

Gender Norms and Parental Leave

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Motivation

- ▶ Work-related gender gaps increasingly due to child penalties (Kleven et al., 2024)

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- ▶ Parental leave great potential to reduce child penalties

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- ▶ Parental leave great potential to reduce child penalties ?
(Olivetti and Petrongolo, 2017; Zurla, 2022; Kleven et al., 2024)
 - + Keep mothers engaged in the labor market
 - Delay their return to the workplace after child birth

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- ▶ Parental leave great potential to reduce child penalties ?
 - + Keep mothers engaged in the labor market
 - Delay their return to the workplace after child birth
- ▶ **Elephant in the room:** ‘gender norms’
 - Key driver of child penalties (Steinhauer, 2018; Kleven, 2022; Casarico and Lattanzio, 2023)

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 - Key driver of child penalties (Steinhauer, 2018; Kleven, 2022; Casarico and Lattanzio, 2023)

Do gender norms affect mothers’ parental leave decisions?

This paper

► Context:

- Focus on Italy for cultural heterogeneity (Putnam, 1993)
- **Voluntary** parental leave (PL): max 6 months each, with 30% replacement rate [► PL in Italy](#)
- Administrative data on universe of Italian employees (2009-2022)

► Empirical strategy:

- Exploit municipal-level Facebook-based Gender Norms Index (*GNI*) (Carrer and De Masi, 2024)
- Measure mothers' gender attitudes using their birth-town *GNI*
- Generate cultural variation **within** commuting zones [► Map](#)

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► Main findings:

- Traditional gender norms do ***not*** affect leave uptake for **low-productivity mothers...**

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- ...but they **increase** leave uptake for **high-productivity mothers**

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► Main findings:

- Traditional gender norms do **not** affect leave uptake for **low-productivity mothers**...
- ...but they **increase** leave uptake for **high-productivity mothers**
- Longer leave to signal attachment to mother role *despite* career (**mothers' guilt**)

Contributions

1. Effects of gender norms on female labor market outcomes (Giuliano, 2020)

- Epidemiological approach (Férrnandez, 2007; Kleven, 2022; Gay, 2023)
- Intergenerational transmission (Férrnandez and Fogli, 2009; Kleven, 2018)

⇒ Leverage within-country heterogeneity in gender norms + Policy participation

2. Spillover effects in welfare participation

- Information channel through network/peer effects (Bertrand et al., 2000; Dahl et al., 2014a; Dahl et al., 2014b; Welteke and Wrolich, 2019)

⇒ Role of social norms

3. Effectiveness of PL schemes

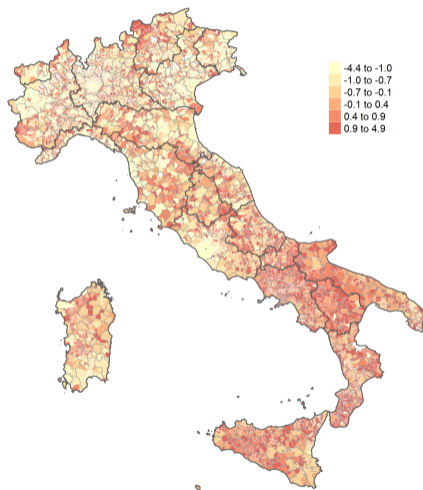
- Non-linear or null effects on female wages/employment (Olivetti and Petrongolo, 2017; Kleven et al., 2020; Corekcioglu et al., 2022; Zurla, 2022)
- Welfare-damaging PL with endogenous norms (Barigozzi et al., 2018)

⇒ PL uptake (and efficacy) depends on gender norms

Outline

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Data**
- 3 Methodology
- 4 Results
- 5 Theoretical framework
- 6 Conclusion

Gender norms: Facebook-based municipal *GNI*



PL uptake: Data and sample

- ▶ Matched employer-employee records from INPS (monthly 2009-2022)
 - Universe of workers in non-agricultural private sector
 - Demographic and work-related information (e.g., age, gender, wage, occupation, hours worked)
 - Working mothers' benefit histories
 - Hiring firms' registers

- ▶ Maternity and parental leave registers
 - Date of childbirth
 - Type and exact duration (in days) of the leave

- ▶ Our main sample:
 - Consider mothers born between 1973 and 1990
 - Focus on mothers with single childbirths between 2012 and 2017
 - Focus on PL days taken within the first three years following childbirth

▶ Timing of PL uptake

▶ Descriptives

▶ Other data

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Empirical specification

For mother i working in firm $j(i)$ in municipality k of age t at first childbirth:

$$Leave_{i,k,t} = \beta HighGNI_i + X_i' \alpha + W_{j(i)}' \gamma + D_k' \delta + \lambda_{CZ} + \nu_t + \varepsilon_{i,k,t}$$

- ▶ $Leave_{i,k,t}$: total duration (# of days) of leave taken
- ▶ $HighGNI_i$: indicator for being born in high-sexism town
- ▶ X_i : mother pre-birth characteristics
- ▶ $W_{j(i)}$: firm characteristics
- ▶ D_k : municipality of work characteristics
- ▶ λ_{CZ} : commuting zone fixed effects
- ▶ ν_t : age-at-first-birth fixed effects

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- ▶ ν_t : age-at-first-birth fixed effects

- ✓ Observed and unobserved differences across **commuting zones**
→ *job availability, average wages, career opportunities*

Empirical specification

For mother i working in firm $j(i)$ in municipality k of age t at first childbirth:

$$Leave_{i,k,t} = \beta HighGNI_i + X_i' \alpha + D_k' \delta + \theta_{j(i)} + \nu_t + \varepsilon_{i,k,t}$$

- ▶ $Leave_{i,k,t}$: total duration (# of days) of leave taken
- ▶ $HighGNI_i$: indicator for being born in high-sexism town
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- ▶ D_k : municipality of work characteristics
- ▶ $\theta_{j(i)}$: firm fixed effects
- ▶ ν_t : age-at-first-birth fixed effects

✓ Observed and unobserved differences across **firms**
→ *workplace culture*

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Gender norms and mothers' PL uptake

Dep. Var.:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	<i>Number of days on parental leave</i>						
Born in high-sexism town	-34.077***						
	(1.377)						
Age							
Full-time							
Monthly earnings (log)							
Permanent							
Manager							
Work experience							
Tenure							
Start age employment							
Demo and work individual controls							
Firm controls							
Work town controls							
Commuting zone FE							
Mother's age at first child FE							
Observations	280,149						
Adj. R-squared	0.04						
Mean outcome	86.05						

▶ All mothers

▶ Within firms

▶ Small firms

▶ Extensive margin

▶ Dynamics

Gender norms and mothers' PL uptake

Dep. Var.:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	<i>Number of days on parental leave</i>						
Born in high-sexism town	-34.077*** (1.377)	-23.868*** (1.222)					
Age		5.467*** (0.655)					
Full-time		-1.555*** (0.490)					
Monthly earnings (log)		20.655*** (0.715)					
Permanent		47.996*** (0.733)					
Manager		-19.045*** (1.415)					
Work experience		0.939*** (0.310)					
Tenure		0.472*** (0.181)					
Start age employment		-0.526* (0.315)					
Demo and work individual controls		Yes					
Firm controls							
Work town controls							
Commuting zone FE							
Mother's age at first child FE							
Observations	280,149	280,149					
Adj. R-squared	0.04	0.04					
Mean outcome	86.05	86.05					

Gender norms and mothers' PL uptake

Dep. Var.:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	<i>Number of days on parental leave</i>						
Born in high-sexism town	-34.077*** (1.377)	-23.868*** (1.222)	-23.686*** (1.219)				
Age		5.467*** (0.655)	0.902 (0.609)				
Full-time		-1.555*** (0.490)	-0.944** (0.478)				
Monthly earnings (log)		20.655*** (0.715)	14.607*** (0.719)				
Permanent		47.996*** (0.733)	51.481*** (0.732)				
Manager		-19.045*** (1.415)	-19.675*** (1.423)				
Work experience		0.939*** (0.310)	0.915*** (0.309)				
Tenure		0.472*** (0.181)	0.554*** (0.179)				
Start age employment		-0.526* (0.315)	-0.538* (0.315)				
Demo and work individual controls		Yes	Yes				
Firm controls			Yes				
Work town controls							
Commuting zone FE							
Mother's age at first child FE							
Observations	280,149	280,149	280,149				
Adj. R-squared	0.04	0.04	0.11				
Mean outcome	86.05	86.05	86.05				

