10 How long-term NEET are explained by family policies in OECD countries

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10.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we examine the association between family policies and the likelihood that young people become long-term not in education, employment, or training (NEET). In the introduction to this book, we explored the ways in which institutional contexts might shape gendered pathways into NEET statuses. We emphasized that in all countries, young mothers in particular face greater risks of income loss, work interruptions, and dismissal – and thus NEET statuses and potential skill depreciation – due to family-related contingencies. However, these risks differ both qualitatively and in magnitude depending on specific institutional factors. To support parent's education and employment, leave schemes and affordable childcare services are considered reconciliation policies (Gornick and Meyers, 2003; Olivetti and Petrongolo, 2017).

We examine several different kinds of family policies. First, job-protected leave schemes. These leave schemes enable parents to temporarily disengage from the labour market to take care of their children without losing their job. While some studies suggest that paid maternity and parental leave benefits are most beneficial to women's relative economic position (Estévez-Abe and Hethey-Maier 2013), this depends on the length of paid parental leave. Short or no leave policies tend to result in young mothers being more likely to become NEET (Nieuwenhuis et al., 2012), but very long parental leave makes returning to work more difficult (Boeckmann, Misra, and Budig, 2014). We expect that young people living in countries with relatively longer durations of leave schemes will be less likely to become long-term NEET. From the five countries, we analyse in this book, Germany and France are countries with relatively long durations of job-protected parental leave, while, in the Netherlands, the duration is shorter.

Second, the affordability of childcare services. Childcare services may facilitate parental leave to combine parental obligations with work or education obligations. We expect that in countries where childcare services are more affordable, young people will be less likely to become long-term NEET because they are able to use the childcare services. When we look at the five countries in this chapter, childcare costs for couples with two children are relatively expensive in the UK, where they constitute a significant barrier to

entering the labour force, followed by Japan and the Netherlands, but relatively more affordable in Germany and France.

The findings from the country chapters illustrated that NEET statuses are highly related to having children for women specifically. In the Netherlands, there are 16 weeks of fully paid maternity leave, but longer parental leaves are generally unpaid. Childcare is partly subsidized by the government for working parents on a sliding scale according to income. However, parents generally do not use formal childcare options, but rather rely on informal care and most particularly grandparents. Within this context, we found that women with children were more likely to become late NEET, but not necessarily long-term NEET, while men with children were less likely to become long-term NEET.

In Germany, although maternity leave is technically shorter (14 weeks), there also exists a parental leave allowance (*Elterngeld*) and three years of job-protected parental leave (*Elternzeit*). Furthermore, although public childcare provision has greatly increased in recent years, the traditional male-breadwinner model is still strong, and most often women care for young children for the first year of life. In this context, we found that women with children were both more likely to follow a late NEET pathway or a long NEET pathway.

In France, 16 weeks of maternity leave are supplemented by parental leaves (*Congé parental d'éducation*) that guarantee a return to work until the third birthday of the youngest child. However, these longer parental leave policies, mainly taken up by women, have been described as 'poisoned chalices' that perpetuate gender inequalities (Fagnani, 2000). However, public childcare is widely available and heavily subsidized in France. Perhaps due to this fact, we found that being a woman with a child only had a relatively small effect on the likelihood of reporting a long-term NEET status, but that women with children did also tend to have more accumulated months of NEET status.

In the UK, where leave is relatively long and childcare costs are high, women with children are much more likely to be long-term NEET. This is the case even though women are less likely to experience being NEET overall than men in the UK. In Japan, again, having a child strongly influences women, but not men, to become late- and long-term NEET. This also relates to social norms associated with motherhood, which differ strongly between countries.

We explore the following research question: *To what extent are different characteristics of family policies associated with the likelihood to become long-term NEET?* We analyse data from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies [PIAAC] (OECD, 2013a). This data is conducted in 33 advanced countries. For our analyses, we selected young people aged 16–29 in approximately 28 countries. We start with logistic regression analyses to compare the five countries that are studied in-depth in the country chapters: the Netherlands, Germany, France, the UK, and Japan. Additionally, we test whether the findings are generalizable on 28 OECD countries by using multilevel logistic regression.

