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## Two Sides of a Coin: the Relationship Between Work Autonomy and Childbearing

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**Abstract:** This paper investigates the under-researched role of the three types of work autonomy – control over how, when and where to work – for both the entry into parenthood and the transition to a second child across different social strata in the United Kingdom. Over the past three decades, employees have gained increased work autonomy, a trend expected to persist with technological advancements. Work autonomy substantially affects the combination of paid work and family life. But its multifaceted impact on workers' fertility behavior, especially across different educational levels, has remained unclear. The study employs a sample of partnered women and men from UKHLS 2009-2019 data. Event-history models are estimated. We find no relationship between work autonomy and fertility behavior for men. Work autonomy is only weakly related to the childbearing behavior of highly-educated women, though mothers with a university degree who have control over their work time are more likely to have a second child. For lower-educated women work autonomy is often negatively related to childbearing. The study highlights the intricate link between work autonomy and fertility and emphasizes important social stratification in the impact of autonomy on individuals. Further research is needed to unravel the observed duality, i.e., understanding the challenges posed by work autonomy for fertility, especially among the lower-educated.

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**Keywords:** work autonomy, childbearing, fertility behavior, United Kingdom

**JEL codes:** J01, J11, J13

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## 1. Introduction

Over the past three decades, the world of work has undergone a profound transformation, fuelled by the rapid advancement of information and communication technologies (ICTs). The widespread adoption of ICTs in the labour market, along with the increasing availability of broadband internet, has facilitated novel modes of communication and collaboration that were once considered unattainable (OECD, 2019). Simultaneously, rapid globalization has intensified the pressure on companies to adapt and innovate, leading, among other things, to the implementation of high-commitment policies, such as the provision of work autonomy (Green, 2004; Piva & Vivarelli, 2017). Accordingly, many twenty-first-century workers have more control over their work arrangements, implying a paradigm shift in the way work is approached. The literature has identified three crucial types of control in this context: *job control*, autonomy over how work is done; *schedule control*, autonomy over work time; and *workplace control*, autonomy over where work is done (Karasek, 1979; Wheatley, 2017). In the UK – where the current study is located – around every fourth employee worked from home at least occasionally or was able to organize working hours in a flexible manner even before the Covid-19 pandemic. Over half of employees reported having some degree of control over how work is done (Eurostat, 2022a; Eurostat, 2022b; ONS 2022).

The widespread use of the three forms of autonomy in the workplace has the potential to significantly impact workers' fertility behavior by affecting the organization of their work and its compatibility with family life. The outcome of this influence remains, however, unclear. Yes, autonomy grants workers flexibility and may thus foster the integration of work and family responsibilities (Annink & Den Dulk, 2012; Chung & Van der Lippe, 2020). It could thereby facilitate childbearing. But autonomy could, also, result in blurred boundaries between work and family spheres and greater work demands: long working hours or/and greater pressure associated with work (Chung, 2022; Powell & Craig, 2015; Wood et al., 2019). This might, of course, impede fertility. Moreover, the relationship between autonomy and childbearing may depend on workers' education. Studies have shown that highly-skilled workers not only enjoy more autonomy at work. They also derive more benefits from autonomy in their daily lives compared to their lower-skilled counterparts (Lu et al., 2023). For example, they more often channel the time saved through increased autonomy toward pursuits aligned with leisure or personal goals (Chung & Booker, 2023). It is, thus, highly likely that work autonomy will provide highly-educated workers with a better work-life balance, thereby improving their opportunities for having children compared to lower educated workers.

Despite the number of workers with work autonomy has grown rapidly, extending to a substantial portion of the population in reproductive age, empirical evidence on the relationship between work autonomy and childbearing is surprisingly scarce. Studies tend to focus more on fertility intentions than on actual behavior, often conceptualizing only one type of autonomy at a time. For example, Begall and Mills (2011) found a positive association between job control and intentions to have a second child among mothers in Europe. Similarly, Sinyavskaya and Billingsley (2015) observed a positive link between schedule control and second-birth intentions among mothers in Russia. On a different note, Osiewalska et al. (2022) looked into the role of workplace autonomy in fertility behavior. This study found that working from home is negatively associated with the transition to motherhood and unrelated to the progression to a second child. In summary, to the best of our knowledge, no previous study has thoroughly examined the role of all three types of autonomy in fertility behavior, nor have they dug down into the socio-economic differences in this relationship.

We address this gap by conducting a comprehensive study on how the level and the form of work autonomy relates to birth transitions in the United Kingdom. We chose the UK as it has had one of the highest levels of work autonomy in Europe (Eurostat, 2022a). Our focus includes both the entry into parenthood and the transition to a second child across different social strata. Specifically, we investigate: (1) couples in which a woman or her partner has a high level of job, schedule or workplace autonomy are more or less inclined to have children, and (2) whether this relationship is influenced by educational level. Within our study we specifically focus on the period prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, covering the years from 2009 to 2019. This deliberate choice allows us to eliminate the confounding effects of the pandemic on both the level of worker's autonomy and fertility: confounding effects include but are not limited to school closures and lockdowns.

By investigating the role of work autonomy in fertility behavior our study makes a timely and highly relevant contribution to family science and to fertility research in particular. The present research has identified work and family incompatibilities as an important barrier to family formation, responsible, among other things, for the decline in fertility in advanced economies in the second half of the twentieth century (Brewster & Rindfuss, 2000; Engelhardt et al., 2004). More autonomy over how, where and when work is done will likely affect these incompatibilities and influence fertility behavior, though the direction of this influence has not been thoroughly investigated. Furthermore, work autonomy, even if becoming increasingly common, is not available to all social groups equally and not all workers experience its benefits to the same extent. This may potentially lead to work-autonomy-related inequalities in the

conditions for having children. In this study, we address these pressing issues, first by outlining the theoretical mechanisms and next by providing empirical evidence on how different types of work autonomy relate to childbearing, paying special attention to the socio-economic differences in these relationships. Opportunities to organize work time and place in a flexible way and to decide how work is done are widely available, at least to some social groups. Understanding whether having children becomes easier or more challenging in these new circumstances is pivotal.

## **2. Background**

### ***2.1 Paid work and family careers***

Difficulties with combining paid work and care pose significant challenges to young and mid-age adults, contributing to fertility postponement and even decline. A large body of research has shown that women and men postpone the transition to their first child until they have secured a stable position in the labor market (Ní Bhrolcháin & Beaujouan, 2012; Vignoli et al., 2020; Wood & Neels, 2017), and that tensions in combining paid work with care discourage couples from having another child (Goldscheider et al., 2015; Kravdal, 1994). For these reasons young adults planning to have children may be searching for a better reconciliation of paid work and family life.

Work autonomy has emerged as one of the most prominent job resources in this context (Karasek, 1979; Lu et al., 2023; Voydanoff, 2004). By providing employees with greater control over how, when and where they work, autonomy may create new opportunities for effectively combining work and family duties. In some cases it may eliminate, at least partly, the negative consequences of work-family conflict for workers and improving conditions for family formation. However, it is important to acknowledge that autonomy can also bring new and sometimes unforeseen challenges. These may intensify work-family conflict. The benefits and challenges present in an individual case depend on the type of work autonomy.

### ***2.2 Work autonomy: work and family reconciliation***

Work autonomy is a multidimensional construct with three main forms in the literature: job control, schedule control, and workplace control (Wheatley, 2017). *Job control* reflects autonomy over tasks and their order, providing workers with influence and decision-making power in their work pace and manner. *Schedule control* pertains to autonomy over the timing of work, namely the hours workers start or finish their jobs. Lastly, *workplace control* extends beyond the timing and manner of work to encompass the freedom to choose the physical location of work, including work from home.

Each dimension of autonomy provides distinct contexts for work-family reconciliation. Job control allows individuals to adjust the order and intricacy of job tasks. This is done according to current family or personal circumstances and may lead to reduced stress and lower work-family conflict (Grönlund, 2007). Job control also elevates the perception of being valued at work (van der Zwan et al., 2020; Wheatley, 2017), and increases job satisfaction and work commitment (Thompson & Prottas, 2006). At the same time, job control implies larger responsibility for work outcomes (Van Echtelt et al., 2009). It may thus lead to longer, more intense work (Wood et al., 2019), and, consequently, increased work-family conflict (Gallie & Russell, 2009; Haines et al., 2013).