Gender norms and mothers' PL uptake

Dep. Var.:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	<i>Number of days on parental leave</i>						
Born in high-sexism town	-34.077*** (1.377)	-23.868*** (1.222)	-23.686*** (1.219)	-21.930*** (0.690)			
Age		5.467*** (0.655)	0.902 (0.609)	1.141* (0.592)			
Full-time		-1.555*** (0.490)	-0.944** (0.478)	-1.466*** (0.457)			
Monthly earnings (log)		20.655*** (0.715)	14.607*** (0.719)	13.046*** (0.563)			
Permanent		47.996*** (0.733)	51.481*** (0.732)	51.814*** (0.721)			
Manager		-19.045*** (1.415)	-19.675*** (1.423)	-23.038*** (1.715)			
Work experience		0.939*** (0.310)	0.915*** (0.309)	0.818*** (0.312)			
Tenure		0.472*** (0.181)	0.554*** (0.179)	0.593*** (0.125)			
Start age employment		-0.526* (0.315)	-0.538* (0.315)	-0.504 (0.316)			
Demo and work individual controls		Yes	Yes	Yes			
Firm controls			Yes	Yes			
Work town controls				Yes			
Commuting zone FE							
Mother's age at first child FE							
Observations	280,149	280,149	280,149	280,149			
Adj. R-squared	0.04	0.04	0.11	0.13			
Mean outcome	86.05	86.05	86.05	86.05			

Gender norms and mothers' PL uptake

Dep. Var.:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	<i>Number of days on parental leave</i>						
Born in high-sexism town	-34.077*** (1.377)	-23.868*** (1.222)	-23.686*** (1.219)	-21.930*** (0.690)	-4.744*** (0.524)		
Age		5.467*** (0.655)	0.902 (0.609)	1.141* (0.592)	1.786*** (0.559)		
Full-time		-1.555*** (0.490)	-0.944** (0.478)	-1.466*** (0.457)	-2.190*** (0.447)		
Monthly earnings (log)		20.655*** (0.715)	14.607*** (0.719)	13.046*** (0.563)	6.974*** (0.495)		
Permanent		47.996*** (0.733)	51.481*** (0.732)	51.814*** (0.721)	54.022*** (0.745)		
Manager		-19.045*** (1.415)	-19.675*** (1.423)	-23.038*** (1.715)	-21.020*** (1.588)		
Work experience		0.939*** (0.310)	0.915*** (0.309)	0.818*** (0.312)	0.365 (0.301)		
Tenure		0.472*** (0.181)	0.554*** (0.179)	0.593*** (0.125)	0.394*** (0.102)		
Start age employment		-0.526* (0.315)	-0.538* (0.315)	-0.504 (0.316)	0.069 (0.303)		
Demo and work individual controls		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Firm controls			Yes	Yes	Yes		
Work town controls				Yes	Yes		
Commuting zone FE					Yes		
Mother's age at first child FE							
Observations	280,149	280,149	280,149	280,149	280,149		
Adj. R-squared	0.04	0.04	0.11	0.13	0.17		
Mean outcome	86.05	86.05	86.05	86.05	86.05		

▶ All mothers

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Gender norms and mothers' PL uptake

Dep. Var.:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
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Born in high-sexism town	-34.077*** (1.377)	-23.868*** (1.222)	-23.686*** (1.219)	-21.930*** (0.690)	-4.744*** (0.524)	-21.820*** (0.685)	
Age		5.467*** (0.655)	0.902 (0.609)	1.141* (0.592)	1.786*** (0.559)	4.609* (2.610)	
Full-time		-1.555*** (0.490)	-0.944** (0.478)	-1.466*** (0.457)	-2.190*** (0.447)	-1.344*** (0.457)	
Monthly earnings (log)		20.655*** (0.715)	14.607*** (0.719)	13.046*** (0.563)	6.974*** (0.495)	12.994*** (0.560)	
Permanent		47.996*** (0.733)	51.481*** (0.732)	51.814*** (0.721)	54.022*** (0.745)	51.985*** (0.720)	
Manager		-19.045*** (1.415)	-19.675*** (1.423)	-23.038*** (1.715)	-21.020*** (1.588)	-22.632*** (1.712)	
Work experience		0.939*** (0.310)	0.915*** (0.309)	0.818*** (0.312)	0.365 (0.301)	-1.930*** (0.342)	
Tenure		0.472*** (0.181)	0.554*** (0.179)	0.593*** (0.125)	0.394*** (0.102)	0.643*** (0.124)	
Start age employment		-0.526* (0.315)	-0.538* (0.315)	-0.504 (0.316)	0.069 (0.303)	-3.227*** (0.347)	
Demo and work individual controls		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Firm controls			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Work town controls				Yes	Yes	Yes	
Commuting zone FE					Yes		
Mother's age at first child FE						Yes	
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Age		5.467*** (0.655)	0.902 (0.609)	1.141* (0.592)	1.786*** (0.559)	4.609* (2.610)	6.230** (2.550)
Full-time		-1.555*** (0.490)	-0.944** (0.478)	-1.466*** (0.457)	-2.190*** (0.447)	-1.344*** (0.457)	-2.085*** (0.446)
Monthly earnings (log)		20.655*** (0.715)	14.607*** (0.719)	13.046*** (0.563)	6.974*** (0.495)	12.994*** (0.560)	6.952*** (0.492)
Permanent		47.996*** (0.733)	51.481*** (0.732)	51.814*** (0.721)	54.022*** (0.745)	51.985*** (0.720)	54.152*** (0.744)
Manager		-19.045*** (1.415)	-19.675*** (1.423)	-23.038*** (1.715)	-21.020*** (1.588)	-22.632*** (1.712)	-20.652*** (1.586)
Work experience		0.939*** (0.310)	0.915*** (0.309)	0.818*** (0.312)	0.365 (0.301)	-1.930*** (0.342)	-2.156*** (0.332)
Tenure		0.472*** (0.181)	0.554*** (0.179)	0.593*** (0.125)	0.394*** (0.102)	0.643*** (0.124)	0.433*** (0.103)
Start age employment		-0.526* (0.315)	-0.538* (0.315)	-0.504 (0.316)	0.069 (0.303)	-3.227*** (0.347)	-2.430*** (0.334)
Demo and work individual controls		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Firm controls			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Work town controls				Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Commuting zone FE					Yes		Yes
Mother's age at first child FE						Yes	Yes
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Mean outcome	86.05	86.05	86.05	86.05	86.05	86.05	86.05

Taking stock

- ▶ Gender norms in place of origin affect mothers' PL uptake
 - Mothers ask for significantly long leaves...
 - ...and even more so if born in gender-*progressive* towns

Taking stock

- ▶ Gender norms in place of origin affect mothers' PL uptake
 - Mothers ask for significantly long leaves...
 - ...and even more so if born in gender-*progressive* towns

- ▶ Is this puzzling? Or are we missing something?

Potential sources of bias

1. Differential selection into labor force (Olivetti and Petrongolo, 2008)
 - Individual and work-related characteristics before child birth [▶ Table](#)
 - Child penalties after child birth (Kleven et al., 2019; Casarico and Lattanzio, 2023)
 - [▶ Employment](#)
 - [▶ Earnings](#)
 - [▶ Work intensity](#)
2. Differential access to informal care (e.g., grandparents)

Potential sources of bias

1. Differential selection into labor force (Olivetti and Petrongolo, 2008)

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→ Compare similarly productive mothers estimating productivity with AKM (Abowd et al. 1999)

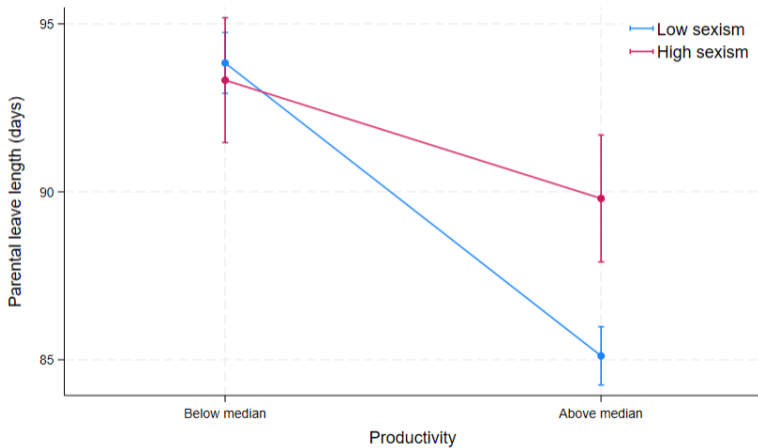
[▶ Leave uptake and productivity](#)

2. Differential access to informal care (e.g., grandparents)

→ Restrict to ‘stayers’

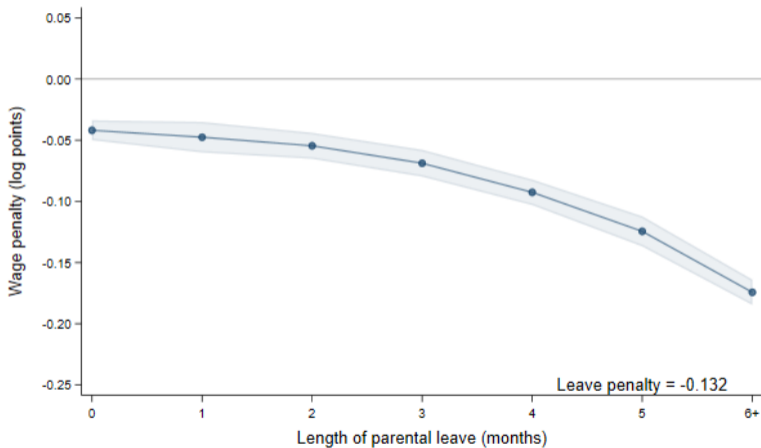
Leave uptake, productivity and gender norms

