

## **Care and work: How do middle-aged women combine paid employment and unpaid caregiving of varying intensity?**

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### **Abstract**

How does caregiving for the sick or elderly people affect women's employment behaviors? And who are the women who actually assume these responsibilities? By analyzing data on 6,483 middle-aged women from the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), I first find that caregivers are not disproportionately recruited from people with a weak labor market attachment. It is not a selective group of women that provides care. Instead, women are likely to take on caring roles irrespective of their labor force attachment and previous employment histories. Second, I find that while intensive caring roles involving three and more hours of care per day are strongly associated with women's exits from the labor market, less intensive caregiving is likely to result in women moving from full-time to part-time employment. This is the first study based on the German data to show that. Previous research on other European countries either finds no significant differences between labor market participation of low-level caregivers and non-caregivers, or shows that low-level caregivers tend to work even more hours than non-caregivers. The finding of the present study may be attributed to the specific German context, where many care recipients are eligible to receive payments from the insurance and many care givers have a legal right to cut back on work when care needs arise. Even though my analysis shows that, for some women, part-time employment is a useful strategy for combining care and paid work, it is still the case that women with any caring role experience serious difficulties in maintaining the

level of employment they had prior to caregiving. Therefore, there is a need for policy changes to help women to combine paid work and care.