10.2 Theory: Understanding differences

In this section, we develop hypotheses on how family policies are associated with the likelihood of becoming long-term NEET. Based on 'New home economics' (Becker, 1965, 1981), we expect that time devoted to parental obligations cannot be spent on work or education. Therefore, young people have to decide whether the benefits of continuing education or work outbalance the time spent on taking care of children. We expect that certain family policies can influence these decisions, such as the option to use leave schemes and childcare.

First, job-protected leave schemes allow young parents to devote themselves to temporary caregiving after the child is born before they return to the same job as they had before childbirth. In most cases, young parents also get some level of income replacement. However, large variation in terms of length of leave and the level of income exist (Thévenon, 2011; Thévenon and Luci, 2012; van Belle, 2016). We expect that depending on the length and compensation level, young people consider their decision about reallocation of time between caregiving and work differently. We expect that in countries with shorter periods of leave, young people will be more likely to quit their job or education to take care of their children. In contrast, in countries with longer leave durations, young people can take up relatively long leave durations without losing their attachment to the labour market. Therefore, we hypothesize that *In countries with longer leave schemes (e.g., maternity, paternity, parental), young people are less likely to become long-term NEET (Hypothesis 12).*

Second, childcare is another option that might influence young people's decision to continue with school or work after having children. However, the effectiveness of childcare depends, among other things, on the affordability of childcare services (Eurofound, 2013; Gambaro, Stewart, and Waldfogel, 2015; Yerkes and Javornik, 2018). These criteria may be crucial in the decision-making process by which young people choose to allocate their time between parental obligations and work/education obligations. We expect that the lower childcare costs, the more likely that they are affordable for young people across all income distributions, and thus the more likely they are to continue their studies or work. Therefore, we expect that *In countries where childcare is more affordable, young people are less likely to become long-term NEET (Hypothesis 13).*

In addition to these main effects, we also expect that family policies have a different effect not only for men and women but also on people with different educational attainment levels. The generosity of paid leave benefits improves women's position as compared to their partners (Estévez-Abe and Hethey-Maier, 2013). The country chapters suggest cross-national variation in the extent to which women become long-term NEETs, and also in the extent to which having a child is associated with higher risks of long-term disengagement. Here, we investigate whether family policies plausibly affect gendered NEET differences, and whether they work differently for school-leavers with different educational attainment levels.

10.3 Data and measurements

10.3.1 PIAAC

We analyse data from the PIAAC from 28 countries (OECD, 2013). The survey provides valid and reliable estimates of adults' competencies in numeracy and literacy skills, as well as relevant characteristics. Respondents were interviewed using computer–assisted personal interviews, although pencil–and–paper data collection strategies were also used. We analyse a total working sample of $N=47,456$, young people aged 16–29. Depending on the available information about the contextual indicators, the number of observations could differ across analyses.

10.3.2 Measurements

The descriptive statistics of the variables are presented in Table 10.1. We describe how the long-term NEET and the country–level variables are measured below. See Chapter 8.3 for the measurements of the individual–level variables.

Dependent variable

- *Long-term NEET:* As in Chapters 8 and 9, we use information about whether young people (a) have had paid work, (b) participated in formal education, or (c) participated in nonformal education during last 12 months preceding the PIAAC survey to construct the variable that measures long-term NEET. Here too, we define young people who have not participated in any of these activities within the last 12 months preceding the survey as long-term NEETs.

Country-level variables

- *Length of maternity leave:* Number of weeks of job–protected maternity leave available for mothers just before and after childbirth (OECD, 2020b).

Table 10.1 Descriptive statistics

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Length of maternity leave (weeks)	25	21.08	10.86	0	52
Length of parental leave with job protection (weeks)	25	83.45	56.96	12	156
Length of paid father-specific leave (weeks)	25	7.21	13.41	0	53
Total length of paid maternity and parental leave (weeks)	25	57.98	45.64	0	166
Childcare costs – couple with 2 children	28	13.64	8.04	0	26

Note: Continuous variables are standardized before analyses.

We standardized this variable (mean 21.08, standard deviation 10.86, range from 0 to 52). A higher score means a longer period of job-protected maternity leave.

