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The Maternity Capital programs in Russia and the second birth spacing

The paper utilises survival analysis to study the role of a Maternity Capital program, introduced in 2007 in Russia to stimulate families to have a second birth (or adopt a second child), in changing the birth spacing between the first and the second child. The empirical study is carried out on the microdata of the Russian Longitudinal Monitoring survey over 2000–2019, the regional-level data from Rosstat and the data on the region's Maternity Capital programs by years from the open sources. The identification strategy compares birth spacing (via estimation of second childbirth hazards) before and after the introduction of the Maternity Capital program. The methods used do not allow us to isolate the impact of policy and time-fixed effects such as macro shocks. However, we implemented a test to check for no fertility trends in the pre-policy period. We also control for a wide range of personal and regional characteristics. Results are robust to different metrics (proportional hazard and accelerated failure time), functional forms (parametric and non-parametric) and subsamples (married women and working women). We find that the indexation of the federal Maternity Capital program leads to a 2.1% increase in the hazard of a second birth. The paper also tests the role of regional programs in addition to the federal-level program. We show that regional Maternity Capital programs also affect the probability of a second birth, and the estimated effect is two times bigger than for the federal program.

Keywords: demography; Maternity Capital; duration models; policy analysis.
JEL classification: J11; J13; J18; C41.

1. Introduction

In 2008, the population level in Russia achieved its lowest value (145.1 million people) of the period 2002–2017 within current borders, according to census data. In general, over the ten years between 2010 and 2020, there has been a slight increase in the population to 146.8 million people in 2017, which is still lower than in 2002. However, in 2018, the population growth in the Russian Federation was again negative. In 2020, the population growth reached the lowest value from 2005 (amounting to –550 thousand people), mainly due to the excess mortality during the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) and decreased immigration levels. It is illustrated in Fig. 1.

Thus, like most others, one of the main goals of the Russian government is to stimulate population growth in the country. That is why in 2007, the government introduced Maternity Capital (MC) as a form of pronatalist policy. It is a measure of financial support for Russian families in which a second child was born or adopted since 2007. As in the presidential decree of the 7th of May 2018,

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