Schedule control contributes to work-family reconciliation by facilitating effective time management around family needs, while maintaining a physical separation between paid work and family domains. It has been primarily associated with improved work-life balance, especially among mothers (Annink & Den Dulk, 2012) and those with a heavy burden of unpaid labor (Jung Jang et al., 2012; Lyness et al., 2012). However, flexible schedules may also imply employer expectations for constant availability beyond regular working hours, leading to work intensification, unpaid overtime (Chung & Van Der Horst, 2020; Peetz & Allan, 2005) and, consequently, to an increased mental load and self-exploitation (Kim et al., 2020; Lott, 2020). Finally, workplace control, and work from home in particular, facilitates the integration of work and family responsibilities within the same physical space. It enables workers to save time by eliminating or reducing commuting, multitasking, and minimising interruptions from the workplace (Hill et al., 2003). It promotes the flexible organisation of work around family obligations, thus lowering work-family conflict (Chung & Van der Lippe, 2020; Felstead et al., 2002). But it can also result in the blurring of the boundaries between paid work and family life due to the absence of physical boundaries between the workplace and home (Demerouti et al., 2014) with work, say, extending late into the evening (Hill et al., 2003; Powell & Craig, 2015). Particularly for women working from home, expectations of increased household chores and family responsibilities may lead to a higher overall workload compared to women working outside the home (Chung & Booker, 2023).

### ***2.3 Work autonomy and childbearing: intersections with gender and parity***

Given the numerous consequences the three types of autonomy may have on workers' lives, it is reasonable to expect associations with fertility. The direction of these relationships, however, is not entirely clear and may, in addition, vary by gender and parity.

Childless women with work autonomy may be more likely to enter motherhood, seeing job, schedule and workplace autonomy as advantageous assets in balancing work and future

caregiving. On the other hand, women who have access to work autonomy may, alternatively, delay entry into motherhood. This scenario unfolds when the price for being autonomous involves higher work intensity and constant availability (Kvande, 2009; Van Echtelt et al., 2009). This dynamic could also materialize in organizations offering autonomy alongside a steep career trajectory. In such instances, women may be enticed to leverage autonomy to optimize work efforts and so swiftly ascend the professional ladder before embarking on motherhood. They, therefore, minimize parenting opportunity costs through delayed childbearing (Kahn et al., 2014).

In contrast to childless women, mothers with access to work autonomy are already well-informed about what being autonomous means for combining paid work and caregiving. Despite potentially experiencing blurred boundaries between work and family life, they can still derive benefits from work autonomy in their daily efforts to balance work and family duties. Family reasons appear to be the primary motivator for mothers to choose autonomy (Chung & Van der Lippe, 2020). We might assume, then, that the overall impact of autonomy on maternal well-being is likely perceived as being positive. Indeed, research consistently indicates that, notwithstanding its drawbacks, autonomy among mothers is generally associated with lower work-family conflict, reduced pressure, and a diminished mental load (Hilbrecht et al., 2008; Jung Jang et al., 2012; Voydanoff, 2004). This positive relationship is primarily attributed to the increased flexibility to align work with family demands or the alleviation of time constraints through multitasking or the elimination of commuting. Consequently, through alleviated work-family reconciliation, autonomy holds the potential to increase the likelihood of mothers having another child (Begall & Mills, 2011).

Finally, men, whether they are fathers or childless, frequently employ job, schedule, and workplace autonomy for performance-related purposes (Chung & Van der Lippe, 2020; Munsch, 2016; Powell & Craig, 2015). They may leverage autonomy to prioritize and focus on their professional responsibilities, to prolong their working hours, avoid workplace interruptions or to increase income. Moreover, even if men use flexible working arrangements for caregiving purposes, their primary objective is often to support the career advancement of their female partners rather than to facilitate family development (Langner, 2018). Consequently, a male partner's work autonomy, given that it is less important for family-related responsibilities, may matter less in a couple's childbearing decisions compared to women's autonomy.



#### ***2.4 Work autonomy and childbearing: social disparities***

Work autonomy may also be linked differently with childbearing for highly- and lower-educated workers, given distinct job demands and types of job security (Lu et al., 2023; Schieman et al., 2009). Highly-educated individuals are more likely to work in high-status occupations where various types of work autonomy are provided to enhance job satisfaction, promote job attachment, and retain them in their roles (Green, 2004; Piva & Vivarelli, 2017). For them, autonomy signifies being valued and distinguished. Despite the accompanying high-job demands and complexity typical of these professions, studies demonstrate that work autonomy serves as an important buffer against stress and work-family conflict (Kelly et al., 2014; Schieman & Glavin, 2011). With greater resources than lower-educated counterparts, highly-educated individuals can manage demands at home by outsourcing tasks or by negotiating a fair division of unpaid labor with their partners (De Ruijter & Van der Lippe, 2007; Schober, 2013). This allows them to preserve time saved through autonomy for personal needs and leisure pursuits (Clawson & Gerstel, 2014). This contributes to rest and reinvigoration after their often demanding jobs, ultimately increasing the likelihood of birth transitions (Jarosz et al., 2023).

The situation may be different for low-skilled individuals. They are less likely to be entitled to any work autonomy in general. If they do have autonomy, it is often in the context of precarious, temporary jobs in which controlling tasks, working hours and work location signifies being left alone and fully responsible for the work outcome (Savage et al., 2013). This responsibility can increase mental load and job-related stress (Bhattacharya & Ray, 2021; Lu et al., 2023). Furthermore, unlike their better-educated counterparts, those with lower educational attainments rarely use the time gained through work autonomy for rest or leisure. Instead, they tend to exhaust their work autonomy to earn additional income, i.e. by taking overtime hours or an additional job (Clawson & Gerstel, 2014) or to manage childcare and routine household chores (Chung & Booker, 2023; Stanczyk et al., 2017). Consequently, lower-educated employees who have autonomy may experience more exhaustion than those without autonomy at work. This sense of being overwhelmed may, in turn, reduce the likelihood of having a child (Jarosz et al., 2023), especially among low-skilled women, who are more often confined by traditional gender roles than their better-educated counterparts (Dumont et al., 2012).

All in all, better educated individuals experience greater advantages and fewer disadvantages of job, schedule, and workplace autonomy compared to their less educated counterparts. Consequently, we may anticipate a more positive (or at least less negative) link



between the three types of autonomy and birth transitions for highly-educated individuals than for their lower-educated peers.

### **3. UK Context**

Our study was conducted in the United Kingdom (UK), where the total fertility rate (TFR) declined from a peak of 1.90 in the years 2009-2012 to 1.63 in 2019, primarily due to a decrease in first birth rates (Ermisch, 2021). Despite relatively high employment, with slightly more than 80% of childless women and men aged 20 to 49 employed in 2019, challenges in combining paid work and care persist. In that year, 74% of mothers were employed (compared to 92% of fathers), and nearly half worked part-time (Eurostat, 2022c, 2022d). Although women are entitled to a fifty-two-week maternity leave and eighteen-week parental leave, only the first six weeks are compensated at 90% of pre-birth earnings, whereas the remaining weeks are paid at a flat rate or left unpaid (GOV.UK, 2022b). Fathers rarely make use of the leave entitlements (Kaufman, 2018). Moreover, the UK's public childcare services are not always easily accessible, and private childcare is costly (Yerkes & Javornik, 2019).

In response to the challenges of combining paid work and care the government implemented a flexible work policy in 2003 (GOV.UK, 2022a). It allows employees to request autonomy, specifically through flexible work schedules or working from home. Indeed, the UK is among the European countries with the highest levels of work autonomy. In 2019, 26% of workers worked from home at least occasionally (Eurostat, 2022b) and 29% had flexible working hours (ONS, 2020). Notably, these proportions characterized the UK as far back as the late 1990s. Additionally, job control is also widespread in the country. Nearly 60% of workers have at least some level of autonomy over tasks and work content in 2019 (Eurostat, 2022a).

### **4. Data and Method**

#### ***4.1 Data and sample***

We investigated the links between work autonomy and childbearing with the Understanding Society (UKHLS) data – an annual longitudinal study that interviews members of approximately 40,000 households (ISER, 2022). We covered the period between 2009 and 2019 (waves 1 to 10) and focused on women at reproductive age (18-44) living in coresident unions, and their partners. We limited the analysis to first and second births and included only women for whom we had an adequate number of observations to lag the explanatory variables with respect to the birth of a child.

Our initial sample consisted of 2,735 childless women and 2,774 one-time mothers. The number of third births was not sufficient for a reliable analysis. Subsequently, we created two event-history subgroups: childless women for the transition to a first birth (7,788 women-years) and

one-time mothers for the transition to a second birth (7,206 women-years). We observed these women either until the birth of a child or, if no birth occurred, until their last survey participation or the end of the partnership (whichever came first). If a woman entered into a new union, she was reintroduced to the sample. A woman included in the subsample of childless women, for whom a first birth was observed, was then included in a subsample of one-time mothers. Out of this initial sample we selected cases with complete information on autonomy for both the woman (excluding 210 childless women and 134 mothers) and her partner (excluding 320 childless women and 368 mothers), as well as other moderating and control variables, enumerated in the paragraphs that follow (excluding 67 childless women and 177 mothers). Our final sample consisted of 2,138 childless women (6,132 woman-years) and 2,095 mothers (5,281 woman-years). Within this sample there were 805 first and 902 second births.

