# Parenthood Penalty in Russia

## Evidence from Exogenous Variation in Family Size

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# Child is a ticket to poverty

Childbearing is associated with drop in employment and income (e.g. Cukrowska-Torzewska & Matysiak, 2020)

**The (economic) parenthood penalty** – the systemic disadvantages that parents face in the labor market in comparison to those who do not have children.

Parenthood penalty **is persistent across different cultural settings****

1. The **largest effect is for "liberal" welfare** states (e.g. USA) – around 10%

2. The **smallest effect is for "social democratic"** welfare states (Sweden) – around 4%

3. The effect for developing countries varies dramatically:
    1. Brazil – as in the US
    2. Greece and China – "medium effect" (6-8% )

**What about Russia?**

There are a few research**: the penalty is from 4% to 17%**, small premia for fathers*

*"**A child is** for the absolute majority of Russian citizens **a one-way ticket to poverty, a second child is a one-way ticket to destitution**"*

**Michael Delyagin,**
deputy chairman of the Russian Parliament Committee on Economic Policy

**Arzhenovsky & Artamonova, 2007; Biryukova & Makarentseva, 2017; Budig et al., 2016; Karabchuk et al., 2021; Nivorozhkina et al., 2008*
*** Wang, 2023; Kleven, Landais & Søgaard, 2019; Grimshaw, & Rubery, 2015; Cruces & Galiani, 2007;*

# Correlation or Causation?

**I suggest that previous papers studying Russia have produced too pessimistic results**

Reverse causality:

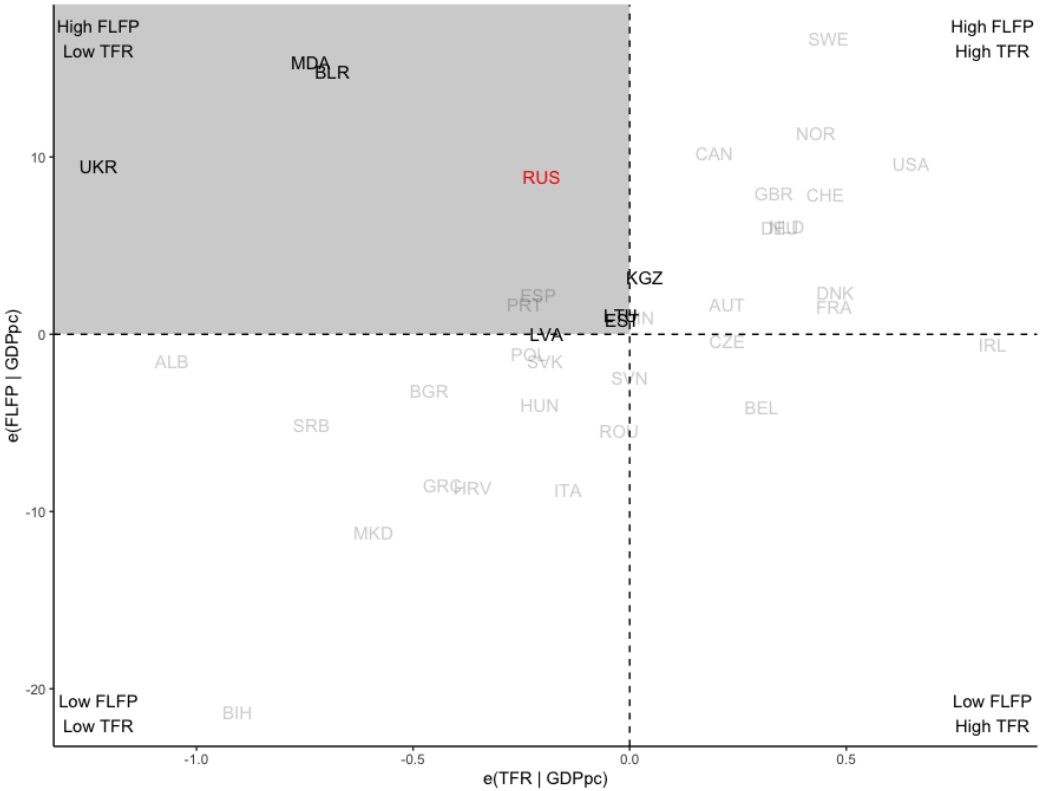
1. **Fertility is negatively affected** by mother's employment and earnings (Filimonova et al., 2023; Zhuravleva & Gavrilova, 2017)

2. **Fertility decreases** mother's employment and earnings (Karabchuk & Nagernyak, 2013)

**Fertility cannot be both dependent and exogenous** at the same time -> **previous regressions has limited causal interpretation**

**Why are results from other countries potentially misleading**?

1. Substantial public sector
2. Active pronatalist policies
3. Soviet legacy: *high FLFP, but traditional gender roles*
4. Strict pro-maternal labor codex




*Partial correlation between TFR and FLFP conditional on GDP pc in 2019*

*Data: GDP pc –(WB, 2025); FLFP – national estimates in %, 15+ (WB, 2025); TF2017 international $R (UN, 2025)*

# Novelty & goals

**Goal**

*Establishment of the causal effect of childbearing on labor market participation in Russia for both fathers and mothers*

**Novelty & Contribution**

1. Theoretical:
    1. Test of universalistic (Western) hypotheses in the Russian context
    2. Causal identification using instrumental variables approach

2. Practical – *correction of previous estimates of the effects of fertility on the labor market outcomes in Russia*

**Final research questions**

1. *What is the effect of fertility on economic behavior of parents in Russia?*

2. *Does Russia differ from Western countries in the 'parenthood penalty'?*

# Theoretical background – Mothers

**Rational choice theory*:**

1. Childbearing leads to:
    1. disrupt of career trajectories
    2. less work experience and training
    3. reduced working time due to childcare
2. Women anticipate childbearing and tend to invest less time to career
3. Mothers choose *"family-friendly"* employment (public sector)
4. Effect should be more pronounced for mothers with high human capital – tertiary education

**Status-based discrimination theory**:**

1. Child is a 'red flag' for the employer, who adopt a rational choice theory
2. Childbearing changes the status of women to "social" role – childcare -> self-realization is not expected -> underestimation of women's skills
3. Mothers are associated with "warmth and caring" -> contradiction with masculinizing attributes of leadership and hard work

*"**A steady paycheck**... **availability of this big vacation**, which with children is very convenient ... **sick leave**, that is, I can go on sick leave at any time, even if the child has a little cough, and completely sit it out, which, I know, **is not welcome in commercial organizations**"*

Isupova, 2015, p. 202

*"I went to so many of these interviews... **Everyone was happy with my age, education**, knowledge of computers. **As soon as you announce that you have a child of two or three years old, their gaze immediately dims…"***

Isupova, 2015, p. 201

**Lundberg & Rose, 2000; Staff & Mortimer, 2012; Anderson, Binder & Krause, 2002; Nielsen, Simonsen & Verner, 2004; Becker, 1985;*
***Correll, Benard & Paik 2007; Valiquette-Tessier, et al., 2019; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; Torres, et al., 2010;*

# Theoretical background – Fathers

**Rational choice theory*:**

1. Childbearing leads to higher labor supply – the need to substitute decrease in mother's supply
2. No career interruptions

