

Sweden is apparently full of 'latte dads' carrying toddlers – and it's a sign of critical social change ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Forget "ladies who lunch." In Sweden there are "latte dads."

In an NBC News article profiling American dads who move to Sweden to live in a different parenting culture, authors Alexander Smith and Vladimir Banic write that it has become so common for new fathers to take parental leave that it's largely frowned upon if you don't. The result, the authors write, is that "Areas of Stockholm are now rife with 'latte dads' – typically youngish, bearded men carrying their babies in slings or hanging out with their toddlers."

Americans aren't the only ones seeking out the life of a latte dad in Sweden. In a 2012 article in the *The Observer* by a British man who was raising his kids in Malmö, Sweden, journalist Richard Orange writes:

"Men with prams have become such a familiar sight since shared parental leave was first introduced in 1974 (a full 41 years before parents are scheduled to get it in the UK under the government's proposals) that there's even a name – 'latte pappas' – for the tribe.

"At the free-of-charge, drop-in play group in Malmö that is my morning refuge, the pappas often outnumber the mammas. I'll find myself sitting cross-legged next to a taciturn Swedish engineer, a heavily tattooed biker, or another migrant – there's a computer programmer from Chennai – as our children play with the wooden blocks, rattles and drums."

And a 2014 article from Australia's SBS profiles Andrew Gillard, an Australian living in Sweden. He says the latte dad, or latte pappas, is a common sight: "You probably wouldn't see the same thing happening in Australia," he told SBS. "You've got four or five guys all around 30 years old pushing a pram, going into a cafe, and having a latte."

Latte dads aren't so commonplace because of their taste for caffeine. They're a direct result of Sweden's parental leave policy, one of the most progressive in the world. The Swedish government says that parents of both sexes are entitled to 480 days (16 months) of paid parental leave at about 80% of their salary (with a cap), plus bonus days for twins, and they must share – Swedish dads must take at least some of those 16 months. The days don't expire until the child is 8 years old.

"These days, for Swedish dads, the decision is not 'Will I take time off to be with my child?' but 'How long will I take?' Most take three to nine months," Swedish dad Jonas Frid told Martin Daubney for *The Australian*.

That's a huge departure from many other western countries. The US in particular is known for its ungenerous leave. The government does not require companies to give employees any paid parental leave, making it the only developed country in the world that does not, reported Business Insider's Rachel Gillett.

"You could certainly write a book on why the US has yet to see a federal paid leave policy — but the answers essentially come down to two distinct cultural elements at play in the US: the values we place in individualism and business," she writes.

Sweden isn't perfect — its citizens do pay a high tax rate to subsidize generous policies like this one — but it's a pretty good place to be a parent.

Especially a latte dad.

-reprinted from Business Insider

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