

# Of Stepping Stones and Mommy Tracks: Legislation and Mother's Transition from Part-Time to Full-Time Employment in East and West Germany

## Introduction

Research on mother's reconciliation of family and employment has widely acknowledged that mothers differ systematically from men and childless women with regard to their employment behavior and short- and long-term occupational outcomes. A crucial aspect in that regard is that in most Western countries mothers seem to pursue a "mommy track" which leads many women into long-lasting part-time employment upon childbirth.

To understand this phenomenon of part-time mommy tracks, researchers have studied it from different angles. One angle focused on the societal prevalence of women's part-time employment across time and age groups (e.g. Allmendinger et al. 2013). Another studied childbirth as the critical turning point for women's employment behavior with a large part of them withdrawing from their prenatal full-time work to part-time employment (e.g. Drobnič et al. 1999). Beyond that, researchers have examined part-time work's role as stepping stone to full-time employment, showing that it only serves that purpose for some mothers while it remains a long-term solution for others (e.g. Connolly and Gregory 2010; Kelle et al. 2017).

Lastly, the part-time mommy track has been found to be facilitated by legislation. Across Europe, principles of equal treatment for part-time workers have blended with the prevalent gender culture (Pfau-Effinger 1998) and thus have typically been interpreted to address women (Aisenbrey et al. 2009). While mothers' wide-spread part-time employment was quickly embraced as an instrument to better reconcile family and employment, thus elevating female employment rates while retaining high job satisfaction (Blau and Kahn 2013; Gallie et al. 2016), it also intensified an array of labor market disadvantages for women: vertical gender segregation, statistical discrimination and occupational penalties for mothers (Gangl and Ziefle 2009; Dieckhoff et al. 2016; Fernández Kranz et al. 2017). Altogether, wide-spread female part-time employment turned out to be both boon and bane; Mandel and Semyonov (2006) labeled such discrepancies between equalizing and segregating outcomes of family-friendly policies a "welfare state paradox".

What remains unclear in that regard is, however, how legislation affects not only the mere prevalence of part-time employment, but also its role as temporary stepping stone to mothers' more extensive labor market participation in the life-course. Thus, in this paper we ask: Do legislative and societal developments, which improved the reconciliation of family and (part-time) employment for mothers, also facilitate an increase of working hours from part-time to full-time employment in line with the stepping-stone hypothesis? Or do they, again, shed light on the welfare state paradox? Also, do the answers to these questions vary across different structural and normative regional conditions?

To find an answer to these questions, we study the quantity and tense of mothers' increase in working hours upon their final childbirth across different legislative and societal configurations. For that purpose, Germany offers a particularly interesting case study. On the one hand, Germany is one of the highest-ranking European countries when it comes to both female part-time employment rates and gender differences therein. The majority of part-time employed

mothers choose to cut hours for the sake of caregiving. As a result, the model of a male breadwinner and a female secondary earner dominates among German households with children (Statistisches Bundesamt 2018; Lechevalier forthcoming).

On the other hand, Germany's legislative and societal framework is of outstanding interest. The country possesses a considerable cross-sectional heterogeneity: its federalism and particularly its binational history<sup>1</sup> signify a great variety of different cultural framework conditions and institutional policy implementations, across a fairly gender-complementary West and an occupationally quite egalitarian East Germany. Additionally, it also portrays noticeable time series heterogeneity: in the last decades, Germany has, by means of several reforms, advanced from a traditional gender-specific legislation to a recent egalitarian Scandinavian-style framework. Accordingly, we observe mothers' behaviors in West and East Germany, starting from a period of a consolidated three-year sheltered caregiving without entitlement to public child care, and pursue them further to a changed paradigm of a one-year income-contingent allowance and the expansion of full-time child care for infants.

We base our event history analyses on the German Socioeconomic Panel study (SOEP) for the years between 1992 and 2017, supplemented by yearly regional-level macro data on structural and institutional indicators. We premise the finalization of mothers' childbearing years as a starting point for observation. As Brehm (2019) has shown, the employment behavior of mothers often takes up sincerity only after having finished the childbearing years. However, existing studies on women's transition between part-time and full-time employment typically fall short of paying due regard to the dependency on the progression in the family phase: they focus on mothers' behavior after the first birth in isolation (Kelle et al. 2017), treat childbirth as a mere control (Connolly and Gregory 2010) or underestimate mothers as a specific group of interest altogether (Blank 1998; O'Reilly and Bothfeld 2002; Månsson and Ottosson 2011). In this paper, we aim to overcome this constrained perspective.

## **Sources and consequences of part-time employment and the role of legislation**

### **Reasons for mothers' part-time employment**

At about the turn of the millennium, part-time employment was set on solid legislative grounds by European principles of equal treatment. At that time, part-time work had long been a relevant sector in some, particularly Northern European countries while it had developed somewhat more recently in Central Europe like the German-speaking countries (Gallie et al. 2016; Lechevalier forthcoming; for an European comparison see Allmendinger et al. 2013). Despite diverse norms and conditions across Europe, part-time employment has predominantly developed to be women's work.

In West Germany, for example, the principle of equal treatment encountered a long-standing framework that had been found to suppress female full-time employment, including a taxation system which considers spouses jointly (Dearing et al. 2007) and the lack of affordable and high-quality child care (Hipp et al. 2015). The overall institutional framework concurred with a complementary gender culture (Pfau-Effinger 1998) with a gender-specific division of unpaid labor. In East Germany, in contrast, the equal treatment of part-time work came upon an ideal of female full-time employment and relatively high child care ratios, but a troubled labor market with high female unemployment rates. Despite these conditions, unpaid labor and caregiving

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<sup>1</sup> Until 1990, Germany was divided into the Eastern socialist German Democratic Republic and the Western liberal-democratic Federal Republic of Germany. Upon reunification, East Germany became part of the FRG.

was also attributed to the female sphere (Arránz Becker et al. 2010). As a result, formally gender-unspecific incentives to work part-time were quickly interpreted gender-specifically (Pfau-Effinger 1998; Aisenbrey et al. 2009). Despite recent policy reforms, which explicitly encourage parents to share their employment and child care responsibilities more equally, and the massive expansion of child care, the complimentary gender culture has proven to be rather tenacious. Accordingly, German women have increasingly been adducing reasons of caregiving responsibilities for their part-time employment, in West Germany (84%) more so than in the Eastern part (48%: Rübenach and Keller 2011; see also Statistisches Bundesamt 2018; Lechevalier forthcoming). Beyond these institutional factors, pre-existing economic inequalities within couples have also been found to play a pivotal role for mothers' returns to part-time instead of full-time employment (Dieckhoff et al. 2016).