**The effect is reverse for fathers**

Penalty -> premia

**Status-based discrimination theory**:**

1. Child is a 'green flag' for the employer, who adopt a rational choice theory
2. Childbearing changes the status of men to "breadwinner" or "provider"

**Killewald, 2013; Petersen et al., 2007, 2014*

***Pasley et al., 2014; Percheski & Wildeman, 2008*

# Previous research

**Main findings for Russia:**

1. **Authors predominantly use rational choice theory**
2. Penalty in wage for mothers is from 4% to 17%, the mean is 8%
3. Women with tertiary education have more negative effect
4. Since 2000, the effect has declined

5. There is a negligible fatherhood premia

**Gaps & limitations:**

1. Theory suggests the effect should be more pronounced in terms of employment – **no study of the employment**

2. **All research might be biased due to selection bias**

**Tab. 1.** Summary of previous research findings and identification of potential problems.

| Reference | Data & sample | Estimator/correction | Dep. var | Effect | Possible problems |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arzhenovsky and Artamonova (2007) | RLMS, 2003-2005 (treated as CS); Employed women aged 18-49 | OLS / – | Monthly wage, ln | -0.08 | Selection bias; Inclusion of colliders: education, occupation status; Reverse causality |
| Nivorozhkina et al. (2008) | RLMS, 2003-2005 (treated as CS) + NOBUS 2003; Employed women aged 18-49 | Switching OLS / instrumental variables | Monthly wage, ln | -0.113 | Weak instruments; Violation of exogeneity and exclusion restriction; Inclusion of colliders: education, occupation status |
| Budig et al. (2016) | RLMS, 2000/2001 (CS); Employed women aged 25-45 (russian data as part of cross-cultural dataset) | RE OLS / Heckman model | Monthly wage, ln | Insignificant effect | Selection bias due to unobserved factors in Heckman model; Inclusion of colliders: education; Reverse causality |
| Biryukova and Makarentseva (2017) | RLMS, 2014 (CS); Employed women aged 20-44 | OLS / IPW | Monthly wage, ln | -0.039 | Selection bias due to unobserved factors in IPW model; Inclusion of colliders: education, occupation status, health; Reverse causality |
| Karabchuk et al. (2021) | RLMS, 2000-2015 (panel data); Employed women aged 18-45 | OLS / FE | Monthly / hourly wage, ln | -0.104/-0.039 | FE OLS problems for difference-in-difference strategy as outlined in the text; Inclusion of colliders: education, occupation status; Reverse causality |
| Lebedinski et al. (2023) | RLMS, 1994-2018 (panel data); Any women | OLS / Event analysis design | Employment; monthly wage, ln; hours worked | – | Violation of PTA |
| Oshchepkov (2020) | RLMS, 2000-2018 (panel data); Residential fathers in partnership aged 25-59 | OLS / FE and anticipation tests | Monthly wage, ln | 0.03 | FE OLS problems for difference-in-difference design as outlined in the text |

# Analytical pitfalls

Two main problems that cannot be addressed by classical approaches used before

**Reverse causality:**

1. Fertility is negatively affected by mother's employment and earnings (Filimonova et al., 2023; Zhuravleva & Gavrilova, 2017)
2. Fertility decreases mother's employment and earnings (Karabchuk & Nagernyak, 2013)

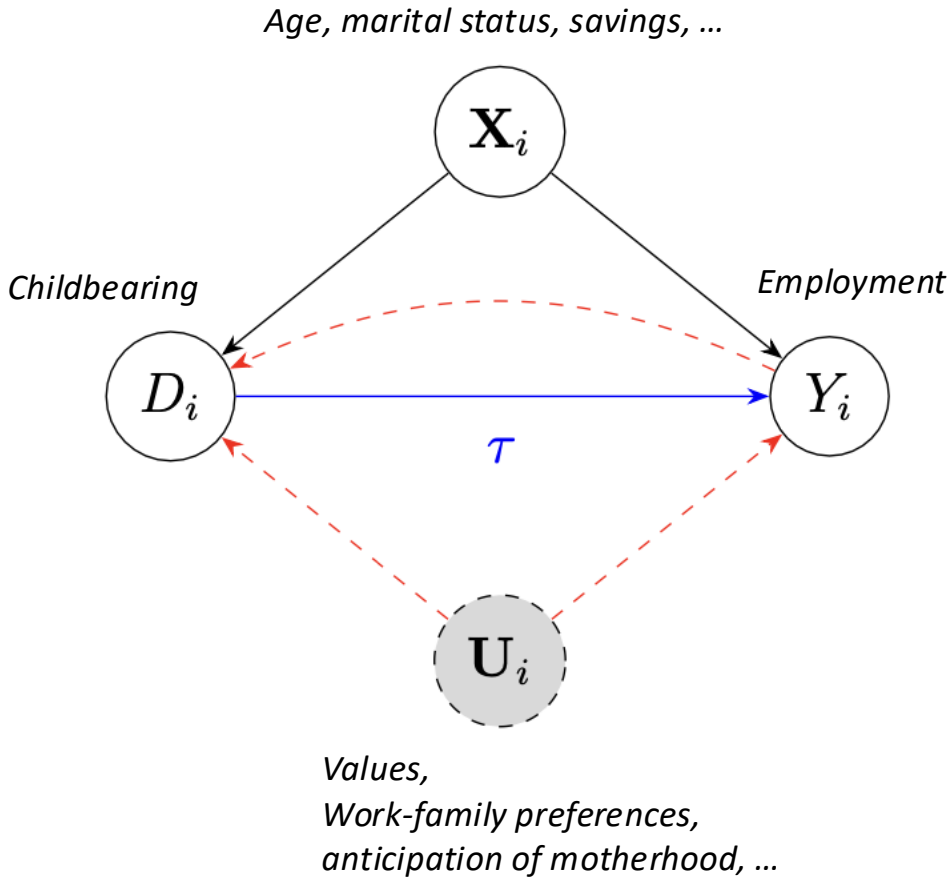
**Estimates should be negatively inflated due to "self-reinforcing cycle"**

**Selection bias** (Selection into parenthood):

1. OLS produce consistent estimates if childbearing is at random
2. (Further) mothers differ dramatically from the childless women
3. There is a plethora of unobserved factors that cannot be measured

**Estimates should be negatively biased**

**Usual OLS produces highly pessimistic results**



# Hypotheses

**Baseline hypotheses:**

**H1**: *Childbearing has a negative effect on maternal employment*

**H2**: *Childbearing has no effect on employment of mother's partner*

→ ***Expect less negative effect in comparison with market-based economics:***

1. High labor mobility and "downward" flexibility
2. Large public sector

**Additional hypotheses:**

**H3**: *Negative effect of childbearing is more pronounced among mothers without tertiary education*

Why?

