

When did you last see your father? European fathers and the time they spent looking after children (1994 – 2001).

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Abstract

Changes in parental employment patterns and family structures are creating new socio-economic and cultural contexts for negotiating what it means to be a father. The dual-earner/dual-carer family model envisions, as both positive description and normative aspiration, a social and economic arrangement in which men and women engage symmetrically in both paid work in the labour market and in unpaid work in the home. This family model is unusual in reality as women have, in general, become earners to a greater extent than men have become carers. Change has been asymmetric. There has been much research into the causes and consequences of women becoming more attached to the labour market. Strikingly little complementary research has been undertaken to discover either the causes or consequences of paternal care.

This paper examines paternal time (time spent looking after children) of fathers across the European Union between the years 1994 - 2001. Specifically, it seeks to answer questions (using European Community Household Panel data) that are currently unaddressed given the paucity of research in this area:

1. Are there significant differences in paternal time between member states?
2. Are there significant differences in gender inequalities in parental time between member states?
3. Are there trends across time in paternal time?
4. What person and household specific characteristics make a difference to paternal time?
5. How do workplace characteristics affect paternal time?

This paper finds (using simple pooled cross sectional analysis and random effects models) that (i) paternal time varies across the EU; (ii) gender inequalities in parental time vary across the EU; (iii) paternal time is increasing over time; (iv) there are certain person and household specific characteristics affecting paternal time such as education level, having a working spouse and having a step or adopted child in the household; and (v) working conditions (such as occupation, working hours, size of the firm and sector) affect paternal time.