Still, the great number of structural and institutional constraints is usually not perceived negatively by mothers. Instead, they typically frame their part-time employment as choice for the sake of motherhood, even though both temporarily and lastingly part-time employed women consider jobs that accommodate child care responsibilities as "bad", i.e., of lower occupational worth (Webber and Williams 2008).

### **Consequences of mothers' part-time employment**

Internationally, wide-spread female part-time employment has been shown to cause both many positive outcomes, but its gender-specificity also brought about a wide array of negative consequences. As Stier et al. (2001) argue, the labor market penalizes female part-time employment as a homogeneous, "standard" mommy track. Thereby, part-time employment is one source of a "welfare state paradox" (Mandel and Semyonov 2006), i.e. progressive family-friendly legislations that induce both equalizing and segregating outcomes, which can be observed both on national and individual level.

On the national level, the entitlement to part-time employment and its equal treatment was internationally the greatest driver of female labor force participation (Sørensen 1990; Blau and Kahn 2013). Germany has been unique in Europe with regard to increasing the employment of mothers (Lechevalier forthcoming). However, the overall volume of work has remained unchanged, reflecting a loss of economic efficiency (for UK see Connolly and Gregory 2008; for Austria see Berghammer and Riederer 2018; for Germany and France see Lechevalier forthcoming). Furthermore, the dissemination of female part-time work has amplified vertical segregation (Blau and Kahn 2013) and contributed to the statistical discrimination of all women as potential mothers (Dieckhoff et al. 2016; Fernández Kranz et al. 2017; Oesch et al. 2017).

On the individual level, working part-time has facilitated high job satisfaction in mothers (for Netherlands see Booth and van Ours 2013; for Germany, Netherlands, Sweden and UK see Gallie et al. 2016). At the same time, it has also brought about a wide array of occupational penalties, for example with regard to wages and returns to experience (for Germany, UK and US see Gangl and Ziefle 2009; for Spain see Fernández Kranz and Rodríguez-Planas 2011; Fernández Kranz et al. 2015; for Austria, Italy, Poland and UK see Matteazzi et al. 2014), job positions, prestige and contract type (for UK see Connolly and Gregory 2008; for Germany see Hipp and Stuth 2013; Brehm and Buchholz 2014; for Germany and Sweden see Evertsson and Grunow 2012; for Spain see Fernández Kranz et al. 2015), learning opportunities (for Germany, Netherlands, Sweden and UK see Gallie et al. 2016) and, eventually, pensions (for Germany and Switzerland see Madero-Cabib and Fasang 2016).

### **Part-time employment as a stepping stone**

In light of the origins and consequences of mother' part-time employment, a strand of research has focused on its role as temporary bridge for the sake of caregiving, but as stepping stone to full-time work. For Germany, women's accounts of an ideal-typical timing to return to part-time or full-time employment, respectively, give rise to that assumption. On average, women perceive it ideal to return to part-time work when the youngest child is slightly older than three years while they consider full-time work to be appropriate after the child's seventh birthday (Lietzmann and Wenzig 2017). However, testing of the stepping stone-hypothesis proved that part-time employment only serves that bridging purpose for some mothers while it remains a long-term solution for others. In fact, part-time and full-time employment follow different mechanisms in female life courses (for Germany see Frodermann et al. 2013; Brehm 2019; for UK see Wright and Hinde 1991). Beyond that, part-time employment alone may represent two different tracks, depending on mothers' aspirations and opportunities: a long-lasting, occupationally dead-end mommy track on the one hand and a stepping stone into full-time employment on the other (for Germany see Kelle et al. 2017; for UK see Connolly and Gregory 2010; for Germany and UK see O'Reilly and Bothfeld 2002; for US see Blank 1998; for Sweden see Månsson and Ottosson 2011).

In sum, research has shown that structural conditions influence the dissemination of part-time employment among mothers as a successful instrument to increase their overall occupational participation. At the same time, part-time employment contributes crucially to women's disadvantages on the labor market. Still, women do not necessarily use part-time employment as a stepping stone to occupationally more promising full-time employment. In light of that, the present paper ties these separate strands of research together. Specifically, it contributes to understanding what impact legislative and societal developments exert on the role of part-time employment as a stepping stone to full-time employment.

### **Family policies, child care availability and prevalence of part-time employment in Germany**

To understand the impact of various legislative and societal developments on female labor market behaviors, Germany sets a great example. The country possesses a considerable heterogeneity, both cross-sectionally and longitudinally, when it comes to family policies, child care availability and the prevalence of part-time employment.

The cross-sectional heterogeneity originates, first, from Germany's binational history. Until the peaceful revolution in 1989, East Germany was a socialist state with a wide array of facilitations, incentives, but also strains to bring mothers back to full-time employment after childbirth (cf. Arránz Becker et al. 2010). Beyond reunification, this history bequeathed a strong mothering norm to reconcile family and full-time employment, a rich infrastructure of full-time public child care, both for under-three-year-old infants and over-three-year-old kindergartners, and a relatively high readiness to adapt to policies among mothers (Falk and Schaeper 2001). In West Germany, in contrast, both gender culture and gender order have encouraged labor division and thus have traditionally placed mothers in the family sphere (Pfau-Effinger 1998). The discrepancy reflected in both child care and female part-time employment rates. In 1992, at the start of our observation period and shortly after reunification, infant child care ratios were below 2 % in West German area states yet between 43 and 55 % in East German area states, many of which offered full-time services. In contrast, female part-time employment rates amounted to between 33 and 39 % in West Germany but only to between 17 and 21 % in East Germany, many of which resulted from the poor labor market situation after reunification.

Second, Germany's cross-sectional heterogeneity stems from its federalism: each of the 16 federal states has a high number of jurisdictions, including many aspects of public child care. Additionally, the states differ considerably, for example with regard to culture (e.g., more catholic, conservative states in Southern Germany and more secular or protestant states in the North) and urbanity (e.g., high population density in North Rhine-Westfalia as opposed to low population density in Mecklenburg-Hither Pomerania). These differences reflect in a high variety in both child care and female part-time employment rates, even today and even within East and West Germany. For example, in 2017, full-time infant child care rates ranged in West Germany between 10 (Baden-Wuerttemberg) and 22 % (Saarland), and in East Germany between 33 (Brandenburg) and 48 % (Thuringia). Part-time employment rates varied in West Germany between 48 (Bavaria) and 52 % (Rhineland-Palatinate), and in East Germany between 36 (Brandenburg) and 47 % (Mecklenburg-Hither Pomerania).

