

Childcare availability and maternal employment: New evidence from Japan ^[1]

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Excerpt from abstract

As grandparental childcare in Japan becomes highly uncommon in recent years, working mothers need to rely more on formal childcare services. In 2015, the Japanese government launched the Comprehensive Support System for Children and Child-rearing (CSSCC) to promote the expansions of early childhood education and care (ECEC) services. This study estimates the effects of ECEC availability on maternal employment in the new context, using a fresh dataset combining official municipality data and individual-level data of a sample of mothers with preschool children extracted from an original Japanese nationwide survey dataset for 2015, 2016, and 2017. Identification for the maternal employment effects is based on the variation across municipalities and over time in the pace of ECEC expansions triggered by the CSSCC. The empirical results show that a one percentage point increase in the capacity rate of ECEC facilities targeted at the 0–5 age group predicts an increase of 0.27 percentage points in mothers' working probability. The overall increase in working probability is almost entirely explained by the increase in nonregular employment rather than regular employment and is mainly driven by mothers with low education. A new type of ECEC service established under the CSSCC for the 0–2 age group has a sizable effect exclusively on the nonregular employment of mothers from three-generation households. Comparisons with the findings by previous studies and implications for the future design and implementation of family policy are discussed.

Region: Asia ^[3]

Tags: availability ^[4]

mothers' labour force participation ^[5]

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