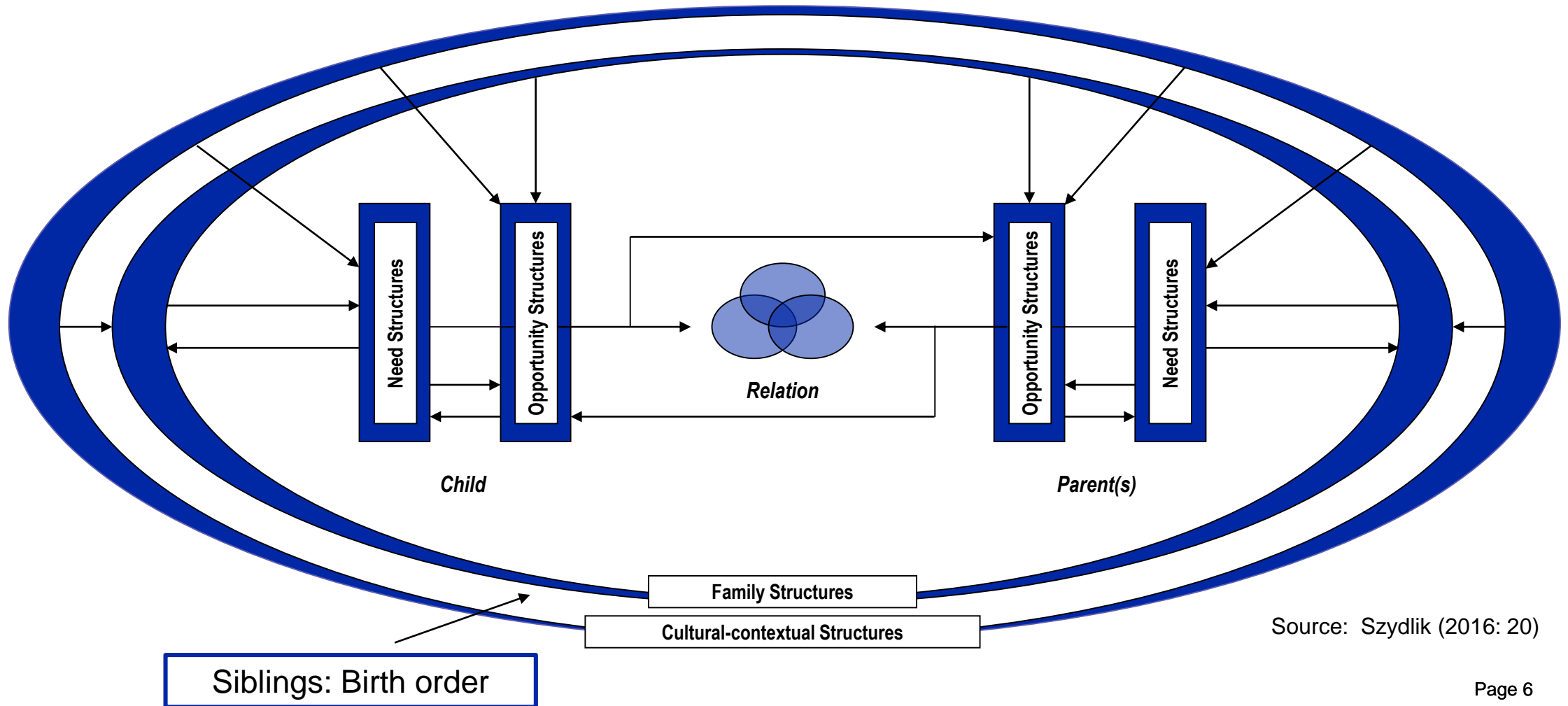
### **Functional Solidarity**

Giving and taking of space, time, and money

Source: Bengtson/Roberts (1991); Szydlik (2016)



# Theoretical Model



Source: Szydlik (2016: 20)



## State of Research: Intergenerational Solidarity

### Family generations ...

- are emotionally closely connected (e.g. Bertogg 2017; Berger/Fend 2005)
- are characterized by (mutual) support and cohesion (e.g. Preisner 2016; Szydlik 2016)
- live close to each other (e.g. Isengard 2018; Hank 2007)
- are often in contact with each other (e.g. König 2016; Steinbach/Kopp 2008)



