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This chapter extends previous work in several directions. First, I augment the number of countries in the sample to include Japanese data. Second, the five-country comparison together with the examination of two periods, notably the 1980s and the 1990s, allows for a straightforward analysis of the effects of family policy on the employment status of first-time mothers. Indeed, the five countries and two time periods provide sufficient variation in family policy status and objectives such that effects of different emphasis can be isolated empirically. Third, I present a graphical illustration of the monthly (yearly for Japan) employment status around childbirth of women who gave birth to the first child in the 1980s and 1990s. Forth, estimation of multinomial logit models on women's employment choice among full-time employment, part-time employment and not at work after first childbirth, using monthly data (yearly data for Japan) is a further novel aspect of this chapter.

The results of the econometric analyses are in line with the (actual) development in the 1980s and the 1990s of the policy environment in each of these five countries and support the notion that modern family policies go in hand with a stronger commitment to paid work among mothers. Adequate design of family policies aiming at facilitating the combination of motherhood and paid employment thus prove to be effective means in improving the labour force participation rate of first-time mothers.

I use household panel data from five countries: for Britain I use the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) (see Taylor, 1999; Halpin, 1997); for West Germany², the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP) (see Wagner, Schupp and Rendtel, 1991; Haisken-De New and Frick, 1998); for the Netherlands, the Labour Force Supply Panel collected by the *Organisatie voor Strategisch Arbeidsmarktonderzoek* (OSA, Netherlands' Institute for Labour Studies) (see Allaart et al., 1987); for Sweden, the *Hushållens ekonomiska levnadsförhållanden* (HUS, Household Market and Non-Market Activities) (see Flood, Klevmarken and Olovsson, 1997) and for Japan, the Japanese Panel Survey of Consumers (JPSC) (Japan's Institute for Research on Household Economics).

The outline of this chapter is as follows. Section 3.2 reviews family policies in Japan and the four European countries during the 1980s and 1990s. Section 3.3 describes

² For West Germany, I use Sample A of the GSOEP data, which solely includes Germans living in the former West Germany.