

Labor-Participation of Mothers in Austria

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Theoretical background

The reconciliation of family and work is an important topic for parents, especially for mothers. The children's needs, the possibilities for child care, financial resources, legal frameworks and the work-orientation of the parents influence the (re)entry of mothers in the labor market after the birth of their children. Most studies concentrate on the reentry of mothers and whether the work is full-time or part-time, but do not include information about the labor-status prior to birth.

Parental leave and regulation of part-time-work for parents in Austria

Maternity leave starts 8 weeks before birth and ends 8 weeks after birth. Parental leave ends 24 months after birth. It can be used by mothers and fathers but not at the same time (with exception for one month). Parents in parental leave have a higher protection against dismissal. Since 2004, parents have the legal right to reduce work-time until the child is 7 years old (former regulation) or child attends school (recent regulation), if they are working in companies with more than 20 employees and when they have been continuously employed with their present employer for at least three years. These parents are protected against dismissal until their child's fourth birthday. During the remaining period of part-time work (i.e. until the child's seventh birthday or school entry at a later date) protection against dismissal without grounds is provided. After this period parents can continue working in the same hour-scheme prior to birth. Some interviewed mothers, especially these with 2 or more children, had reduced working-time before the recent regulation was legally effective. These mothers have other, more complicated, legal possibilities to return to full-time work.

Main results

The figures compare labor-participation of mothers in Austria before and after the birth of the first (left figure) and the second (right figure) child. The first four columns in each figure show the labor-participation of women, who did not work before the birth of the first/second child, when the child was 11 months, 25 months, 5.5 years and 7 years old. The middle four columns refer to women, who had worked part-time before the birth of child one/two and the last four columns refer to women, who had worked full-time.

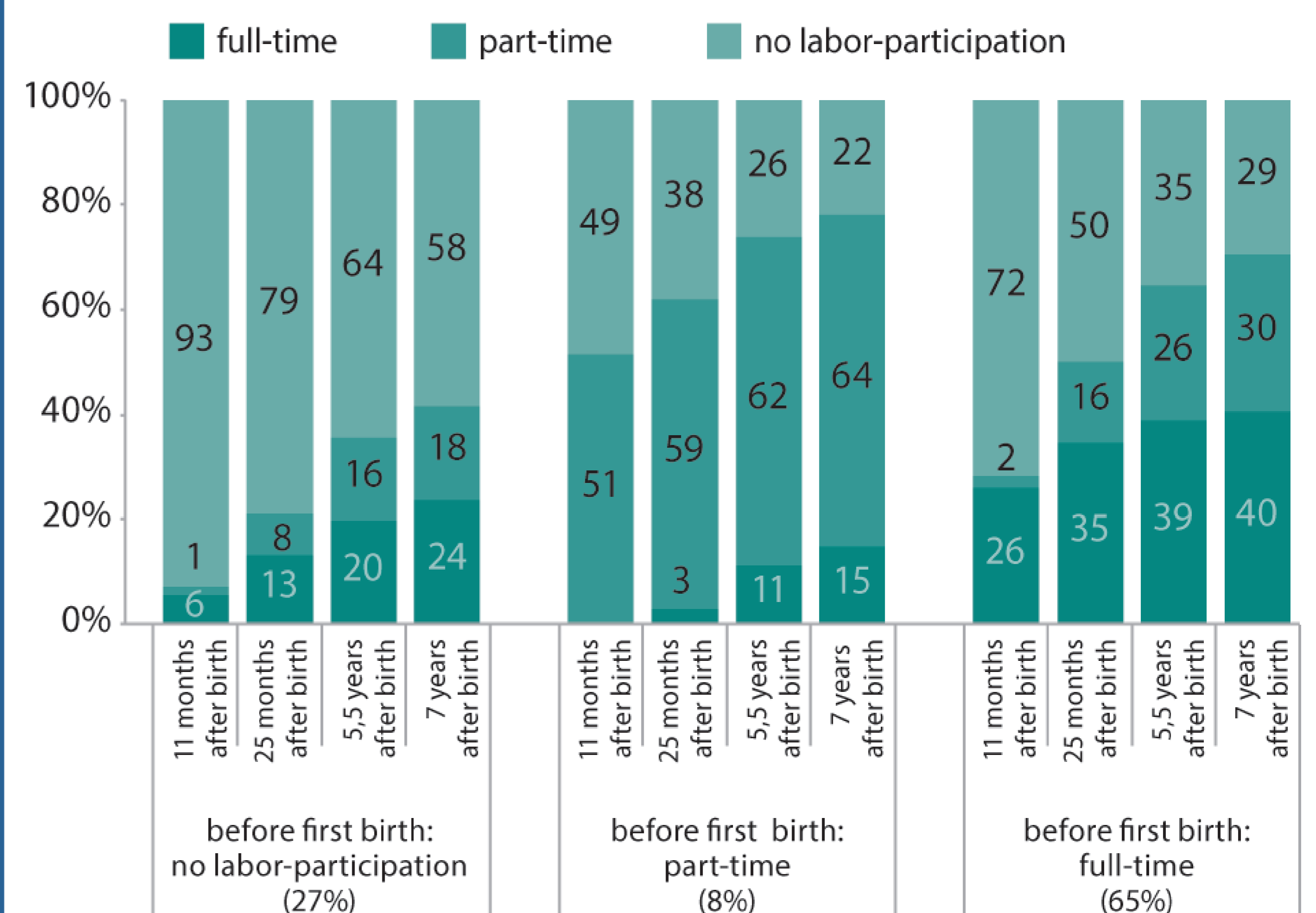
Concerning the first child, labor participation before birth has a crucial influence on the labor participation after birth, also with long-term effects. If mothers had not worked before the first birth, they often did not start working until the child started school. Nearly 6 of 10 mothers still stayed at home when the child was 7 years old. If the mothers had worked part-time before giving birth to their first child, more than half of them worked part-time after delivering the child. These mothers stayed in part-time work for a long time. 64% of them still worked part-time when the child was 7 years old. Full-time working women often did not reduce working hours after delivering their first child. If they were participating in labor market, they rather worked full-time than part-time. If they returned within one year, nearly all of them chose to work full-time. The return strategies after the second child are comparable to the behavior after the first child. Mothers who had worked part-time between child one and child two, tended to return and to stay in part-time for a long time, mothers who worked full-time often chose to work full-time. If the mothers stayed at home until giving birth to their second child, more than half of them did no start working until the second child went to school.

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Labor-participation after first birth



Labor-participation after second birth