- *Length of parental leave:* Number of weeks after maternity leave which a woman can take up as parental leave with job protection, disregarding payment conditions (OECD, 2020b). We standardized this variable (mean 7.21, standard deviation 13.41, range from 0 to 53). A higher score indicates a longer period of parental leave.
- *Length of paid father-specific leave*: Number of paid weeks reserved for the exclusive use of fathers (OECD, 2020b). We standardized this variable (mean 83.45, standard deviation 56.96, range from 12 to 156). A higher score reflects a longer period of paid father-specific leave.
- *Total duration of paid maternity and parental leave*: Total number of weeks which women can take as paid leave after childbirth (OECD, 2020b). We standardized this variable (mean 57.98, standard deviation 45.64, range from 0 to 166). A higher score means a longer period of paid maternity- and parental-leave.
- *Childcare costs:* Net costs for full-time centre-based childcare paid by a couple with two children expressed as a percentage of their disposable household income and after any benefits designed to reduce the gross childcare fees in 2012 (OECD, 2019b). We standardized this variable. A higher score indicates higher childcare costs.

10.4 Analyses and results

We start with analyses on the five countries that are studied in-depth in the country chapters: the Netherlands, Germany, France, the UK, and Japan. We perform logistic regression analyses with a country-cluster approach. Following this, we perform multilevel logistic regression modelling to test the generalizability of the findings to approximately 28 OECD countries.

10.4.1 Comparing family policies in the Netherlands, Germany, France, the UK, and Japan

In Tables 10.2–10.6, results are shown describing the relationship between different kinds of family policies and the risk to become long-term NEET across the five countries: the Netherlands, Germany, France, the UK, and Japan.

As before, we present odds ratios where an estimate below 1 indicates a negative relationship and an estimate of 1 or above indicates a positive relationship. First, in Table 10.2, we focus on the length of maternity leave. We find that more weeks of maternity leave are positively correlated with the likelihood of becoming long-term NEET (Models 1–4; 1.824/1.421). This is in the opposite direction of what we expected in Hypothesis 12. Surprisingly, gender does not seem to significantly moderate this relationship

Table 10.2 Logistic regression: estimates of the relation between length of maternity leave and long-term NEETs (odds ratios)

	M1	M2	M3	M4
Length of maternity leave (weeks)	1.824★★★	1.293★	1.346★	1.421★★★
	(0.228)	(0.145)	(0.160)	(0.140)
Length of maternity leave (weeks) × female			0.945	
			(0.137)	
Length of maternity leave (weeks) × medium educated				0.909
				(0.101)
Length of maternity leave (weeks) × high educated				0.688★
				(0.122)
Control variables:				
Female (male = ref.)		1.803★★★	1.849★★★	1.799★★★
		(0.204)	(0.330)	(0.205)
Age (Age 16–19 = ref.)				
Age 20–24		2.902★★★	2.902★★★	2.781★★★
		(0.478)	(0.479)	(0.467)
Age 25–29		3.945★★★	3.937★★★	3.772★★★
		(0.491)	(0.472)	(0.347)
Completed education level (low = ref.)				
Medium		0.507★★★	0.508★★★	0.539★★★
		(0.037)	(0.038)	(0.065)
High		0.344★★★	0.344★★★	0.414★★★
		(0.071)	(0.071)	(0.093)
Numeracy score		0.452★★★	0.452★★★	0.448★★★
		(0.029)	(0.030)	(0.029)
Migration background (native = ref.)				
First-generation migrant		0.373★★	0.372★★	0.386★★
		(0.118)	(0.118)	(0.119)
Second-generation migrant		0.919	0.919	0.956
		(0.334)	(0.333)	(0.339)
Having children (no = ref.)		5.295★★★	5.318★★★	5.300★★★
		(1.050)	(1.110)	(1.085)
Parental education (both lower educated = ref.)				
At least one medium educated		0.721★	0.721★	0.737~
		(0.117)	(0.117)	(0.127)
At least one high educated		0.678	0.678	0.683
		(0.177)	(0.178)	(0.183)
Missing		0.767★	0.765★	0.762★
		(0.090)	(0.090)	(0.086)
Pseudo R^2	0.055	0.321	0.322	0.323
N country	5	5	5	5
N individual	7,689	7,689	7,689	7,689

~ $p<0.10$ ★ $p<0.05$, ★★ $p<0.01$, ★★★ $p<0.001$; Standard errors in parentheses.

