**Maternity Leave and Long-Term Health Outcomes of Children**

**170 words**

This paper assesses the impact of the length of maternity leave on children’s long-run health outcomes. Our quasi-experimental design evaluates an expansion in maternity leave coverage from two to six months, which occurred in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1979. The expansion came into effect after a sharp cutoff date and significantly increased the time working mothers stayed at home with their newborns. In our analysis, we exploit the German Micro Census and hospital registry data, containing detailed information about the universe of inpatients' diagnoses and treatment for the years 1995 to 2014. By tracking the health of treated and control children from age 16 up to age 35, we provide new insights into the trajectory of health differentials over the life-cycle.

We find a positive effect of the legislative change on several measures of long-term child health. Our intention-to-treat estimates suggest that children who were born shortly after the implementation of the reform experience fewer hospital admissions and are less likely to be diagnosed with mental and behavioral disorders.

(JEL I10,J13,J18)

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Rausgenommen: For men, we find significant reductions in sick leave.