

Working Mothers across Swiss Cantons: a Multilevel Approach

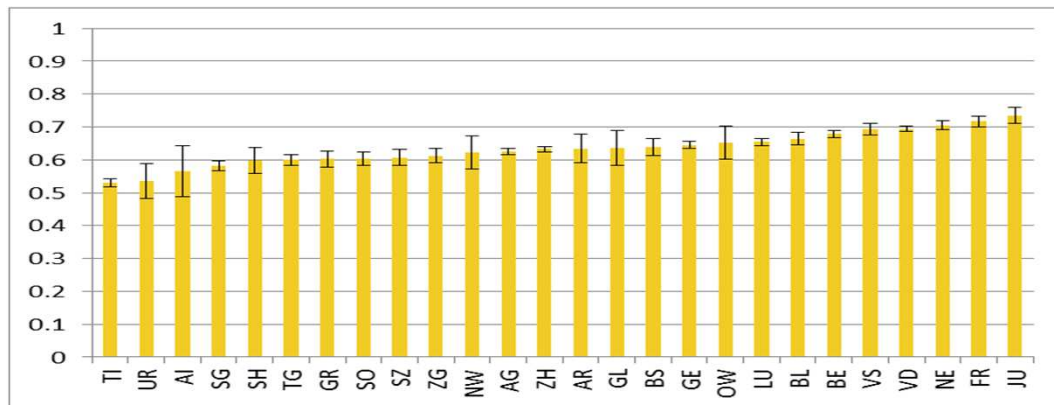
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For women, having a preschool child (under the age of 4 years) is usually associated with a lower participation in the labour market. In Switzerland in 2015, only 56.7% of mothers with at least one preschool child are professionally active (vs. almost 80% of all women). Mothers' participation in the labour market depends on different factors, both on the household level (age, educational level, and nationality of parents, number and age of children, etc.) and on the Cantonal level (childcare offer, cultural preferences, labour market outcomes, etc.). Between Swiss Cantons, the variation in mothers labour market participation is indeed important [F. 1].

Research question: To what extent is the variation between Cantons explained by household characteristics and to what extent is it related to Cantonal factors? Or in other words: for two identical households, does living in a different Canton influence the mother's participation in the labour market?

Data: The data are drawn from the 2010-2014 pooled sample of the Swiss Structural Survey. Analyses apply to family households (couples living with children) with at least one preschool child (94'958 sampled households). The statistical unit is the household, household weights are therefore used. **Method:** We run random-intercept logit models using the proc glimmix procedure in SAS

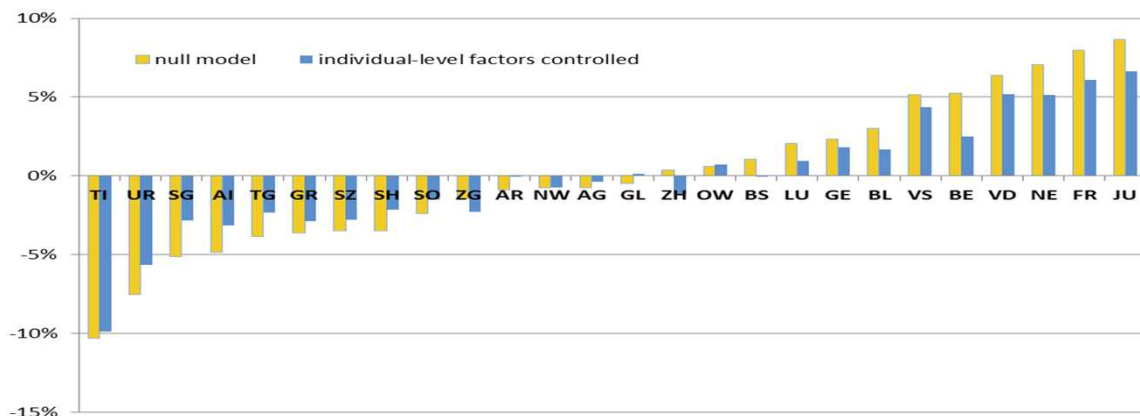
Figure 1. Percentage of active mothers (with at least one child under 4 years), by Canton, in 2010-2014 (95 % CI).



Results: Mothers' activity status (active vs. non active) varies with age, spousal age difference, marital status, number of children, both partners' educational level and origin, and the partner's occupational rate.

Inter-cantonal variation is significant and seems only partly related to compositional factors (individual-level variables) [F.2]. Participation rates are low in Ticino, Eastern Switzerland and parts of Central Switzerland, and higher-than average in Western Switzerland.

Figure 2. Multilevel logit models (active vs non active): ordered random intercepts (difference with overall mean proportion) depending on explanatory (individual - level) factors included.



Why does mothers' participation in the labour market differ from one Canton to another, independently from household characteristics? The explanation needs to be searched in regional differences, such as, for instance, the offer and the costs of childcare. A lower offer and higher costs may reduce both the demand for childcare and mothers' propensity to work. Also, parents' preferences and attitudes regarding the childcare strategies and the child education (with the mother at home or in a childcare facility) could play a role. Labour market features may also be determinant: in Cantons with higher unemployment rates, women may have difficulties in finding a job after a maternity break. We will continue this work by adding contextual Cantonal - level variables to our model in order to see to what extent the variation is explained.