## State of Research: Siblings and Solidarity

### Siblings ...

- **reduce coresidence and increase geographical mobility** (e.g. Isengard/Szydlik 2012; Rainer/Siedler 2009; Hank 2007)
- **reduce contact frequencies** (e.g. Fors/Lennartsson 2008; Kalmijn/Dykstra 2006; Roan 1993)
- **compete with each other for restricted parental resources:**  
**Money** (e.g. Szydlik 2016; König 2016; Lois 2014; Deindl 2011) **and time** (Igel 2011)
- **reduce personal responsibility for help/care** (e.g. Schmid 2014; Deindl/Brandt 2011)





## Data & Methods

### Survey of **H**ealth, **A**geing and **R**etirement in **E**urope (SHARE)

- 6<sup>th</sup> wave (2015), release 6.1.1
- Countries:  
Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland
- Sample: Family respondents (50+) with three adult children → n = 14,070

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Multilevel ordered and logistic regressions with robust standard errors



## Dependent Variables

### 1. Distance

Where does child X live?

### 2. Contact

During the past twelve months, how often did you have contact with child X, either in person, by phone, mail, email or any other electronic means?

### 3. Space

Coresidence: Child X lives in the parental household.

### 4. Money

Given/*received* financial gift ( $\geq 250$  €) in the last twelve months (inside or outside the household) to child/*from* child X.

### 5. Grandchild care

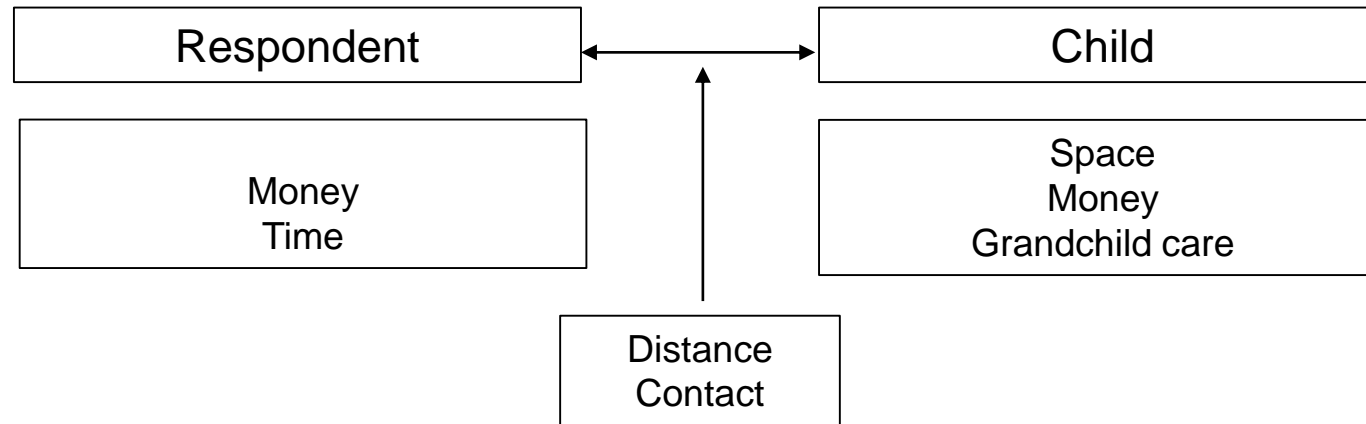
Given grandchild care in the last twelve months (inside or outside the household, at least weekly) to child X.

### 6. Time

Received help/care in the last twelve months (inside or outside the household, at least weekly) from child X.