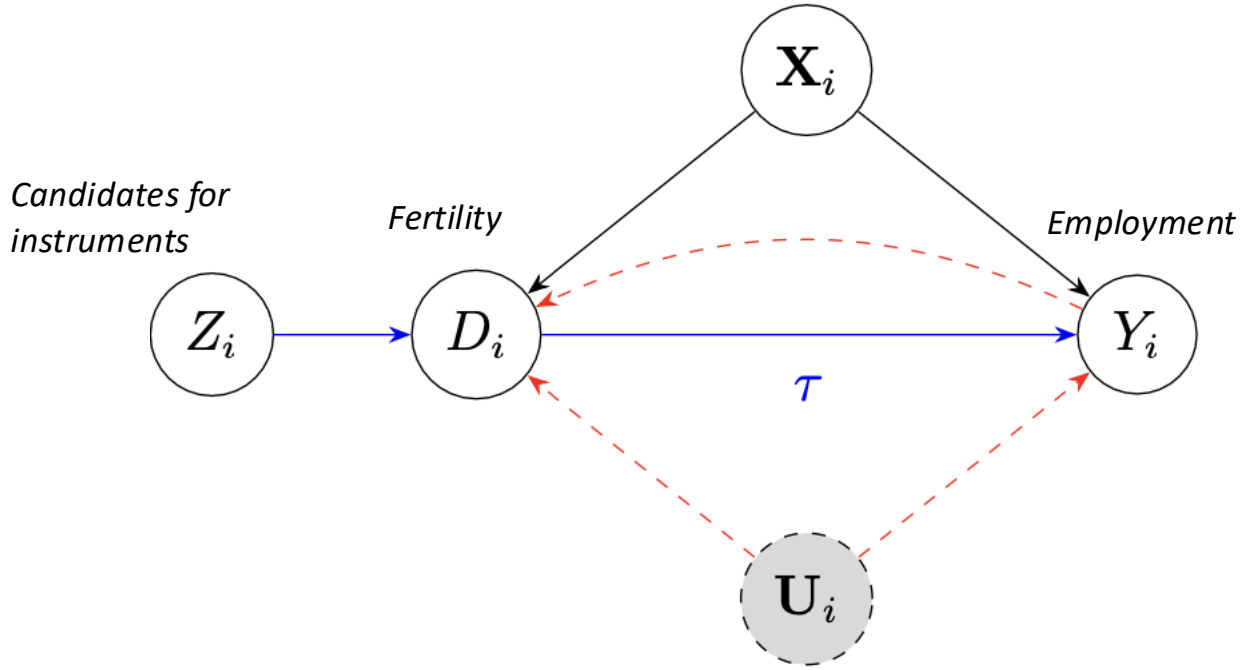
1. Higher employment in "family-friendly" sectors
2. Higher employment in less intensive labor usage sectors
3. More likely to be able to defend their rights before employers

**H4**: *Negative effect of childbearing is more pronounced for women with partners*

# Instrumental variables

**Assumptions:**

1. Relevance
2. Exogeneity
3. Exclusion restriction
4. Monotonicity




Candidates for instruments:

1. **Same sex of the first two children:**
    1. Both boys / girls -> higher probability to have 3rd child
    2. Finding is quiet persistent in different settings (US, Greece, Brazil, **Russia**)
    3. Child's sex does not depend on parents *(in Russia there is no evidence of selective abortions)*

2. **Multiple births**
    1. Parents want 1 – get 2
    2. Distributed completely at random *(while a higher probability with age that can be well controlled)*

# Estimator for IV – 2SLS

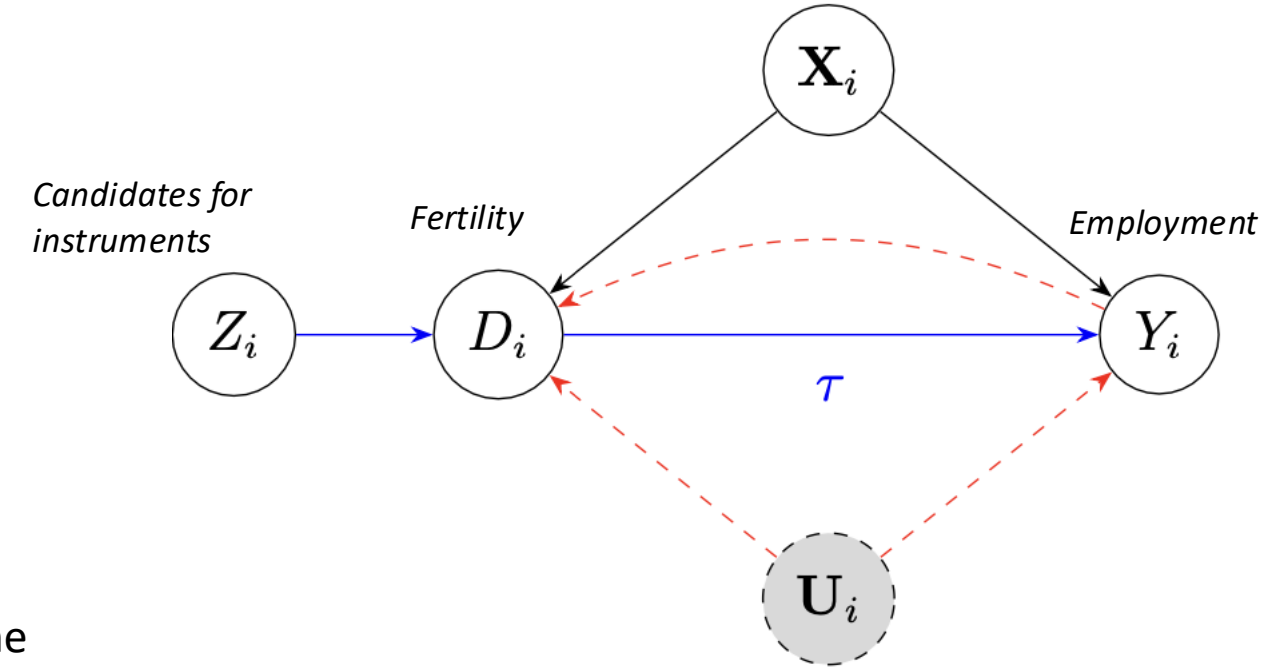
***First-stage:*** $D_i = \alpha_0 + \boldsymbol{Z_i}\gamma + \boldsymbol{X}_i\mu + \eta_i$

$D_i$ - more than 2 children (independent variable)
$\boldsymbol{Z_i}$ - instruments: same sex or multiple births
$\boldsymbol{X}_i$ - control variables

***Second-stage:*** $Y_i = \beta_0 + \tau \widehat{D_i} + \boldsymbol{X}_i\theta + \varepsilon_i$

**Technical points:**

1. Robust F-statistic to control for possible heterogeneity applying HC1 correction for variance-covariance matrix (the same is done for the second stage variance estimates)
2. Anderson-Rubin 95% CI (aka weak-instrument interval)
3. Subsample analysis rather than interaction effects (because of the lack of instruments)



# Data

Microdata from Censuses of 2002 and 2010 (Rosstat, 2021a; 2021b)