#### **4.2 Measures of autonomy**

Our study employs three measures of work autonomy among employees, namely his and her job control, schedule control, and workplace control. Each of them captures perceived autonomy, i.e., own assessment of the level of control over some aspects of paid work. Job control was measured through four questions about the degree of influence over task selection, task order, work pace, and work manner: *In your current job, how much influence do you have over: what tasks you do in your job (1); the order in which you carry out tasks (2); the pace at which you work (3); how you do your work (4)*. Response options range from “none” to “a lot” and are aggregated into a composite index with a high degree of internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha of around 0.85). We categorized employed respondents into three levels of job control: *Low* (none or little control), *Medium* (some control), and *High* (a lot of control). Schedule control was measured with a single question that asks employees about the degree of control over start and finish times: *In your current job, how much influence do you have over the time you start or finish your working day*. Response options are, again, recoded into three categories: *Low, Medium, High*.

Workplace control was operationalized as the perceived accessibility and usage of working from home. We employed two questions to construct this measure. The first asked employees about the availability of regular work from home: *If you personally needed any, which of the following arrangements are available at your workplace? To work from home on a regular basis*, with possible answers including *Yes* or *No*. The second question asked about current use: *Do you currently work in any of these ways? To work from home on a regular basis*, with answers, again, *Yes* or *No*. Based on these two questions we classify workplace

control into three categories: *Onsite* (no access to work from home), *Irregular* (access but irregular or no use), and *Regular* (regular use of work from home).

In UKHLS, the three measures of work autonomy were collected every second wave, starting with wave 2. We imputed missing data in intermediate waves using the nearest wave, but only if one had not changed a job or employer between the two waves. As such, our imputation strategy was based on the assumption that work autonomy remained unchanged when job or employer transitions were not made. For cases where one had changed a job or employer, missing values were imputed through linear bootstrapping. This accounted for less than 8% of all values. We performed robustness checks to confirm the reliability of our imputation strategy (for details see robustness checks section).

Work autonomy was assessed only for employees. Self-employed and individuals not working were considered in our models as two distinct categories.

### 4.3 Other variables

Following our theoretical model, we include women's and men's educational attainment (*Tertiary* encompassing higher degree; and *Below tertiary* including A levels, general secondary education or below). Those who are still in education were not selected as a separate category due to a limited number of people who are still studying in our sample of couples (less than 5% among childless and less than 2% among parents). Education, besides being an independent socioeconomic determinant of fertility, may act as a potential moderator of the link between work autonomy and childbearing. Moreover, accounting for education is crucial as highly-educated individuals are likely overrepresented among those who are entitled to high levels of autonomy. The inclusion of education in our models allowed us to rule out the possibility that any observed link between autonomy and childbearing was driven by educational attainment and not by autonomy *per se* (something similar is true of occupation, for more see our Robustness checks section).

Furthermore, to account for the possibility of self-selection bias wherein couples who prioritize family planning may choose jobs that provide greater autonomy, we controlled for women's family orientation (as determined by this question: *How important is the family to your sense of who you are?*). As family orientation data were collected in every third wave, we substituted missing data with the nearest non-missing value.

We further included several control variables in all models, including women's age (18-24; 25-29; 30-34; 35-39; 40-44), her ethnicity (*British/Irish; Asian; Indian; Black; Other white; Other*) and general health (*Excellent/Very good; Good; Fair/Poor*), partnership status (*Cohabiting; Married*), time period (2009-2012 for economic recession; 2013-2016 for pre-

Brexit referendum; and 2017-2019 for the period after the Brexit referendum), and male partner's income quartile. For first-time mothers, we also include the age of the first child in years (0-1; 2-3; 4-6; 7 or more) and a dummy variable indicating the use of external childcare (*Do you ever use any type of (external) childcare for your child /-ren?*). Summary statistics of all variables used in this analysis can be found in the Appendix: Table A1.

#### 4.4 Modeling strategies

Our event of interest is the first or the second childbirth. We employed random-effect complementary log-log (cloglog) models individually for the transition to the first and second birth. Random-effects account for the correlation between panel observations clustered for the individual (Hartzel et al., 2001), whereas the cloglog specification is preferred over the logit or probit for rare events (Mills, 2010). All of our main explanatory variables and control covariates were lagged as the birth happens later than the decision to have a child was made. We lagged them by a year if the woman was not pregnant in the wave preceding childbirth or two years if the woman was already pregnant in the wave before childbirth and this pregnancy resulted in a live birth.

Our empirical analysis consisted of two parts that were applied separately for first and second births. In the first part, we focused on examining the relationship between his and her autonomy and birth risk. We estimated three models for the first birth (M1a-c) and three for the second birth (M2a-c), introducing each type of work autonomy separately to avoid the collinearity (correlation between the three types of autonomy reaches 0.7). In other words, our models incorporated a woman's and her partner's job control (subscript a), schedule control (b), or workplace control (c), and all the control variables specified in the previous section.

The second part of our analysis focused on establishing potential social disparities in the link between the three types of women's and men's autonomy and birth risks. We accomplished this by interacting each type of work autonomy with educational level. In models M3a-c (first birth) and M4a-c (second birth), we introduced the interaction between a woman's work autonomy and her education. Similarly, in models M5a-c (first birth) and M6a-c (second birth), we included the interaction between the man's work autonomy and his education. For alternative analytical strategies, refer to the *Robustness checks* subsection.

For simplicity, we relied our inference on predicted birth probabilities (plotted in Figures 1-4). To compare the predicted probabilities across different categories of work autonomy, we computed 83% confidence intervals as it has been demonstrated by Austin and Hux (2002) that a difference between two predicted probabilities should be considered significant at 0.05 level if the 83% confidence intervals do not overlap.

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Descriptives

In our sample, women more often than their male partners did not work for pay, especially when they had children (Appendix, Table A2). Women were also more rarely self-employed. Regarding work autonomy, there was minimal variation in job, schedule, and workplace control based on gender and parenthood status. Though all types of autonomy were slightly more common among men than among women (Appendix, Table A3). Job control was the most common type of autonomy among both childless individuals and first-time parents. About two in five women and men on average exhibited high and around one third on average medium levels of job control over the period they were observed (2009-2019). Schedule control was the next common work autonomy with around one quarter of employees exhibiting high and another one quarter medium levels of its use, with men slightly outnumbering women. Work from home was much rarer in the period of our observation: it was a regular option for 8% of childless woman and first-time mothers, and 11% of childless men and first-time fathers. Irregular home-based work was slightly more common. This was employed by 16% of childless woman and men and 11-12% of parents. These shares are quite consistent with official statistics (Eurostat, 2022a, 2022b). Consistent with past research (Lu et al., 2023; Wheatley, 2017), we also found highly-educated workers to be more often entitled to work autonomy (Appendix, Table A3), though the differences across education levels were not very large, especially for job or schedule controls. The most significant disparities were observed for workplace autonomy, with highly-educated individuals being almost twice as likely to be eligible for regular work-from-home than their lower-educated counterparts. These patterns held for both childless individuals and parents within our sample.

### 5.2 Birth transitions and work autonomy

In this section, we present findings from our basic models for first and second births (M1-2a-c, Table 1). These evaluated the associations between different types of women's and men's work autonomy and birth transitions. We visualized the predicted probabilities in Figures 1-2. Our findings indicated that the association between women's work autonomy and childbearing was contingent on gender and parity. For women, all three types of women's work autonomy – job, schedule, or workplace control – exhibited a negative correlation with first birth transitions (M1a-c, Table 1). Specifically, childless women with high levels of job or schedule control or those engaged in irregular work from home were more inclined to postpone motherhood compared to employed women without these autonomies. Consequently, they faced the lowest

probability of having a first child among employed women, comparable to those observed for self-employed or childless women who were not working (Figure 1A, top panel).

In contrast to childless women, among first-time mothers, we detected either a non-significant or a weakly positive association between their autonomy and second birth progression. The levels of job or workplace control did not significantly differentiate the probability of a second birth (M2a, M2c, Table 1). However, having high levels of schedule control was weakly associated (p-value of .10, M2b, Table 1) with an increased risk of transitioning to a second child compared to women without such autonomy. Notably, this association got stronger for dual-earning couples (see *Robustness checks*).

With regard to a male partner's work autonomy and its role in childbirth risk, our analysis did not reveal any significant association between a man's job, schedule, or workplace autonomy and the likelihood of having a first (Figure 1B, top panel) or second child (Figure 1B, bottom panel). However, interestingly, we observed that couples in which the male partner worked from home were less likely to progress to a second child compared to those couples where the man worked onsite, was self-employed, or was not working at all. This pattern remained consistent for both regular and irregular home-based working male partners. But it was significant only for irregulars.