Beyond these cross-sectional heterogeneities, there has been considerable variation across time. While East Germany started off from a dual earner reference model, West Germany was more heterogeneous but with an underlying female caregiver norm. Reunification implemented West German legislation to East Germany, including some particularly conservative policies like joint taxation and spouses' co-insurance, both of which are most advantageous if one partner (typically the female) has no or only little income. Still, since reunification, there have been several reforms of family policy across which paradigms in other legislative fields changed remarkably.

- In 1992, a three-year parental leave (*Erziehungsurlaub*) with a two-year fixed allowance (*Erziehungsgeld*) was consolidated. This reform followed a gradual extension of parental leave in the preceding years in both separated and reunified Germany. It marked a conservative high point in legislatively sheltering a caregiving period for mothers, thereby setting a return norm both for many West German mothers, who had behaved quite heterogeneously beforehand (Brehm 2019), and East German mothers, who had uniformly returned much earlier before 1992 (Falk and Schaeper 2001).
- In 1996, the parental leave-reform was reinforced by an entitlement to public child care for at least three-year-olds. The entitlement launched or amplified a public child care expansion in West Germany: by the end of the 1990s, child care rates had increased and harmonized from little above 50 % in some area states at the beginning of the decade to well above 80 % in all of them, thereby catching up with standards that had existed in East Germany for many years. Nonetheless, East and West Germany continued to differ regarding the scope of public child care: while a considerable share of child care institutions in the East offered full-time caregiving, this remained rather uncommon in the West.
- 2001 heralded a turnaround: parental leave was flexibilized and parental allowance could be requested for one year at a higher rate instead of the usual two-year payment (*Elternzeit*). In the same year, the EU-principle of treating part-time and full-time employees equally was implemented in Germany. In the Western part of the country, it put the advanced dissemination of female part-time employment on legal grounds while it accelerated its increase in the East.
- In 2007, a (capped) income-contingent allowance was introduced (*Elterngeld*). It replaced 67 % of the caregiving parent's net income for one year and allowed for another two months if both parents took leave. The reform marked a "change in paradigm" in (West) Germany's legislation from a conservative gender-complimentary model to a social-democratic Scandinavian-style family policy (Ostner 2006).

- Accordingly, starting in 2013, public child care availability and entitlement was extended to one- and two-year-olds while parental leaves and allowances were adjusted to encourage both parents to decrease working hours for the sake of caregiving (*Elterngeld Plus*).

Though recent policies encourage a more equal division of paid and unpaid labor across genders, others retained more complimentary gender roles. As a result, traditional and egalitarian norms compete in Germany today (Grunow et al. 2018). Thus, the middle way persists: a reference model of a female additional earner and main caregiver in part-time employment.

There is a considerable amount of research on German mothers' labor market behavior across family policies, child care availability and the prevalence of part-time employment. The literature stresses that West and East Germany somewhat converged with regard to returns to employment after childbirth in the last decades, fostered, first, by increasingly reconciliation-friendly family policy reforms, second, by the buildout of public child care for infants, and, third, by the dissemination of part-time employment (Matysiak and Steinmetz 2006; Hanel and Riphahn 2011; Ziefle and Gangl 2014). As Table 1 shows, the median duration of employment interruptions have decreased in both German regions, though the decrease was sooner and more pronounced in East Germany. Simultaneously, the share of women who returned to part-time employment increased and converged, constituted by a decrease of those who returned to full-time employment or who did not return to employment at all – notably in West Germany<sup>2</sup>. An exception therein is the period after the reconciliation-friendly *Elterngeld* reform of 2007, when West German mothers revert to returning to full-time employment at higher shares than in the decade before.

*Table 1: mothers' employment return behavior after the last childbirth, by region and period of family policy*

	total	period of family policy at birth of last child							
		West				East			
		1992-95	1996-00	2001-06	2007-12	1992-95	1996-00	2001-06	2007-12
duration of employment interruption (median in years)	2.2	3.6	2.9	2.3	1.8	3.6	2.0	1.4	1.3
return to full-time employment (in %)	18	16	12	10	14	63	38	38	28
return to less than full-time employment (in %)	71	69	75	79	75	33	53	58	63
no return to employment (in %)	11	15	13	11	11	--	--	--	9

In the light of the welfare state paradox, however, it remains unclear how the legislative and societal developments in West and East Germany have contributed to mothers' employment

<sup>2</sup> The cell sizes are too small to rely on the results for East Germany.

behavior *beyond* their initial return to part-time work. Thus, in this paper we analyze how (a) reconciliation-facilitating family policies, (b) extended public child care which disburdens mothers from many caregiving responsibilities, and (c) widespread chances and increasing normality to return to part-time employment influence mothers' tendency to seize part-time employment as a stepping stone to full-time employment – or whether those reconciliation-friendly developments also, paradoxically, pull mothers onto a mommy track away from full-time labor market commitment. By the example of West and East Germany, we examine these questions across historically, structurally and normatively diverse-yet-similar regions.

## Data and methods

### Sample and method

We investigate our research questions using the German Socioeconomic Panel (SOEP; v34). The SOEP is a representative longitudinal study conducted in Germany and has been carried out annually since 1984 (Wagner et al. 2007). Since the start of the survey, the sample has been supplemented time and again by additional survey groups (Kroh et al. 2018). In addition, surveys and oversampling of special population groups are carried out at irregular intervals, e. g. in 1990 of a sample of the East German population (Wagner 2009). In addition to the annual surveys, it also contains biographical data on births and employment. This enables us to include information from before the actual survey period. For the following analyses we use waves from re 1992 to 2017<sup>3</sup>. We restrict our sample to women who gave birth to at least one child during that period and who returned to part-time employment thereafter. To be able to observe their post-birth employment behavior and to reduce the number of women who merely bridge the spacing between several childbirths, we only consider mothers whose birth and employment biography can be observed for at least five years after the birth of their last child. As a result, we observe women whose last childbirth was in 2012 at the latest. According to these limitations, our analysis sample consists of 934 women living in West Germany and 198 women living in East Germany<sup>4</sup>.

In our center of interest is women's transition from part-time to full-time employment upon their last birth; we use SOEP's monthly information on the employment status of women. We differentiate between part-time and full-time employment alongside women's reported contractual (or, if missing, actual) working hours: In line with the OECD-definition (van Bastelaer et al. 1997), a maximum of 30 hours per week is considered part-time employment, everything above is labeled full-time work. Because women's self-classification as part-time or full-time employed is chronologically more exact, we adjust the precise working hours to the chronological information. We smooth out gaps or excess hours of two months or less and exclude women who were non-employed for more than one year between their labor market return to part-time employment and their increase of working hours to full-time work. Women are 'at risk' of transitioning if they are currently part-time employed or if they had been not more than six months ago.

