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Maternity and Labor Markets: Impact of Legislation in Colombia

Working Paper No. 870 Keep in mind
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Our research seeks to determine the impact on female labor outcomes of the amendment on the Colombian labor law in which maternity leave was extended from 12 to 14 weeks (through Law 1468 of July 2011). To identify this impact we compare labor market outcomes of two groups of women with differences in their fertility rates. We find evidence that as a result of the extension of the maternity leave period, women in the high-fertility age group have experienced an increase in inactivity rates, informality, and self-employment. We argue that a redesign of maternity protection policy is due, one through which the economic and social costs of bearing children are shared by both parents and which may generate social change regarding the importance of paternal care.

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Fuente: https://www.banrep.gov.co/en/borrador-870