Stayer mothers



Leave penalty

High-productive mothers



▶ Low-productive mothers

▶ By norms

▶ Model in first differences

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Rationalizing our findings

Leave uptake, productivity and gender norms

Model of mothers' career and newborn care choices ▶ Setup

- ▶ Key ingredient: Endogenous norm regarding maternal care (Barigozzi et al., 2018)
- ▶ Key insight: Inefficiently long leaves due to the norm → reinforce gender roles

Rationalizing our findings

Leave uptake, productivity and gender norms

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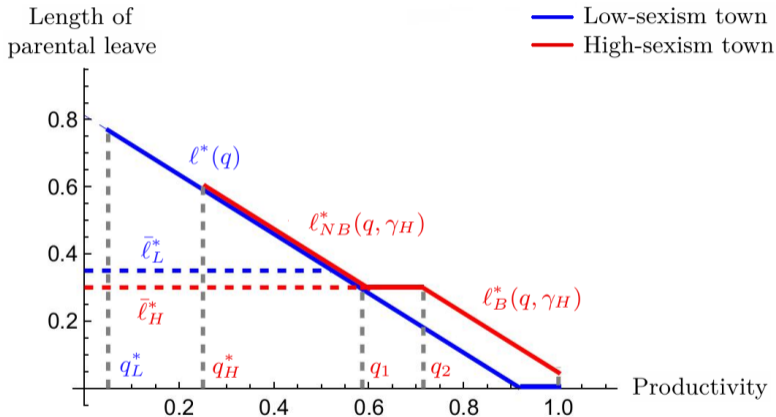
$P1$: High-productive mothers take *shorter* leaves than low-productive peers

- Higher opportunity cost of leave

$P1'$: With gender norms, gap in leave uptake between low- and high-productive mothers shrinks

- Higher norm costs of career

Sexist vs. non-sexist towns



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Conclusion

- ▶ Do gender-biased attitudes affect the uptake of leaves by new mothers?
 - Exploit variation in gender norms within areas with similar economic and policy variables
- ▶ Traditional gender norms increase leave uptake for high-productive mothers
 - Longer leave to signal their attachment to mother role (*mother's guilt*)
 - Rationalize using a model of career and PL choices with endogenous norms
- ▶ As loss of work experience costly, longer leaves may exacerbate child penalties

Conclusion

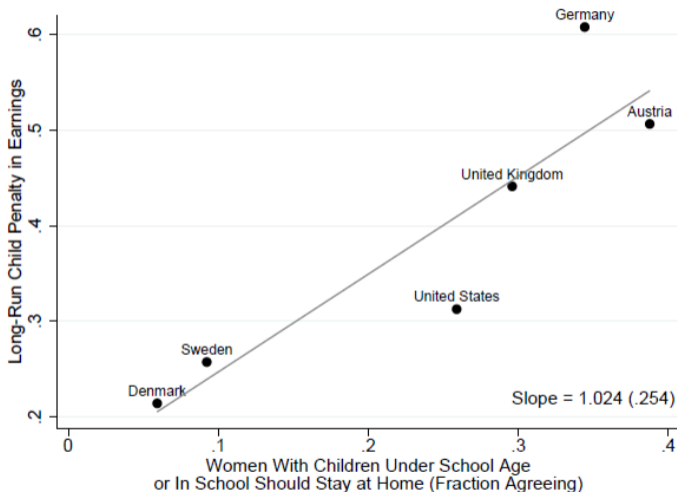
- ▶ Do gender-biased attitudes affect the uptake of leaves by new mothers?
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- ▶ Traditional gender norms increase leave uptake for high-productive mothers
 - Longer leave to signal their attachment to mother role (*mother's guilt*)
 - Rationalize using a model of career and PL choices with endogenous norms
- ▶ As loss of work experience costly, longer leaves may exacerbate child penalties
 - **Next:** Identify impact of (longer) leaves on future career outcomes

Thank you!

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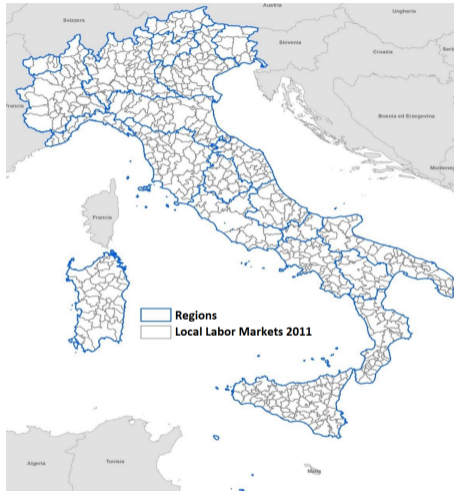
Appendix

Child penalties and gender culture



Source: Kleven et al., (2019) using responses from the International Social Survey Program (ISSP).

Local Labor Markets



Data source: Data from the Italian National Bureau of Statistics (ISTAT) on Local Labor Markets (LLMs) in 2011.

Parental leave in Italy

Voluntary Parental Leave (*D.Lgs. 151/2001, D.Lgs. 80/2015*)

▶ Duration

- Household entitled to 10 months before child's 12th birthday
- Each parent can take up to 6 months

⇒ *Focus on leave-taking within the first three years*

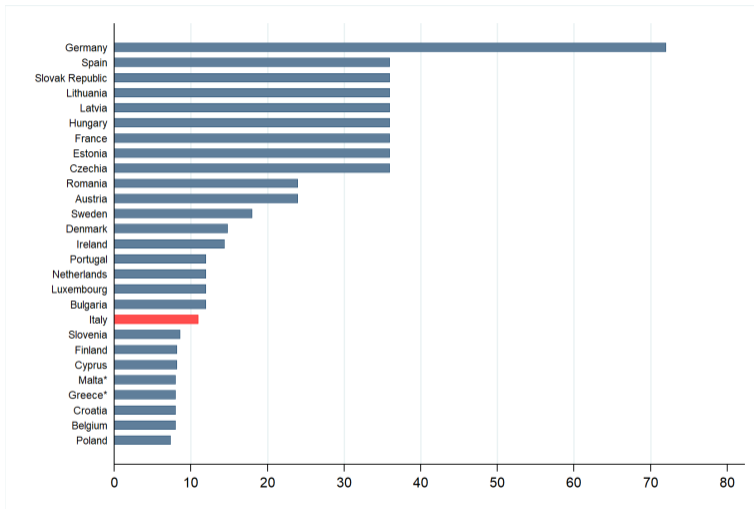
▶ Extension for fathers

- Extra month (11 in total) if father takes at least 3 months

▶ Allowances

- Replacement rate of 30% if PL taken before child's 6th birthday

Duration of PL in Europe

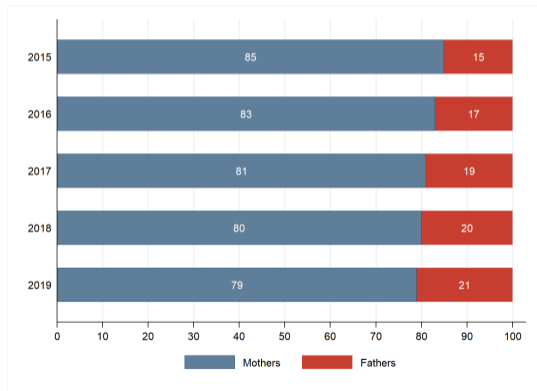


Duration in months, April 2021. * PL for workers in the private sector.

