

Men and women workforce transitions following childbearing in France

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Extended abstract

General background and problematic

Childbearing has a distinct impact on parents' professional career according to gender. In France, where there is a universal system of paid maternity leave and where the formal child care program is quite expanded, women's employment is less often disrupted by childbearing. However, more and more women return to work part-time to better manage the competing priorities of work and family. There is little work on the workforce transitions of fathers. However case studies show that while fathers' professional career are more linear than mothers' ones, being father may have an impact on their career path. Some men increase their activity, other change their position or job, unemployed could seek more actively a job.

This paper explores the relationship between childbearing and employment by examining the workforce transitions after childbearing. Changes over time in these transitions are also evaluated. It compares both partners' transitions after childbearing. The aim is to consider what factors are associated with a higher maternal/paternal attachment to work (human capital variables, marital status, partner's characteristics, occupational status).

Data and methods

The data set used here comes from the *Family and Employer survey* conducted by INED in 2004-2005. The sample is made up of about 9,500 individuals aged from 20 to 49. Two persons per household were interviewed. Data were extracted for all female and male respondents who had one child or more and we restrict the analysis to those who worked before the first birth.

This survey includes retrospective work history: respondents were asked for their work status in every year between when they turned 18 and the survey date. Alignment of these data to the comprehensive fertility and relationship histories collected in this survey enabled an examination of the workforce transitions around childbearing. In addition to work history calendar, work status was determined before and after each birth for each parent. This information was also used to measure workforce transitions.

The descriptive part of the paper compares mothers and fathers transitions around the first, the second and the third birth. We know if during the year following the arrival of each child each parent has changed his/her job, stopped working, reduced his/her activity or responsibilities (including becoming part-time), has increased his/her activity or responsibilities (including

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becoming part-time), has changed his/her position or job, has leaved or lost his/her job, has taken parental leave.

The second part of the paper focus on explanatory factors behind transitions. The three main transitions studied are to keep the same job, to take a part-time job, to take a new full-time job, to leave work. Using a multinomial logistic regression enables this analysis among those who worked full time before the birth.

Finally, we study the occurrence of a return to work for mother, but also the timing of that event using time event history analysis.

Results

Childbearing has a grater impact on mothers than on fathers' careers. Moreover, for women the higher the rank of birth, the higher the impact of childbearing on activity. It is the contrary for men. For more than 4/5^e of men, childbearing, whatever its rank, has no impact on fathers' professional situation. Men change their professional status more frequently after the first birth (9% change their job, 4% change their position). The majority of fathers do not change their time schedule after the birth, and 6% increase their activity or responsibilities. These changes are more frequent for the first birth than for the followings.

Women change their activity status more frequently, and more and more frequently with the children rank. 60% of women do not change their work status after the first birth, 48% after the second birth and 41% after the third. After a second or a third birth more women take a parental leave (resp. 21% et 30%) or a part-time job (resp. 12% et 9%).

In the multivariate analysis part, we find that human capital — measured as labour market experience or education level — is found to be an important determinant of women's transitions out of work on childbearing and on the return to work. Women with greater levels of human capital are less likely to exit from work on childbearing. These women might seek to minimise job breaks to reduce the opportunity cost of childbearing, and to minimise the deterioration of skills. At each stage, education was strongly associated with employment, with higher education being linked to a higher rate of employment.

The effect of education is less significant in explaining the return to full-time or part-time work. On the other hand, the work status before the birth has a significant impact on the hazard to work part time or full time. Women who had worked in public sector before their first birth are more likely to work part time in the year after that birth.

Lastly, this article emphasizes that the impact of childbearing should be analysed in a couple perspective, since the birth changes the couple's organisation.

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