Table 10.3 Logistic regression: estimates of the relation between length of parental leave and long-term NEETs (odds ratios)

	M1	M2	M3	M4
Length of parental leave with job protection (weeks)	0.700 (0.217)	0.846 (0.105)	0.935 (0.173)	0.862 (0.118)
Length of parental leave with job protection (weeks) × female			0.864 (0.091)	
Length of parental leave with job protection (weeks) × medium educated				0.950 (0.065)
Length of parental leave with job protection (weeks) × high educated				1.039 (0.194)
Control variables:				
Female (male = ref.)		1.823*** (0.203)	1.778*** (0.202)	1.821*** (0.205)
Age (age 16–19 = ref.)				
Age 20–24		2.977*** (0.485)	2.972*** (0.488)	2.996*** (0.459)
Age 25–29		3.919*** (0.469)	3.922*** (0.459)	3.949*** (0.509)
Completed education level (low = ref.)				
Medium		0.523*** (0.039)	0.522*** (0.038)	0.517*** (0.040)
High		0.369*** (0.078)	0.370*** (0.078)	0.373*** (0.063)
Numeracy score		0.432*** (0.038)	0.432*** (0.038)	0.432*** (0.039)
Migration background (native = ref.)				
First-generation migrant		0.359*** (0.102)	0.361*** (0.103)	0.358*** (0.099)
Second-generation migrant		0.882 (0.265)	0.875 (0.256)	0.876 (0.252)
Having children (no = ref.)		5.736*** (1.154)	5.699*** (1.162)	5.720*** (1.156)
Parental education (both lower educated = ref.)				
At least one medium educated		0.726~ (0.126)	0.725~ (0.126)	0.725~ (0.127)
At least one high educated		0.646~ (0.158)	0.644~ (0.158)	0.643~ (0.156)
Missing		0.807 (0.135)	0.808 (0.134)	0.803 (0.136)
Pseudo R^2	0.014	0.317	0.317	0.317
N country	5	5	5	5
N individual	7,689	7,689	7,689	7,689

~ $p<0.10$ ★ $p<0.05$, ★★ $p<0.01$, ★★★ $p<0.001$; Standard errors in parentheses.

Table 10.4 Logistic regression: relation between length of paid father-specific leave and long-term NEETs

	M1	M2	M3	M4
Length of paid father-specific leave (weeks)	0.603	0.923	0.653	0.638★
	(0.247)	(0.225)	(0.171)	(0.143)
Length of paid father-specific leave (weeks) × female			1.599★★★	
			(0.069)	
Length of paid father-specific leave (weeks) × medium educated				1.564★★★
				(0.085)
Length of paid father-specific leave (weeks) × high educated				2.094★★★
				(0.301)
Control variables:				
Female (male = ref.)		1.846★★★	2.128★★★	1.857★★★
		(0.212)	(0.203)	(0.226)
Age (age 16–19 = ref.)				
Age 20–24		3.065★★★	3.063★★★	2.882★★★
		(0.506)	(0.504)	(0.490)
Age 25–29		3.970★★★	3.934★★★	3.756★★★
		(0.474)	(0.438)	(0.340)
Completed education level (low = ref.)				
Medium		0.510★★★	0.511★★★	0.595★★★
		(0.043)	(0.044)	(0.038)
High		0.366★★★	0.365★★★	0.422★★★
		(0.081)	(0.080)	(0.066)
Numeracy score		0.439★★★	0.440★★★	0.442★★★
		(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.033)
Migration background (native = ref.)				
First-generation migrant		0.342★★★	0.344★★★	0.353★★★
		(0.103)	(0.103)	(0.104)
Second-generation migrant		0.780	0.772	0.778
		(0.279)	(0.267)	(0.265)
Having children (no = ref.)		5.855★★★	5.947★★★	5.916★★★
		(1.177)	(1.275)	(1.260)
Parental education (both lower educated = ref.)				
At least one medium educated		0.695★	0.693★	0.706★
		(0.118)	(0.116)	(0.122)
At least one high educated		0.625˜	0.619★	0.618★
		(0.154)	(0.146)	(0.147)
Missing		0.784˜	0.772˜	0.771★
		(0.109)	(0.103)	(0.100)
Pseudo R^2	0.021	0.315	0.317	0.320
N country	5	5	5	5
N individual	7,689	7,689	7,689	7,689

˜ $p<0.10$ ★ $p<0.05$, ★★ $p<0.01$, ★★★ $p<0.001$; Odds ratios; standard errors in parentheses.