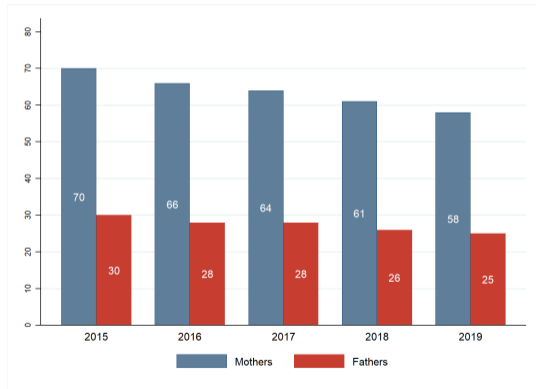
Data source: Authors' computations from International Network on Leave policies & Research

Statistics in Italy

- ▶ 2015-2019: on average 82% of PLs uptaken by **women**
- ▶ **Share of men** on leave slightly increased to 21%
- ▶ **Average length** of leave: 58 days for women vs. 25 for men

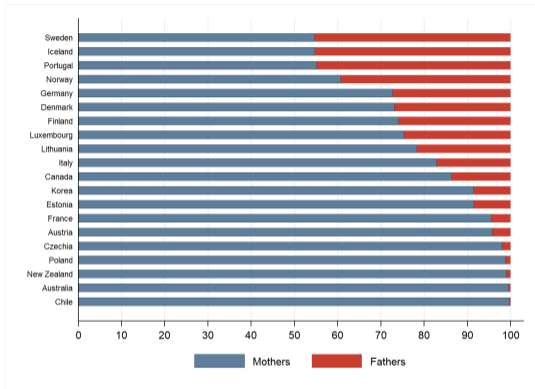


Share of PL uptakes by gender

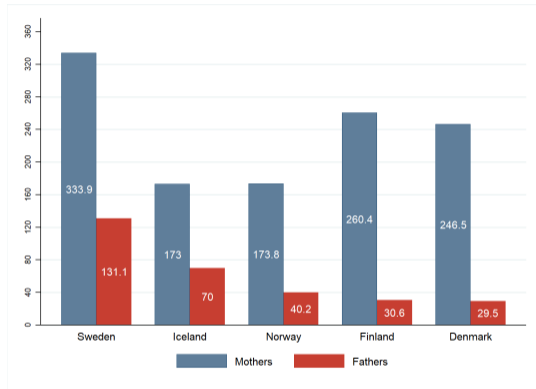


Average number of authorized days of PL by gender

Statistics in OECD countries



Share of PL uptakes by gender



Average number of authorized days of PL by gender

Data source: Authors' computations from OECD Family Database.

Municipal-level variables

- ▶ Commuting zones from the Bureau of Statistics (*ISTAT*)
 - Macroeconomic indicators (*# firms, average revenues, average wages etc.*)

- ▶ Municipal characteristics from the Bureau of Statistics (*ISTAT*)
 - Availability of childcare services (*facilities, teachers etc.*)
 - City size (*resident population*)
 - GDP (*average per-capita income*)
 - Education level (*share of high school/college graduates*)
 - Other covariates (*altitude*)

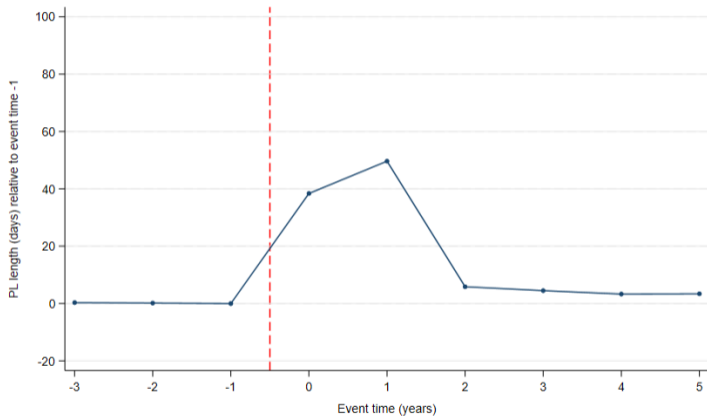
Descriptive statistics for mothers with one child

	N	Mean	S.D.
Panel A: Demographic characteristics			
Age	280,149	32.73	4.3
Macro-area of job			
North-West	280,149	0.31	0.46
North-East	280,149	0.21	0.41
Center	280,149	0.22	0.41
South	280,149	0.17	0.38
Islands	280,149	0.09	0.28
Macro-area of birth			
North-West	280,149	0.28	0.45
North-East	280,149	0.18	0.39
Center	280,149	0.20	0.40
South	280,149	0.23	0.42
Islands	280,149	0.11	0.31
Panel B: Work-related characteristics			
Full-time	280,149	0.63	0.48
Monthly Earnings	280,149	1,625.73	896.13
Permanent contract	280,149	0.88	0.32
Manager	280,149	0.02	0.13
White collar	280,149	0.68	0.46
Blue-collar	280,149	0.3	0.46
Experience	280,149	10.75	5.29
Tenure	280,149	3.73	1.94
Age at first employment	280,149	21.53	4.2
Small Firm (< 15)	280,149	0.42	0.49

Descriptive statistics for all mothers

	N	Mean	S.D.
<u>Panel A: Demographic characteristics</u>			
Age	470,251	31.91	4.17
N. children	470,251	1.44	0.56
Age at first child	470,251	32.25	4.16
Macro-area of job			
North	470,251	0.52	0.47
Center	470,251	0.21	0.41
South	470,251	0.25	0.37
Macro-area of birth			
North	470,251	0.49	0.46
Center	470,251	0.19	0.39
South	470,251	0.32	0.42
<u>Panel B: Work-related characteristics</u>			
Full-time	470,251	0.67	0.47
Monthly earnings	470,251	1,702.88	883.26
Hourly wage	470,251	9.04	4.53
Permanent contract	470,251	0.9	0.3
Manager	470,251	0.02	0.13
White collar	470,251	0.72	0.45
Blue collar	470,251	0.26	0.44
Experience	470,251	10.08	5.05
Tenure	470,251	4.05	1.81
Age at first employment	470,251	21.38	4.16
Small Firm (< 15)	470,251	0.39	0.49

Timing of parental leave uptake



Gender norms and parental leave use for all mothers

Dep. Var.:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	<i>Number of days on parental leave</i>							
Born in conservative town	-36.580*** (1.438)	-35.489*** (1.417)	-26.049*** (1.254)	-26.077*** (1.255)	-22.655*** (0.939)	-4.401*** (0.496)	-22.582*** (0.934)	-4.501*** (0.500)
Age		6.439*** (0.556)	1.838*** (0.500)	1.646*** (0.489)	1.797*** (0.484)	3.092*** (0.452)	3.599* (2.011)	4.995** (1.967)
N. children		8.813*** (0.276)	4.289*** (0.244)	3.349*** (0.239)	3.112*** (0.242)	1.907*** (0.239)	3.262*** (0.241)	2.041*** (0.239)
Full-time			-0.392 (0.398)	0.982** (0.386)	0.315 (0.368)	-0.782** (0.355)	0.453 (0.368)	-0.659* (0.355)
Monthly earnings (log)			23.398*** (0.649)	16.187*** (0.679)	14.576*** (0.537)	7.638*** (0.429)	14.532*** (0.535)	7.609*** (0.426)
Permanent			42.374*** (0.622)	45.848*** (0.610)	46.050*** (0.610)	48.371*** (0.622)	46.219*** (0.610)	48.519*** (0.621)
Manager			-19.376*** (0.965)	-19.122*** (0.973)	-22.149*** (1.285)	-19.887*** (1.137)	-21.856*** (1.277)	-19.606*** (1.129)
Work experience			0.804*** (0.236)	0.779*** (0.234)	0.747*** (0.236)	0.371 (0.229)	-1.650*** (0.257)	-1.906*** (0.249)
Tenure			0.268 (0.168)	0.385** (0.167)	0.430*** (0.114)	0.256*** (0.086)	0.465*** (0.112)	0.282*** (0.085)
Start age employment			-0.652*** (0.241)	-0.677*** (0.239)	-0.598** (0.239)	0.081 (0.228)	-2.975*** (0.259)	-2.178*** (0.248)
Demo individual controls		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Work individual controls			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Work municipality controls					Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Firm FE						Yes		Yes
Mother's age at first child FE							Yes	Yes
Observations	470,251	470,251	470,251	470,251	470,251	470,251	470,251	470,251
Adj. R-squared	0.04	0.05	0.10	0.11	0.13	0.18	0.13	0.18
Mean outcome	89.7	89.7	89.7	89.7	89.7	89.7	89.7	89.7

Gender norms and parental leave use within firms

Dep. Var.:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	<i>Number of days on parental leave</i>							
Born in conservative town	-35.833*** (1.403)	-34.513*** (1.395)	-25.130*** (1.256)	-24.918*** (1.255)	-21.563*** (0.904)	-12.542*** (0.728)	-21.461*** (0.897)	-12.561*** (0.725)
Age		5.467*** (0.655)	1.281** (0.619)	0.902 (0.609)	1.141* (0.592)	3.410*** (0.894)	4.609* (2.610)	10.585*** (4.063)
Full-time			-1.555*** (0.490)	-0.944** (0.478)	-1.466*** (0.457)	-0.396 (0.813)	-1.344*** (0.457)	-0.415 (0.811)
Monthly earnings (log)			20.655*** (0.715)	14.607*** (0.719)	13.046*** (0.563)	-0.425 (1.173)	12.994*** (0.560)	-0.369 (1.174)
Permanent			47.996*** (0.733)	51.481*** (0.732)	51.814*** (0.721)	57.433*** (1.082)	51.985*** (0.720)	57.512*** (1.085)
Manager			-19.045*** (1.415)	-19.675*** (1.423)	-23.038*** (1.715)	-23.339*** (1.720)	-22.632*** (1.712)	-23.177*** (1.716)
Work experience			0.939*** (0.310)	0.915*** (0.309)	0.818*** (0.312)	1.049** (0.463)	-1.930*** (0.342)	-0.886* (0.520)
Tenure			0.472*** (0.181)	0.554*** (0.179)	0.593*** (0.125)	0.584*** (0.179)	0.643*** (0.124)	0.616*** (0.179)
Start age employment			-0.526* (0.315)	-0.538* (0.315)	-0.504 (0.316)	0.413 (0.468)	-3.227*** (0.347)	-1.508*** (0.526)
Demo individual controls		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Work individual controls				Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Work municipality controls					Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Firm FE						Yes		Yes
Mother's age at first child FE							Yes	Yes
Observations	280,149	280,149	280,149	280,149	280,149	150,512	280,149	150,512
Adj. R-squared	0.03	0.04	0.10	0.11	0.12	0.25	0.12	0.25
Mean outcome	86.05	86.05	86.05	86.05	86.05	94.63	86.05	94.63