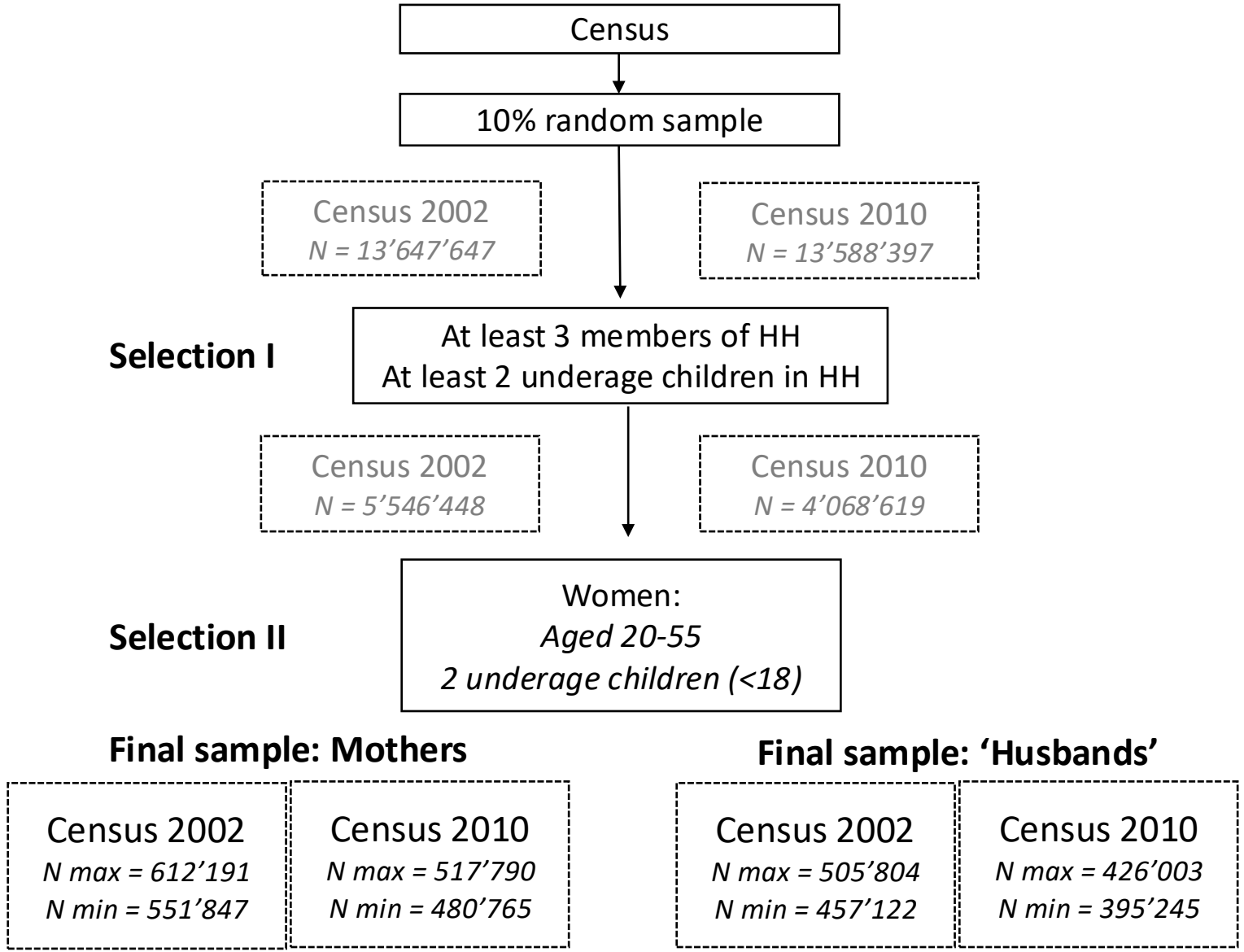
**Data Limitations*:**

1. Limited number of variables:
    1. No income
    2. No hours worked
2. **Father's' operationalization = Mother's partner**

3. Underestimation of children under age of 5 -> *less external validity*
4. "Death souls" -> *less external validity*
5. Unprofessional census takers -> *possible mistakes in coding*

**In defense:**

1. Sample size is huge and can be considered as ***'Population of interest'***
2. **The only opportunity to examine the causal effect**






*Andreev, 2012; Mkrtchyan, 2011

# **Data:** key variables

**Dependent variables:**

1. Employment: *respondent had a paid job in the time of census*
2. Second employment: *respondent had a second paid job in the time of census*

**Independent variable:** More than 2 children (3+)

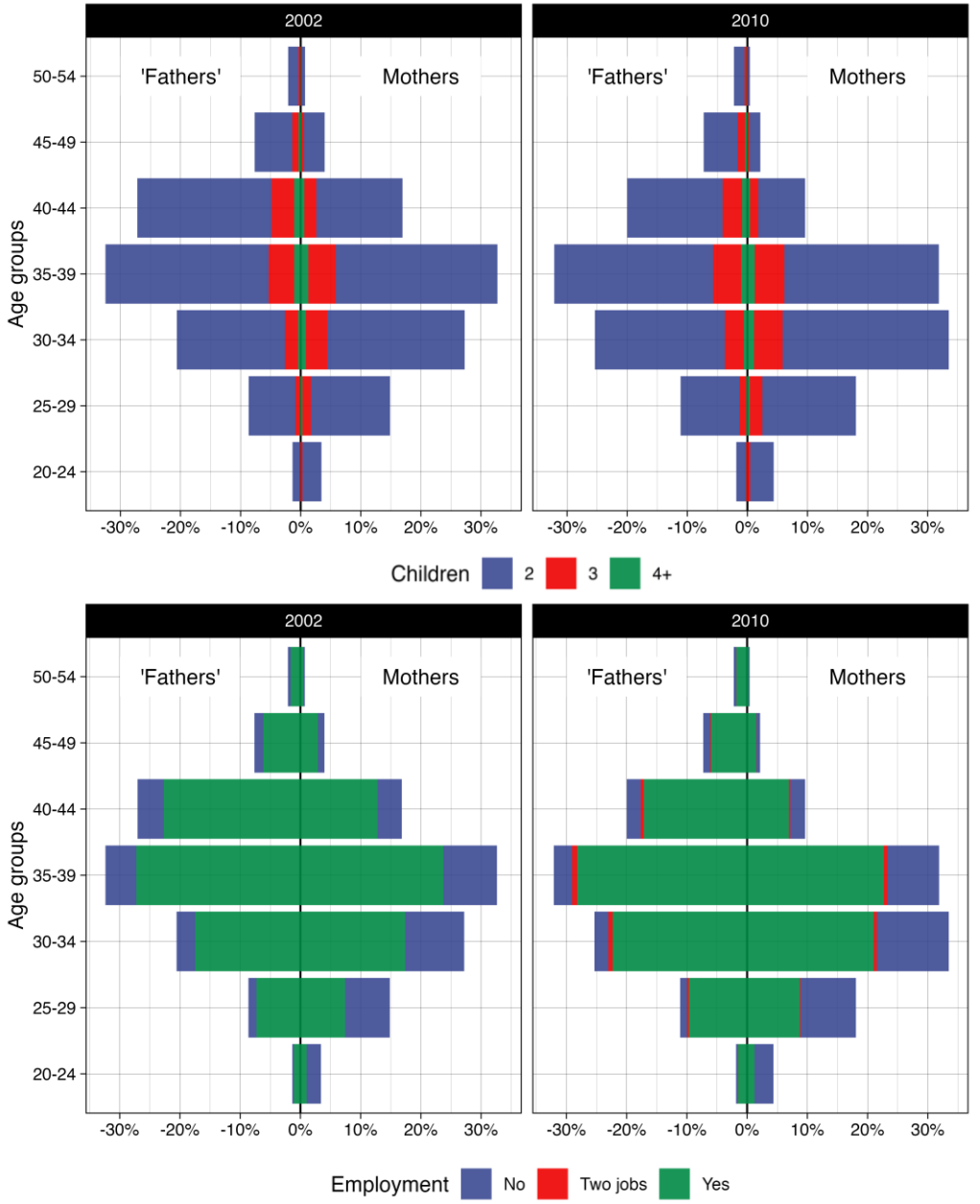
**Control variables:** *(conditional exogeneity of instruments + efficiency)*

