

Women take lion's share of unpaid baby leave ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

Swedish women take around 80 percent of both paid and unpaid parental leave, according to a new report by the National Social Insurance Agency, which shows that the situation affects how other household chores are divided.

"Parental leave has significance both for women in the workplace and for their future pay, career development and pension," said Laura Hartman at the National Social Insurance Agency (Försäkringskassan) in a statement.

The Swedish parental leave system is characterized by its relative generosity and also by its flexibility. Of a total of 480 days only 60 are exclusively reserved for each parent with the remainder freely interchangeable.

The days can furthermore be taken out full or part time and up to the child's 8th birthday or the end of their first school year.

Women on average spend 15.3 months on parental leave, but only receive remuneration for 9.5 months, according to the report. Men spend an average of 3.8 months on leave while they typically receive pay for 2.2 months.

The study showed a general increase in the amount of unpaid parental leave taken by both parents.

Men are also more often than women on parental leave part-time enabling them to keep a foothold in the labour market and an eye on their career development, the report noted.

The study furthermore showed that the division of other household chores is impacted by the division of parental leave with women taking a larger share of the burden, while men spend more time at work. This situation furthermore persists even after children begin attending daycare and school.

"This study indicates that decision over how to share parental leave have long-term consequences for how housework is then divided later," Laura Hartman said.

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