## Model

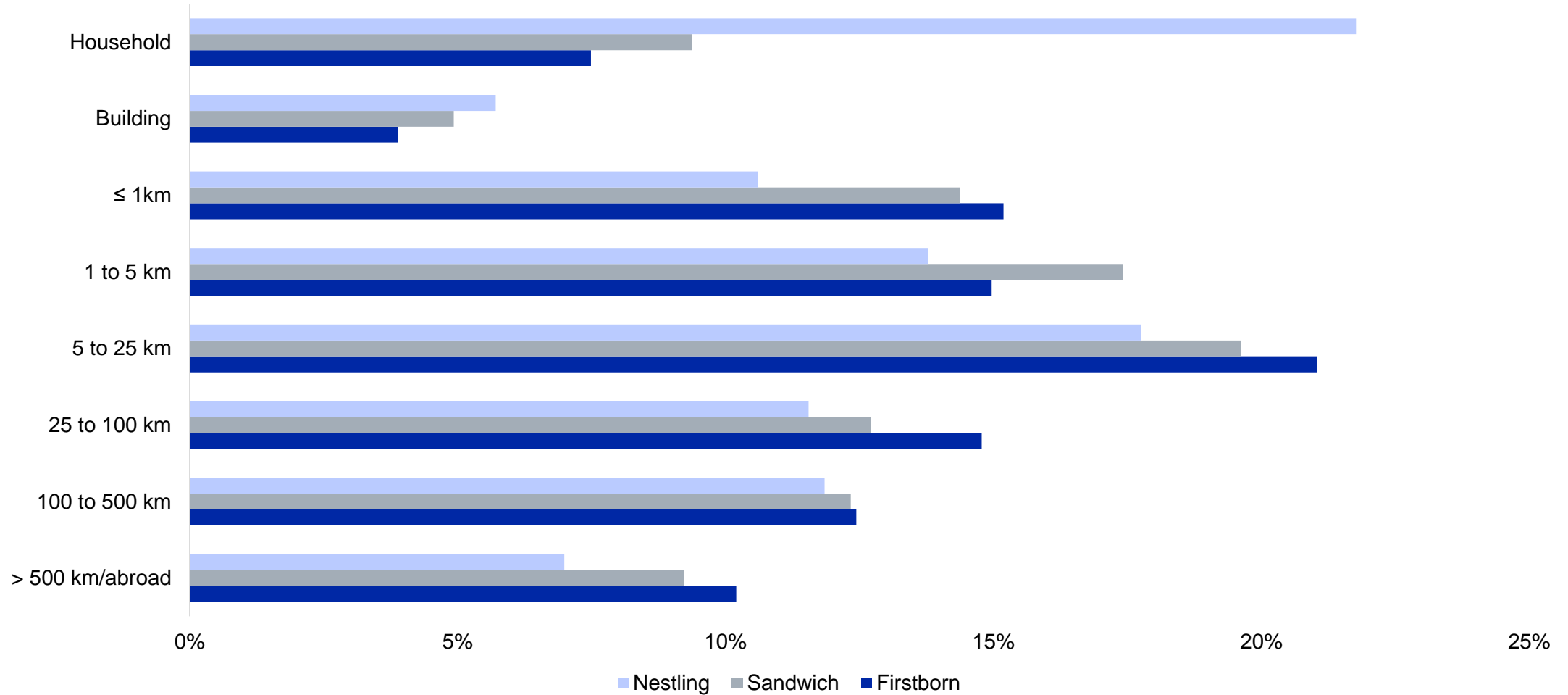


### Further Variables:

- Respondent → Age, education, income, property, health, partnership, sibling(s)
- Child → Gender, [birth order](#), partnership, labor force status, child(ren)
- Family → Sisters, brothers
- Context → Country

