Gender equality in a Nordic perspective – Policies and outcomes

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Overview

1. **Where are we now?** Nordic gender equality in work and care – successes and continued bumps

2. **How did we get here:** The Nordic road to gender equality through family policy

3. **What are the outcomes:** Consequence of different leave components

4. **What stands in the way?** Dominant discourses and possible solutions for more equal sharing of leave
1. Nordic gender equality in work and care – successes and continued bumps

- Shared historical and cultural heritage in Nordic countries
- Traditionally placed focus on gender equality in work and care: The dual earner/dual carer model

- Outcome of a long development with three distinct historical stages:
  1. **formalization of equal rights** of women and men in legislation, eg women’s vote btw 1906 and 1919. Marriage laws in the 1920s emancipating women from their husbands’ guardianship, e.g. full rights to own property, in DK shared parental responsibility in 1925
  2. **facilitation of women’s take up of paid labour**, eg in DK public child care legislation in 1964; individual taxation in S and DK in 1971
  3. Women and men’s **full sharing of both economic and care responsibilities** of the family – still to be fully implemented! And a stage dominated by the effort to reconstruct gender and gender relations towards more active fatherhood. (Eydal, 2009)
Over time generally better gendered division of housework and childcare

**Housework:**

- General convergence across OECD countries in men and women’s housework hours since the 1970s although gender gap remains.

- Women reduced time spent on housework since the 1970s, while men have increased theirs (Hook, 2006).

- Partly due to outsourcing and labour-saving domestic appliances and products such as pre-prepared food.
Childcare:

• Men and women privilege parenting activities over housework activities. High social prestige, more rewarding - and graver implications if neglected.

• Gender gap is generally reduced but also persistent here. Both men and women are spending more time on childcare, even as fertility has declined, e.g. in US from 10 h. weekly for mothers in 1965 to 13 h in 2000, and from 3 to 7 h for fathers (Bianchi et al, 2006).

• Mothers increase their time especially with interacting activities, and fathers with routine activities.

• Time spent increases with no. of children but consistent gender gap – although smaller gender gap in Nordic countries.
Care work takes up time and continues to be gender unequal, regardless of welfare state arrangement.

Source: OECD Family Database
Gendered outcomes

- Gender equality is in this way perceived to be more than equality of opportunity. Equality of outcome and especially the gendered division of unpaid and paid work is central (Leira 2006).

- Reflected in statistics on labour market participation, educational attainment, representation in positions of power, and in sharing of housework and childcare (Björnberg & Ottesen, 2013).

- Top of the lists – apart from Denmark

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Western Europe</th>
<th>Global rank*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Sweden</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sustained female employment

- Nordic countries managed to increase and sustain female employment rates that were already high in the early 1970s.

- In 2016, ranged from 67.6% in Finland to 83.4% in Iceland, well above the OECD average of 59.4%. 7 out of 10 women in the Nordic region are in work.
# Key measures of gender gaps in employment, 2016 or latest year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Top performer</th>
<th>Moderate performer</th>
<th>Bottom performer</th>
<th>Gender gap in usual weekly working hours, all ages (p.p.)</th>
<th>Female share of managers, all ages (%)</th>
<th>Gender gap in median earnings for full-time employees, all ages (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender gap in the labour force participation rate, 15-64 year-olds (p.p.)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>27.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
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<td>11.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
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<td>37.8</td>
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<td>Sweden</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<td>Canada</td>
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<td>6.1</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>13.9</td>
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<td>16.4</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>29.3</td>
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<td>30.8</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>27.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>9.4</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>36.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>United States</td>
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<td>10.8</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>43.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD average</td>
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<td>11.4</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD std. dev.</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: OECD 2018. Note: Shading indicates performance relative to the OECD average and the OECD standard deviation.
Middle-high but persistent gender pay gap (GPG)

The unadjusted gender pay gap, 2016 (difference between average gross hourly earnings of male and female employees as % of male gross earnings)

*Source: Eurostat [tsdsc340]*
Although parts of the GPG explained by differences in men and women’s economic activity, occupation and education.
Main factors behind GPG

Three explanatory factors with different explanatory effects on the decomposition of GPG:

• **Education**: employed women have, on average, a higher level of education than men in most European labour markets.

• **Economic activity**: men tend to be employed in better paid economic activities than women (sectoral segregation).

• **Occupation**: men tend to work in better paid occupations than women (occupational segregation).

  = Women take up work in family friendly public sector and work in sectors where there are many women and thus understanding for the need to privilege children over work.
Friend or foe?

- High female labour market participation, but also encouragement of **part-time work of mothers and long leaves**

- Mandel and Semyonov (2006): High level of part time work contribute to relative high degree of gendered **occupational segregation** and low proportion of women in **top positions** in the Nordic region compared to other countries

- Women in the Nordic countries are **less likely to be entrepreneurs** than in most other OECD countries.