### ***5.3 Social disparities in the relationship between autonomy and birth transitions***

It emerged, however, that the relationships between woman's work autonomy and birth transitions varied by education (see Figure 2 for predicted probabilities and Table A4 in the Appendix for full model estimates). As expected, we found that the associations between work autonomy and birth risks in most cases were less negative (or more positive) for higher-educated than for lower-educated women. First, for childless lower-educated women we observed strong negative correlation between irregular work from home and the transition to motherhood. Such an association was not significant among their better-educated counterparts (as depicted in Figure 2A, top panel). Second, for less-educated mothers, the association between schedule control and the risks of a second birth was insignificant, and the relationship between workplace control and second births was distinctly negative. Conversely, among highly-educated mothers, we observed that schedule control was positively associated, though workplace control showed no significant relationship with their transition to a second child (Figure 2A, bottom panel). Likewise, job control had a negative relationship with the risk of a second birth among low-educated mothers, but the same association for better-educated women was insignificant. The only finding that contrasted with this pattern (less negative / more positive relationship between work autonomy and birth risk) was the negative association



between job control and the transition to motherhood among tertiary-educated women. This was insignificant among the lower-educated (Figure 2A, top panel).

For men, we did not find any significant social gradient in the relationship between work autonomy and first or second births (Figure 2B and Appendix, M5a-M6c). This means that the previously identified weak or non-existent association between a male partner's job, schedule, or workplace control and the likelihood of having a child remained consistent regardless of the male partner's education level (Figure 2B).

#### **5.4 Robustness checks**

We considered several additional models in order to verify the robustness of our results to model specification. First, we explored the potential mediating role of women's and their partner's work autonomy by incorporating them separately into our basic models. There were no alterations in our findings (Appendix, Table A5). Second, couples in which both partners are employed may need autonomy more than couples where only one partner participates in the labor market. This has the potential to alter our findings. However, using a sample of dual-earning couples we obtained results very similar to those from the entire sample, but with slightly enhanced positive association between women's schedule control and second birth risk (risk ratio of 1.22, p-value of 0.07; Appendix, Table A6). Further, as occupation may determine the level of workers' autonomy, we explored the possibility that our results are driven by occupation and not by autonomy *per se*. To this end, we included occupational group (*Professionals / Managers (1); Technicians / Associate Professionals / Clerks (2); Other (3)*) as a control to our models and re-evaluated them on a sample of dual-earner couples. This did not lead to a significant change in our findings, but the association between mother's schedule control and the risk of a second birth strengthened again (risk ratio of 1.25, p-value of 0.05, Appendix, Table A6). Finally, we made several imputations of missing data to our measures of job, schedule and workplace autonomy in order to assess how much the imputed values impact our results. We allowed for different imputations (bootstrapping, imputations up and down), and the results hold (these are available upon request).



Table 1. Estimates of the Random-Effects cloglog Model on the Probability of First and Second Births, UK 2009–19

<i>Predictors</i>	First births						Second births					
	M1a:		M1b:		M1c:		M2a:		M2b:		M2c:	
	Job control		Schedule control		Workplace control		Job control		Schedule control		Workplace control	
	<i>RR</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>RR</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>RR</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>RR</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>RR</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>RR</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	0.26	0.00	0.25	0.00	0.26	0.00	0.27	0.00	0.23	0.00	0.26	0.00
Her age (ref. 30-34)												
18-24	0.82	0.14	0.83	0.17	0.82	0.15	1.09	0.52	1.08	0.55	1.07	0.59
25-29	0.84	0.06	0.84	0.07	0.84	0.07	1.01	0.88	1.02	0.85	1.01	0.92
35-39	0.54	0.00	0.54	0.00	0.54	0.00	0.66	0.00	0.64	0.00	0.65	0.00
40 or more	0.09	0.00	0.09	0.00	0.09	0.00	0.12	0.00	0.11	0.00	0.11	0.00
Her ethnicity												
Asian	0.48	0.01	0.49	0.01	0.48	0.01	0.92	0.63	0.91	0.62	0.91	0.62
Indian	0.98	0.89	0.98	0.91	0.95	0.74	0.82	0.11	0.81	0.10	0.80	0.09
Black	0.74	0.28	0.75	0.32	0.75	0.32	1.59	0.02	1.59	0.02	1.59	0.02
Other white	0.83	0.30	0.84	0.35	0.85	0.35	0.64	0.01	0.63	0.01	0.64	0.01
Other	0.52	0.09	0.56	0.15	0.55	0.13	1.11	0.66	1.13	0.62	1.12	0.65
Partnership status (ref. Married)												
Cohabiting	0.36	0.00	0.36	0.00	0.36	0.00	0.83	0.03	0.83	0.04	0.82	0.02
Period (ref. 2009-2012)												
2013-2016	0.99	0.95	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.99	0.95	0.45	0.96	0.61	0.96	0.59
2017-2019	0.72	0.02	0.73	0.03	0.73	0.02	0.51	0.00	0.52	0.00	0.52	0.00
Her family orientation (ref. Other)												
Very high	1.46	0.00	1.45	0.00	1.42	0.00	1.04	0.69	1.04	0.66	1.03	0.75
Her health status (ref. Very good)												
Good	1.06	0.53	1.07	0.48	1.06	0.52	0.91	0.22	0.91	0.25	0.91	0.22
Fair/Poor	0.58	0.00	0.58	0.00	0.57	0.00	0.61	0.00	0.62	0.00	0.61	0.00
Her educational level (ref. Below tertiary)												
Tertiary	1.04	0.69	1.04	0.65	1.06	0.51	1.13	0.12	1.14	0.11	1.13	0.11
His educational level (ref. Below tertiary)												
Tertiary	0.90	0.24	0.91	0.27	0.92	0.32	1.16	0.05	1.14	0.10	1.17	0.05
His income (ref. 1st quartile)												
2nd quartile	1.09	0.47	1.10	0.43	1.12	0.36	1.07	0.51	1.06	0.57	1.07	0.52
3rd quartile	0.94	0.64	0.96	0.76	0.98	0.88	0.93	0.51	0.92	0.47	0.94	0.59
4th quartile	1.22	0.11	1.24	0.10	1.28	0.06	1.08	0.49	1.07	0.56	1.11	0.35
First child's age (ref. 2-3)												
0-1							0.90	0.22	0.89	0.18	0.89	0.20
4-6							0.82	0.06	0.82	0.07	0.82	0.07
7 or more							0.31	0.00	0.31	0.00	0.31	0.00

Use of external childcare							
(ref. No)							
<i>Yes</i>				1.37	0.00	1.37	0.00
Her job control (ref. Low)							
<i>Medium</i>				0.96	0.67		
<i>High</i>				0.88	0.20		
<i>Self-employed</i>				0.69	0.07		
<i>Not working</i>				1.15	0.21		
His job control (ref. Low)							
<i>Medium</i>				0.88	0.22		
<i>High</i>				0.97	0.80		
<i>Self-employed</i>				1.13	0.31		
<i>Not working</i>				1.20	0.25		
Her schedule control (ref. Low)							
<i>Medium</i>						1.17	0.12
<i>High</i>						1.18	0.10
<i>Self-employed</i>						0.80	0.27
<i>Not working</i>						1.32	0.01
His schedule control (ref. Low)							
<i>Medium</i>						0.94	0.50
<i>High</i>						1.03	0.74
<i>Self-employed</i>						1.17	0.15
<i>Not working</i>						1.24	0.16
Her workplace control (ref. Onsite work)							
<i>Irregular home-based work</i>				0.72	0.01		0.90 0.41
<i>Regular home-based work</i>				0.84	0.29		1.04 0.78
<i>Self-employed</i>				0.64	0.03		0.73 0.11
<i>Not working</i>				0.76	0.05		1.22 0.03
His workplace control (ref. Onsite work)							
<i>Irregular home-based work</i>				0.89	0.35		0.76 0.03
<i>Regular home-based work</i>				0.92	0.58		0.88 0.35
<i>Self-employed</i>				1.13	0.34		1.13 0.23
<i>Not working</i>				0.76	0.13		1.23 0.16
Observations	6132	6132	6132	5281	5281	5281	

