

Babies and Bosses - Reconciling work and family life: A synthesis of findings for OECD countries ^[1]

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Description:

Finding a suitable work/family life balance is a challenge that all parents face. Many parents and children in OECD countries are happy with their existing work and care outcomes, while many others feel seriously constrained in one way or another. Some people would like to have (more) children, but do not see how they could match that commitment with their employment situation. Other parents are happy with the number of children in their family, but would like to work more. Yet other parents who are happy with their family situation, may wish to work at different hours, or reduce hours worked to spend more time with their children, but do not because they cannot afford to take a pay cut, or because they do not want to put their career prospects at risk.

If parents cannot achieve their desired work/family life balance, not only is their welfare lower but economic development is also curtailed through reduced labour supply by parents. A reduction of birth rates has obvious implications for future labour supply as well as for the financial sustainability of social protection systems. As parenting is also crucial to child development, and thus the shape of future societies, policy makers have many reasons to want to help parents find a better work/family balance.

The Babies and Bosses reviews of work and family reconciliation analysed policies and family outcomes in Australia, Denmark and the Netherlands (OECD, 2002); Austria, Ireland and Japan (OECD, 2003); New Zealand, Portugal and Switzerland (OECD, 2004); and Canada, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom (OECD, 2005). This report, the last in the series, synthesises these findings and extends the scope to include other OECD countries. Based on OECD-wide indicators, it examines tax/benefit policies, parental leave systems, child and out-of-school-hours care support, and workplace practices that help determine parental labour market outcomes and family formation across the OECD.

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