

PRESS RELEASE

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Why Only Every Second Woman Wants To Work Full-Time As Mother

- **Representative surveys of 5,000 individuals**
- **Increasing hours worked by mothers counteracts skills shortage**

Bonn, Mannheim, Germany, 25.03.2024 – **Almost half of the women in Germany work part-time, compared to only about 10 percent of men. New research reveals that perceptions of women drive their work-related decisions: Even in a best-case scenario of high-quality, full-day childcare, only 55 percent of women would want to work full-time – 40 percent would work part-time when having a child. These are findings of the discussion paper “Beliefs About Maternal Labor Supply” published by the EPOS Economic Research Center at the Universities of Bonn and Mannheim.**

“We have analyzed the perceived benefits and costs of mothers to work part- or full-time”, says Katja Kaufmann from the EPOS Economic Research Center. “The perceived returns and costs shape the decisions on the amount of hours worked in the job. Our results show that such perceptions are important drivers of decisions.”

Perceived benefits of part-time work

Part-time work of mothers is perceived to have a number of associated benefits compared to staying at home: Women expect to have better future labor market outcomes, such as higher wages or career progression. They also expect a positive effect on children’s skills due to increased family income. Moreover, the satisfaction of different family members is perceived to improve with mothers working part-time.

Perceived costs of full-time work

While a full-time job of mothers is perceived as having further positive effects on labor market and child outcomes, people expect important negative effects for family outcomes, such as the satisfaction of different family members and the relationships between them.

Demographic change and women’s participation in the labor market

However, with the demographic change, the potential of women in the labor market is high on the policy agenda in many countries. Increasing the hours worked by mothers is therefore seen as an important means to counteract the skills shortage.

Policy recommendations

“Policy-makers who aim to make it more attractive for mothers to return to a full-time job, have often overlooked the perceived negative effects on the satisfaction and relationships of different family members”, says Kaufmann. In most OECD countries, a lack of childcare facilities is seen as the main reason for mothers with young children not returning to the job or working part-time. Our results show that childcare does indeed matter. Yet, even with good-quality full-time care, people still think it is difficult to reconcile family life with both parents working full-time. These underlying worries should also be addressed.”

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The data

The researchers have surveyed a representative sample of 4,000 childless adults in Germany between the ages of 18 and 45 on beliefs about benefits and costs of maternal labor supply, beliefs about factors such as childcare availability and maternal labor supply intentions. In a separate representative survey of 1,000 individuals with the same target population, the researchers conducted a randomized information experiment to vary people's beliefs about returns in order to show that beliefs are critical drivers of labor supply intentions.

The presented discussion paper is a publication without peer review of the Collaborative Research Center Transregio 224 EPoS. Access the full discussion paper here: <https://www.crctr224.de/research/discussion-papers/archive/dp517>

Find the list of all discussion papers of the CRC here: <https://www.crctr224.de/research/discussion-papers>.

Authors

Teodora Boneva, Professor of Economics, University of Bonn

Marta Golin, Postdoctoral Research Associate, University of Zurich

Katja Kaufmann, Professor of Economics, University of Bayreuth and member of EPoS Economic Research Center

Christopher Rauh, Professor of Economics, University of Cambridge

The Collaborative Research Center (CRC) Transregio 224 EPoS

Established in 2018, [the Collaborative Research Center Transregio 224 EPoS](https://www.crctr224.de), a cooperation of the universities Bonn and Mannheim, is a long-term research institution funded by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG). EPoS addresses three key societal challenges: how to promote equality of opportunity; how to regulate markets in light of the internationalization and digitalization of economic activity; and how to safeguard the stability of the financial system.

Press Contact

econNEWSnetwork

Sonja Heer

Tel. + 49 (0) 40 82244284

Sonja.Heer@econ-news.de

Contact

Prof. Katja Kaufmann, Ph.D.

Department of Economics

University of Bayreuth

katja.kaufmann@uni-bayreuth.de

CRC TR 224 Office, Marja Eisheuer

phone | +49 228 737926

email | crctr224@uni-bonn.de

www.crctr224.de