1. Age
2. Marital status: with / without a partner
3. Place of living: rural / urban
4. Age of mother's debut
5. Children's characteristics: sex, age
6. Region FE

**Other variables:** *(investigation of conditional effects)*

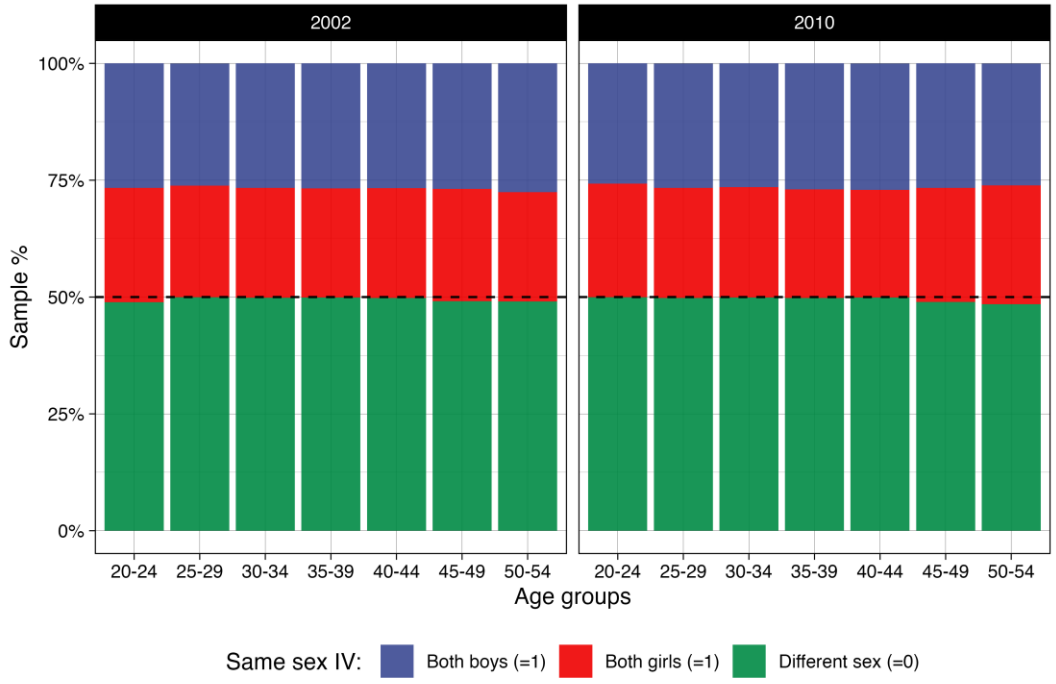
Education

1. Secondary or lower: *no education, primary, general secondary*
2. Secondary professional
3. Tertiary or higher

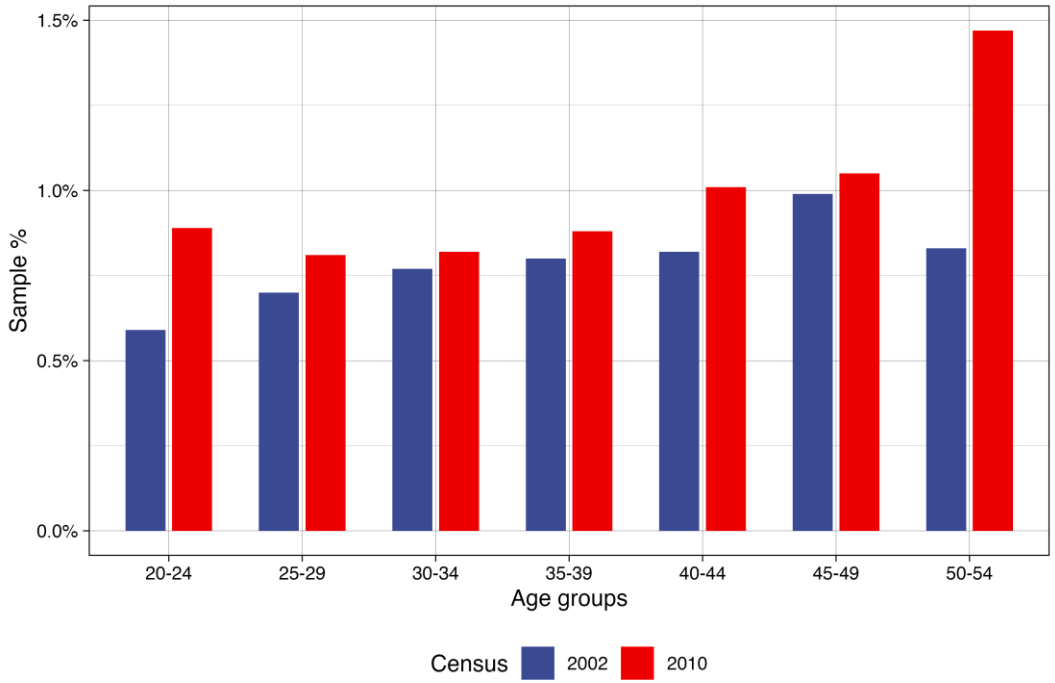


# **Data:** descriptive statistics by IV

**Same sex**




**Multiple births**



# **Results:** mothers, 2010

**OLS** shows **dramatic constant drop (20%)** in employment because of childbearing

**2SLS** shows only **moderate negative effect** (3%)

*Note! Only 2SLS with multiple births is significant – shock in fertility*

**Support for H1**

**Results are persistent over time** (see 2002 analysis in the appendix)

**Tab. 4.** OLS and 2SLS estimates of the effect of childbearing on mother's employment, 2010 census.

| | OLS | 2SLS | 2SLS | 2SLS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intercept | 0.34*** | 0.35*** | 0.35*** | 0.36*** |
| | (0.02) | (0.02) | (0.02) | (0.02) |
| More than 2 children | −0.20*** | −0.08 | −0.05 | −0.03*** |
| | (0.00) | (0.05) | (0.05) | (0.01) |
| 1st child sex | −0.00** | −0.00* | | −0.00* |
| | (0.00) | (0.00) | | (0.00) |
| 2nd child sex | −0.01*** | −0.01*** | −0.01*** | −0.01*** |
| | (0.00) | (0.00) | (0.00) | (0.00) |
| IV | – | Same sex | Both boys/girls | Multiple births |
| Weak Instr. | – | 655.97 *** | 343.46 *** | 29707.43 *** |
| AR | – | (-0.18) - 0.02 | – | (-0.05) - (-0.02) |
| Wu-Hausman | – | 5.16 * | 8.33 ** | 448.37 *** |
| Sargan | – | – | 6.6 * | – |
| Num. obs. | 482260 | 482260 | 482260 | 480765 |

Note: $^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$. As control variables in all models are included mother's age (categorical variable with 5-year age groups), children's age, marital status and rural dummy as well as region FE; heteroskedasticity consistent standard errors (HC1) are in parentheses; test on weak instruments shows robust F-statistic from the first-stage; AR - Anderson-Rubin 95-CI.