Table 10.5 Logistic regression: relation between total length of paid maternity and parental leave and long-term NEETs

	M1	M2	M3	M4
Total length of paid maternity and parental leave (weeks)	0.579★	0.866	0.730★★★	0.727★★★
	(0.135)	(0.162)	(0.052)	(0.056)
Total length of paid maternity and parental leave (weeks) × female			1.277	
			(0.295)	
Total length of paid maternity and parental leave (weeks) × medium educated				1.774★
				(0.432)
Total length of paid maternity and parental leave (weeks) × high educated				1.210
				(0.326)
Control variables:				
Female (male = ref.)		1.831★★★	1.981★★★	1.829★★★
		(0.211)	(0.294)	(0.216)
Age (age 16–19 = ref.)				
Age 20–24		3.021★★★	3.032★★★	2.854★★★
		(0.468)	(0.465)	(0.484)
Age 25–29		3.916★★★	3.923★★★	3.661★★★
		(0.495)	(0.494)	(0.298)
Completed education level (low = ref.)				
Medium		0.505★★★	0.506★★★	0.546★★
		(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.110)
High		0.356★★★	0.356★★★	0.417★★★
		(0.087)	(0.086)	(0.098)
Numeracy score		0.441★★★	0.442★★★	0.441★★★
		(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.044)
Migration background (native = ref.)				
First-generation migrant		0.354★★★	0.354★★★	0.364★★★
		(0.110)	(0.109)	(0.109)
Second-generation migrant		0.816	0.823	0.857
		(0.280)	(0.284)	(0.294)
Having children (no = ref.)		5.813★★★	5.873★★★	5.922★★★
		(1.186)	(1.259)	(1.307)
Parental education (both lower educated = ref.)				
At least one medium educated		0.733★	0.732★	0.757~
		(0.110)	(0.110)	(0.119)
At least one high educated		0.673★	0.674★	0.673★
		(0.121)	(0.119)	(0.125)
Missing		0.804	0.802	0.811
		(0.128)	(0.129)	(0.126)
Pseudo R^2	0.028	0.316	0.317	0.319
N country	5	5	5	5
N individual	7,689	7,689	7,689	7,689

~ $p<0.10$ ★ $p<0.05$, ★★ $p<0.01$, ★★★ $p<0.001$; Odds ratios; standard errors in parentheses.

Table 10.6 Logistic regression: relation between childcare costs and long-term NEETs

	M1	M2	M3	M4
Childcare costs – couple with 2 children	1.618	1.224~	1.138	1.244~
	(0.475)	(0.127)	(0.193)	(0.156)
Childcare costs – couple with 2 children × female			1.111	
			(0.129)	
Childcare costs – couple with 2 children × medium educated				1.004
				(0.060)
Childcare costs – couple with 2 children × high educated				0.879
				(0.145)
Control variables:				
Female (male = ref.)		1.814★★★	1.767★★★	1.810★★★
		(0.202)	(0.203)	(0.201)
Age (age 16–19 = ref.)				
Age 20–24		2.942★★★	2.940★★★	2.930★★★
		(0.481)	(0.482)	(0.441)
Age 25–29		3.930★★★	3.939★★★	3.914★★★
		(0.477)	(0.469)	(0.482)
Completed education level (low = ref.)				
Medium		0.523★★★	0.522★★★	0.524★★★
		(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.043)
High		0.365★★★	0.365★★★	0.382★★★
		(0.078)	(0.078)	(0.067)
Numeracy score		0.436★★★	0.436★★★	0.435★★★
		(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.036)
Migration background (native = ref.)				
First-generation migrant		0.365★★★	0.366★★★	0.367★★★
		(0.104)	(0.106)	(0.101)
Second-generation migrant		0.911	0.908	0.919
		(0.297)	(0.293)	(0.293)
Having children (no = ref.)		5.571★★★	5.537★★★	5.555★★★
		(1.062)	(1.075)	(1.063)
Parental education (both lower educated = ref.)				
At least one medium educated		0.723~	0.722~	0.726~
		(0.132)	(0.132)	(0.136)
At least one high educated		0.649~	0.648~	0.650~
		(0.165)	(0.166)	(0.166)
Missing		0.795	0.797	0.791
		(0.128)	(0.128)	(0.129)
Pseudo R^2	0.027	0.318	0.319	0.319
N country	5	5	5	5
N individual	7,689	7,689	7,689	7,689

