



UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW  
**Faculty of Economic Sciences**

# Are women who work from home more likely to have children?

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 **LabFam**



PRE-INDUSTRIAL ERA

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTIONS

DIGITAL REVOLUTION

1800

1990

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# 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 focus on pre-pandemic context (2009-2019)
- We examine timely yet fully unknown relationship

# HBW: what do we know?

## PROS

- saves time: less commuting, multitasking (Hill et al., 2003, Bailey and Kurland, 2002)
- allows for organizing paid work flexibly around childcare duties (Crosbie and Moore, 2004)
- allows for being more present in children's lives (Callister and Singley, 2004)
- allows for working longer and minimizing work-related interruptions (Arntz et al. 2019, Chung and van der Horst 2018)

## CONS

- blurs the boundaries between paid work and family life (Glavin and Schieman 2012)
- longer work hours & evening work (Felstead and Henseke, 2017)
- fragmented work time, stress, interruptions (Powell and Craig 2015)
- negative consequences for work career:
  - less networking (Martinez and Gómez, 2013)
  - lower visibility at work (Richardson and Kelliher, 2015)
  - flexibility stigma (Munsch 2016)

# HBW and childbearing: What do we expect?

The relationship between HBW and fertility is positive if:

- H1: HBW has a potential to lower work-family conflict (time saving, spacious apartment, no long working hours)
- H2: male partners are strongly involved in paid work and perform relatively little childcare

The HBW and fertility link is shaped by implications of HBW for women's professional careers:

- H3: **childless women** may postpone or abandon their decision to have a child if HBW entails distress about employment
- H4: **mothers** may choose to have another child if they feel tense with their HBW

# Data & Method

- Data:** UKHLS waves 1 to 10, 2009 to 2019
- Sample:** Employed women aged 18-44 living with a partner
- Method:** discrete time logit model
- Response:** Occurrence of 1st / 2nd birth
- Key explanatory:** Access to and use of HBW: (1) no access, no use  
(2) access, no-use/non-regular use  
(3) access, regular use

# Moderators

## **Work-family reconciliation:**

- commuting time
- number of bedrooms
- women's work hours

## **Partners' involvement in paid work / at home:**

- men's work hours
- involvement in childcare

## **Consequences for work career:**

- job anxiety (tensed / uneasy / worried about work)