Using these data, we estimate piecewise constant exponential models with period-specific effects. The observed time periods are based on intervals of two years: zero to 24 months, 25 to 48 months, and more than 48 months after women's return to the labor market. These are

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<sup>3</sup> Institutional households and the refugee sample were excluded.

<sup>4</sup> Due to a small cell size (n=15), we do not present the results for East German women who returned to part-time between 1992 and 1995.

crossed with the four periods of family policies (see next section) to create period-specific effects.

All models are calculated separately for women's area of living, namely West and East Germany. Internal migrants are considered as of or until their migration. We have decided to exclude the city states from our analysis as the conditions differ from those in area states: for example, child care ratios are higher while part-time employment rates are lower. In addition, we exclude city states to avoid biases: while in East Germany the only city state Berlin is excluded in many analyses as the city was divided before reunification, in West Germany we find Hamburg and Bremen as city states.

### **Central determinants**

Apart from time-constant factors, all variables are on a monthly basis. All metric variables were z-standardized.

The central determinants are the period of family policy at last childbirth, the child care rate, and the female part-time employment rate. In accordance with the historical developments (cf. page 5), we group the women alongside the timing of their last birth: 1992 to 1995, 1996 to 2000, 2001 to 2006 and 2007 to 2012. For the child care rate and the female part-time employment rate, we rely on publicly available yearly macro data on the regional level. While female part-time employment rates are available throughout, we have to impute some missing values for child care ratios. With regard to child care ratios, reliable yearly data on children in child care is available as of 2006, just before the first public investments in child care expansion. Prior to that, every five years there is data on available child care places per child. In West Germany, we assume that these two measures do not diverge fundamentally but that the relatively few places are utilized almost completely. Thus, we linearly extrapolate missing overall general child care rates for infants and kindergarteners. The full-time childcare rates, in contrast, are unfortunately not available until 2006. We assume that their development in West Germany was only marginal before and thus keep the levels of 2006 constant in the years before. In East Germany, the decreasing birth rates after reunification led to many unutilized child care places. Consequently, we cannot assume child-place-ratios to concur with child care rates unanimously. Regarding overall child care for kindergartners, the information from around reunification (Deutscher Bundestag 1991) aligns neatly with the information from 2006. Thus, we keep values constant between these years. With regard to overall child care for infants, we observe relatively small rates and ratios and assume them to be utilized quite extensively. Thus, we linearly extrapolate available data. Concerning full-time child care, we have information for the time of reunification (assuming that all child care places were available as full-time places) and as of 2006. For the meantime, we assume consistency in rates since 1995 for infants and since 1996 for kindergartners (Hank et al. 2001) and use linear extrapolation for the years before.

In addition, we control for mothers' socio-demographics, the overall state of the labor market, as well as the occupational and familial history and situation of mothers. Specifically, we control for age, education, migration background, parity of the child, partnership status, yearly individual income as well as equivalent household income, the duration of employment interruption after the last child, the hazard rate of generally returning to the labor market, the current part-time working hours, current non-employment, regional female unemployment rate and a dummy for a market flexibilization reform of 2005 (see Appendix 1). Women's education is divided according to the CASMIN classification: no or lower secondary qualification; middle secondary qualification; upper secondary qualification and tertiary qualification. The female unemployment



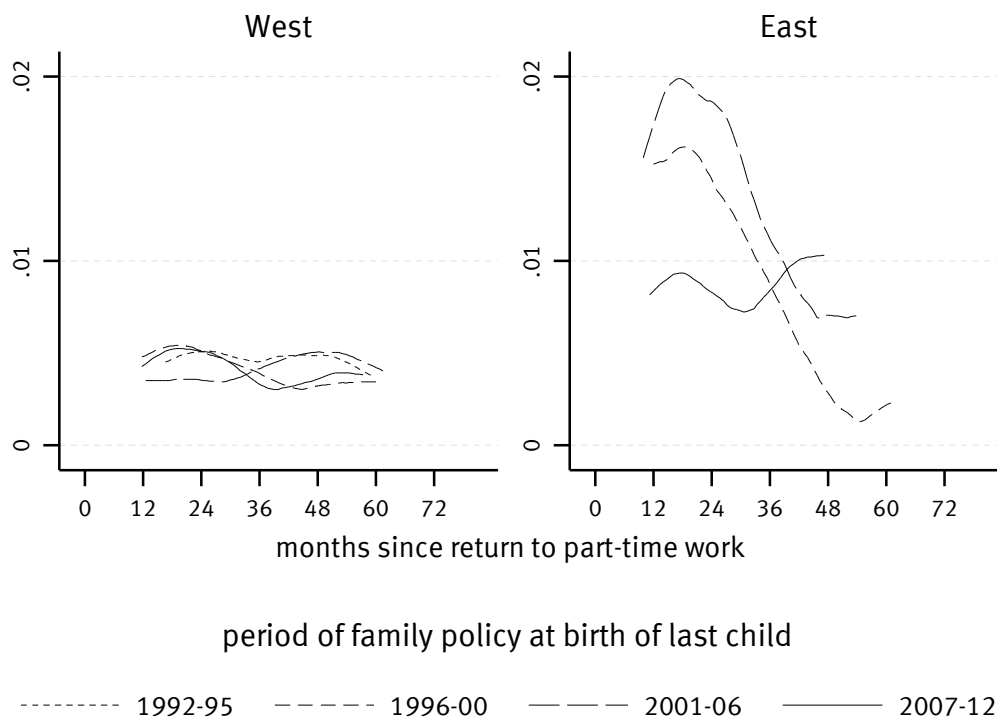
rate considers all civilian workers, including the self-employed. We impute the missing first three years (1992 to 1994) by keeping it proportional to the available information on unemployment rate of the dependent civilian labor force.

## **Results**

At a first, descriptive assessment, the results yield that only about half of mothers increase their working hours from part-time to full-time employment after their last child. In our sample, across the observable time, just above 50 % of mothers in West Germany and slightly above 60 % of mothers in East Germany top up to full-time work. The speed at which they transition is, however, very different: while in West Germany it takes 5.4 years for 25 % of part-time returnees to have raised their working hours, and 16.4 years to reach 50 %, in East Germany, the first 25 % have transitioned to full-time work after already 1,8 years and 50 % after 5.8 years.

