

Fertility Intentions and Occupational Choices over the Lifecourse

Having Children Triggers Misallocation of Skills and Talent?

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Motivation & Hypothesis

Women’s **career choices** are shaped by care responsibilities, while men mainly respond to **financial considerations**. We hypothesize that these patterns **emerge before parenthood** and trigger **gender occupational sorting**.

- H1:** Women who want to have children are more likely to enter female-dominated occupations.
- H2:** They are also more likely to choose jobs with higher earnings potential before childbirth.
- H3:** Men who want to have children sort into higher-earning occupations, but not into more female-dominated ones.

Data and method

Data sources:
– **Generations and Gender Programme (GGP):** Wave 1 of GGS-II (years: 2020-2025) – **EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS)**

Dependent variables:
– **Occupational Earnings Potential OEP:** Median earnings ranking (4-digit ISCO).
– **Feminization of occupation:** Proportion of women (3-digit ISCO).

Variable of interest: – **Fertility intentions:** Wants children in the next 3 years or in the future (5-level scale).

Controls: age, age², education, mother’s education, country, year.

Sample: employed, childless adults aged 18–50 y.

Countries: Argentina, Austria, Croatia, Czech R., Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Moldova, the Netherlands, Norway, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Taiwan.

Analytical approach: OLS with SE clustered on country level + models with interactions.

Contribution

Completed:

- Identified relationship between fertility intentions and occupational earnings potential among childless women and men.
- Identified relationship between fertility intentions and job feminization among women.

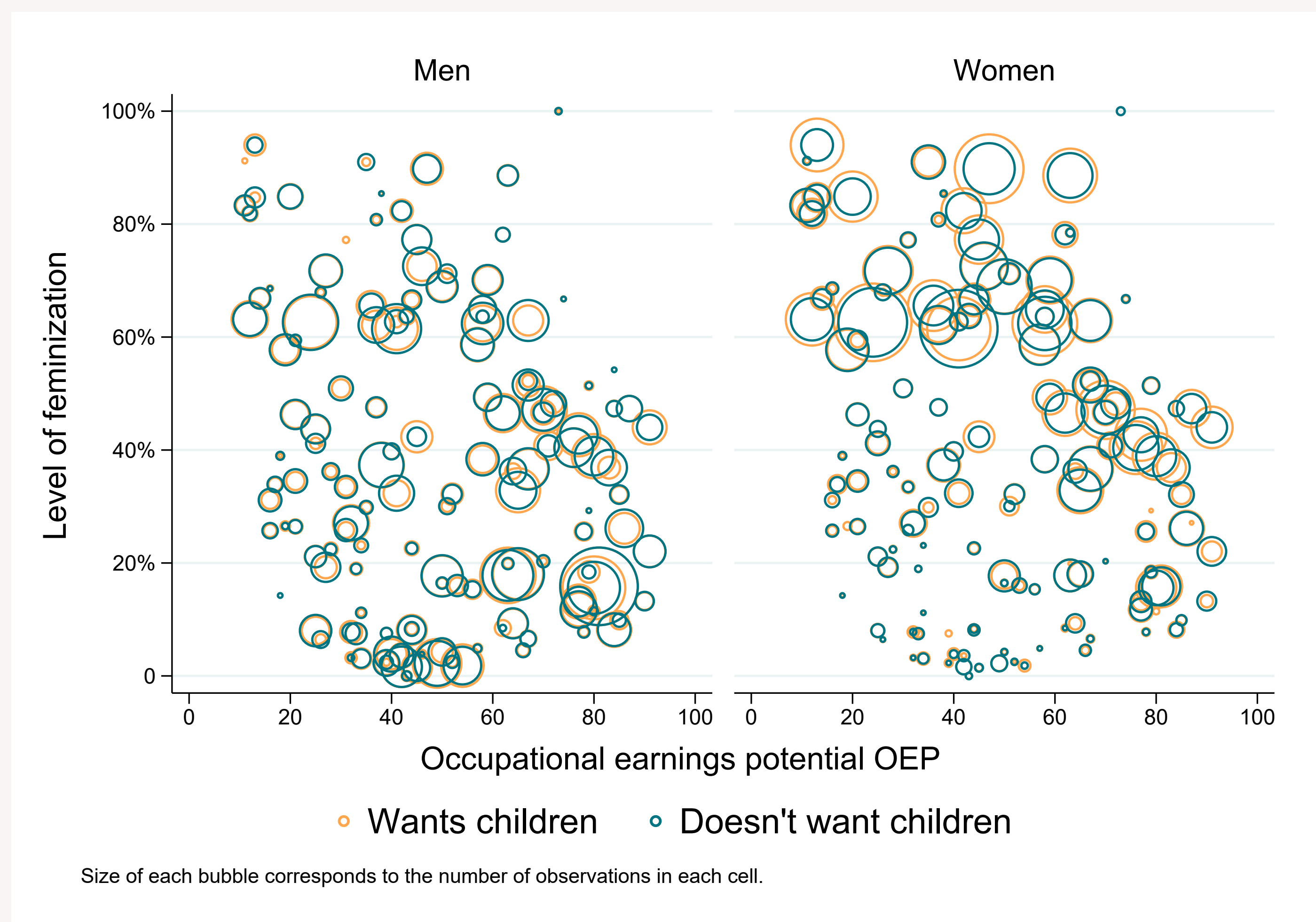
Planned:

- Causal identification using instrumental variables (IV) and empirical verification of the “misallocation of skills” mechanism.
- Identification of occupational upgrading and downgrading following childbirth.

