

# Ceilings, Floors, and Children. The Gender Pay Gap over the Lifecycle\*

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*Preliminary draft, please do not quote*

## Abstract

We investigate the gender gap in career progression with special attention to the consequences of fertility and heterogeneity along the wages distribution. We rely on a difference-in-difference around childbirth interacted with rank in the hourly wages distribution, and apply it to a French large longitudinal dataset. Highly paid women are less likely to decrease their labor supply than their lower paid counterparts. Yet their hourly wages losses are similar in magnitude. We relate these patterns to heterogeneity in the opportunity cost of career interruption rather than to heterogeneous preferences. Because highly paid men benefit from a slight fatherhood premia, few years after childbirth the gender pay gap widens more at the top of the distribution, which contributes to a glass ceiling pattern. Reversely, in the long run poorly paid mothers have slower wages growth than their childless counterparts, which leads to a sticky floor pattern. However, childless women experience slower wages growth than their male counterparts at both ends of the distribution, so that glass ceilings and sticky floors are not merely the consequences of parenthood.

**Keywords:** Gender pay gap, glass ceiling, sticky floor, motherhood penalties.

**JEL Classification:** J16, J31.

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