To understand these working hour increases more profoundly, we focus on the period of six years after women's part-time employment returns. Within these six years, the observed women's children have, in the majority, finished their kindergarten years and started school. Therefore, mothers have acquired experience with reconciling caregiving and employment in the light of two to three different child care institutions (early child care, kindergarten, and elementary school). Figure 1 shows the hazard rates of their transitions from part-time to full-time employment, separated by area of living (West vs. East Germany) and period of family policy that was in effect at the time of the last birth. The graph shows that in West Germany only relatively few women increase their working hours from part-time to full-time employment. Also, their transition rates are relatively even over time since the last childbirth and have hardly changed across family policies. In East Germany, in contrast, the rates of women transiting from part-time to full-time work are considerably higher. In former family policy periods, they used to be particularly high within the first two years after returning to the labor market and descend sharply thereafter. After the 2007 reform, however, they seem to have decreased and evened out considerably and converged to the West German character.

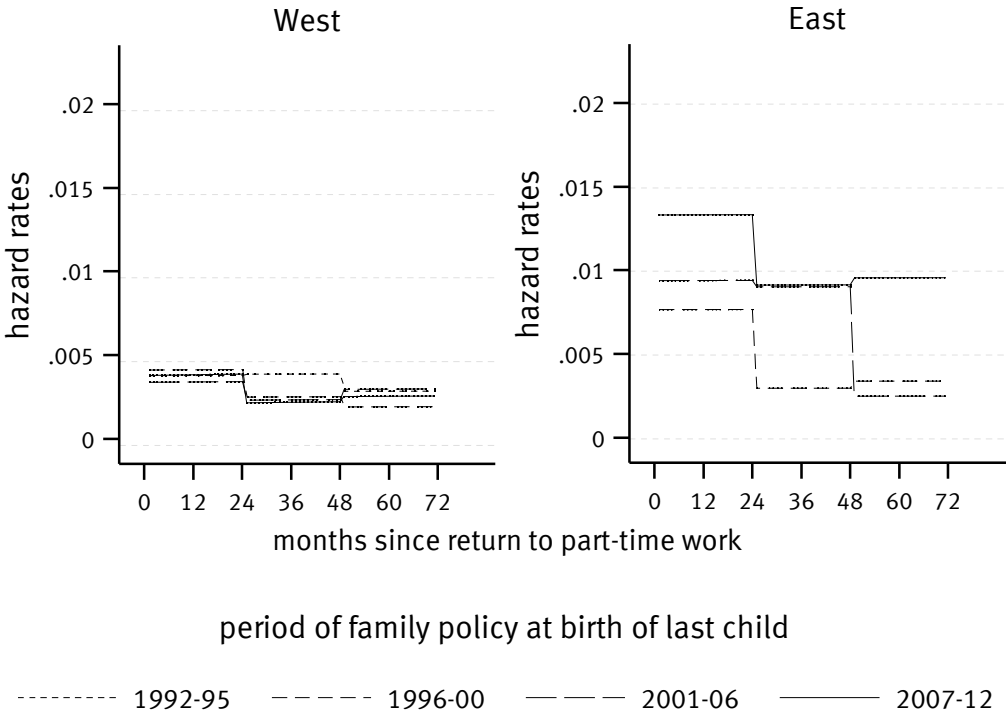
Figure 1: hazard rates of transitions from part-time to full-time employment



Note: family policy period “1992-95” not shown for East Germany for reasons of small cell size.

Of course, we can expect some factors to systematically skew these results because they have changed concurrently with or as a result of family policies. These factors include socio-demographics, the overall state of the labor market and the occupational and familial history and situation of mothers. Thus, in the following, we present the West and East German hazard rates estimated from piecewise constant exponential models with period-specific effects, controlled for a wide array of relevant background factors (cf. also Appendix 2). As Figure 2 suggests for West Germany, the general nature of the transitions from part-time to full-time employment remains the same upon controlling for these factors. The overall hazard rates are relatively stable, both across the passage of time since the last birth as well as across family policy periods. For East Germany, in contrast, the picture changes dramatically upon inserting controls into the model. The most influential factor therein is the female unemployment rate. It skyrocketed to up to 24 % in 1990s in the East Germany federal states, following the economic and political transformation in the course of the German reunification, but has decreased sharply since the German market flexibilization and hardening of social security accesses in 2005. High female unemployment rates in East Germany go along with a higher tendency to top up working hours from part-time to full-time employment. Thus, upon controlling for these factors, the hazard rate to raise working hours increases alongside family policy periods, first between 24 to 48 months after returning to part-time employment (in 2001 til 2006), then both before 24 and after 48 months (in 2007 til 2012).

Figure 2: hazard rates of transitions from part-time to full-time employment, estimated from piecewise constant exponential models with period-specific effects



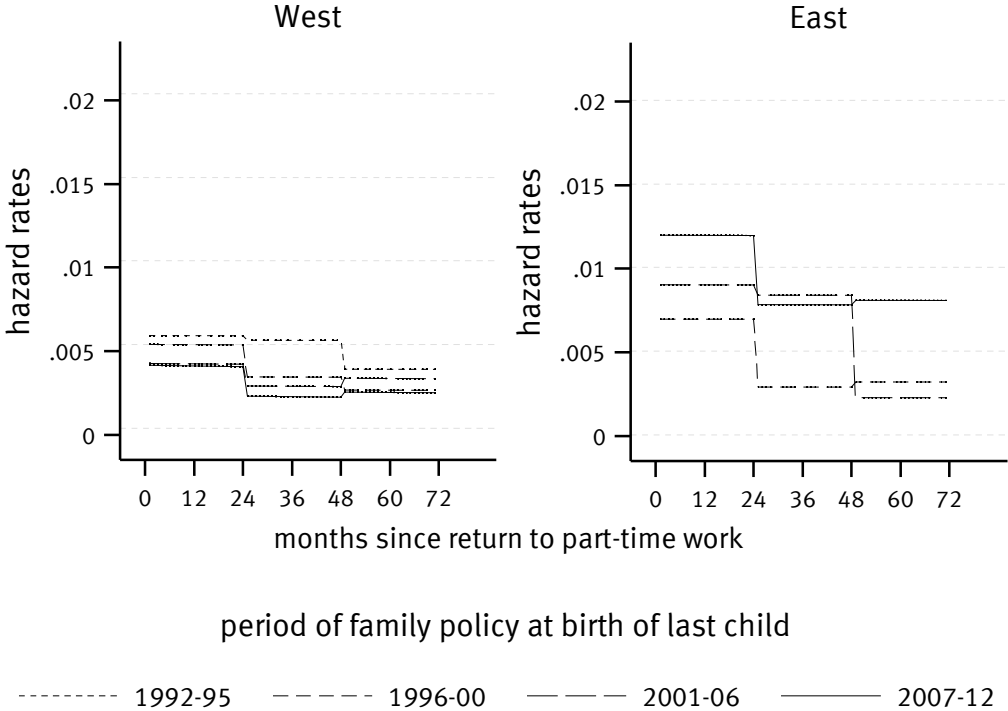
Note: controlled for (kept constant at): age of mother (z-std., 0), education (middle secondary), migration background (none), parity (2), relationship status (married), yearly income (z-std., 0), eqiv. household income (z-std., 0), duration of employment interruption after last child (z-std., 0), hazard rate of return to labor market (z-std., 0), current part-time working hours (z-std., 0), currently non-working, regional female unemployment rate (z-std., 0), market flexibilization of 2005 (before). Family policy period “1992-95” is not shown for East Germany for reasons of small cell size.

