



Maternal employment in the first twelve months after the birth: the effect of pre-birth job characteristics

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Maternal employment rates are lowest in the first year of a child's life as women leave employment or take a break from employment to take on the responsibilities associated with caring for an infant. But within this first year of the child's life there are considerable differences in rates of employment as some women make their way back to work. In this paper, we explore these patterns of return to work. In particular, we explore whether characteristics of the job held prior to the birth lead to differences in the timing of return to work. Some of these characteristics are employment contract (self-employed, permanent, casual), hours worked, income and occupational status. We analyse these data using multivariate techniques which also control for other personal and family characteristics and take into account the types of leave used. This analysis is based on recently collected data (2005) from the Wave 1.5 collection of the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC). Mothers of the infant cohort were asked a range of questions relating to their employment before and after the birth of the study child, as well as their use of different types of leave. The study children of this cohort were aged at least 15 months at this time, enabling an examination of employment in the first year of the child's life for these respondents