~ *p*<0.10 ★ *p*<0.05, ★★ *p*<0.01, ★★★ *p*<0.001; Odds ratios; standard errors in parentheses.

(Model 3). Model 4 shows that for highly educated young people, the relationship between the length of maternity leave and the risk of becoming long-term NEET is weakened (Model 4; 0.688). In other words, while youth in countries that offer more weeks of maternity leave have higher probabilities of reporting long-term NEET statuses, this effect is less pronounced for the highly educated.

Next, we look at the estimates of the length of parental leave with job protection in Table 10.3. While the estimates are in the expected direction (Hypothesis 12), it seems that the number of weeks of job-protected parental leave does not significantly affect the likelihood of becoming long-term NEET (Models 1–4). Additionally, the cross-level interactions with gender and education level do not show significant relationships (Model 3 and Model 4).

In Table 10.4, we look at the relationship between the length of paid father-specific leave within a country and the likelihood of becoming long-term NEET. Overall, Models 1–3 show that the length of paid father-specific leave is not significantly correlated to long-term NEET risks. However, females are more likely to become long-term NEET, and according to Model 3, this relationship becomes stronger for females as the number of paid father-specific leave increases within a country (OR = 1.599). This counter-intuitive finding may be driven by the fact that in our five countries, there is a great variation between short-term father-specific leave (France and the UK: 2 weeks) and long-term father-specific leave (Japan; 52).

When we turn to Model 4, we see that higher numbers of weeks of paid father-specific leave decrease the likelihood of becoming long-term NEET for young people (OR = 0.638). In addition, we find that this relationship is less strong for medium- and high-educated young people (OR = 1.675/2.094). This indicates that for the medium- and high-educated young people, the length of paid father-specific leave has less influence on their chances of becoming long-term NEET, while for the low-educated young people, the negative relationship between father-specific leave and NEET is stronger.

The relationship between the length of paid maternity and parental leave and long-term NEET is presented in Table 10.5. Here we see that the higher the number of weeks of paid maternity and parental leave within a country, the less likely young people are to become NEET (Model 1; OR = 0.589). While this is in line with our expectations formulated in Hypothesis 12, this estimate turns insignificant after controlling for the individual-level characteristics.

When we include the interaction with gender, the estimate of the total length of paid maternity and parental leave becomes significant again (OR = 0.730). However, we do not find statistical evidence for the cross-level interaction with gender. In Model 4, we included a cross-level interaction with education level. We find that the number of weeks of paid maternity and parental leave is negatively associated with the risk of becoming long-term NEET (OR = 0.727), but this relationship is stronger for low-educated young people than highly educated young people (OR = 1.774).

In Table 10.6, we show our results concerning the relationship between childcare costs (couples with two children) and the likelihood of becoming long-term NEET. We find that this relationship becomes significant when we control for individual-level characteristics in Model 2. We find that higher childcare costs are related to higher chances of becoming long-term NEET (Model 2; OR = 1.224). This is in line with our expectation in Hypothesis 13: In countries where childcare is more affordable, young people are less likely to become long-term NEET. We do not find statistical evidence for the cross-level interactions with gender and education level.