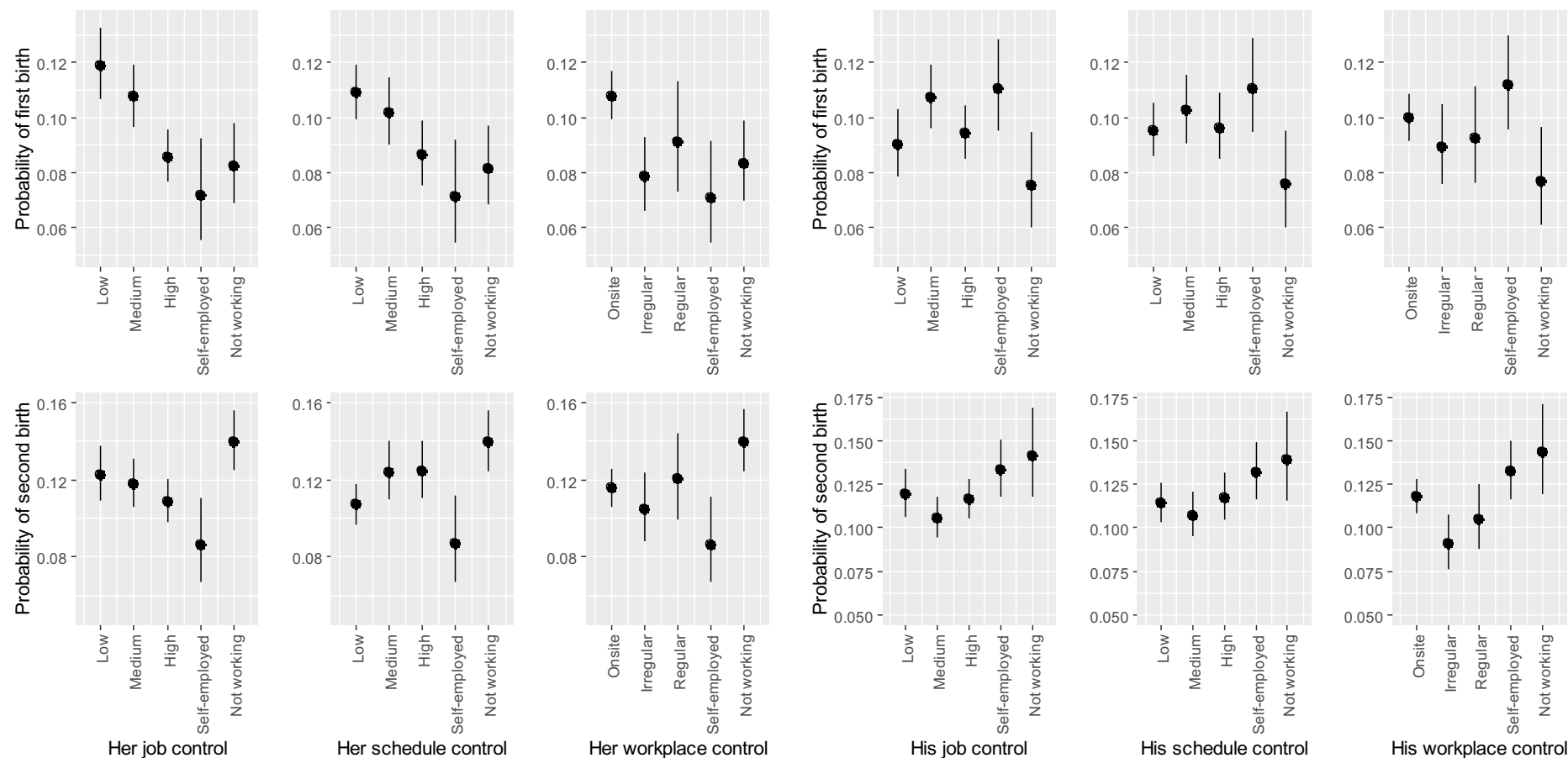
Note: RR stands for Risk Ratio, p for p-value

Source: Authors' calculations based on UKHLS data.

Figure 1. Predicted probabilities of first and second births by women's and their partners' work autonomy, UK 2009-2019

## A. Woman's autonomy

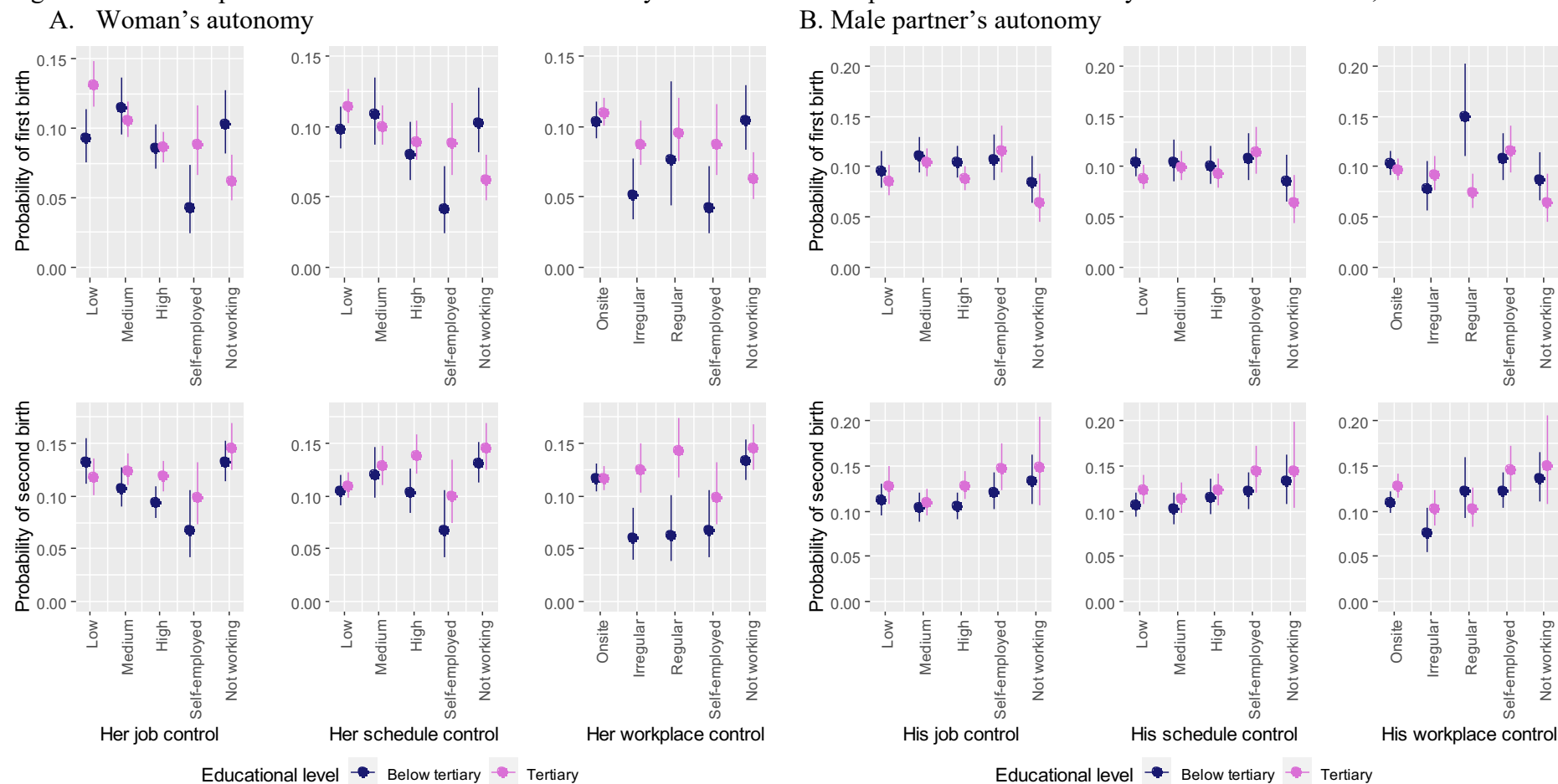
## B. Male partner's autonomy



Note: Predicted probabilities and 83% CI are calculated based on the estimates of Models 1a-2c, which includes the measure of his and her (a) job, (b) schedule, or (c) workplace autonomy. Model controls for: woman's age, ethnicity, partnership status, time period, family orientation, woman's and her partner's educational level, health, and male partner's income quartile. The model for second births additionally includes: age of the first child and use of external childcare.

Source: Authors' calculations based on UKHLS data

Figure 2. Predicted probabilities of first and second births by women's and their partners' work autonomy and educational level, UK 2009-2019



Note: Predicted probabilities and 83% CI are calculated based on the estimates of Models 3a-6c, which includes the measure of his or her (a) job, (b) schedule, or (c) workplace autonomy interacted with his or her educational level. Model controls for: woman's age, ethnicity, partnership status, time period, family orientation, health, male partner's educational level, his income quartile. The model for second births additionally includes: age of the first child and use of external childcare.

Source: Authors' calculations based on UKHLS data

## 6. Conclusions

During the last three decades employees became far more autonomous in how, where and when they work. This is a trend that will likely continue with the further development of information and communication technologies, the expansion of the knowledge economy and growing competition in the global labor markets (Smite et al., 2023). More work autonomy has important consequences for employees, including work-life balance and work-family conflict, yet little is known about their relationship to fertility choices. This study pioneered a comprehensive exploration of the link between work autonomy and fertility, focusing on three distinct types of work autonomy (job, schedule and workplace). It outlined possible ways that work autonomy can affect childbearing and tests the derived expectations theoretically, stratifying the analysis according to workers' socio-economic status. Drawing on the existing literature, we anticipated two alternative consequences of work autonomy for childbearing. On the one hand, autonomy may ease work-family reconciliation and thus increase birth risks; on the other, it may entail a higher commitment to paid work and larger work burdens, with little room left for family development. Which side of the coin faces up may depend on gender, parity and educational strata.