# **Results:** husbands, 2010

**OLS** shows **moderate constant drop (2%)** in employment because of childbearing

**2SLS** shows **no effect**

*Note! All 2SLS models produce 0 effect, even with 'shock in fertility' model*

**Support for H2**

**Results are persistent over time** (see 2002 analysis in the appendix)

**Tab. 6.** OLS and 2SLS estimates of the effect of childbearing on husband's employment, 2010 census.

| | OLS | 2SLS | 2SLS | 2SLS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intercept | 0.74*** | 0.74*** | 0.74*** | 0.74*** |
| | (0.04) | (0.04) | (0.04) | (0.04) |
| More than 2 children | −0.02*** | −0.01 | −0.01 | −0.00 |
| | (0.00) | (0.03) | (0.03) | (0.01) |
| 1st child sex | −0.00 | −0.00 | | −0.00 |
| | (0.00) | (0.00) | | (0.00) |
| 2nd child sex | −0.00 | −0.00 | −0.00 | −0.00 |
| | (0.00) | (0.00) | (0.00) | (0.00) |
| IV | – | Same sex | Both boys/girls | Multiple births |
| Weak Instr. | – | 658.61 *** | 346.29 *** | 23965.06 *** |
| AR | – | (-0.08) - 0.05 | – | (-0.01) - 0.01 |
| Wu-Hausman | – | 0.07 | 0.23 | 14.54 *** |
| Sargan | – | – | 0.83 | – |
| Num. obs. | 396460 | 396460 | 396460 | 395245 |

Note: $^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$. As control variables in all models are included mother's and husband's ages (categorical variables with 5-year age groups), children's age and rural dummy as well as region FE; heteroskedasticity consistent standard errors (HC1) are in parentheses; test on weak instruments shows robust F-statistic from the first-stage; AR - Anderson-Rubin 95-CI.

# **Results:** second job, 2010

**Mothers (only employed):**

1. OLS shows moderate ***positive*** effect

2. 2SLS reveals **no effect** (in line with previous results)

| | Mothers | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OLS | 2SLS | 2SLS | 2SLS |
| Intercept | 0.06 (0.04) | 0.06 (0.04) | 0.06 (0.04) | 0.06 (0.04) |
| 3 children | 0.01 (0.00)*** | 0.03 (0.03) | 0.03 (0.03) | 0.01 (0.01) |
| 1st child sex | 0.00 (0.00) | 0.00 (0.00) | 0.00 (0.00) | 0.00 (0.00) |
| 2nd child sex | −0.00 (0.00) | −0.00 (0.00) | | −0.00 (0.00) |
| IV | – | Same sex | Both boys/girls | Multiple births |
| Weak Instr. | – | 354.27 *** | 177.8 *** | 18017.21 *** |
| AR | – | (-0.03) - 0.1 | – | 0 - 0.02 |
| Wu-Hausman | – | 0.72 | 0.64 | 0.11 |
| Sargan | – | – | 0.56 | – |
| Num. obs. | 232107 | 232107 | 232107 | 231487 |

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**Husbands (only employed):**

Both OLS and 2SLS shows negligible **positive** effect
**(contradiction with H2)**

In Russia there is a **negligible permanent fatherhood "premia"**

*Note! Only 2SLS with multiple births is significant – shock in fertility*

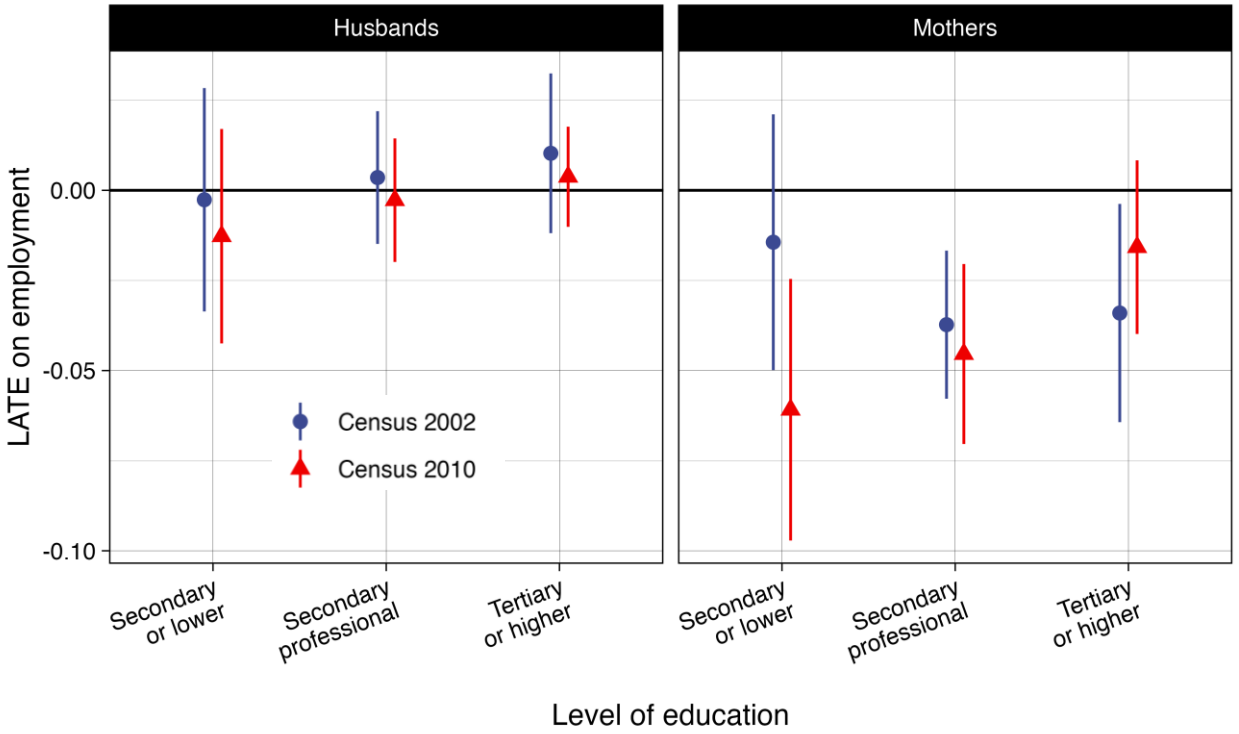
| | Husbands | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OLS | 2SLS | 2SLS | 2SLS |
| Intercept | 0.07 (0.02)*** | 0.08 (0.02)*** | 0.07 (0.02)*** | 0.07 (0.02)*** |
| 3 children | 0.01 (0.00)*** | 0.03 (0.02) | 0.03 (0.02) | 0.01 (0.00)*** |
| 1st child sex | 0.00 (0.00) | −0.00 (0.00) | −0.00 (0.00) | −0.00 (0.00) |
| 2nd child sex | −0.00 (0.00) | −0.00 (0.00) | | −0.00 (0.00) |
| IV | – | Same sex | Both boys/girls | Multiple births |
| Weak Instr. | – | 569.34 *** | 286.45 *** | 22977.7 *** |
| AR | – | (-0.01) - 0.08 | – | 0.01 - 0.02 |
| Wu-Hausman | – | 1.27 | 1.1 | 4.85 * |
| Sargan | – | – | 1.06 | – |
| Num. obs. | 347970 | 347970 | 347970 | 346956 |