- And (like elsewhere in the OECD countries), **gender pay differentials widen once children appear in the household** (OECD, 2018). Swedish data: women’s low intensity of labour force participation during the five years after first childbirth explain most of the female disadvantage in career and pay profiles. (Keloharju, Knüpfer and Tåg, 2017)

- **Nordic family friendly welfare model – gendered privilege or punishment?**
  - Need for more gender equal sharing of work and care – what are the efficient family policies?
2. How did we get here: The Nordic road to gender equality through family policy
Over time generally better gendered division of housework and childcare

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Source: OECD Family Database
The Nordic recipe: The gender equality project and child care

- 1960s and 1970s: The Nordic gender-equality project encouraged women’s participation in the labour market

- All the countries developed extensive policies in order to enable equality among both men and women

- Public day-care services: Denmark first to address day care in legislation (1964), followed by Finland, Iceland and Sweden (1973) and later Norway (1975)

- Services based on universal principles, and heavily subsidized and regulated by the public sector. Local authorities gained great autonomy regarding the volume of day care. Day care guarantee

- In spite of these similarities different levels of provision can be observed – institutionalised differences
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age groups</th>
<th>1995</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2010</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 years</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 years</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 years</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 years</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 years</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note day care includes both family day-care which is usually used for the youngest children and day care in preschools. Source: NOSOSKO 2007-8, 2009; NOSOSKO 2009-10, 2011.
Share of Nordic children enrolled in childcare
per cent of age group (2016). Source: Nordic Statistics 2018

1-2 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Iceland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3-5 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Iceland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Danish nurseries offer free childcare so parents can make more babies

A group of Danish nurseries has come up with a novel way to help the country's low birth rate – offering parents an evening of free child care so they can go home and make more babies.
Parental leave and paternity leave

- General Nordic support for supporting gender equality by introducing leave also for fathers:

- In the late 1970s and early 1980s all the Nordic countries changed their schemes of maternity leaves to parental leave, thus giving fathers opportunity to share the paid leave with the mother.

A poster from a campaign in the 70s to promote paternity leave. The title translates roughly to "Stay-at-home dad!", although Google translate will translate the word "barnledig" to "maternity" even though the original word is genderless.
# History of leaves, Nordic countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weeks</th>
<th>Maternity leave</th>
<th>Paternity leave</th>
<th>Parental leave</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>1974*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*First country in the world

Note: Mandatory rest after birth introduced earlier, eg in DK in 1901

Source: Duvander and Lammi-Taskula, 2014
Individual non-transferable entitlements for fathers

- In order to increase the uptake of the paid parental leave among fathers
  independent rights – ‘use-it-or lose-it’ - father’s quotas enacted into law:
  - Norway 1993
  - Sweden 1995
  - Denmark 1998-2001
  - Iceland 2000
  - Finland 2003*

* 2 bonus weeks if the father used 2 weeks of the joint entitlements
(Father’s) quota

• A “use-it-or-lose-it” parent-specific quota

An individual, non-transferable right to parental leave

• Can today be available for both men and women (mother’s quota)

• Strong gender equality incentive (Haas and Rostgaard, 2011)

• More controversial than parental leave – arguments about state paternalism, disregard of fathers’ different labour market position
### Number of weeks of paid leave in the Nordic countries, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weeks</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Iceland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total weeks*</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of which:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother (maternity/quota)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father (father’s quota)</td>
<td>0**</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10***</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father with mother (paternity)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* max. full-time; ** 2 weeks in 1998-2002, *** reduced from 14 weeks in July 2014.

Note: Maternity leave includes pre-natal and post-natal leave.
3. What are the outcomes: Consequence of different leave components
Why encourage more men to take parental leave?

• **Universal Nordic model:**
  • Focus on equality and facilitation of men and women’s equal opportunities, as well as child’s access to both parents.

• **Evidence that equal sharing of parental leave supports:**
  • Equality in household and especially care work (Duvander, Ferrarini and Johansson, 2015); facilitated by active parenting/fatherhood trend (Eydel og Rostgaard, 2014)
  • Prevents ‘motherhood penalty’ in wage and career opportunities; in Sweden, both parents’ wages affected if they take leave (Evertsson and Duvander 2010)
  • Father’s relation to child, also following divorce (Hwang and Lamb 1997, Sarkadi et al., 2007, Brandth and Kvande 2016a, Arnalds, Eydal and Gislason, 2013, Duvander and Jans 2009, Ottesen 2014)
  • Fathers increase involvement in child -> positive effect on child’s school performance and social, behavioural and psychological well-being (Sarkadi et al., 2007, Brandth and Gislason 2011)
How to make fathers take leave?

Fathers take longer parental leave if....

