# The long term cost of partnership and fertility trajectory: later life earnings of women across Europe

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The increase of female employment was the most significant change in labour markets during the past century. However, women’s earnings remain closely related to their changing family roles over the life course. Mothers’ wages lag behind those of childless women and men, even after controlling for individual work experience. This so called “motherhood penalty” is a well-established finding in many Western countries. Against this background, the present study will address the research question: what is the association between the family trajectory, i.e. combined partnership and fertility history, and later life (50-59) labour market income among women? Also, we ask whether this association differs between countries. We contribute to the literature in three main ways. First, we take a holistic life course approach by combining multiple characteristics of the family trajectory into one typology. Previous research mainly focused on the effects of single events, for instance the mother’s age at first birth and presence of a partner. However we expect that the interplay between fertility and partnership history is relevant. Therefore, we combine them in one typology using sequence analysis. Second, we focus on later life outcomes. Most studies regard only short-term income effects. However, women’s decision to quit their job or reduce their working hours does not only lower current income, but also compromises future earnings. Third, this study provides a cross-country perspective. Previous research suggests that motherhood effects on income are shaped by country-specific family policies and cultural attitudes. We contribute to the literature by assessing a large number of country contexts. To answer our research questions, we will use data from 23 European countries of the Generations and Gender Surveys and SHARELIFE. These datasets include full partnership and fertility histories.

The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP/2007-2013) / ERC Grant Agreement n. 324178 (Project: Contexts of Opportunity. PI: Aart C. Liefbroer).