

Home-based work and childbearing

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 LabFam

The goal

- To study the association between home-based work (HBW) and first and second birth rates among couples in a liberal labour market setting (UK)
- We use UKHLS data from pre-pandemic period (2009-2019)
- We examine timely yet fully unknown relationship

Unclear relationship between HBW and fertility

POSITIVE

- HBW relaxes time constraints, reduces commuting time and allows more time to be devoted to family life (Chung and Van der Lippe 2018);
- HBW improves work-family balance, allows organizing work more flexibly around the housework or childcare duties (Crosbie and Moore 2004, Powell and Craig 2015)

NEGATIVE

- HBW exacerbates the work-family conflict, by blurring the boundaries between paid work and family life and work-to-family spillover (Kurowska 2018, Glavin and Schieman 2012).
- HBW may induce 'flexibility stigma', i.e. being disregarded in the workplace (Munsch 2016, Kouki and Sauer 2020).

Analytical design

We identify variables that may drive the positive/negative relationship between HBW and childbearing:

- **commuting time** - positive among women who live far from the office as gains from HBW are then the highest
- **work hours** - positive among women who do not work long, otherwise work-family spillover
- **job satisfaction** - positive among women who are satisfied with their work situation (HBW)
- **job anxiety** - positive when HBW does not entail job-related tensions (such as fear of flexi-stigma, high work intensity)

Sample & Method

Sample: Employed women aged 18-44 living with a partner

Method: Random-effect logit model

Response: Occurrence of 1st / 2nd birth

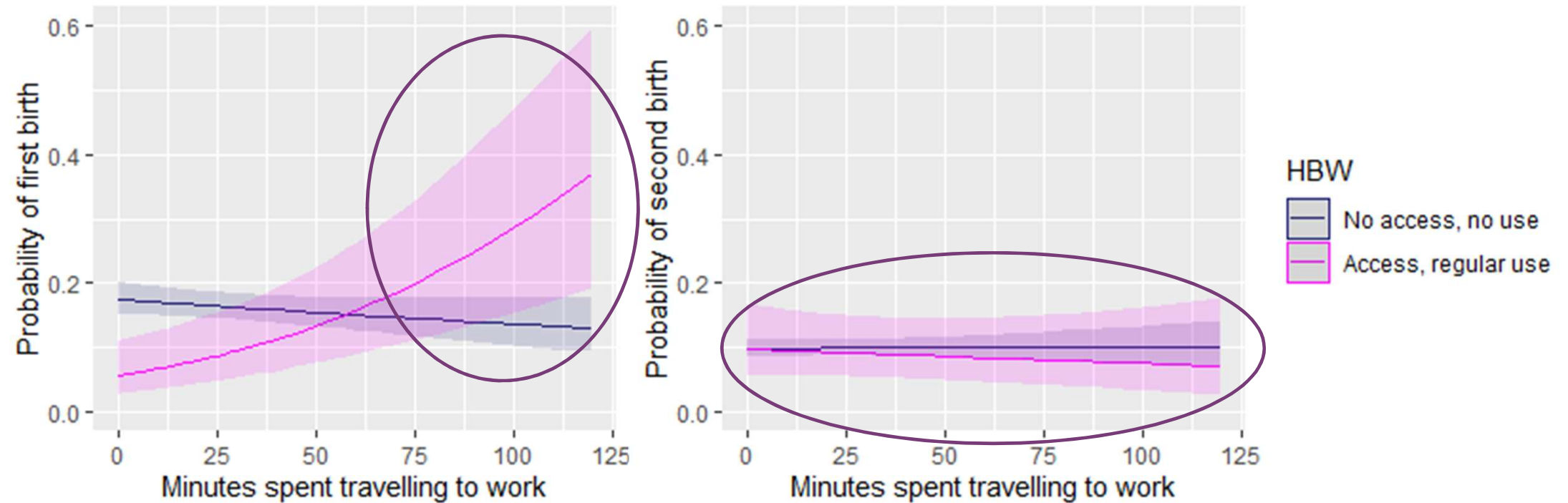
Key explanatory: HBW (1 – *no access, no use*; 2 – *access, no use or occasional use*; 3 – *access, regular use*)