• **Policy incentives:**
  • There are individual rights in the legislation and if there is a father’s quota

• **Work related incentives (culture and rights):**
  • He works in the public sector, especially if working in a female dominated sector
  • Other fathers at workplace take leave, especially if manager acts as role model
  • Employer tops up benefit

• **SES factors**
  • He is in the middle/high income group, but not earning more
  • Both parents have long education
  • If it is his first child

(Duvander and Lammi-Taskula, 2012)
Increase in father’s take-up of leave – especially in countries with father quota

Share of leave days, fathers, Nordic countries, 2000-2011

Norway 1993
Sweden 1995
Denmark 1998-2001
Iceland 2000
Finland 2003

NOSOSCO, various years
Denmark as the odd (quota) case

• Denmark presently only Nordic country without father’s quota.
• But had a 2 week father’s quota in 1998-2002
• Abolished by right-wing government who instead lengthened the parental leave and increased benefit
• No parliamentary nor public debate
• Today very politicized, former left-center coalition government abandoned promises from election campaign. Present right wing government show no interest
• Counter-arguments of parents free choice. Employers’ organizations opposed. (Missed timing? Bonoli, 2006, 2007)
Father’s quota in Danmark 1998-2001 increased the no. of fathers on leave

Share of fathers on parental leave, 1990-2006
Fathers with different entitlements

• As a consequence of the abolishment of the father’s quota in Denmark. Danish fathers now have different rights to quota, depending on labour market agreements.

• Clear impact on take-up: fewer self-employed and fewer with primary and secondary education take leave.

• Less equality for fathers (and mothers and children).

Share of parental leave taken by fathers
per cent (2015)

10
DENMARK

11
FINLAND

30
ICELAND

21
NORWAY

27
SWEDEN

In the Nordic countries, data on gender equality is gathered and evaluated. Access Nordic gender equality indicators here:
norden.org/statistics

Source: Nordic Statistics 2018
3. What stands in the way? Dominant discourses in sharing work/care and possible solutions
Discourses

• 2* ‘Best for the child’
  • Emphasis on the homely environment. Parents’ (women’s) preference for part-time work in order to cut down on hours of care outside the home. Quality of day care essential, child: staff ratios, early enrollment in kindergarten, right to stay at home to look after sick children.
  • Social investment – “the citizen child”, early investment in cognitive capital, the need to be able to participate in different arenas and for having multiple social relations and skills (Johansen 2009).

• State paternalism/choice
  • Political ideas about welfare state, the collective and equality replaced by liberal ideology focusing on the individual and her right to choose, ‘kitchen table democracy; ie. the state expected to have less influence over daily day decisions and the family expected to take greater responsibility for care needs (Anttonen, 2012)
  • Assumption that family life is shaped by continuous and power balanced negotiations about responsibility and division of work between members of the family. Individualization and romanticizing power structures, overlooking structural limitations.
  • Importance of Cash for care
• **The parent-child bond**
  • Continued strong gendered culture about mothers and fathers roles in early stages of parenting
  • The significance of breastfeeding
  • Father’s rights as a parent; to a lesser degree child’s right to its father

• **Unequal rights**
  • Surprisingly little focus on how different fathers - and their parnter and children – are positioned differently. At least in DK.

• **Fathers’ quota is a good policy option for the privileged middle class only**
  • Father’s quota reflect middle class values as well as middle class possibilities to take leave.
  • Maybe but “Middle-class men tend to “talk the talk but not walk the walk”, working-class men tend to “walk the walk but not talk the talk“” (Williams 2010)
S: EU går alt for vidt med fordeling af barselsorlov
Det undergraver den danske model, lyder det fra Socialdemokratiet om forslag fra EU-Kommissionen.

Ligestillingsminister sætter foden ned overfor EU om orlov
Regeringen bliver ikke fødselshjælper på EU-forslag om øremærket forældreorlov ifølge Karen Ellemann.

**CURRENT EU LAW**

No minimum standards for parental leave at EU-level.

**Working Arrangements**

- Reduced working hours
- Flexible working hours
- Flexibility on the place of work
- Right to request part-time work for all workers
Possible policy solutions for more sharing of work and care

*Keep up the good work! But also consider:*

- **Change structures and policies**
  - work for more equal and legislative rights
  - inform better about how to share leave, complicated rules
  - continue mild pressure for shared leave (mother’s and father’s quota)

- **Change cultures and norms**
  - Inform about the consequence for women’s gendered position over the life course, but also about the consequences for the partner relationship and the relationship father-child.
  - insist on gender equality as a political ambition, based on evidence and ideological values; legitimate to set terms for public investment, into leave benefits or any other.
  - Support gender neutral workplace cultures and promote the frontrunners

- **Changes in concept of equality:** can parenting ever be equal? For whom and in regards to what? Are there limits to equality in parenting? And if so how do policies need to reflect this?
  - (based on amongst other Schadler et al. 2017; Doucet 2013, 2017)
Conclusion

• Nordic countries long tradition and history of gender equality policies.
• Emphasis on dual earner/dual carer model
• Materialised in child care and leave policies that support gender equality
• Long experience with father’s quota. But variation across countries – allows comparison of outcomes
• More gender equal take up of leave especially facilitated by father’s quota.
• Need for change of discourse of division of work and care, or is there more to achieve in the Nordic countries?
Primary sources


Haas & Rostgaard (2011), Fathers’ Rights to Paid Parental Leave in the Nordic Countries – Consequences for the Gendered Division of Leave, in *Community, Work & Family*, 14: 2, 177 — 195


http://www.leavenetwork.org/