In terms of gender differences, we find that women's work autonomy is significantly related to both first and second birth transitions (though in a complex way), whereas male autonomy appears to be insignificant in both cases. This aligns with the literature showing that men in the UK continue to be secondary care providers (McMunn et al., 2020) and thus may be less in need of work autonomy than their female partners. In fact, unlike women, men tend to use autonomy primarily for performance-related purposes rather than for family-related reasons (Chung & Van der Lippe, 2020; Williams et al., 2013).

In contrast to men's work autonomy, women's work autonomy exhibits a significant relationship with birth transitions, contingent on a woman's socio-economic status and parity. For highly-educated childless women, no significant relationship is observed between entry to motherhood and two types of autonomies: schedule and workplace controls. At the same time, these women are more likely to postpone motherhood in relation to how much control they have over how they work. Clearly, our findings suggest that work autonomy does not facilitate the transition to parenthood by highly-educated women. Even though it provides flexibility in adjusting paid work to workers' needs and thus may potentially reduce future incompatibilities between paid work and childrearing, work autonomy may also imply more intense work in which employees are expected to complete work tasks or to be available for work outside of standard work hours (Chung, 2022; Kim et al., 2020; Wood et al., 2019). Such expectations can

be particularly strong in knowledge-intensive organizations, largely populated by highly-educated workers. These provide workers with a great deal of work autonomy, but at the same time demand strong commitments to work and high responsibility for work outcomes. These work contexts do not create family friendly conditions, even though they often provide workers with wide autonomy. It is also possible that highly-educated childless women who possess work autonomy postpone motherhood as their jobs not only offer them greater flexibility, but also enable them to optimize their work efforts in order to efficiently ascend the professional ladder prior to embarking on motherhood (Vignoli et al., 2020; Wood & Neels, 2017). Such a strategy helps to minimize the opportunity costs of eventual motherhood (Kahn et al., 2014).

Somewhat different findings are obtained for highly-educated mothers. In this group of women, job and workplace controls were unrelated to second birth risks, but tertiary educated mothers with high levels of schedule control were more likely to have a second child than mothers without this kind of flexibility. These findings demonstrate that the ability to adjust working hours to ones' needs has the potential to ease tensions between paid work and caregiving for highly-educated women, enabling them to have a second child. It is noteworthy, however, that similar conclusions cannot be drawn for job and workplace controls. One possibility is that the drawbacks related to these autonomies, such as high work intensity or the blurring of the boundaries between paid work and care, outweigh any benefits. It is, however, also likely that workplace control was insignificantly related to second births because it was much less common before the Covid-19 pandemic than it is now. The relatively low incidence of workplace control together with higher stigmatisation of this mode of work before the pandemic (Chung, 2020; Munsch, 2016) might be responsible for this finding. Future research should thus look more closely into the relationship between workplace control and childbearing in the post-Covid context.

Our findings for low-educated women are different and point to profound social disparities in the link between work autonomy and childbearing. Specifically, autonomy tends to be more negatively related to birth transitions among lower-educated than among highly-educated women. This kind of tendency was seen for job, schedule, and workplace autonomy among mothers, and for workplace control among childless women. In particular, lower-educated mothers with high job control as well as those who were able to work from home (regularly or irregularly) were less likely to have the second child than similar women with little job or workplace control. An equivalent negative relationship was established for workplace control and entry to parenthood whereas the remaining relationships (between job autonomy and first birth risks, and between schedule autonomy and first or second birth risks) were not

significant. These findings align with existing literature indicating that highly-educated women tend to derive benefits from work autonomy. Lower-educated women are, instead, more likely to experience drawbacks from work autonomy in their everyday lives (Lu et al., 2023; Schieman et al., 2009). These drawbacks may involve elevated stress levels, higher mental load, and reduced overall well-being stemming from sacrificing the benefits of autonomy to maximize income or manage unpaid labor rather than engaging in self-renewal; the strategy much more common among lower-educated than among higher-educated women (Chung & Booker, 2023; Kim et al., 2020). As our study demonstrates, the adverse consequences of autonomy for the lower-educated also extend to their childbearing decisions.

The disparities found between the low- and highly-educated are compelling. These disparities suggest that autonomy holds different meaning for lower-educated women compared to their highly-educated counterparts. For the latter, autonomy may be linked to prestigious roles highly-esteemed by employers, whereas in lower-skilled positions, it perhaps signifies a disadvantage in the context of precarious, low-paid, and temporary jobs. In such circumstances, lower-educated individuals may experience more stress, uncertainty, and worse mental health than their better-educated peers, all while having fewer social and economic resources to cope with these stressors (Kondirulli & Sunder, 2022). Consequently, they may face more adverse impacts on their everyday lives from autonomy, including postponed childbearing plans. But our findings also perhaps suggest that highly-educated women exhibit resilience to drawbacks that job resources may bring along, a resilience not observed among the lower-educated. Due to limited bargaining resources, the lower-educated group may be less able to resist expectations for increased unpaid labor, which escalates with autonomy, or more likely to be exploited by employers in exchange for autonomy due to the fear of becoming displaced at work. Regardless of the mechanism behind the results (advantage or resilience), our study implies that autonomy maybe only serves as a remedy for work-care incompatibility problems among the highly-educated. It remains to be seen why autonomy hinders rather than facilitates childbearing for women without a tertiary degree.

One of the most important limitations of our study is a potential self-selection bias. Workers may select themselves into jobs offering high autonomy due to unobserved characteristics related to childbearing. We minimize this selection by controlling for family orientation, health, and socioeconomic status. Still, if there is another unobserved factor influencing both the desire for children and the use of autonomy, we might observe a spurious relationship between autonomy and birth risks. For instance, prioritizing a convenient lifestyle without the intention to have a child may drive a spurious negative link between autonomy and



first birth risk. The study would thus benefit from controlling for fertility intentions, which, regrettably, were not available in our dataset. Furthermore, individuals, mothers in particular, may also select themselves into employment. This self-selection might influence our findings, as some individuals who left the labor market to fulfil their childbearing plans might have stayed in employment if autonomy had been available to them. We were not able to fully capture that in our study. Future research, conducted in the post-pandemic context, could usefully minimize this selection by focusing on a period with potentially more widespread and less selective prevalence of autonomy.

Our study would also benefit from more detailed measures of work autonomy, encompassing not only the perceived level of autonomy, but also more objective measures of the frequency of its use (see for instance Neidlinger et al. (2022)).

All in all, our study does not offer a simple answer to whether work autonomy, as a job resource, facilitates birth transitions. Instead, it highlights the complexity of this relationship and points to the very important social stratification in the effects of work autonomy on workers' lives. It should also encourage further attempts to unravel the duality in the link between fertility and work autonomy. Specifically, there is a need to discern which facets of work autonomy or jobs that provide substantial work autonomy pose particular challenges for fertility. This is particularly true among those with lower levels of education. In an ideal situation, future studies aiming to explore this relationship would leverage data originating from a context with a more widespread and less selective prevalence of autonomy and enriched with broader measures of autonomy at work.