RESULTS

Birth risk is higher when HBW frees from long commuting

FIRST BIRTH: +

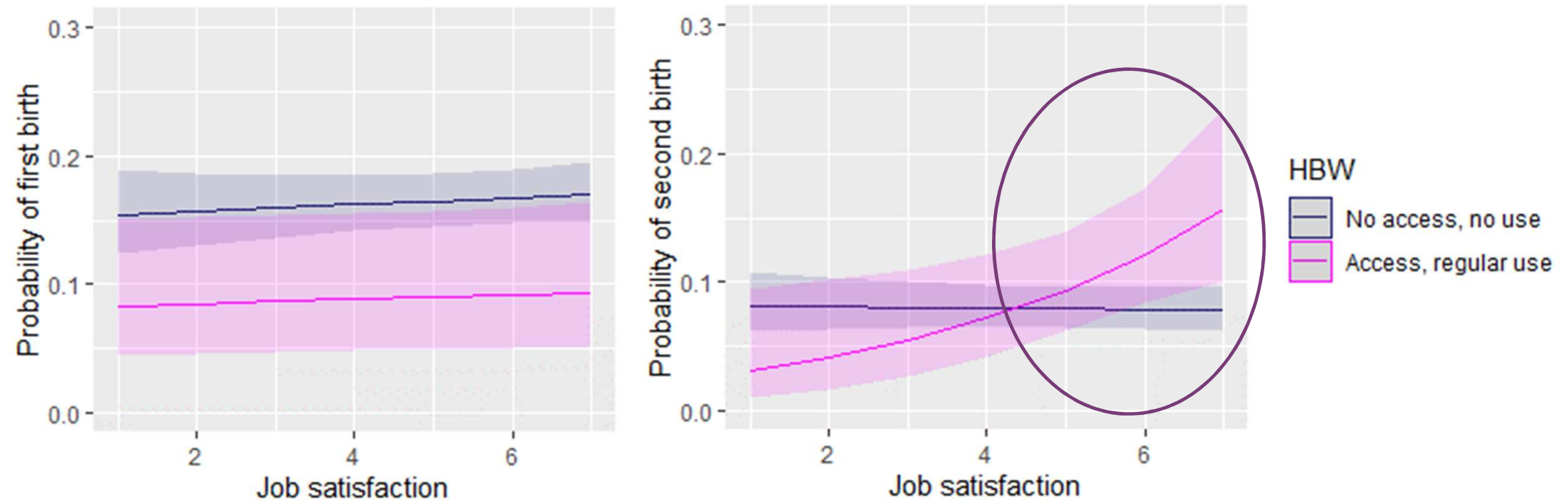
SECOND BIRTH: 0



Birth risk is higher when HBW is satisfying

FIRST BIRTH: 0

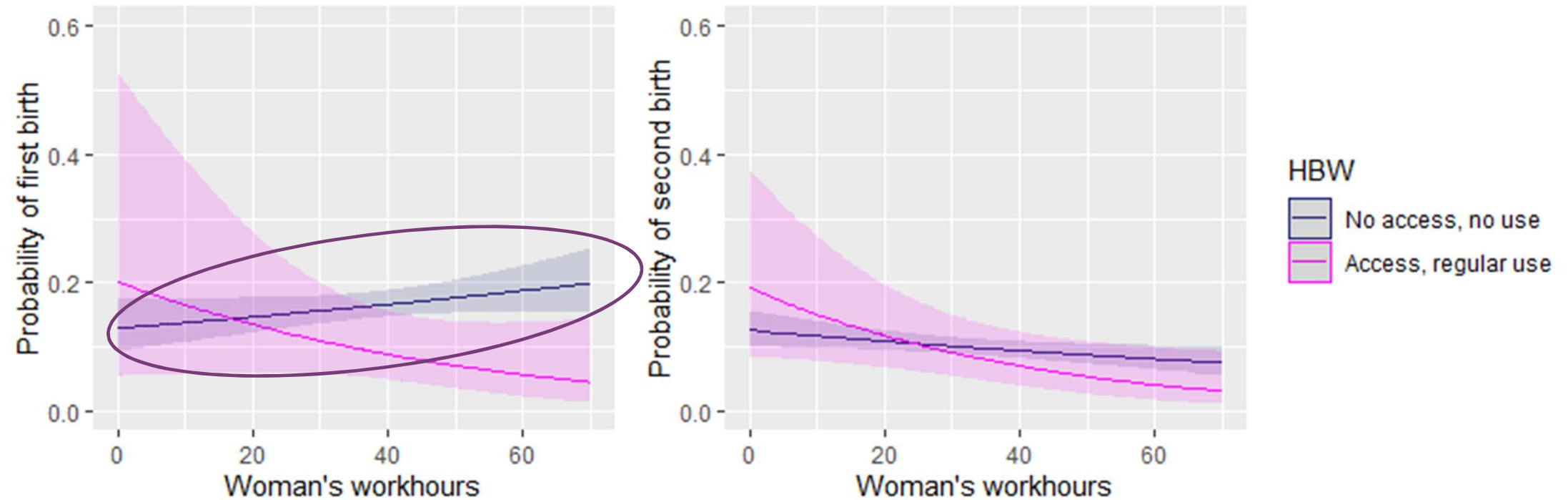
SECOND BIRTH: +



Birth risk is lower when HBW is accompanied by long work hours

FIRST BIRTH: -

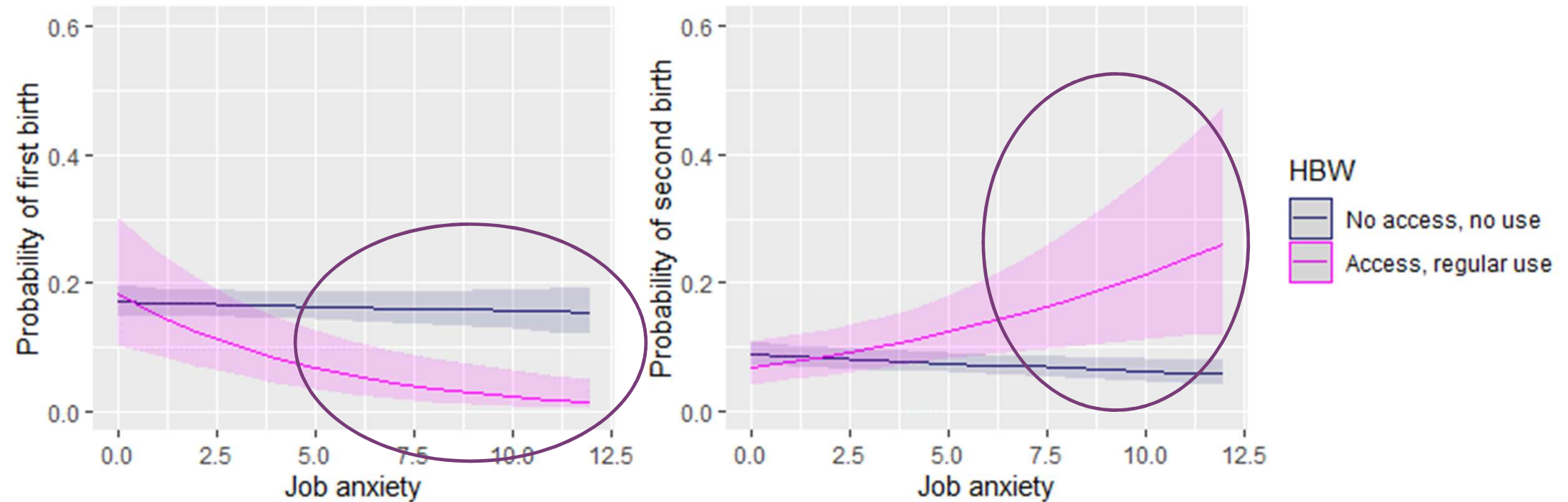
SECOND BIRTH: 0



Birth risk is lower when HBW entails anxiety (?)

FIRST BIRTH: -

SECOND BIRTH: +



CONCLUSIONS

Regular use of HBW

- is positively related to **first birth**, but only among women who:
 - do not work more than 35-40 hours per week;
 - feel confident about their jobs;
 - would have to commute long.
- is positively related to **second birth**, but only for women who:
 - are satisfied with their jobs;
 - feel job-related anxiety.

Take-home message

There is no universal association between HBW and fertility.

CHILDLESS WOMEN

The most important in shaping HBW-fertility relationship are factors related to WLB:

- long commuting (+)
- long work hours (-)
- tensions about job (-)

MOTHERS

HBW-fertility relationship is determined by job-related factors:

- job satisfaction (+)
- tensions about job (+)



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