

## Perceived Costs and Benefits of Maternal Labor Supply Decisions

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### Abstract:

We elicit beliefs about different pecuniary and non-pecuniary benefits and costs of maternal labor supply in the years following the birth of a child. Mothers' later-life earnings are perceived as increasing in the number of hours worked, as are children's skills. Family outcomes, such as the quality of the mother-child relationship, are perceived to be the highest when the mother works part-time, which is also the option most respondents believe their friends and family would like them to choose. Perceptions about the non-pecuniary benefits/costs to maternal labor supply as well as beliefs about the opinions of friends and family are found to be strong predictors of maternal labor supply decisions, while beliefs about labor market returns do not correlate with choices. Finally, there is large heterogeneity in the perceived availability of full-time childcare. Relaxing constraints in terms of childcare availability would substantially increase maternal labor supply.