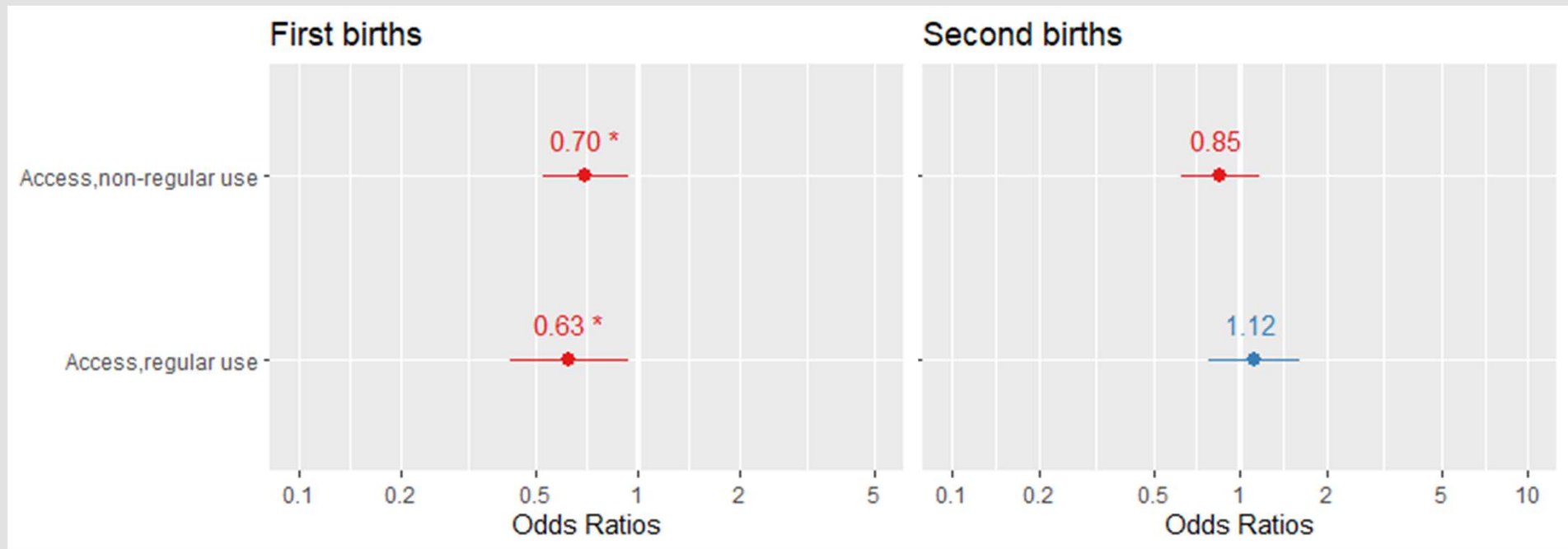
# RESULTS



# Main effects

FIRST BIRTH: -

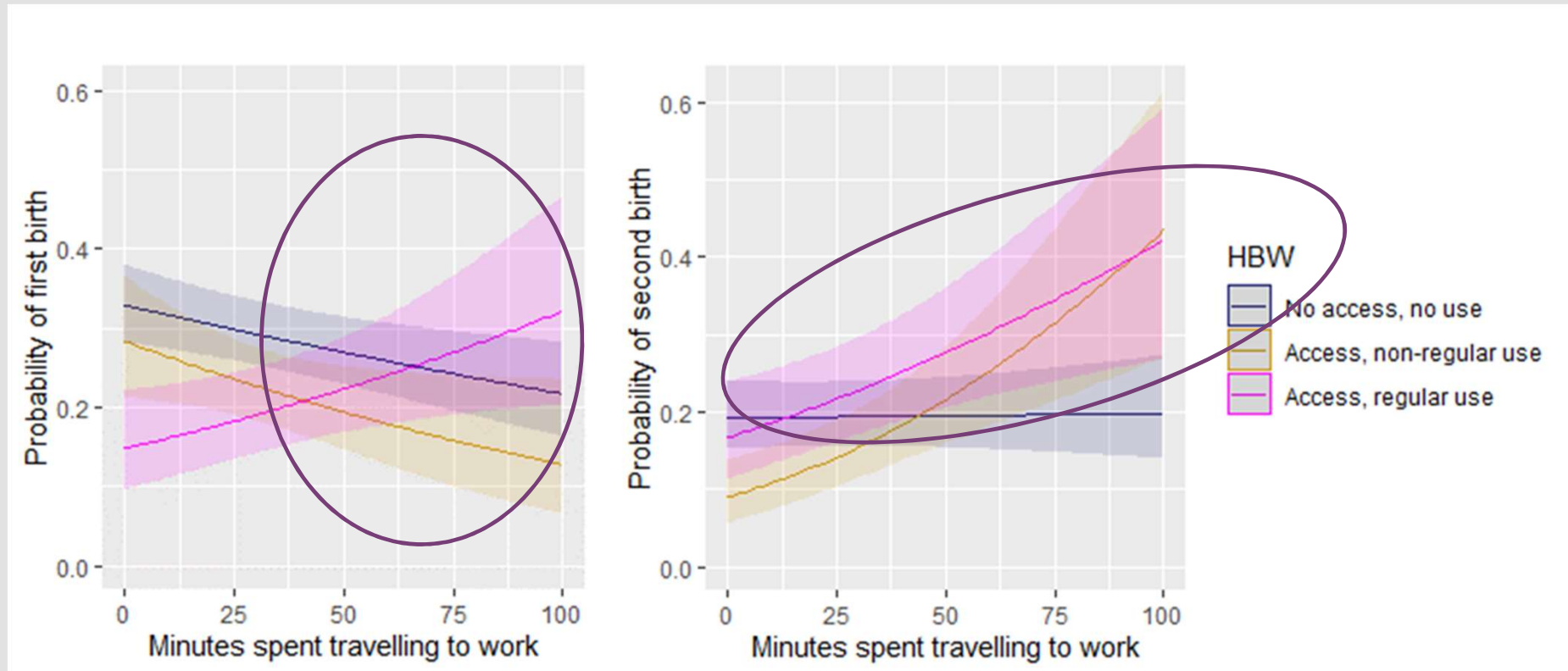
SECOND BIRTH: 0



# Birth risk is **higher** when HBW frees from long commuting?

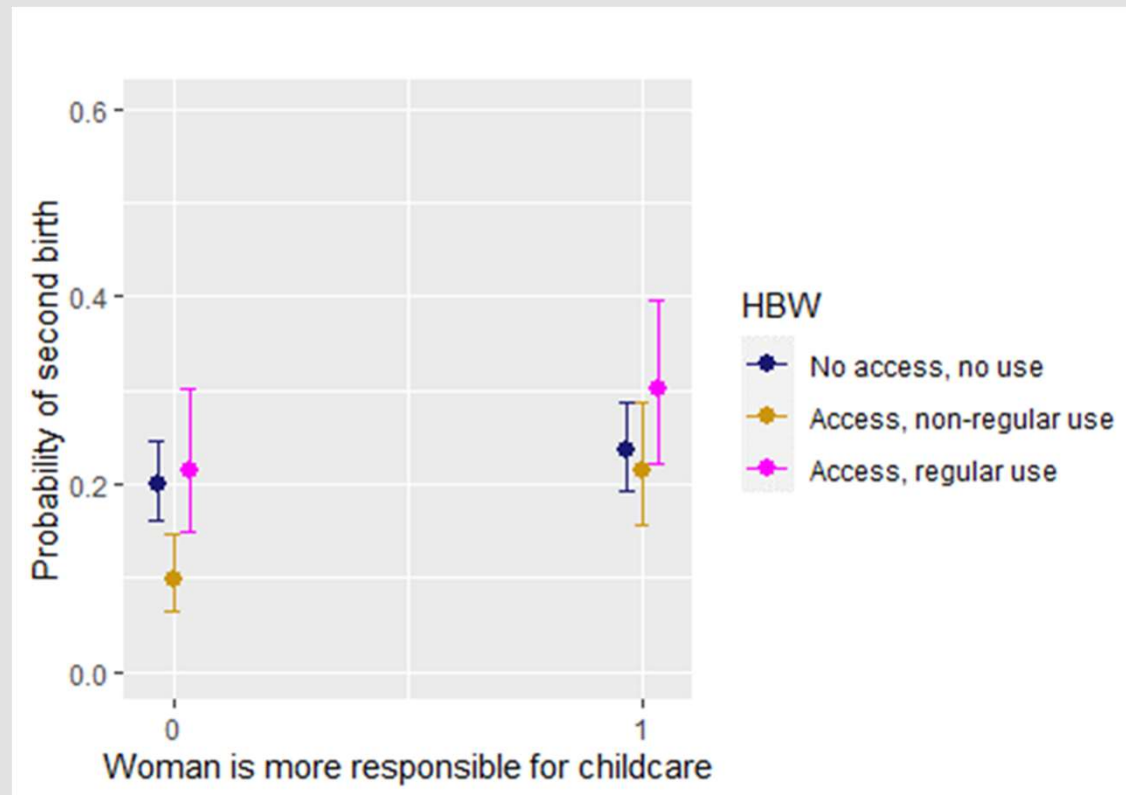
FIRST BIRTH: +

SECOND BIRTH: +



# Birth risk is **higher** when HBW is accompanied by childcare responsibility?

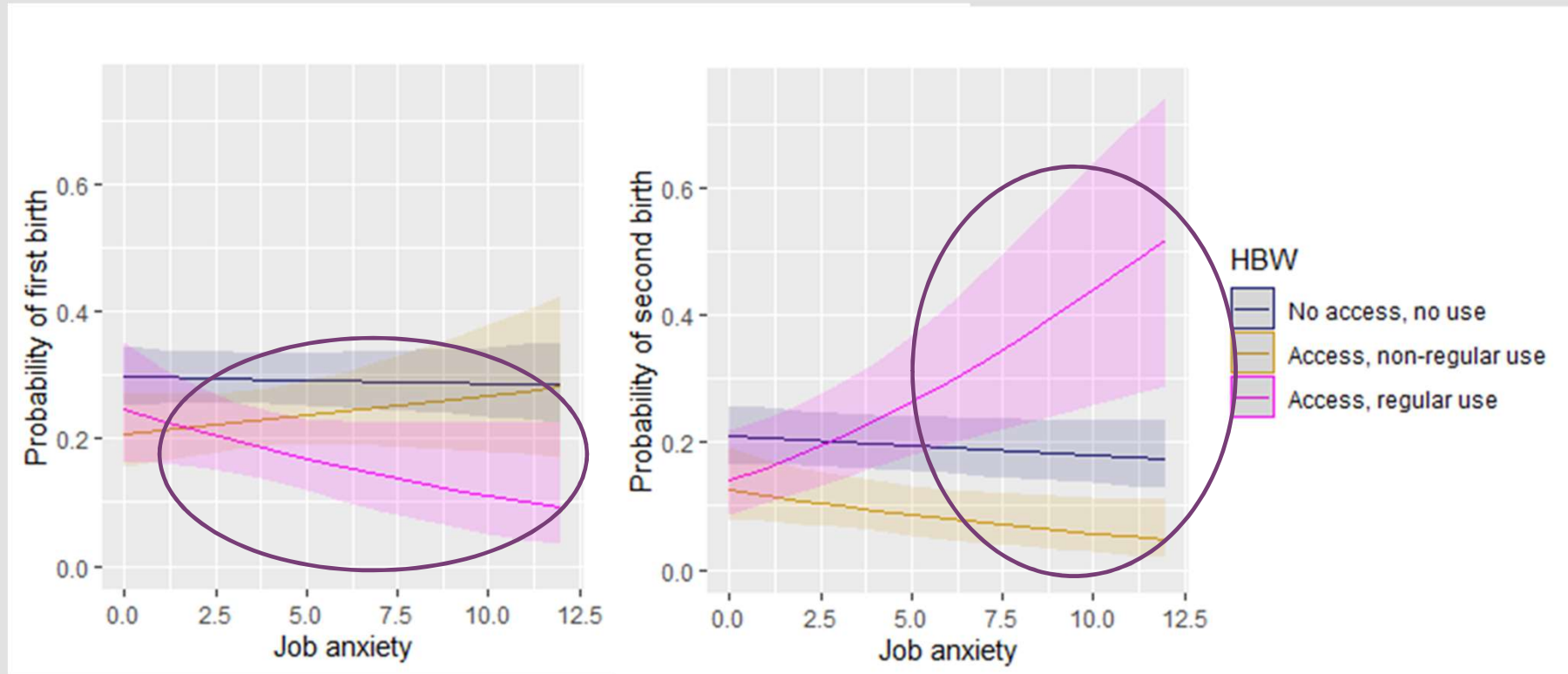
SECOND BIRTH: +



# Birth risk is lower/higher when HBW entails anxiety?

FIRST BIRTH: -

SECOND BIRTH: +



# Conclusions

- Both access to and use of HBW were negatively associated with the transition to motherhood and unrelated to the progression to second child
- Being freed from long commuting is clearly linked with faster progression to first and second birth
- HBW helps women to have a subsequent child if their male partners are not strongly involved in childcare
- Childless women who work from home and experience job-related stress are more likely to postpone transition to motherhood than on-site workers
- Mothers, in contrast, whose regular work from home entails high levels of anxiety tend to escape the stress-causing employment by having another child.

# Take-home message

- Our findings suggest that HBW is not a great remedy to women's incompatibility problems and that bringing paid work home will not result in immediate gains in fertility
- We rather show that HBW can help certain women have children:
  - those who would have to spend much time commuting
  - women who want to combine paid work and care but receive little support from their partners.
- For larger gains in fertility to be achieved, HBW would have to entail lower costs for the remaining women: progress in gender equality and higher acceptance of flexible work arrangements among employers.

# Limitations

- Measure of workplace flexibility
- Women may not know whether HBW is available till they ask for it
- Selection to HBW

# THANK YOU

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The LabFam logo features a stylized 'i' icon (a vertical line with a dot) followed by the text 'LabFam' in a bold, black, sans-serif font.