
From maternity to unemployment: Women with young children returning to the labour market

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Summary

- The established tendency of Czech women to take long periods of parental leave represent a significant loss of human capital and an interruption of these women's professional development; in addition, it contributes to a high risk of unemployment when they return to the labour market.
- In this study we look at the period during which women with young children return to the labour market following parental leave, documenting the development of their unemployment risk by the age of their child and the process through which mothers with young children end up unemployed.
- The unemployment rate is very high right after the end of parental leave, i.e. when the child is 3 years old; at this point, unemployment among women with high school diploma or more reaches 12% and for those with lower education is as high as 28%.
- Women often become unemployed immediately after returning to the labour market. Almost 30% of women with two-year-old children and 60% of women with three-year-old children become unemployed as soon as they return to the labor market. Among those with three-year-old children it is likely that this unemployment occurs as a result of the women losing their right to return to their previous employment. Among women with younger children, however, the high share of unemployed immediately when they end their parental leave calls into question the real functioning of the job protection period during which women have the right to return to their previous employment.
- Many women, too, become unemployed only after a short period of employment. About 15% of unemployed women with three-year-old children and a quarter of unemployed women with four-year-old children became unemployed only after having returned to work for some time.
- Among women with pre-school age children this unemployment is not necessarily only a short term gap between the end of parental leave (or after having returned to their previous employment) and finding a new job. The vast majority of unemployed women with five to seven-year-old children have been unemployed for more than a year.