

# **The Motherhood Wage Penalty – How do Job Tasks matter?**

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A large literature shows that mothers earn less than nonmothers. Recently, studies have addressed the role of occupational characteristic, for example by investigating how different work conditions amplify or mitigate wage penalty between mothers and non-mothers. What research so far has not addressed is how changes to job tasks are related to the motherhood wage penalty. That is an important gap in the literature as many explanations of motherhood penalties implicitly or explicitly draw on changes in job tasks; moreover, job tasks are central determinants of wages. If, for example, motherhood penalties have to do with impaired productivity mothers should be doing less highly rewarded job tasks. Alternatively, if compensating differentials are at work, the wage penalty should be partly accounted for by mothers doing more family-friendly job tasks.

This study explores a new dimension of motherhood wage penalties by scrutinizing the role of job tasks. We ask: *Do changes in job tasks account for the motherhood wage penalty?* In a first step we draw on theories on motherhood penalties to assess changes in job tasks. We analyze five dimensions of job tasks: analytical, managerial, communication, interactive and manual job tasks. In a second step we assess to what extent changes in job tasks account for drops in mothers' wages. Analyses are based on a large-scale German panel survey. The National Educational Panel Study (2012-2020, N=3600) include longitudinal information on employees' careers and life courses and three waves include a job task module interval (2011/12, 2015/16 and 2019/2000). Results from individual fixed-effects regression models indicate that childbirth is associated with substantial reductions in analytic and communication job tasks. Wage regressions indicate that reductions in analytical job tasks account only for a part of motherhood wage penalties; however, this is limited to women with tertiary education.