Gender norms and parental leave use in small firms

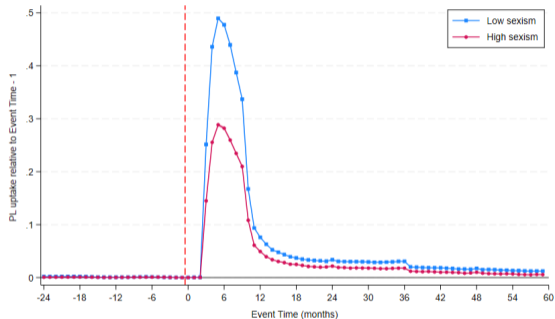
Dep. Var.:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	<i>Number of days on parental leave</i>							
Born in conservative town	-32.167*** (1.388)	-31.742*** (1.391)	-24.440*** (1.321)	-24.344*** (1.320)	-21.288*** (0.942)	-1.819** (0.853)	-21.133*** (0.938)	-1.874** (0.853)
Age		1.485* (0.821)	-0.236 (0.948)	-0.254 (0.948)	-0.276 (0.918)	0.131 (0.885)	-3.406 (3.980)	-2.617 (3.872)
Full-time			4.466*** (0.668)	4.372*** (0.667)	3.702*** (0.661)	2.379*** (0.654)	3.724*** (0.662)	2.399*** (0.655)
Monthly earnings (log)			12.330*** (0.828)	12.082*** (0.833)	11.168*** (0.694)	5.528*** (0.675)	11.153*** (0.694)	5.521*** (0.674)
Permanent			36.705*** (0.917)	36.731*** (0.917)	37.174*** (0.967)	40.042*** (0.975)	37.476*** (0.972)	40.313*** (0.979)
Manager			-3.655 (4.239)	-3.704 (4.256)	-5.374 (4.519)	-10.541** (4.142)	-5.282 (4.498)	-10.444** (4.124)
Work experience			0.765 (0.495)	0.757 (0.495)	0.643 (0.510)	0.131 (0.499)	-2.305*** (0.554)	-2.651*** (0.546)
Tenure			0.032 (0.202)	0.027 (0.201)	0.015 (0.178)	-0.272* (0.158)	0.044 (0.177)	-0.249 (0.159)
Start age employment			-0.732 (0.499)	-0.739 (0.499)	-0.671 (0.508)	0.039 (0.499)	-3.596*** (0.553)	-2.723*** (0.546)
Demo individual controls		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Work individual controls			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Firm controls				Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Work municipality controls					Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Commuting zone FE						Yes		Yes
Mother's age at first child FE							Yes	Yes
Observations	117,855	117,855	117,855	117,855	117,855	117,855	117,855	117,855
Adj. R-squared	0.03	0.03	0.07	0.07	0.08	0.12	0.08	0.13
Mean outcome	74.32	74.32	74.32	74.32	74.32	74.32	74.32	74.32

Gender norms and parental leave use

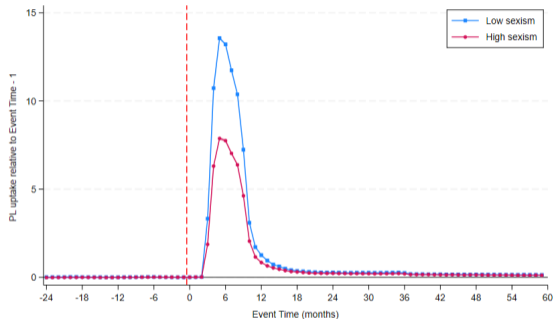
Extensive margin

Dep. Var.:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	<i>Take-up of parental leave (0 = no, 1 = yes)</i>							
Born in conservative town	-0.238*** (0.008)	-0.227*** (0.008)	-0.162*** (0.007)	-0.161*** (0.007)	-0.139*** (0.006)	-0.020*** (0.003)	-0.139*** (0.006)	-0.020*** (0.003)
Age		0.051*** (0.004)	0.023*** (0.003)	0.020*** (0.003)	0.022*** (0.003)	0.024*** (0.003)	0.007 (0.014)	0.020 (0.013)
Full-time			-0.026*** (0.003)	-0.022*** (0.003)	-0.024*** (0.003)	-0.027*** (0.002)	-0.024*** (0.003)	-0.027*** (0.002)
Monthly earnings (log)			0.175*** (0.003)	0.130*** (0.004)	0.120*** (0.003)	0.084*** (0.003)	0.120*** (0.003)	0.084*** (0.003)
Permanent			0.286*** (0.004)	0.312*** (0.004)	0.314*** (0.004)	0.327*** (0.004)	0.315*** (0.004)	0.328*** (0.004)
Manager			-0.062*** (0.007)	-0.067*** (0.007)	-0.087*** (0.008)	-0.074*** (0.007)	-0.086*** (0.008)	-0.073*** (0.007)
Work experience			0.002 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.010*** (0.002)	-0.010*** (0.002)
Tenure			0.007*** (0.001)	0.008*** (0.001)	0.008*** (0.001)	0.007*** (0.001)	0.009*** (0.001)	0.007*** (0.001)
Start age employment			-0.004*** (0.002)	-0.005*** (0.002)	-0.005*** (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.015*** (0.002)	-0.010*** (0.002)
Demo individual controls		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Work individual controls			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Firm controls				Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Work municipality controls					Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Commuting zone FE						Yes		Yes
Mother's age at first child FE							Yes	Yes
Observations	280,149	280,149	280,149	280,149	280,149	280,149	280,149	280,149
Adj. R-squared	0.05	0.06	0.15	0.17	0.18	0.22	0.18	0.22
Mean outcome	0.635	0.635	0.639	0.639	0.639	0.639	0.639	0.639

