

The long term cost of partnership and fertility trajectory: later life labour market income 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, a woman's earnings remain closely related to her changing family role over the life course. Mothers' wages lag behind those of childless women, even after controlling for 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 and later life 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. Previous research mainly focused on the effects of single events, for instance the mother's age at first birth. However we expect that the interplay between fertility and partnership history is relevant. Therefore, we combine them into one typology using sequence analysis. Second, we focus on later life outcomes. Most studies regard short-term income effects. However, women's decision to reduce their working hours not only lowers 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 22 countries in the Generations and Gender Surveys and SHARELIFE.