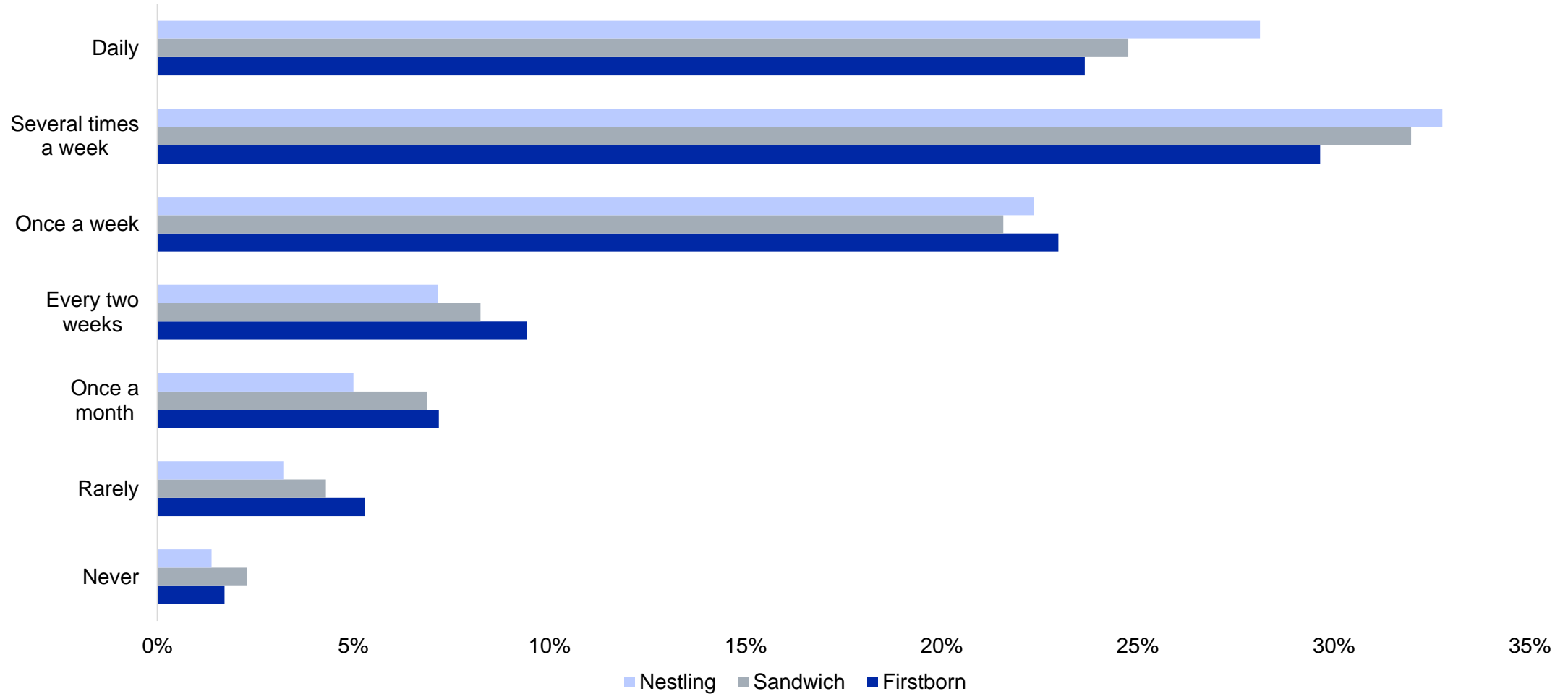


## Geographical Distance & Birth Order



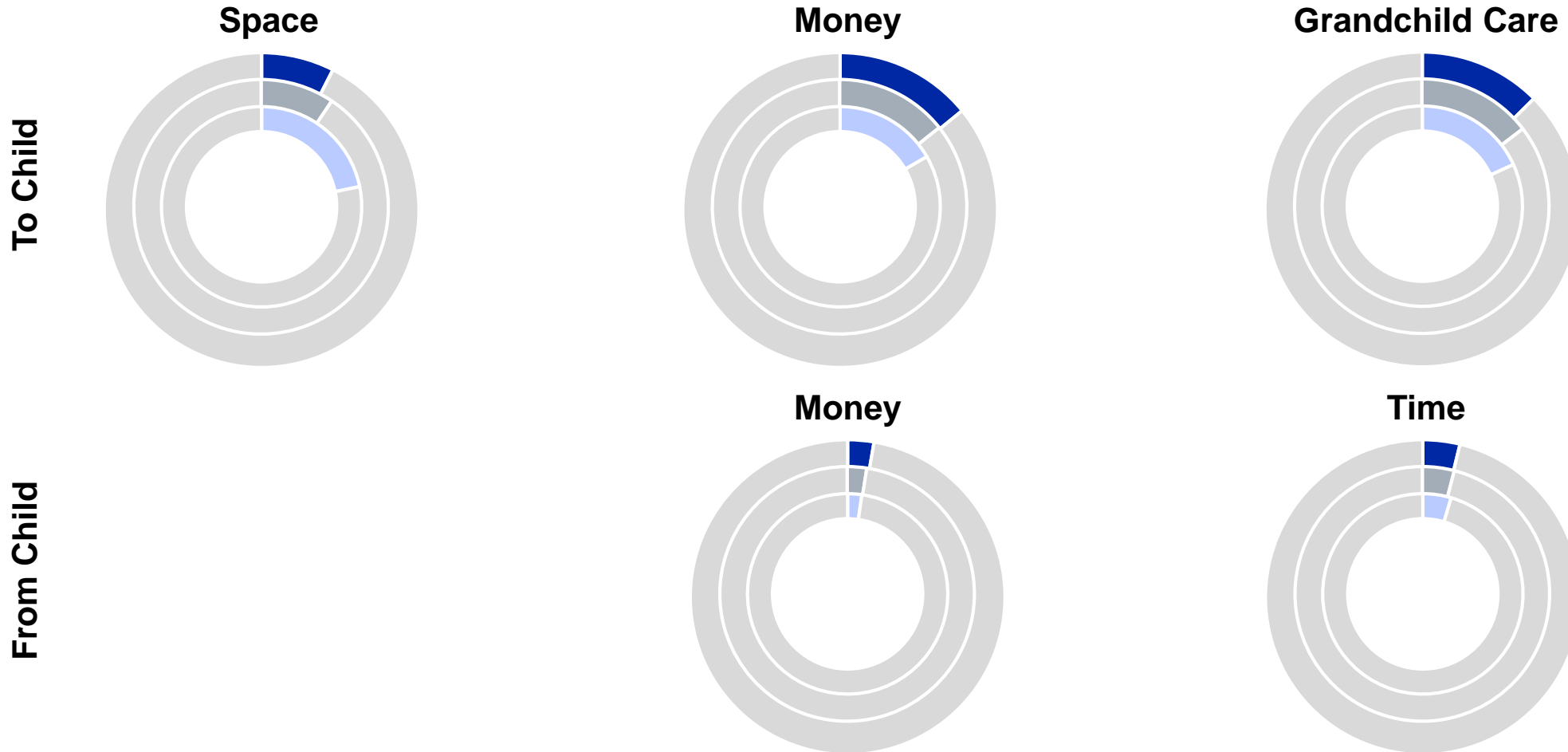


## Contact Frequency & Birth Order





## Functional Solidarity & Birth Order





## Geographical Distance, Contact & Birth Order (Determinants)

	Distance	Contact
<b>Gender: Son</b>	-0.08***	0.24***
<b>Birth order (<i>Nestling</i>)</b>		
Sandwich	0.52***	0.17***
Firstborn	0.44***	0.23***
<b>Birth order*Gender (<i>Nestling-Daughter</i>)</b>		
Sandwich-Daughter	0.11***	0.16***
Firstborn-Daughter	0.15***	0.22***
Nestling-Son	-0.13***	0.22***
Sandwich-Son	0.04	0.41***
Firstborn-Son	0.10***	0.47***



## Functional Solidarity & Birth Order (Determinants): To Children

	Space	Money	Grandchild care
<b>Gender: Son</b>	1.22***	0.92*	0.70***
<b>Birth order (<i>Nestling</i>)</b>			
Sandwich	0.52***	0.95	0.63***
Firstborn	0.44***	0.88**	0.46***
<b>Birth order*Gender (<i>Nestling-Daughter</i>)</b>			
Sandwich-Daughter	0.53***	0.96	0.70***
Firstborn-Daughter	0.39***	0.89	0.48***
Nestling-Son	1.17*	0.93	0.80**
Sandwich-Son	0.61***	0.87*	0.44***
Firstborn-Son	0.56***	0.81**	0.33***





## Functional Solidarity & Birth Order (Determinants): From Children

	Money	Time
<b>Gender: Son</b>	1.05	0.63***
<b>Birth order (<i>Nestling</i>)</b>		
Sandwich	0.82	0.83*
Firstborn	0.94	0.69***
<b>Birth order*Gender (<i>Nestling-Daughter</i>)</b>		
Sandwich-Daughter	0.77	0.86
Firstborn-Daughter	0.94	0.55***
Nestling-Son	1.01	0.56**
Sandwich-Son	0.87	0.44***
Firstborn-Son	0.95	0.52***