The control variables generally show the same results across our analyses. Women are more likely to become long-term NEET as compared to men. Having children increases the risk of becoming long-term NEET. Young people aged 20–29 are more likely to become long-term NEET than 16- to 19-year olds. Looking at education level, we find that young people with a medium or high education level have lower chances of becoming long-term NEET as compared to low educated young people, and that higher numeracy scores are associated with lower long-term NEET risks. In addition, young people with a migration background are less likely to become long-term NEET than their native-born counterparts. Also, young people with at least one medium- or highly educated parent are less likely to become long-term NEET.

10.4.2 Exploring the generalizability of conclusions: A cross-national analysis

In this section, we test whether the previous findings are generalizable to multilevel analyses based on a larger sample of OECD countries. We look at the extent to which family policies affect the chances of becoming long-term NEET in 28 OECD countries. We present the results of the multilevel logistic regression analyses in the margins plots in Figure 10.1. Consistent with the logistic regression analyses on data from the Netherlands, Germany, France, the UK, and Japan, we do not find a great deal of support for our hypotheses that family policies are associated with the likelihood of becoming long-term NEET. Analysing the different measures of leave schemes, we find that the length of maternity leave is significantly associated with long-term NEET risks. This means that the more weeks of maternity leave a woman receives in a country, the more likely young people are to become long-term NEET. This is in line with what we found in the logistic regression analyses based on our five key countries.

Second, we find that in countries with longer durations of paid father-specific leave, the likelihood of becoming long-term NEET is generally reduced, but for highly-educated young people, this relationship is less strong and even seems to become positive as the length of paid father-specific leave increases. Regarding the length of parental leave and total length of paid maternity and parental leave, we do not find any significant association with the likelihood
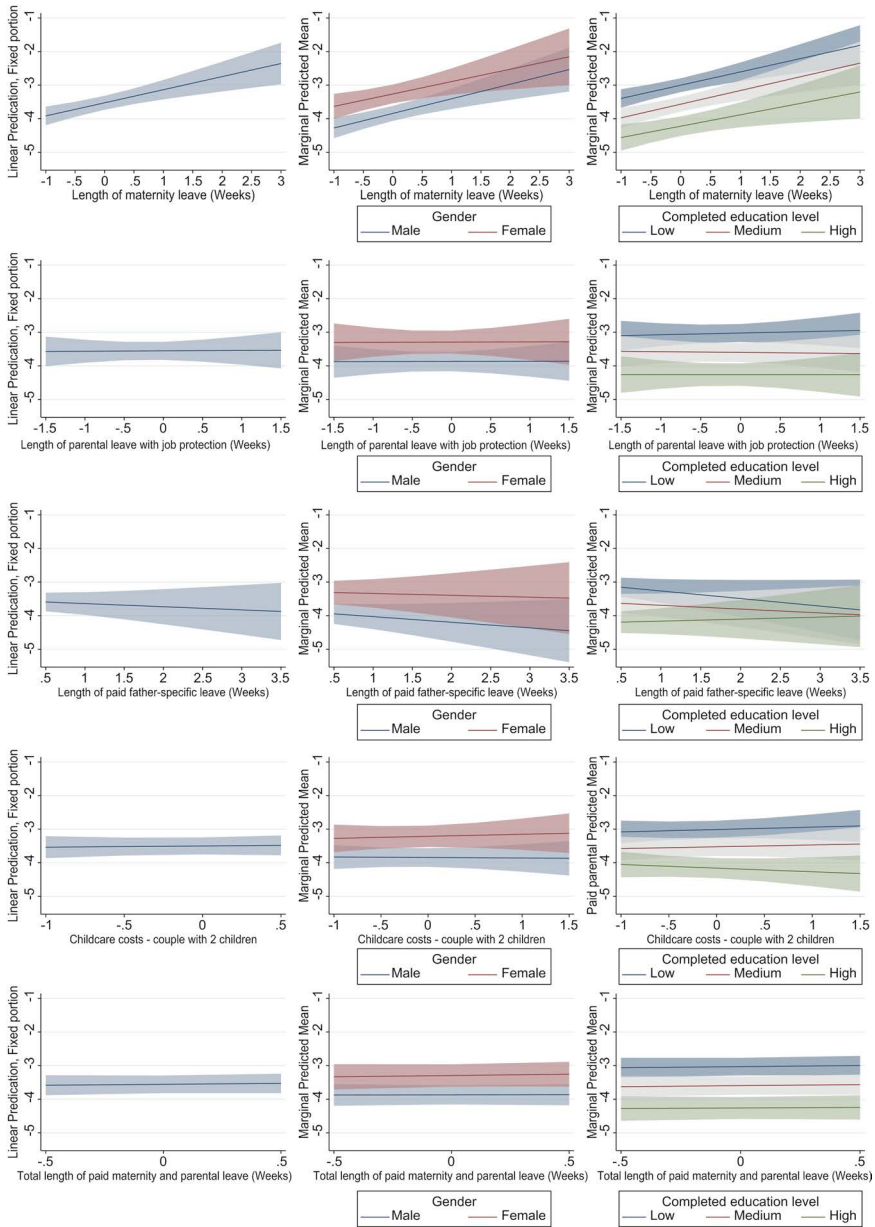
Figure 10.1 Margins plots after multilevel regressions on family policies on long–term NEETs.