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What jobs men and women have before having children?



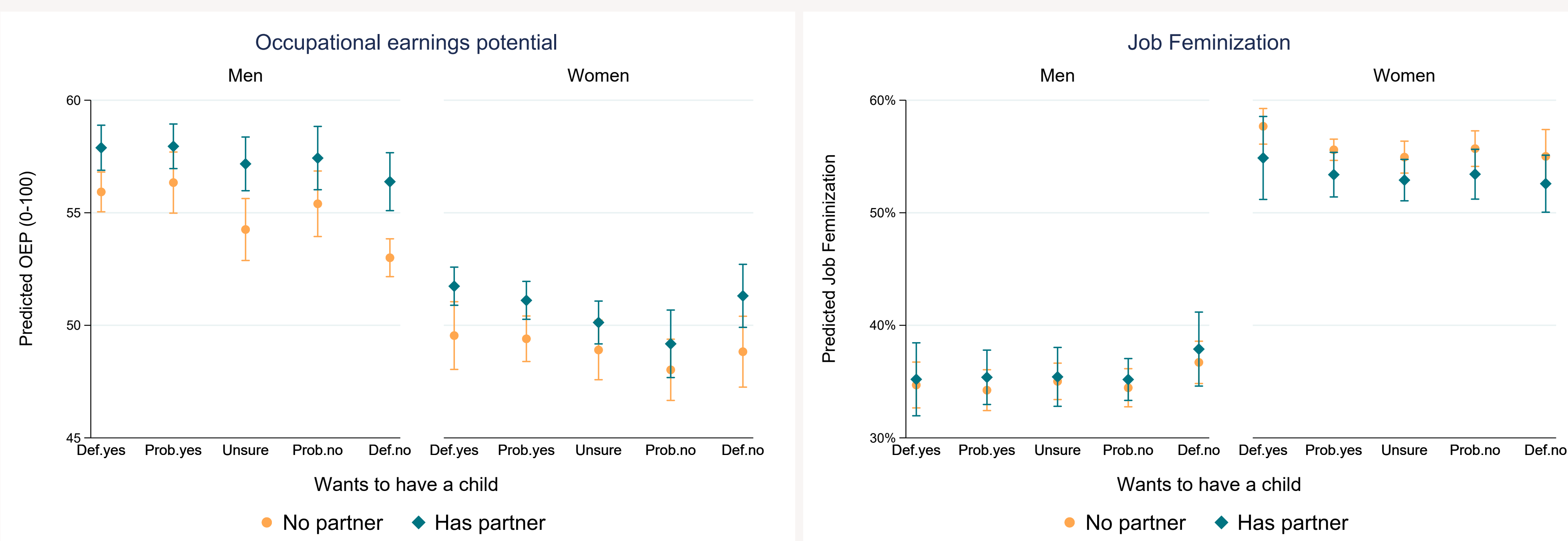
Correlation between Occupational Earnings Potential OEP and Job Feminization scale by ISCO 3-digit code in the GGP sample of working women who do not yet have children, by gender and fertility intentions (excluding unsure).

Fertility intentions and characteristics of occupation

	Occupational Earnings Potential OEP				Job Feminization			
	Men		Women		Men		Women	
	Partner	No partner	Partner	No partner	Partner	No partner	Partner	No partner
Wants children (ref. Definitely yes)								
Probably yes	−0.128 (0.588)	0.969 (0.650)	−0.598 (0.501)	−0.264 (0.861)	0.005 (0.008)	−0.010 (0.010)	−0.020*** (0.005)	−0.019** (0.008)
Unsure	−0.997 (0.695)	−0.606 (0.709)	−1.674*** (0.512)	−1.070* (0.608)	0.011 (0.013)	−0.004 (0.010)	−0.027*** (0.008)	−0.022** (0.009)
Probably no	−0.674 (0.656)	0.614 (0.928)	−2.545*** (0.849)	−2.224*** (0.739)	0.004 (0.011)	−0.011 (0.010)	−0.021* (0.011)	−0.019* (0.010)
Definitely no	−1.569** (0.732)	−1.302 (0.876)	−0.447 (1.055)	−1.896** (0.740)	0.027* (0.013)	0.012 (0.017)	−0.032*** (0.009)	−0.025 (0.014)
Observations	6325	4760	8203	4874	6290	4749	8192	4866
R-squared	0.246	0.258	0.270	0.283	0.067	0.049	0.064	0.042

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
Coefficients in models estimated separately by each group.

Marginal effects of fertility intentions



Marginal effects calculated in models with triple interactions (fertility intentions # female # having partner).

Conclusions

- Women who want to have children are more likely to work in female-dominated occupations, also when not having a partner.
- They have jobs with higher earnings potential, with the biggest gap between those who “definitely” want children and those who “probably” don’t.
- Men with strong fertility intentions work in jobs with higher earnings potential, especially when having a partner.
- Very weak link between fertility intentions and feminization of occupation among men.