# Results: *education*

**Mothers:**

1. Significant negative effect for mothers without tertiary education
2. Moderate or no effect for women with tertiary education

**H3**
***Supported***




**Proposed explanation:**

1. Higher employment in “family-friendly” sectors
2. Higher employment in less intensive labor usage sectors
3. More likely to be able to defend their rights before employers

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**Husbands:** No systematic effect

# Results: *partnership*

For mothers **with partner the effect is negative**

For mothers **without partner there is no effect (support for H4)**

*It is not feasible to allocate the financial burden associated with leaving work to the household (particularly when the partner would contribute significantly)*

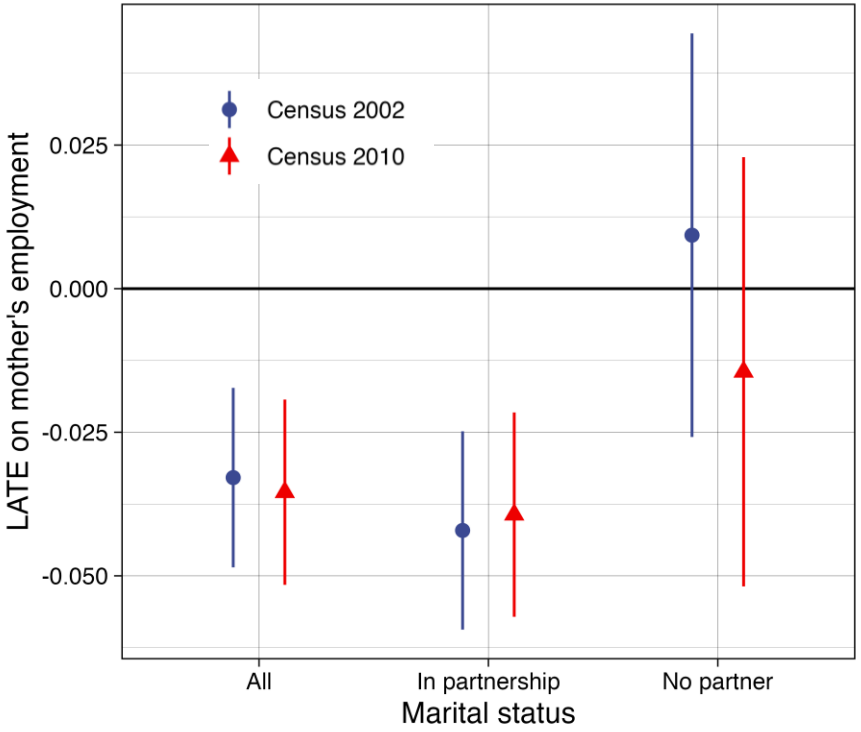
*Note! The effect for 2010 is in negative zone – possible effect of social policy*

There are no *significant* differences between *'all'* and mothers *'In partnership'*

**Why the effect for 'all' is strictly negative?**

*Mothers with partner is about 83% of the sample*
*Effect for all = weighted sum of sub-samples effects*

**Main limitation: no control for divorce / divorce time**



# Results: *"pause in the motherhood penalty"*

**Mothers:**

**0-2 yo**: Sharp drop (though not 100%)

*Parental leave; lack of public childcare services*

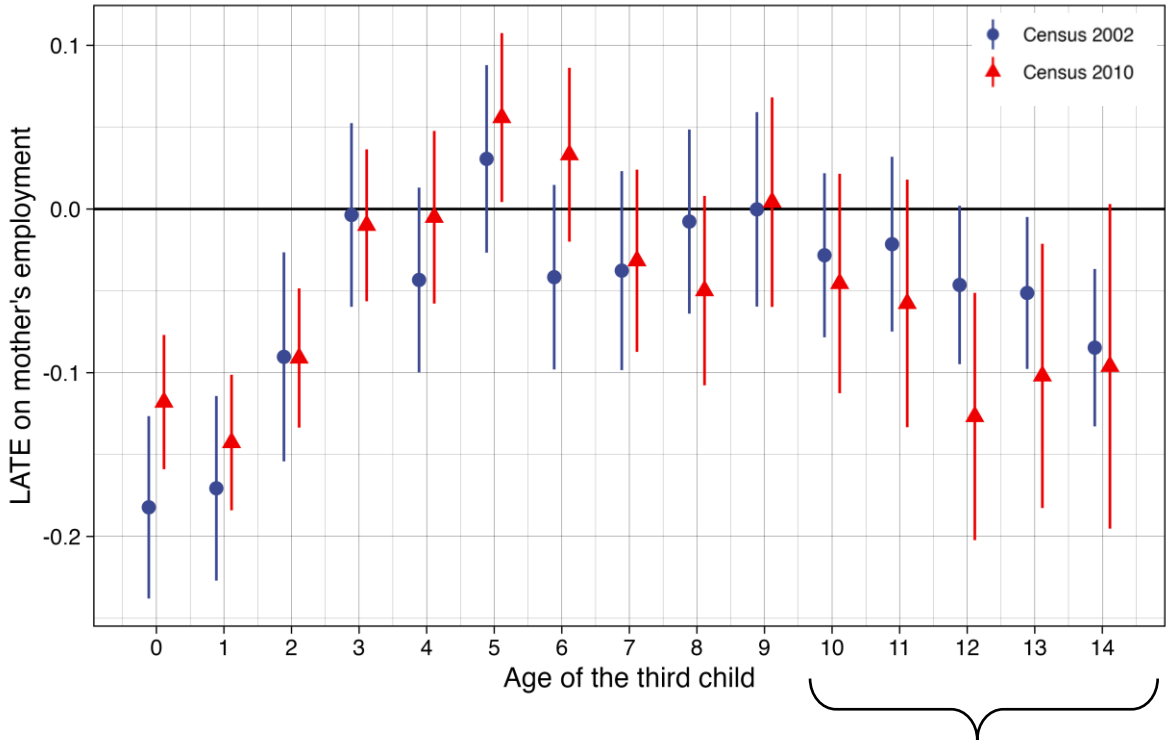
**3-10 yo**: No effect = "pause in the motherhood penalty"

*End of parental leave; kindergarten; need for higher income to "prepare" a child for school*