## Conclusions

- Importance of intergenerational solidarity in European families
  - But: Birth order (especially in combination with gender) influences solidarity patterns
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- Nestlings live closer and have more frequent contacts to their parents
  - Parents distribute their resources not equally among all of their children:  
Nestlings are more often supported with space, money, and time
  - Children frequently hand over responsibility for parental help/care to their youngest sibling



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**Thank you for your attention!**



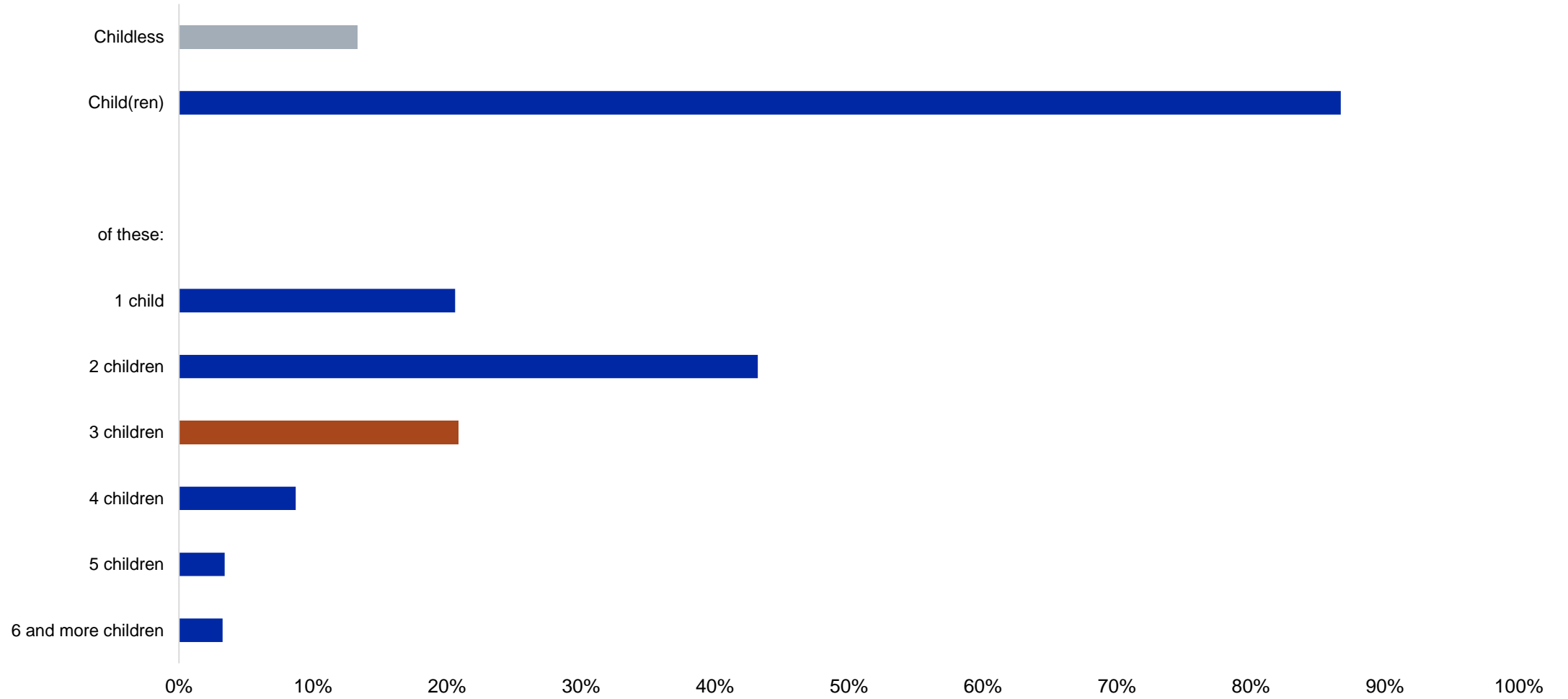
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# Appendix



# Family Sizes in Europe





## Families with Three Children in Europe