To further understand the impact of reconciliation-friendly developments, we estimate the effects of the prevalence of part-time employment as well as regional overall and full-time child care availability for preschool children below and above three years of age. Table 2 presents the coefficients, ceteris paribus and step by step. The overall increasing part-time employment rate has, by itself, no significant impact on mothers’ tendency to top up their part-time working hours to full-time employment – though the effect points to a small positive relation. Overall child care ratios, too, are positive; the effect of the child care ratio for over-three-year-old kindergartners is considerable and only just below significant. Upon controlling for full-time child care availability, however, the picture becomes more complex. Looking at child care for under-three-year-old infants, the insignificant coefficients give a hint that it is the overall child care ratio that supports the increase of working hours from part-time to full-time employment but, counterintuitively, the full-time child care ratio appears to be more of a hindrance. Overall and full-time child care of kindergartners, in contrast, point to a positive association. Beyond that, including said factors, particularly the full-time child care ratio, into the model increases the difference between the family policy periods of 1992 til 1995 and 2007 til 2012 (cf. Figure 3) to a considerable and slightly-below-significant difference.

In East Germany, the effects are very different in character. The increase of part-time employment, which happened at a lower level but at a much higher pace in East as it caught up with West Germany, has a small negative though insignificant impact throughout. The overall child care ratios by themselves are insubstantial but become remarkable in combination with the full-time child care ratios. In contrast to West Germany, it is the full-time child care for infants that

positively dominates the impact on mothers' tendency to top up their working hours: the effect is very strong, although insignificant. Overall and full-time child care for kindergartners has a very minor impact in comparison. With regard to the overall development, the development of overall and full-time child care availability account for parts of the differences across family policies, but mothers' generally more positive tendency to increase working hours from part-time to full-time employment after 2001 and particularly after 2007 remains apparent (cf. Figure 3).

Figure 3



Note: controlled for (kept constant at): age of mother (z-std., 0), education (middle secondary), migration background (none), parity (2), relationship status (married), yearly income (z-std., 0), equiv. household income (z-std., 0), duration of employment interruption after last child (z-std., 0), hazard rate of return to labor market (z-std., 0), current part-time working hours (z-std., 0), currently non-working, regional female unemployment rate (z-std., 0), market flexibilization of 2005 (before), regional female part-time employment rate (z-std., 0), regional overall and full-time child care ratios (z-std., 0). Family policy period "1992-95" is not shown for East Germany for reasons of small cell size.

Table 2:

	West m1	West m2	West m3	West m4	East m1	East m2	East m3	East m4
after return to LM: 0 to 24 months	-5.527 *	-5.478 *	-5.562 *	-5.528 *	-4.318 *	-4.39 *	-4.444 *	-4.427 *
25 to 48 months	-6.103 *	-6.06 *	-6.158 *	-6.11 *	-4.695 *	-4.738 *	-4.798 *	-4.851 *
more than 48 months	-5.967 *	-5.925 *	-6.027 *	-5.979 *	-4.651 *	-4.691 *	-4.739 *	-4.815 *
<i>periodspecific effect of family policy periods</i>								
1992-95 * 0 to 24 ms	0.04	0.173	0.167	0.329	0.05	-0.038	0.004	0.013
25 to 48 ms	0.64 ++	0.747 ++	0.742	0.865 ++	-13.019	-13.126	-13.041	-12.932
more than 48 ms	0.224	0.269	0.305	0.335	-2.331 *	-2.395 *	-2.366 *	-2.271 +
1996-00 * 0 to 24 ms	0.118	0.164	0.164	0.236	-0.545	-0.591	-0.538	-0.549
25 to 48 ms	0.228	0.263	0.304	0.348	-1.112	-1.164 ++	-1.112	-1.003
more than 48 ms	-0.147	-0.126	-0.087	-0.069	-1.023 ++	-1.087 ++	-1.064 ++	-0.937
2001-06 * 0 to 24 ms	-0.086	-0.071	-0.037	-0.005	-0.347	-0.351	-0.313	-0.285
25 to 48 ms	0.135	0.151	0.188	0.189	-0.01	-0.057	-0.018	0.067
more than 48 ms	0.216	0.228	0.232	0.224	-1.34 +	-1.378 +	-1.373 +	-1.284 +
<i>prevalence of women's part-time work</i>								
female part-time employment rate, regional (z-std.)		0.062	-0.017	0.047		-0.086	-0.057	-0.049
<i>child care availability</i>								
child care ratio 0-3 (z-std.)			0.042	0.038			0.007	-0.119
child care ratio 3-6 (z-std.)			0.112 ++	0.103 ++			0.068	0.022
<i>full-time child care availability</i>								
full-time child care ratio 0-3 (z-std.)				-0.129				0.326
full-time child care ratio 3-6 (z-std.)				0.142				-0.089
N observations	65264	65264	65264	65264	10329	10329	10329	10329
N cases	934	934	934	934	198	198	198	198

Note: controlled for (kept constant at): age of mother (z-std., 0), education (middle secondary), migration background (none), parity (2), relationship status (married), yearly income (z-std., 0), eqiv. household income (z-std., 0), duration of employment interruption after last child (z-std., 0), hazard rate of return to labor market (z-std., 0), current part-time working hours (z-std., 0), currently non-working, regional female unemployment rate (z-std., 0), market flexibilization of 2005 (dummy). Significance levels: ++ p<0.20, + p<0.10, \* p<0.05.

