

The Effects of Prohibiting Marriage Bars: The Case of U.S. Teachers^{*}

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Abstract

Married women in the early 20th century U.S. faced “marriage bars,” a form of employer discrimination that barred them from paid employment. However, because the end of marriage bar use coincided with shifting social norms and labor market conditions, it is unclear how the end of marriage bars affected women’s employment. We study the effects of the legislative prohibition of marriage bars in teaching during the 1930s. A difference-in-differences design shows that the prohibitions increased the share of married women teachers, partly by pushing unmarried women out of the labor force, and modestly increased women’s labor force participation.

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