of becoming long-term NEET. The cross-level interactions with gender and education level are not significant either. Furthermore, while childcare costs for couples do not seem to be directly related to the likelihood of becoming long-term NEET, we find that high educated young people are less likely to become NEET and that this relationship becomes more pronounced in countries with higher childcare costs.

10.5 Conclusion and discussion

In this chapter, we examined to what extent family policies are related to long-term NEET risks. We hypothesized that the length of leave schemes and the affordability of childcare services were important factors in predicting young peoples' NEET risks because they help parents reconcile their family obligations with work or education.

Concerning leave schemes, we expected that longer leave schemes within a country would be associated with lower NEET risks because this would give parents time to spend with their child without losing their attachment to the labour market. However, we found that young people living in countries where women had access to longer maternity leaves were more likely to become long-term NEET. This could be due to the use of overly long leaves that have a negative impact on education and labour market outcomes. For example, previous literature has shown that overly long leave schemes create more distance from the labour market due to human capital depreciation and experience loss (Pettit and Hook, 2005; Boeckmann, Misra, and Budig, 2014; Nieuwenhuis, Need, and Van der Kolk, 2017). This makes it more difficult for women to get back into employment or education after their leave.

Next, we found that the total length of paid maternity and parental leave was significantly related to lower NEET risks when we only examined the Netherlands, Germany, Japan, France, and the UK. However, when we included 20 additional countries, these results were not generalizable. Similar findings between our two types of analyses were found for the length of paid father-specific leave: In countries with longer durations of paid father-specific leave, the likelihood of becoming long-term NEET is reduced, but not for the highly educated young people. We also found that for females, the strength of the association with long-term NEET statuses increased with the duration of paid father-specific leave. However, this only held true for the analyses on the five key countries.

The other family policy that we expected to reconcile the conflict between parental obligations and work, or education, was the affordability of childcare costs. We expected that lower childcare costs would be related to lower long-term NEET risks. This is what we found in our analyses on the five countries, but this was not generalizable to the 28 countries. We did find that highly educated young people were less likely to become long-term NEET, and that this association became more pronounced in countries with higher childcare costs. However, childcare options also differ in both their

availability and social acceptability across countries, which may also impact these results.

To conclude, family policies seem to affect young peoples' long-term NEET risks differently than we thought they would. Our findings suggest that factors other than leave schemes and childcare costs might be more important in young people's decision-making processes. This may be because, while the legal limits differ between countries, social norms also play a strong role in shaping country differences. For example, in Germany, there is a strong belief that young children should be taken care of by their mother in their home until at least the age of one. In France, on the other hand, it is socially acceptable for mothers to place their young children in public childcare or in the care of an *assistante maternelle*, both of which are heavily subsidized by the government. These different social contexts have clear effects: Regardless of how many children they have or the ages of their children, French mothers are more likely to be employed and more likely to be employed full-time than German mothers (Fagnani, 2012). Social norms might thus also be impacting these relationships above and beyond the legal limits of leave schemes. Another potential weakness of these analyses is the fact that family policies are likely only important for young people with at least one child. We conducted our analyses on the whole sample of young people aged 16–29, but these policies may not be important in determining NEET statuses for the part of the sample of young people without children.