## Discussion

The results suggest that, comparing East and West Germany, mothers' tendency to top up their working hours from part-time to full-time employment developed very differently across reconciliation-oriented family policies, child care availability and prevalence of part-time employment. In West Germany, we can hardly see changes across policy periods. While we would expect that an improved reconcilability of family and employment would not only increase and accelerate mothers' labor market returns but also their topping up of working hours, we observe quite the contrary. *Ceteris paribus*, their tendency to transition between part-time and full-time employment was, by a small margin, highest between 1992 and 1995 – during a period of a conservative high point when mothers had a three-year job guarantee and no entitlement to kindergarten places for their children – and lowest after 2007, when a paradigm change in policies incentivized mothers' labor market commitment. This perplexing association has been somewhat balanced by the availability of public child care, which has increased considerably in the last years, and the ever rising female part-time employment rates, which reflects the prospering normative model of a female additional earner and main caregiver. Specifically, child care for over-three-year-old kindergartners, both overall and full-time, seems to positively influence mothers' tendency to top up working hours. For under-three-year-old infants, however, results suggest that full-time child care did not bring any extra utility compared to the overall, predominantly part-time child care places. Possibly, full-time child care for infants is still rather a taboo in formerly conservative West Germany. Furthermore, full-time child care is defined as care of a minimum of 35 hours per week. Particularly for commuters, however, these hours might not suffice for full-time employment. The increasing part-time employment rate has, in contrast, close to no impact on mothers' tendency to top up hours – even though it has played a valuable role in bringing West German mothers back to the labor market at all. It does not seem to act as a stepping stone for them, however. Overall, despite considerable public investments in the reconciliation of family and employment and several great successes in supporting the employment of West German mothers, the results suggest that they (can) hardly utilize the reconciliation-oriented changes to increase their working hours from less to more than 30 hours per week.

In East Germany, results suggest a considerably different picture. The crude numbers indicate that East German mothers transition much less often from part-time to full-time employment since the most reconciliation-oriented 2007 reform. However, controlling for other factors, most pronouncedly female unemployment rates, shows quite the opposite: they adapted with a slightly higher tendency to top up their working hours, but because of the low unemployment rates, this association does not take full effect. The reasons leave much room for debate: on the one hand, a market-flexibilizing reform in 2005 brought many formerly unemployed women into small or part-time jobs instead of the, often desired, full-time employment. Thus, the low unemployment rate may reflect high shares of involuntary part-time employment which, consequently, cannot be easily topped up to full-time work. On the other hand, the low unemployment rates may have had an occupationally reassuring effect on women which may reflect in less perceived necessity to increase working hours soon. Beyond that, the prevalence of part-time employment in East Germany seems to be somewhat of a hindrance to topping up hours. The East German labor market was traditionally dominated by full-time work, so the dissemination of part-time employment seems to have opened up an alternative which is not necessarily used as a stepping stone, but rather as a long-term solution. In a similar vein, the expansion of the already high child care rates for kindergartners does not seem to have induced any substantial adaptation among East German women – possibly because most of the demands

had already been satisfied. The increasing ratio of full-time child care for infants, in contrast, seems to impact mothers' tendency to top up hours very positively; it appears that this institutional reform has hit the mark.

In sum, the same family policies, the expansion of child care institutions and the dissemination of part-time employment had very different effects on mothers' tendency to transition from part-time to full-time employment in West and East Germany. While the family policies had close to no impact in West Germany, they seem to have had a generally positive effect in East Germany – an area in which women were found to adapt more readily to policy changes (Falk and Schaeper 2001). Furthermore, mothers in both regions reacted very differently to the increasing prevalence of part-time employment: while its impact is inconsistent among traditionally caregiving-oriented West German mothers, it seems to slightly delay the transition of traditionally full-time employed East German mothers. Similarly, the expansion of child care seems to have met very different reactions in East and West Germany. In West Germany, in which, traditionally, mothers care for their children for several years at home, (full-time) child care institutions for infants appears to be rejected as an opportunity for topping up hours while child care for kindergartners is embraced more openly. In East Germany, in contrast, where public child care is traditionally widespread, mothers seem to readily exploit full-time child care for infants as a chance to increase their working hours.

## **Conclusion**

Research has quite extensively studied West and East German mothers' labor market returns upon childbirth and their dependency on legislative and societal developments (e.g., Matysiak and Steinmetz 2006; Hanel and Riphahn 2011; Pfau-Effinger and Smidt 2011; Ziefle and Gangl 2014). However, we know little about what impact these developments exert on the transition from birth part-time work to full-time employment upon finishing the childbearing years in the different West and East German contexts. In the light of the welfare state paradox (Mandel and Semyonov 2006), it is particularly interesting to understand if and how (a) reconciliation-facilitating family policies, (b) task-externalizing public child care, and (c) increasing access to and normality of part-time work strengthens part-time employment's role as a stepping stone to full-time employment – or as the gateway to a mommy track.

We find that the answers to these questions differ between the historically, structurally and normatively diverse German regions – though the data does mostly suggest below-significant tendencies. Mothers in West Germany, who look back at a history of a traditional gender culture (Pfau-Effinger 1998), appear rather tenacious in the light of less-than-explicit developments: both the evermore reconciliation-friendly family policies and the increasingly accessible and normal part-time employment prove sparsely or ambiguously relevant for mothers' transition from part-time to full-time employment. Furthermore, they seem to downright reject full-time child care for infants which contradicts long-standing mothering norms. Child care for kindergartners, in contrast, a longer-term established measure, is accepted and utilized for the sake of topping up working hours. Overall, West German mothers prove again to be much less adaptive to legislative and structural developments than East German women (cf. Falk and Schaeper 2001). The latter, in contrast, appear to seize developments more readily: they seem to adapt to reconciliation-friendly policies and the expansion of full-time child care. Coming from a tradition of full-time employed mothers, the increasing part-time employment rate seems to reflect a hindrance rather than a stepping from part-time to full-time employment.

Overall, the findings show that it is highly contingent on the regional context if developments are interpreted as stepping stones or retardants to behaviors – and thus whether they give rise to the welfare state paradox hypothesis or not: while West German mothers seem to be quite selective and relatively oblivious to what they seize as opportunities, East German mothers appear to be more apt to adapt to external changes – both terms of gender-equalizing and segregating consequences. This is, however, examined using the example of legislative and structural developments which do not explicitly incentivize full-time work of at least 30 hours a week as opposed to marginal or part-time employment. Given that a society decides to facilitate full-time employment in mothers and this facilitation would change existing paradigms, it might need more explicit legislative and societal developments to hit the mark.



