

INSTITUT PRO DEMOKRACII A EKONOMICKOU ANALÝZU

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(Non-)discrimination against female job applicants for maternity-related reasons: Experiment

Study 1/2015

10. 3. 2015

VOJTĚCH BARTOŠ

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PROJEKT NÁRODOHOSPODÁŘSKÉHO ÚSTAVU

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Summary

- In this study we investigate possible discrimination against female job applicants, in the form of a lower probability of being invited for interview in the periods of their career when 1) it is expected they may soon take maternity leave, and 2) their family commitments are considered to limit their working capacity.
- We carry out a correspondence experiment, in which we construct fictitious profiles for otherwise identical women and men aged either 29 or 41 years, childless or with two children. During the experiment we contact 599 Czech firms, sending them the CVs of the fictitious male and female job applicants. The differences in the level of positive replies received from the firms serve as an indicator of the potential employers' attitudes towards men and women.
- The results demonstrate that on average employers do not discriminate against women. On the contrary, we find that for more highly qualified positions employers greatly prefer to employ 41-year-old women (whether childless or with two children) than men of the same age. This difference is not present among highly qualified childless women and men aged 29, nor among applicants for less highly qualified positions.
- We estimate that the greater frequency of positive responses we have observed for women is not the result of active discrimination against men, but rather arises from the employers' different expectations about the applicants' motivation.
- Although the results of our experiment show that employers do not directly discriminate against women, this does not mean that there are no differences in Czech employers' willingness to employ women and men based on their different characteristics. Such differences may arise both in reaction to state

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family policies and in response to men and women's different preferences. We conclude our study with a discussion of possible ways of solving the problem of gender-unequal treatment.