PL take-up in low- and high-sexism municipalities

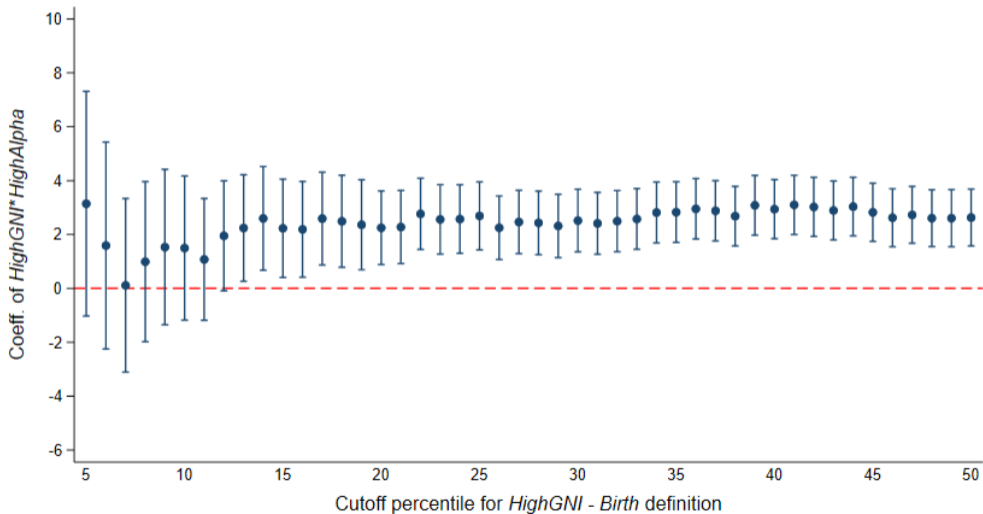


(a) Extensive margin

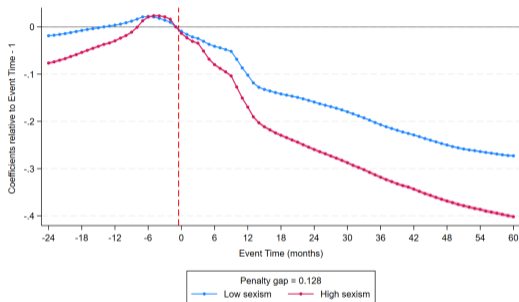


(b) Intensive margin

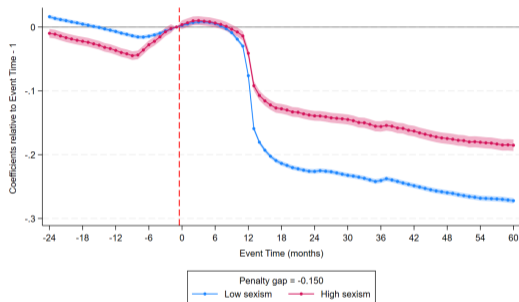
Robustness to *HighGNI* definition



Child penalties in employment by sexism



(a) Employment

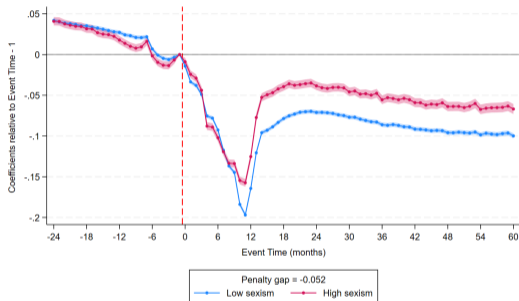


(b) Full-time

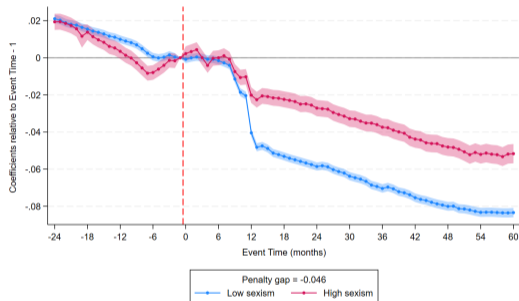
► Model

► Back

Child penalties in earnings by sexism



(a) Monthly earnings

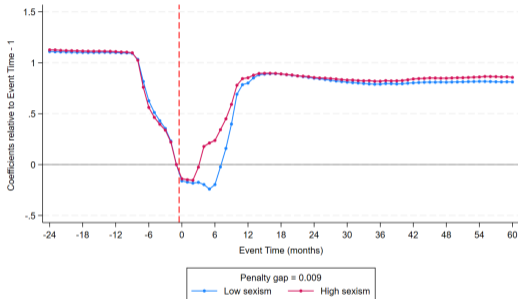


(b) Hourly wage

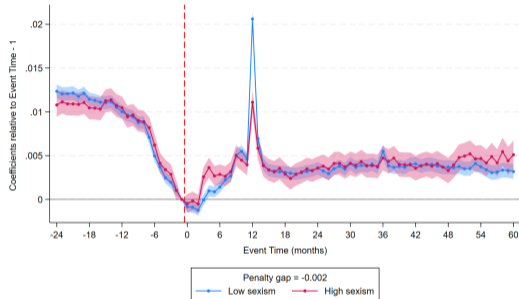
► Model

► Back

Child penalties in work intensity by sexism



(a) Annual hours worked



(b) Monthly hours worked

► Model

► Back

Event study model

Estimate event study model separately for mothers born in low- or high-*GNI* towns:

$$Y_{i,t,s}^g = \sum_{\tau \neq -1} \beta_{\tau}^g \cdot I(\tau = s) + \sum_k \gamma_k^g \cdot I(k = t) + \sum_y \delta_y^g \cdot I(y = Age_{it}) + \varepsilon_{i,t,s}^g$$

- ▶ $Y_{i,t,s}^g$: labor market outcome for mother i born in municipality with $g \in \{LowGNI, HighGNI\}$ in year-month t of age y at event time s
- ▶ $\sum_{\tau \neq -1} \beta_{\tau}^g \cdot I(\tau = s)$: event study indicators (months relative to childbirth)
- ▶ $\sum_k \gamma_k^g \cdot I(k = t)$: year-month dummies
- ▶ $\sum_y \delta_y^g \cdot I(y = Age_{it})$: age dummies

Definition of child penalty

- ▶ Month- s estimated effect in percentages:

$$P_s^g \equiv \frac{\hat{\beta}_s^g}{E[\tilde{Y}_{i,t,s}^g | s]}$$

- $E[\tilde{Y}_{i,t,s}]$: predicted outcome when omitting the contribution of event dummies
 - Interpretation: percentage loss in the average labor market outcome caused by childbirth relative to the counterfactual absent children.
- ▶ Long-term penalty gap between low- and high-GNI mothers, relative to high-GNI mothers at event time 60 (5 years after childbirth):

$$P_{60} \equiv \frac{\hat{\beta}_s^{LowGNI} - \hat{\beta}_s^{HighGNI}}{E[\tilde{Y}_{i,t,s}^{HighGNI} | s = 60]}$$

Pre-birth characteristics by *GNI* tercile

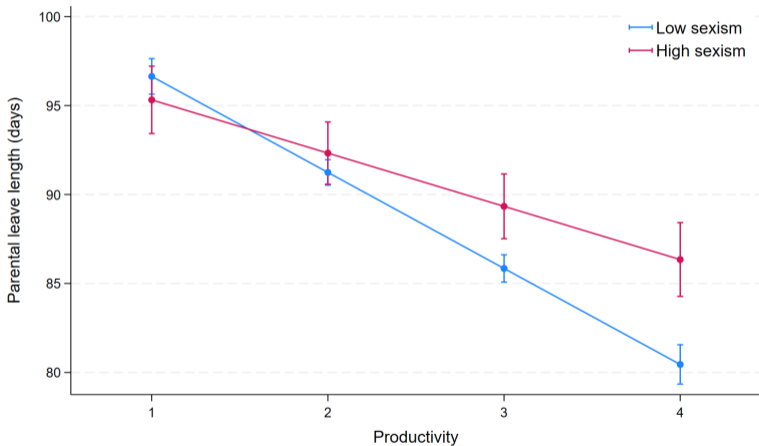
	All females (1)	Relative to low <i>GNI</i> :		Difference: (3)-(2) (4)
		Medium <i>GNI</i> (2)	High <i>GNI</i> (3)	
Age	32.764 [4.289]	-0.360*** (0.029)	-1.013*** (0.038)	-0.652*** (0.041)
Age at first child	33.110 [4.277]	-0.364*** (0.029)	-1.022*** (0.038)	-0.659*** (0.041)
Full-time	0.632 [0.482]	-0.055*** (0.005)	-0.161*** (0.007)	-0.105*** (0.006)
Monthly earnings	1625.731 [896.126]	-206.721*** (11.380)	-499.640*** (16.808)	-292.918*** (12.427)
Monthly wage	1433.235 [719.684]	-154.608*** (8.859)	-356.483*** (14.119)	-201.875*** (10.383)
Hourly wage	9.091 [4.676]	-0.989*** (0.055)	-2.239*** (0.089)	-1.250*** (0.066)
Permanent contract	0.889 [0.314]	-0.016*** (0.002)	-0.034*** (0.002)	-0.018*** (0.002)
Manager	0.018 [0.132]	-0.008*** (0.001)	-0.010*** (0.001)	-0.002** (0.001)
Experience	10.811 [5.312]	-0.547*** (0.075)	-3.226*** (0.096)	-2.679*** (0.069)
Tenure	4.038 [1.856]	-0.126*** (0.031)	-0.508*** (0.034)	-0.382*** (0.025)
Age at first employment	21.509 [4.320]	0.185*** (0.072)	2.218*** (0.078)	2.033*** (0.056)
Small firm (≤ 15)	0.419 [0.493]	0.042*** (0.004)	0.097*** (0.005)	0.055*** (0.004)

Leave uptake and productivity

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Dep. Var.:	<i>Number of days on parental leave</i>					
<i>High productive mother</i>	-3.396*** (0.497)	-4.799*** (0.373)	-6.718*** (0.341)	0.285 (0.443)	-3.114*** (0.319)	-6.626*** (0.341)
Local labor market FE		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Demo individual controls			Yes			Yes
Work individual controls			Yes			Yes
Firm controls			Yes			Yes
Work municipality controls			Yes			Yes
Sample	One child	One child	One child	All mothers	All mothers	All mothers
Mean outcome	91	91	92	95	95	96
Standard errors	Cluster	Cluster	Cluster	Cluster	Cluster	Cluster
Adj. R-squared	0.00	0.11	0.16	0.00	0.12	0.16
Observations	280,149	280,149	280,149	470,251	470,251	470,251