***Mothers are predominantly attached to the labor market** and do not resign from the job*

**>11 yo**: Moderate negative effect – 5%

*Possibly, it is the long-run impact of motherhood on employment*




***Late stages of career?***

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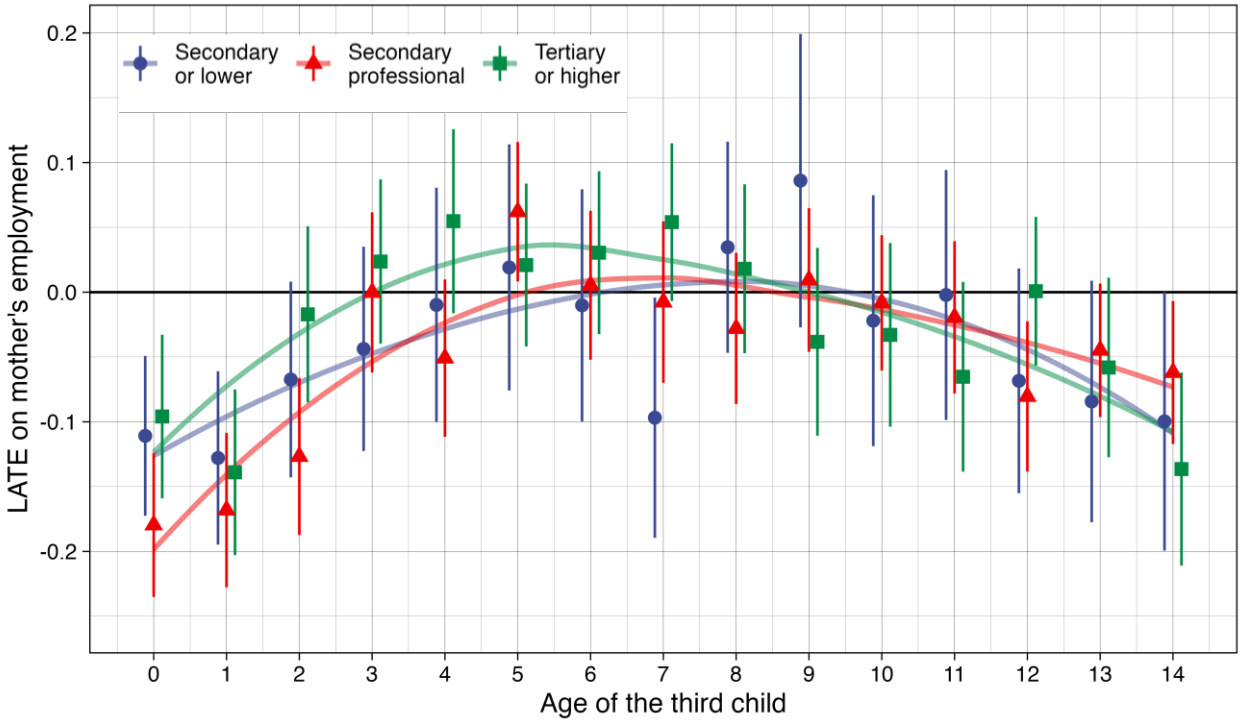
**Husbands:** No systematic effect

# Results: *"pause" and education*

**The effect by child's age and mother's education**

1. No dramatic differences by education
2. The penalty for mothers with tertiary education is smaller **(H3 supported)**
3. Differences diminish as the child becomes older




*Note: results are aggregated by years; the estimation is the same as before*

# Results: *"pause" and partnership*

**The effect by child's age and partnership**

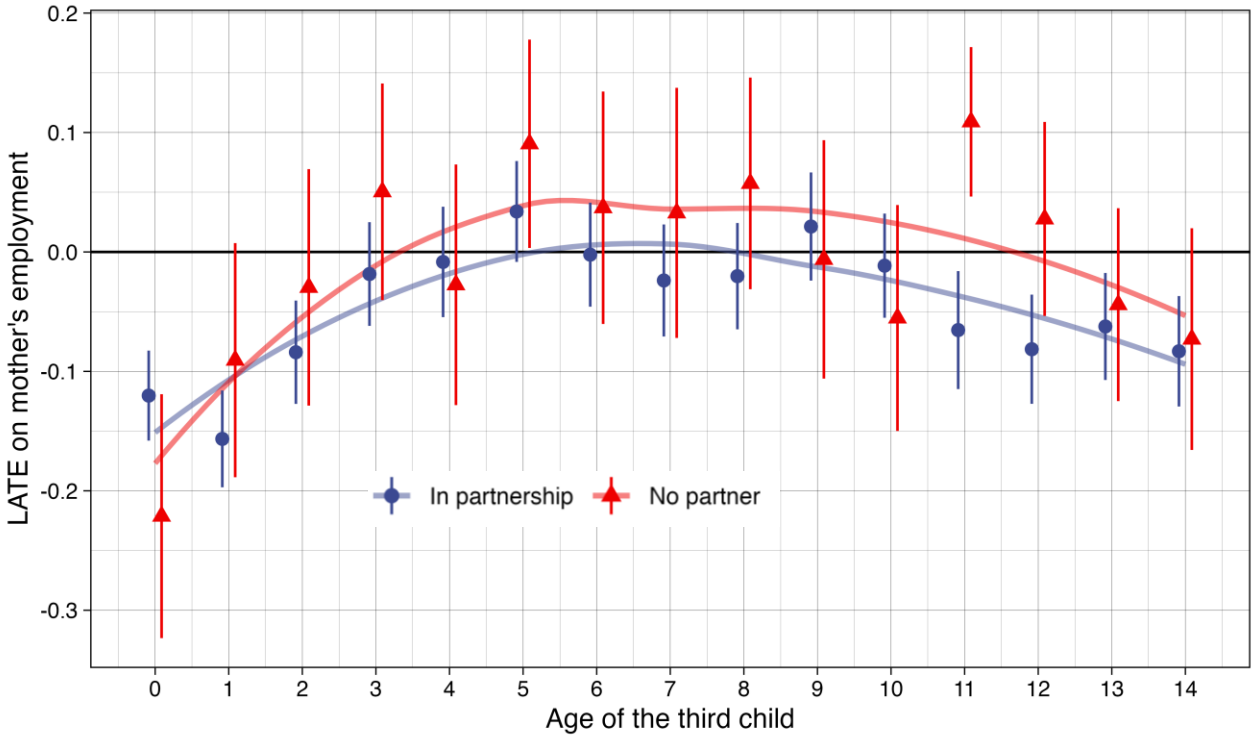
**For mothers with no partner:**

*Parental leave is shorter (0-1 yo) -> majority does not use full parental leave entitlement*

*There is a "permanent pause" -> the long-run effect might be zero*

*While the tendencies are the same, the effect less pronounced and negligible*

**Main limitation: no control for divorce / divorce time**




*Note: results are aggregated by years; the estimation is the same as before*

# Limitations

**Substantial limitations:**

The **results are valid for the 2->3 parity** of birth, while not representative for the earlier parities
**However!** under the assumption of linearity, **the identified effect can be regarded as its most precise estimation**

**The effect shows LATE rather then ATE:** but compliers (I believe) should not differ dramatically from the population

**Not precise operationalization of fathers:** the effect might be misleading

**Data Limitations:**

Limited number of variables:

1. No income
2. No hours worked

Underestimation of children under age of 5 -> *less external validity*

"Death souls" -> *less external validity*

Unprofessional census takers -> *possible mistakes in coding*

# Discussion & Conclusion

1. The first (?) estimates of the causal effect of fertility on labor market outcomes in Russia

2. Previous research on Russia are potentially too pessimistic due to selection bias

3. There is a moderate motherhood penalty in employment, whereas the main effect is around the first years after birth (**H1**)

4. Negligible fatherhood "premia" (**H2**)

5. The effect is much lower for women without a partner (**H4**)

**Key differences from other countries:**

1. The motherhood penalty is most pronounced when the child is aged 0–3, whereas in Western countries, the effect is most pronounced until the child is aged 10–12
2. Greater penalty for women with low education (so, for low-skilled sectors) – **H3**
3. *"Pause in motherhood penalty"?*

Previous research found the **motherhood penalty in Russia is only marginally lower than in developed market-driven countries**

Results suggest it is much lower and is **close to the "social democratic" welfare states**

# References


## Theoretical background:

### Rational choice theory

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# Parenthood Penalty in Russia

## Evidence from Exogenous Variation in Family Size

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