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## Appendix

*Table A1. Summary statistics of control variables*

Variable	Levels	CHILDLESS		MOTHERS	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Period	2009–12	2676	43.6	2294	43.4
	2013–16	2642	43.1	2277	43.1
	2017–19	814	13.3	710	13.4
Partnership status	married	2939	47.9	3783	71.6
	cohabiting	3193	52.1	1498	28.4
Her age	18–24	1011	16.5	455	8.62
	25–29	1978	32.3	1036	19.6
	30–34	1589	25.9	1557	29.5
	35–39	908	14.8	1393	26.4
	40–44	646	10.5	840	15.9
Her ethnicity	British/Irish	5002	81.6	4049	76.7
	Asian	219	3.57	200	3.79
	Indian	341	5.56	508	9.62
	Black	142	2.32	119	2.25
	Other white	338	5.51	312	5.91
	Other	90	1.47	93	1.76
Her family orientation	Other	1663	27.1	795	15.1
	Very high	4469	72.9	4486	84.9
Her educational level	Below tertiary	2006	32.7	2329	44.1
	Tertiary	4126	67.3	2952	55.9

His educational level	Below tertiary	2721	44.4	2817	53.3
	Tertiary	3411	55.6	2464	46.7
His income	Bottom 25	1545	25.2	1321	25.0
	25–50	1521	24.8	1320	25.0
	50–75	1534	25.0	1328	25.1
	Top 25	1532	25.0	1312	24.8
First child's age	0–1			1957	37.1
	2–3			1151	21.8
	4–6			873	16.5
	7 or above			1300	24.6
Use of external childcare	no			2573	48.7
	yes			2708	51.3
Total		6132	100.0	5281	100.0

Source: Authors' calculations based on UKHLS data

Table A2. Structure of Women and Their Partners by Labour Market Status (in Individual-Years)

	Childless				First-time parents			
	Employed	Self-empl.	Not working	SUM	Employed	Self-empl.	Not working	SUM
Woman-years	80.4	6.0	13.6	100.0	72.1	5.3	22.6	100.0
Man-years	77.1	12.8	10.1	100.0	75.8	15.7	8.7	100.0

Source: Authors' calculations based on UKHLS data

Table A3. Structure of Dual-Earner Couples by job, schedule, and workplace autonomy (in Individual-Years)

	Childless (individual-years in %)					First-time parents (individual-years in %)				
	Low Onsite	Medium Irregular	High Regular	/ SUM		Low Onsite	Medium Irregular	High Regular	/ SUM	
Women's										
<i>Job control</i>	27.4	34.9	37.7	100.0		26.2	34.2	39.6	100.0	
<i>Schedule control</i>	52.3	25.3	22.4	100.0		53.7	22.1	24.2	100.0	
<i>Workplace control</i>	77.1	15.3	7.6	100.0		80.6	11.0	8.4	100.0	
Men's										
<i>Job control</i>	22.5	35.3	42.2	100.0		23.5	32.3	44.2	100.0	
<i>Schedule control</i>	45.5	26.7	27.8	100.0		45.6	26.2	28.2	100.0	
<i>Workplace control</i>	73.4	15.9	10.7	100.0		77.1	12.3	10.6	100.0	
Women's job control by education										
<i>Below tertiary</i>	30.1	31.7	38.2	100.0		28.9	30.7	40.4	100.0	

<i>Tertiary</i>	26.4	36.2	37.4	100.0	24.4	36.5	39.1	100.0
Women's schedule control by education								
<i>Below tertiary</i>	57.8	21.4	20.8	100.0	56.8	20.2	23.0	100.0
<i>Tertiary</i>	49.9	27.0	23.1	100.0	51.8	23.3	24.9	100.0
Women's workplace control by education								
<i>Below tertiary</i>	84.1	11.7	4.2	100.0	85.6	8.7	5.7	100.0
<i>Tertiary</i>	74.2	16.8	9.0	100.0	77.4	12.5	10.1	100.0
Men's job control by education								
<i>Below tertiary</i>	26.0	33.9	40.1	100.0	28.3	28.6	43.1	100.0
<i>Tertiary</i>	20.1	36.3	43.6	100.0	18.8	35.9	45.3	100.0
Men's schedule control by education								
<i>Below tertiary</i>	52.1	23.0	24.9	100.0	53.5	24.3	22.2	100.0
<i>Tertiary</i>	41.0	29.3	29.7	100.0	37.7	28.2	34.1	100.0
Men's workplace control by education								
<i>Below tertiary</i>	82.3	11.3	6.4	100.0	84.9	7.7	7.4	100.0
<i>Tertiary</i>	67.2	19.1	13.7	100.0	69.5	16.8	13.7	100.0

Source: Authors' calculations based on UKHLS data

Table A4. Estimates of the Random-Effects cloglog Model on the Probability of First and Second Births, UK 2009–19, all models

Predictors	First births												Second births																									
	M3a				M3b		M3c		M4a		M4b		M4c		M5a				M5b		M5c		M6a=				M6b		M6c									
	her educ & job				her	educ	her	educ	his educ & job		his	educ	his	educ	her educ & job				her	educ	her	educ	his educ & job		his	educ	his	educ										
	control				control		control		control		control		control		control				control		control		control		control		control		control									
	Risk Ratios	p			Risk Ratios	p			Risk Ratios	p			Risk Ratios	p			Risk Ratios	p			Risk Ratios	p			Risk Ratios	p			Risk Ratios	p								
Intercept	0.21	0.00			0.23	0.00			0.26	0.00			0.27	0.00			0.26	0.00			0.26	0.00			0.31	0.00			0.24	0.00	0.28	0.00	0.27	0.00	0.23	0.00	0.25	0.00
Her age (ref. 30-34)																																						
18-24	0.81	0.12			0.82	0.14			0.81	0.11			0.82	0.14			0.83	0.17			0.82	0.14			1.08	0.55			1.08	0.58	1.06	0.69	1.09	0.52	1.08	0.55	1.08	0.58
25-29	0.84	0.06			0.85	0.08			0.85	0.08			0.84	0.06			0.84	0.07			0.83	0.06			1.02	0.87			1.01	0.89	1.00	0.96	1.01	0.88	1.02	0.84	1.01	0.93
35-39	0.54	0.00			0.54	0.00			0.53	0.00			0.54	0.00			0.54	0.00			0.54	0.00			0.65	0.00			0.64	0.00	0.65	0.00	0.65	0.00	0.65	0.00	0.65	0.00
40 or more	0.09	0.00			0.09	0.00			0.09	0.00			0.09	0.00			0.09	0.00			0.09	0.00			0.11	0.00			0.11	0.00	0.11	0.00	0.11	0.00	0.11	0.00	0.11	0.00
Her ethnicity																																						
Asian	0.50	0.01			0.51	0.01			0.50	0.01			0.48	0.01			0.50	0.01			0.49	0.01			0.92	0.67			0.92	0.63	0.92	0.66	0.92	0.65	0.92	0.63	0.92	0.63
Indian	1.00	0.99			1.00	0.99			0.97	0.85			0.97	0.87			0.98	0.89			0.95	0.74			0.82	0.12			0.81	0.10	0.80	0.08	0.81	0.11	0.81	0.11	0.80	0.09
Black	0.73	0.26			0.74	0.29			0.74	0.30			0.74	0.29			0.76	0.34			0.76	0.33			1.64	0.01			1.60	0.02	1.63	0.01	1.60	0.02	1.59	0.02	1.61	0.02
Other white	0.82	0.28			0.84	0.34			0.84	0.33			0.83	0.30			0.85	0.36			0.83	0.30			0.64	0.01			0.63	0.01	0.63	0.01	0.64	0.01	0.63	0.01	0.64	0.01
Other	0.52	0.10			0.57	0.15			0.55	0.13			0.51	0.09			0.56	0.15			0.57	0.15			1.12	0.64			1.14	0.59	1.11	0.66	1.12	0.65	1.13	0.61	1.12	0.64
Partnership status (ref. Married)																																						
Cohabiting	0.36	0.00			0.36	0.00			0.36	0.00			0.36	0.00			0.36	0.00			0.36	0.00			0.82	0.03			0.83	0.03	0.81	0.02	0.82	0.03	0.83	0.04	0.81	0.02
Period (ref. 2009-2012)																																						
2013-2016	0.99	0.89			0.99	0.94			0.99	0.95			1.00	0.96			1.00	0.99			1.00	0.96			0.96	0.59			0.97	0.66	0.96	0.58	0.96	0.64	0.96	0.62	0.96	0.60
2017-2019	0.71	0.01			0.73	0.02			0.72	0.02			0.72	0.02			0.73	0.03			0.73	0.02			0.51	0.00			0.52	0.00	0.52	0.00	0.51	0.00	0.52	0.00	0.52	0.00
Her family orientation (ref. Other)																																						
Very high	1.46	0.00			1.43	0.00			1.41	0.00			1.46	0.00			1.45	0.00			1.42	0.00			1.04	0.66			1.05	0.64	1.03	0.74	1.03	0.73	1.04	0.66	1.03	0.75