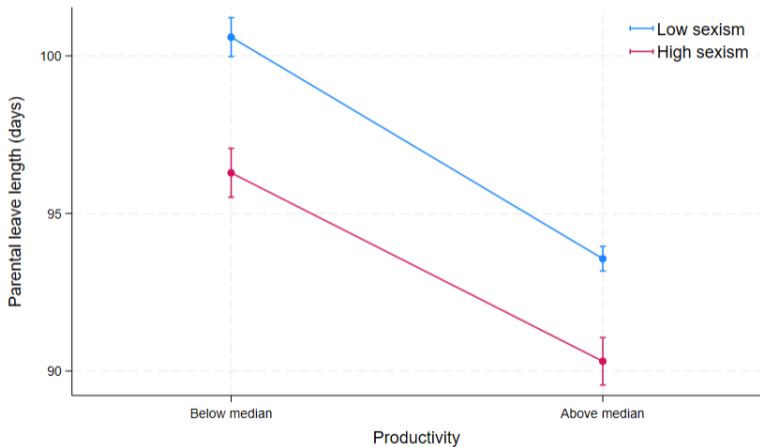
Leave uptake, productivity and gender norms

Quartiles



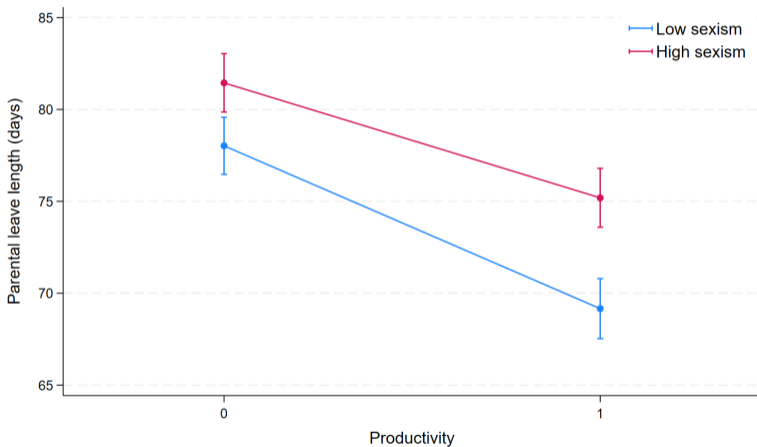
Leave uptake, productivity and gender norms

All mothers



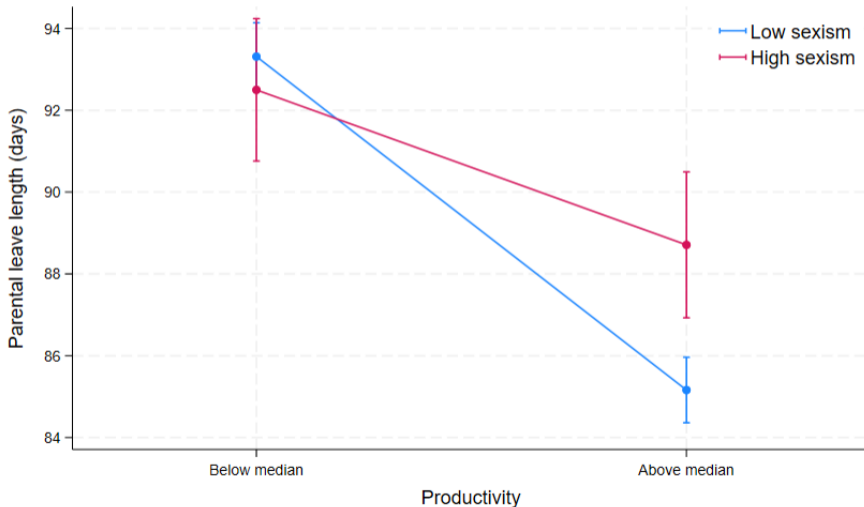
Leave uptake, productivity and gender norms

Matched sample



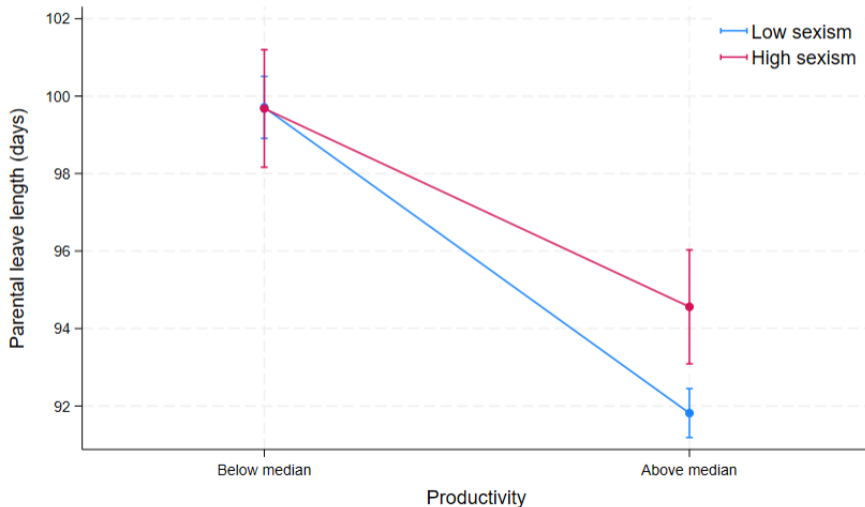
Leave uptake, productivity and gender norms

Alternative definition: Stayer mothers around childbirth



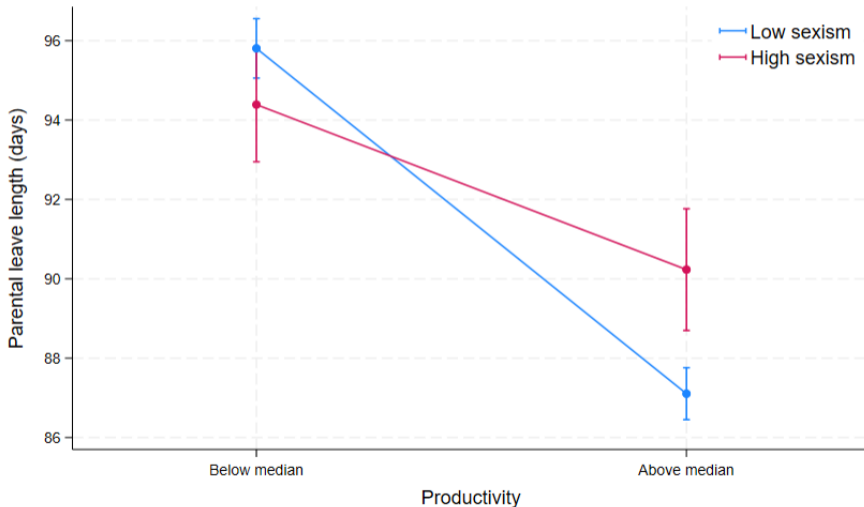
Leave uptake, productivity and gender norms

All stayer mothers



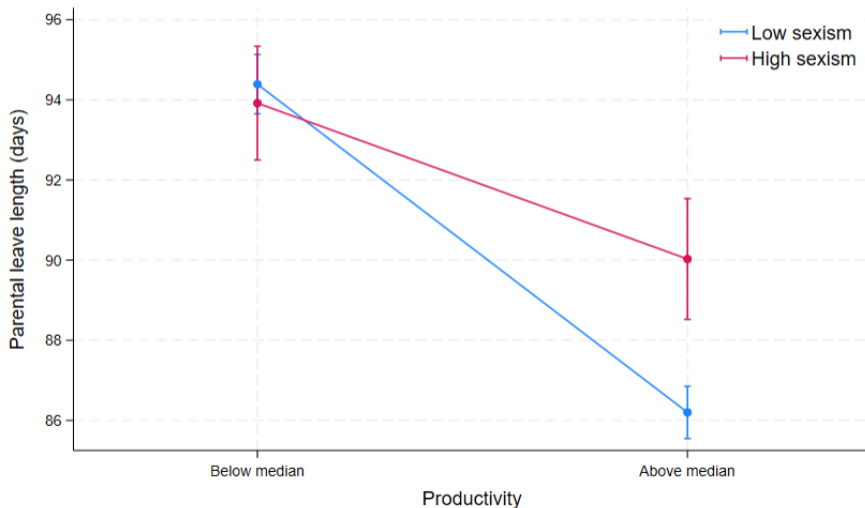
Leave uptake, productivity and gender norms

Regional stayer mothers with one child



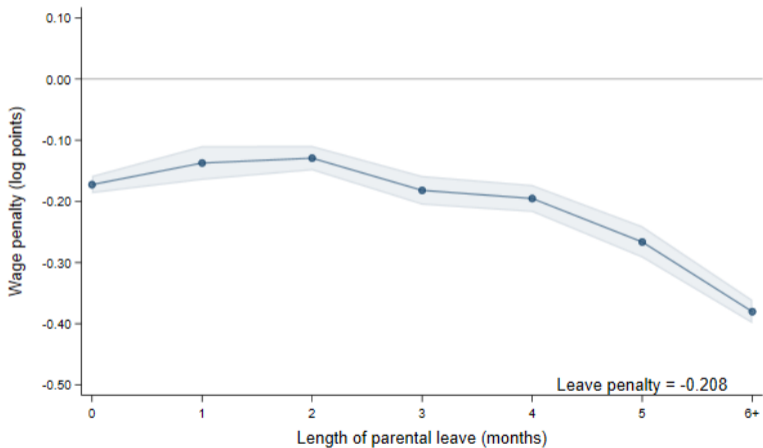
Leave uptake, productivity and gender norms

