

# RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS N° 36

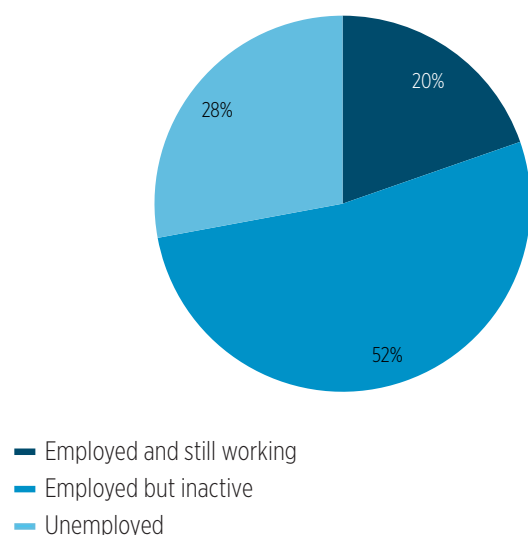
## DECREASED WORK ACTIVITY DURING PREGNANCY IN HUNGARY

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Hungarian pregnant women are entitled to maternity leave, which lasts for a total of 24 weeks and begins four weeks before the estimated date of childbirth at the earliest. However, the time when a mother quits working usually starts earlier in Hungary, often starting at the early stages of pregnancy. This is most likely provided by sick leave permission certified by a gynecologist or general practitioner. This trend keeps a large proportion of pregnant women away from the labor market and directs them to general social security benefits before their maternity leave starts.

We examine the incidence of this phenomenon using data from the first wave of the *Cohort '18 - Growing Up In Hungary*, the Hungarian birth cohort study, in which mothers were interviewed in the seventh month of their pregnancies. According to the results only one fifth of Hungarian pregnant women worked during the seventh month. The majority – more than half of the mothers – had jobs, but by the time of the interview, they were already at home.

**Figure 1.** Work activity of Hungarian women during the seventh month of pregnancy, 2018



Source: Cohort '18 - Growing Up In Hungary, 1<sup>st</sup> wave: period of pregnancy, N=8,287

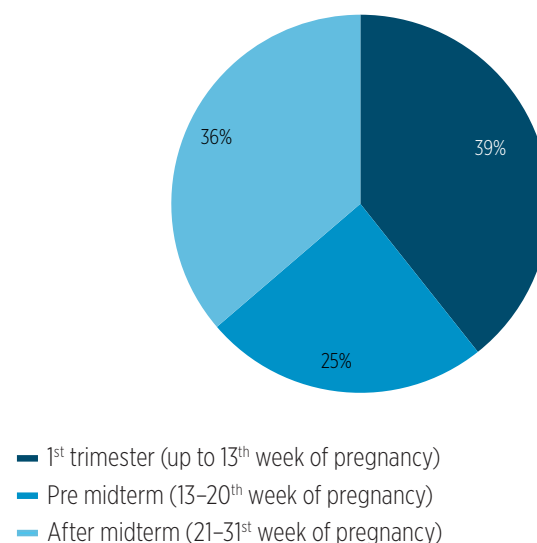
Among those, who have a permanent job but no longer work in their seventh month of pregnancy, three quarters receive the standard sickness benefit that all workers are entitled to in the event of illness. The others are mainly on maternity leave with a child born before.

Discontinuing work during pregnancy is not only common in Hungary, but occurs relatively early. Over one-third of employed mothers, who are pregnant and on sick pay, get inactive in the first trimester of pregnancy (before the 13<sup>th</sup> week) and 25 percent of them went to sick leave before the mid-term (between the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy, see [Figure 2.](#))

Who stays longer at work? These are primarily high-skilled women, who have less physically demanding jobs. Only 21% of those still active do physical work, while 39% of those, who are on sick leave, did physical work. This is also illustrated by the fact that 54% of those engaged in employment have a university degree, while only 39% of women on sick leave are degree holders.

**Figure 2.** Termination of active employment, 2018 (by the week of pregnancy)

(Among employed pregnant women on sick leave at the seventh month of pregnancy)



Source: Cohort '18 - Growing Up In Hungary, 1<sup>st</sup> wave: period of pregnancy, N= 3,059