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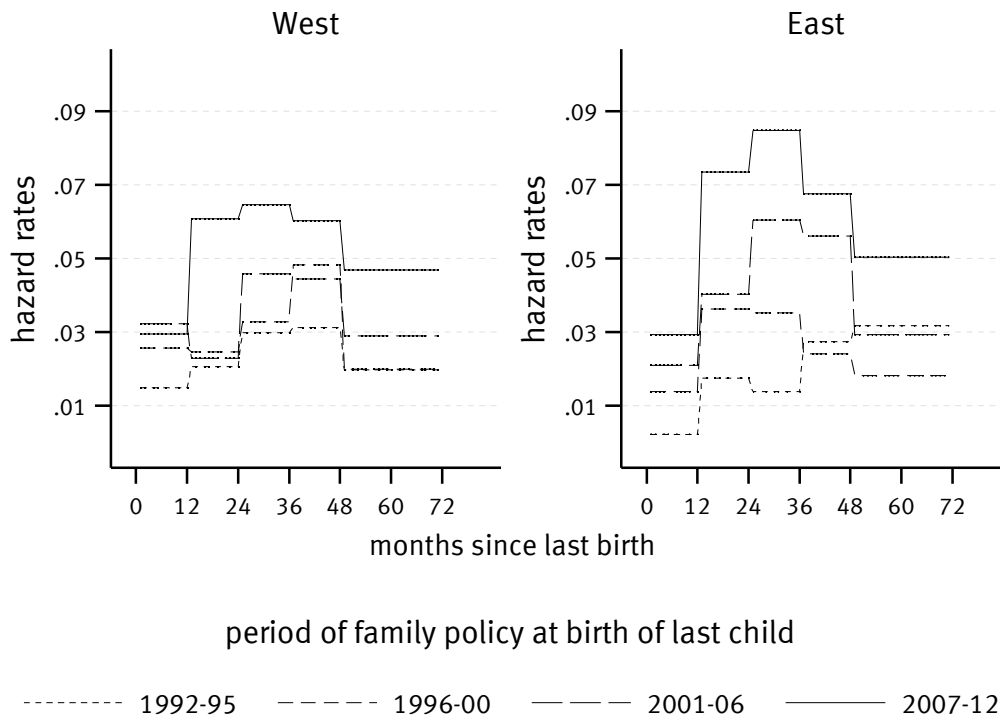
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## Appendix

### Appendix 1: hazard rates of return to labor market



Note: controlled for: age of mother (z-std., 0), education, migration background, parity, relationship status, yearly income (z-std., 0), eqiv. household income (z-std., 0), regional female unemployment rate (z-std., 0), market flexibilization of 2005 (before), regional female part-time employment rate (z-std., 0), regional overall and full-time child care ratios (z-std., 0).

Appendix 2

	West basic	West controls	West full	East basic	East controls	East full
after return to LM: 0 to 24 months	-5.419 *	-5.527 *	-5.528 *	-4.726 *	-4.318 *	-4.427 *
25 to 48 months	-5.769 *	-6.103 *	-6.110 *	-4.815 *	-4.695 *	-4.851 *
more than 48 months	-5.520 *	-5.967 *	-5.979 *	-4.931 *	-4.651 *	-4.815 *
<i>age of mother (z-std.)</i>		-0.338 *	-0.352 *		-0.132	-0.143
<i>educational qualification</i>						
missing		-0.532	-0.543		1.078	1.096
no or lower secondary degree		0.137	0.130		1.249 *	1.085 +
reference: middle secondary degree						
upper secondary degree		-0.065	-0.064		-0.096	-0.117
tertiary degree		-0.056	-0.071		0.258	0.275
<i>migration background</i>						
reference: none						
direct		0.083	0.083		-0.605	-0.784
indirect		-0.027	-0.016		0.492	0.420
<i>parity</i>						
1		0.076	0.077		0.303	0.308
reference: 2						
3+		0.092	0.098		-0.521 ++	-0.498 ++
<i>relationship status</i>						
reference: married						
cohabitation		0.483 *	0.487 *		0.250	0.254
Single		0.588 *	0.592 *		0.241	0.135
missing		0.936	0.972		-10.593	-10.583
<i>previous reconciliation behavior</i>						
employment interruption after last child (z-std.)		-0.016	-0.048		-0.016	-0.020
hazard rate of return to labor market (z-std.)		-0.002	0.003		-0.284 +	-0.307 *
<i>current employment situation</i>						
current part-time working hours (z-std.)		0.327 *	0.321 *		-0.284 *	-0.284 *
currently non-working		1.580 *	1.576 *		1.361 +	1.369 +
<i>financial situation</i>						
yearly income (z-std.)		0.642 *	0.641 *		1.268 *	1.280 *
equiv. household income (z-std.)		-0.255 *	-0.247 *		-0.443 *	-0.433 *
income missing		-0.859 +	-0.848 ++		-0.052	-0.022

<i>regional labor market situation</i>							
female unemployment rate (z-std.)		0.059		0.073		0.542 *	0.627 *
dummy for market flexibilization of 2005		-0.044		-0.115		0.143	0.283
<i>periodspecific effect of family policy periods</i>							
1992-95 * 0 to 24 ms	0.100	0.040		0.329	1.584 *	0.050	0.013
25 to 48 ms	0.533 ++	0.640 ++		0.865 ++	-11.685	-13.019	-12.932
more than 48 ms	-0.070	0.224		0.335	-1.375	-2.331 *	-2.271 +
1996-00 * 0 to 24 ms	0.225	0.118		0.236	0.732 +	-0.545	-0.549
25 to 48 ms	0.226	0.228		0.348	0.085	-1.112	-1.003
more than 48 ms	-0.347	-0.147		-0.069	-0.244	-1.023 ++	-0.937
2001-06 * 0 to 24 ms	-0.030	-0.086		-0.005	0.655 *	-0.347	-0.285
25 to 48 ms	0.122	0.135		0.189	0.434	-0.010	0.067
more than 48 ms	-0.002	0.216		0.224	-1.263 +	-1.340 +	-1.284 +
<i>regional prevalence of part-time work</i>							
female part-time employment rate (z-std.)				0.047			-0.049
<i>regional child care availability</i>							
child care ratio 0-3 (z-std.)				0.038			-0.119
child care ratio 3-6 (z-std.)				0.103 ++			0.022
<i>regional full-time child care availability</i>							
full-time child care ratio 0-3 (z-std.)				-0.129			0.326
full-time child care ratio 3-6 (z-std.)				0.142			-0.089
N observations	65264	65264	65264	10329	10329	10329	10329
N cases	934	934	934	198	198	198	198