Regional stayer mothers around childbirth



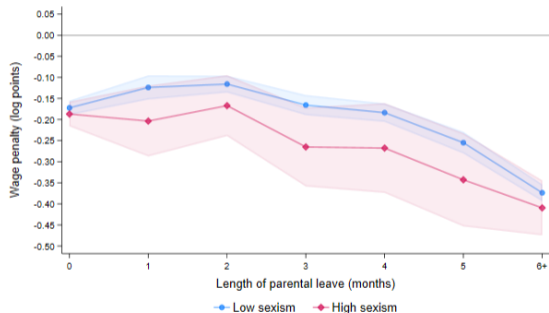
Leave penalty

Low-productive mothers

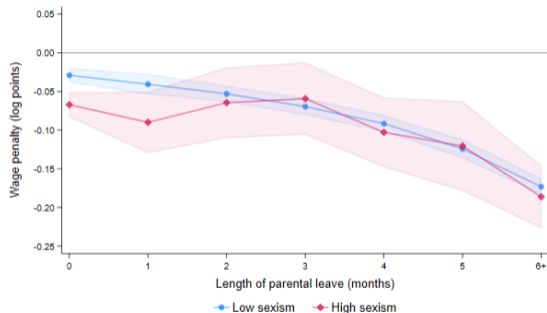


Leave penalty

By productivity level and gender norms



(a) Low-productive mothers



(b) High-productive mothers

Estimating wage penalties by leave duration

Model in first differences separately for low- and high-productive mothers (Albrecht et al., 2025):

$$\Delta \log(w_i^p) = \alpha_i^p + \sum_{\ell} \beta_{\ell} \cdot I(\ell = D_i) + \sum_y \delta_y^p \cdot I(y = Age_i) + \kappa_i^p + \varepsilon_i^p,$$

- ▶ $\Delta \log(w_i^p) = \log(w_{i,t+3}^p) - \log(w_{i,t-1}^p)$: change in log wages of mother i with productivity level $p \in \{Low, High\}$ between $t + 3$ and $t - 1$ (t =child's birth year)
- ▶ D_i : number of months of parental leave taken by mother i
- ▶ $\sum_y \delta_y^p \cdot I(y = Age_i)$: age-at-first-birth dummies
- ▶ κ_i^p : childbirth-year fixed effects

Model setup

- ▶ Two different cultural environments:
 - High-sexism ($s = H$) vs. low-sexism ($s = L$) birth towns
- ▶ All mothers are employed with different productivity levels:
 - $q \sim F(q)$, $q \in [0, q_{\max}]$
- ▶ After childbirth, each mother decides:
 1. Whether to stay in the labor market (U_o)
 2. (If yes,) the duration of voluntary PL ($\ell \geq 0$)
- ▶ Mothers' utility function:

$$U(\ell; q, \gamma_s) = \underbrace{q - \gamma_s}_{\text{effective productivity}} + \underbrace{u(\ell) - (\beta_0 + \beta_1 q)\ell}_{\text{net utility from leave}} - \underbrace{\gamma_s \max\{0, \bar{\ell}_s - \ell\}}_{\text{norm cost}}$$

- $\bar{\ell}_s$: average duration of voluntary PL in mother's birth town

▶ Optimal PL choice

▶ Solution in the absence of norm

▶ Solution with the norm

▶ Back

Optimal voluntary PL choice

- Each mother maximizes:

$$\max_{\ell \geq 0} U(\ell; q, \gamma_s) = q - \gamma_s + u(\ell) - (\beta_0 + \beta_1 q)\ell - \underbrace{I \cdot \gamma_s}_{=1 \text{ when } \bar{\ell}_s - \ell > 0}$$

- $u' > 0, u'' < 0$

- The optimal voluntary PL:

$$\ell^*(q, \gamma_s) = (u')^{-1}(\beta_0 + \beta_1 q - I\gamma_s)$$

1. $\ell^*(q, \gamma_s)$ decreases with q
2. $\ell^*(q, \gamma_s)$ decreases with γ_s when the norm is binding

⇒ High-productivity mothers choose shorter leave and bear the social norm penalty

Solution in the absence of norm ($\gamma_s = 0$)

- ▶ The optimal PL duration when $\gamma_s = 0$:

$$\ell^*(q, \gamma_s) = \max\{0, (u')^{-1}(\beta_0 + \beta_1 q)\}$$

- ▶ The exit threshold in productivity

$$q^* = \frac{U_0 + \beta_0 \ell(q^*) - u(\ell(q^*))}{1 - \beta_1 \ell(q^*)}$$

- is the solution of the following function

$$G(q) = q(1 - \beta_1 \ell^*(q)) - [U_0 + \beta_0 \ell^*(q) - u(\ell^*(q))] = 0$$

- $q^* \in (0, q_{max})$ if:
 - $G(q)' > 0$ in $(0, q_{max})$
 - $G(0) < 0$ and $G(q_{max}) > 0$
- ▶ The average PL duration:

$$\bar{\ell}^* = \frac{1}{1 - F(q^*)} \int_{q^*}^{q_{max}} \ell^*(q) f(q) dq$$

Solution when the norm exists ($\gamma_s > 0$) (1/2)

- ▶ Gender norms penalize deviation from expected PL duration ($\bar{\ell}_N$)
- ▶ The optimal leave duration depends on whether the norm is binding:

$$\ell^*(q, \gamma_s) = \begin{cases} \ell_0^*(q, \gamma_s) = \max \{0, (u')^{-1}(\beta_0 + \beta_1 q)\} & \text{if } (u')^{-1}(\beta_0 + \beta_1 q) \geq \bar{\ell}_N, \\ \ell_B^*(q, \gamma_s) = \max \{0, (u')^{-1}(\beta_0 + \beta_1 q - \gamma_s)\} & \text{if } (u')^{-1}(\beta_0 + \beta_1 q - \gamma_s) < \bar{\ell}_N. \end{cases}$$

- ▶ The norm is not binding for the marginal mother

$$q_N^* = \frac{U^O + \gamma_s + \beta_0 \ell^*(q^*) - u(\ell^*(q^*))}{1 - \beta_1 \ell^*(q^*)}$$

- The exit threshold productivity value is higher with norm $q_N^* > q^*$
- ⇒ As γ_s increases, more mothers exit the labor force post-childbirth

$$F(q^*) < F(q_N^*)$$

- ▶ For productivity levels just to the right to q_N^* , same optimal PL function as with $\gamma_s = 0$

$$\ell_0^*(q, \gamma_s) = \ell^*(q)$$

Solution when the norm exists ($\gamma_s > 0$) (2/2)

- ▶ As productivity $\uparrow \rightarrow$ optimal leave $\downarrow \rightarrow$ the norm becomes binding
- ▶ Some mothers bunch at the value $\bar{\ell}_N$:

$$\begin{cases} q_1 & := \arg\{\ell^*(q) = \bar{\ell}_N\} \\ q_2 & := \arg\{\ell_B^*(q, \gamma_s) = \bar{\ell}_N\} \end{cases}$$

- Bunching region $q \in [q_1, q_2]$: set of mothers for which MB (shorter PL) = MC (norm violation)
- ▶ Market equilibrium characterized by a system of equations:

$$\begin{cases} \ell^*(q_1) = \bar{\ell}_N \\ \ell_B^*(q_2, \gamma_s) = \bar{\ell}_N \\ \bar{\ell}_N = \frac{1}{1-F(q_N)} \left[\int_{q_N}^{q_1} \ell^*(q) f(q) dq + (q_2 - q_1) \bar{\ell}_N + \int_{q_2}^{q_{\max}} \ell_B^*(q, \gamma_s) f(q) dq \right] \end{cases}$$

General case: low- vs. high-sexism towns ($0 < \gamma_L < \gamma_H$)

- ▶ Replicate the analysis twice: once for each level of γ
 - More low-productivity women exit the labor market in high-sexism towns

$$q_H^* > q_L^* \Rightarrow F(q_L^*) < F(q_H^*)$$

- The optimal leave functions coincide when the norm is not binding

$$\ell_0^*(q, \gamma_L) = \ell_0^*(q, \gamma_H) = \ell^*(q)$$

- ▶ Underlying economic mechanisms:

1. Less working mothers in high-sexism towns + lower-productivity mothers choose longer PL

$$\Rightarrow \bar{\ell}_H^* < \bar{\ell}_L^*$$

2. When norms are binding optimal leave is longer in high-sexism towns $\forall q$

$$\Rightarrow \ell^*(q_{\max}, H) > \ell^*(q_{\max}, L) \quad \& \quad \bar{\ell}_H > \bar{\ell}_L$$

Low-sexist vs. high-sexist birth towns

optimal PL