Her health status (ref. Very good)																								
Good	1.06	0.53	1.07	0.46	1.06	0.53	1.06	0.53	1.06	0.49	1.06	0.49	0.91	0.22	0.91	0.25	0.91	0.24	0.91	0.23	0.91	0.24	0.91	0.23
Fair/Poor	0.58	0.00	0.58	0.00	0.57	0.00	0.57	0.00	0.57	0.00	0.56	0.00	0.61	0.00	0.62	0.00	0.61	0.00	0.61	0.00	0.62	0.00	0.61	0.00
Her educational level (ref. Below tertiary)																								
Tertiary	1.45	0.04	1.17	0.23	1.06	0.57	1.04	0.70	1.05	0.64	1.07	0.50	0.88	0.44	1.05	0.67	1.00	0.96	1.13	0.13	1.14	0.11	1.13	0.11
His educational level (ref. Below tertiary)																								
Tertiary	0.91	0.26	0.91	0.27	0.92	0.34	0.89	0.53	0.85	0.22	0.93	0.54	1.16	0.06	1.14	0.10	1.17	0.04	1.15	0.41	1.16	0.23	1.18	0.08
His income (ref. 1st quartile)																								
2nd quartile	1.09	0.47	1.10	0.44	1.12	0.36	1.09	0.49	1.10	0.44	1.11	0.39	1.08	0.48	1.06	0.56	1.06	0.55	1.07	0.53	1.06	0.56	1.07	0.50
3rd quartile	0.95	0.71	0.97	0.80	0.98	0.90	0.94	0.63	0.96	0.76	0.97	0.80	0.94	0.56	0.92	0.47	0.94	0.58	0.93	0.51	0.92	0.47	0.94	0.60
4th quartile	1.23	0.11	1.24	0.09	1.28	0.06	1.22	0.12	1.23	0.11	1.27	0.06	1.08	0.47	1.07	0.56	1.10	0.39	1.08	0.49	1.07	0.56	1.12	0.33
First child's age (ref. 2-3)																								
0-1													0.89	0.19	0.88	0.17	0.89	0.19	0.89	0.19	0.89	0.18	0.89	0.20
04.cze													0.82	0.07	0.82	0.07	0.82	0.07	0.82	0.08	0.82	0.07	0.82	0.07
7 or more													0.31	0.00	0.31	0.00	0.31	0.00	0.31	0.00	0.31	0.00	0.31	0.00
Use of external childcare (ref. No)																								
Yes													1.38	0.00	1.37	0.00	1.39	0.00	1.39	0.00	1.38	0.00	1.38	0.00
Her job control (ref. Low)																								
Medium	1.26	0.25					0.90	0.31					0.80	0.20				0.96	0.67					
High	0.92	0.69					0.71	0.00					0.69	0.03				0.88	0.21					
Self-employed	0.45	0.06					0.59	0.01					0.49	0.05				0.69	0.07					
Not working	1.12	0.62					0.68	0.01					1.00	0.98				1.16	0.19					
His job control (ref. Low)																								
Medium	1.19	0.13					1.16	0.39					0.89	0.26				0.92	0.60					
High	1.04	0.71					1.09	0.63					0.98	0.84				0.94	0.64					
Self-employed	1.22	0.18					1.12	0.58					1.13	0.30				1.09	0.60					

<i>Not working</i>	0.81	0.28		0.88	0.60		1.21	0.25		1.20	0.33		
Her schedule control (ref. Low)													
<i>Medium</i>		1.11	0.60		0.93	0.46		1.16	0.38		1.17	0.12	
<i>High</i>		0.81	0.33		0.78	0.03		0.98	0.92		1.18	0.10	
<i>Self-employed</i>		0.41	0.03		0.64	0.02		0.63	0.19		0.80	0.27	
<i>Not working</i>		1.04	0.83		0.73	0.03		1.27	0.09		1.32	0.01	
His schedule control (ref. Low)													
<i>Medium</i>		1.08	0.48		1.01	0.97		0.94	0.51		0.95	0.72	
<i>High</i>		1.01	0.93		0.97	0.83		1.03	0.73		1.08	0.61	
<i>Self-employed</i>		1.16	0.26		1.04	0.82		1.17	0.14		1.15	0.35	
<i>Not working</i>		0.76	0.14		0.82	0.37		1.23	0.17		1.26	0.18	
Her workplace control (ref. Onsite work)													
<i>Irregular home-base work</i>			0.48	0.02		0.72	0.01		0.50	0.02		0.89	0.38
<i>Regular home-based work</i>			0.73	0.45		0.84	0.29		0.52	0.08		1.05	0.75
<i>Self-employed</i>			0.39	0.02		0.64	0.03		0.56	0.10		0.73	0.11
<i>Not working</i>			1.00	0.99		0.76	0.05		1.15	0.27		1.22	0.04
His workplace control (ref. Onsite work)													
<i>Irregular home-base work</i>			0.89	0.36		0.74	0.22		0.77	0.04		0.67	0.11
<i>Regular home-based work</i>			0.93	0.60		1.49	0.11		0.90	0.43		1.12	0.60
<i>Self-employed</i>			1.12	0.36		1.05	0.79		1.15	0.16		1.12	0.41
<i>Not working</i>			0.73	0.09		0.83	0.40		1.23	0.17		1.25	0.17
Her educational level & Her job control													
<i>Tertiary&amp;Medium</i>	0.63	0.05					1.32	0.19					
<i>Tertiary&amp;High</i>	0.69	0.12					1.46	0.07					
<i>Tertiary&amp;Self-employed</i>	1.45	0.45					1.69	0.23					
<i>Tertiary&amp;Not working</i>	0.41	0.00					1.26	0.28					



Her educational level & Her  
schedule control

<i>Tertiary&amp;Medium</i>	0.79	0.29
<i>Tertiary&amp;High</i>	0.95	0.83
<i>Tertiary&amp;Self-employed</i>	1.85	0.19
<i>Tertiary&amp;Not working</i>	0.50	0.01

1.01	0.95
1.31	0.21
1.44	0.39
1.06	0.75

Her educational level & Her  
workplace control

<i>Tertiary&amp;Irregular home- base work</i>	1.63	0.15
<i>Tertiary&amp;Regular home- base work</i>	1.19	0.71
<i>Tertiary&amp;Self-employed</i>	2.00	0.14
<i>Tertiary&amp;Not working</i>	0.56	0.03

2.16	0.02
2.41	0.03
1.49	0.33
1.10	0.57

His educational level & His job  
control

<i>Tertiary&amp;Medium</i>	1.05	0.82
<i>Tertiary&amp;High</i>	0.94	0.81
<i>Tertiary&amp;Self-employed</i>	1.22	0.48
<i>Tertiary&amp;Not working</i>	0.85	0.66

0.92	0.70
1.08	0.72
1.07	0.76
0.98	0.96

His educational level & His  
schedule control

<i>Tertiary&amp;Medium</i>	1.13	0.58
<i>Tertiary&amp;High</i>	1.09	0.69
<i>Tertiary&amp;Self-employed</i>	1.25	0.37
<i>Tertiary&amp;Not working</i>	0.87	0.70

0.97	0.89
0.93	0.70
1.04	0.85
0.94	0.85

His educational level & His  
workplace control

<i>Tertiary&amp;Irregular home- base work</i>	1.27	0.39
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1.16	0.60
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Table A5. Estimates of the Random-Effects cloglog Model on the Probability of First and Second Births, UK 2009–19, a woman's and a man's autonomy included separately

Predictors	First births										Second births													
	Her job control		Her schedule control		Her workplace control		His job control		His schedule control		His workplace control		Her job control		Her schedule control		Her workplace control		His job control		His schedule control		His workplace control	
	RR	p	RR	p	RR	p	RR	p	RR	p	RR	p	RR	p	RR	p	RR	p	RR	p	RR	p	RR	p
Her job control (ref. Low)																								
Medium	0.90	0.30												0.96	0.67									
High	0.71	0.00												0.88	0.20									
Self-employed	0.60	0.01												0.69	0.07									
Not working	0.65	0.00												1.15	0.21									
Her schedule control (ref. Low)																								
Medium			0.93	0.45												1.17	0.11							
High			0.78	0.02												1.18	0.09							
Self-employed			0.66	0.04												0.83	0.32							
Not working			0.71	0.01												1.35	0.00							
Her workplace control (ref. Onsite work)																								
Irregular home-based work					0.71	0.01												0.87	0.30					
Regular home-based work					0.83	0.28												1.05	0.72					
Self-employed					0.67	0.04												0.75	0.14					
Not working					0.73	0.02												1.26	0.01					
His job control (ref. Low)																								
Medium							1.20	0.13												0.88	0.24			
High							1.02	0.84												0.97	0.74			
Self-employed							1.18	0.25												1.11	0.39			
Not working							0.78	0.20												1.26	0.14			





His schedule control (ref. Low)													
<i>Medium</i>	1.11	0.34			1.11	0.34		0.98	0.87			0.95	0.67
<i>High</i>	1.03	0.81			1.04	0.75		1.11	0.38			1.11	0.35
Her workplace control (ref. Onsite work)													
<i>Irregular home-based work</i>			0.78	0.06		0.76	0.05		0.95	0.71		0.98	0.88
<i>Regular home-based work</i>			0.80	0.23		0.81	0.27		1.07	0.70		1.06	0.75
His workplace control (ref. Onsite work)													
<i>Irregular home-based work</i>			0.84	0.18		0.83	0.17		0.75	0.06		0.76	0.08
<i>Regular home-based work</i>			0.94	0.70		0.95	0.75		0.82	0.21		0.84	0.26
Observations	4048	4048	4048	3978	3978	3978		3128	3128	3128	3025	3025	3025

Note: Models control for the same set of control variables as the original models. Estimates for control variables are not shown.

Source: Authors' calculations based on UKHLS data



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