

Parental leave uptake among migrant and native mothers: Can precarious employment trajectories account for the difference? ^[1]

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Introduction

In response to declining fertility levels and an increase of female labour supply, Western European governments have extended family policies geared towards the reconciliation of labour force participation and family formation since the 1980s (Rindfuss & Brewster, 1996; Thevenon, 2008). In addition to earlier established family policies such as family allowances, the availability of formal childcare and leave schemes has increased considerably (Klusener, Neels, & Kreyenfeld, 2013; RVA, 2012, 2013). The rising popularity of such policies, but also increased maternal employment and the changing relation between female labour force participation and fertility (Ahn & Mira, 2002) suggest that family policy has adapted to the needs of the growing share of dual earner couples. Although labour force participation among mothers in majority populations has increased in recent decades, maternal employment levels remain low in migrant populations across Europe (Bevelander & Groeneveld, 2012; Holland & de Valk, 2013; Kil, Neels, Van den Berg, & de Valk, 2015; Rubin et al., 2008). This contrast between native and migrant populations raises questions on migrants' uptake of family policies. This paper aims to document differences in parental leave use between one-child mothers with and without a migration background, distinguishing different origin groups and generations, and to assess to which degree varying patterns can be explained by employment characteristics and eligibility, drawing on Belgian longitudinal register data (1999 – 2010). Belgium was among the first to develop family policy (Pfenning & Bahle, 2000) and is characterized by a relatively flexible parental leave system (Maron & O'Dorchai, 2008; Ray, Gornick, & Schmitt, 2010). In addition, Belgium has the largest employment rate gap between migrants and natives in Europe making insights into the processes leading to this gap essential for theory and policy alike (Corluy 2014).

Region: Europe ^[4]

Tags: parental leave ^[5]

migrants ^[6]

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