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# Promoting parental leave for immigrant fathers – what role does policy play?

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# Promoting parental leave for immigrant fathers – what role does policy play?

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**Abstract:** A growing number of countries support female employment and fathers' involvement in childcare by providing parental benefits for fathers. The purpose of the study is to examine if the policy design has implications to immigrants' gendered take-up of parental benefits. We do this by comparing two distinct policy contexts, Finland and Sweden. Our results suggest that policy design seems to have a surprisingly large effect on immigrant fathers' take-up. The immigrant-native gap is much wider in Finnish policy context which, at the time, did not incorporate father quota in the strict sense.

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## Introduction<sup>2</sup>

Multiple countries, especially in the Nordic, promote a gender-equal use of parental leave through quotas and paternal leave. Nevertheless, leave is still divided unequally in all the countries, and there are large differences between fathers' leave use in various subpopulations. Not least the difference in leave use between native-born and immigrant fathers demands attention, as it indicates the level of access to policy for growing groups of parents. It has been contested whether immigrants have the same social rights as natives, which has been found to vary between countries and between periods (Sainsbury 2006).

Previous research from Sweden has shown substantial immigrant-native gaps in fathers' use of parental leave (Duvander 2010; Mussino et al. 2016). The purpose of this study is to examine what role policy design plays in the matter. We do this by comparing two relatively similar – but at the same time crucially distinct – policy contexts, Finland and Sweden. By controlling for relevant confounding factors and examining as similar immigrant groups as possible, we aim to separate the impact of policies from economic and socio-cultural factors. We also consider duration of residence to indicate exposure to policy.

The motives for promoting fathers' participation in care are multifaceted; the most eminent may be gender equality per se (Eydal and Rostgaard 2011). The role of the father is undergoing a slow change in many Western countries, from that of the breadwinner to one including an increasing amount of childcare (e.g. Esping-Andersen 2009). In most of the countries, this change has been supported by providing fathers with parental benefits. The support of paternal care can also be motivated through multiple positive outcomes. Household finances, and on a large scale the fiscal budget, are likely to benefit from the dual-earner (or dual-carer) model. Additionally, positive outcomes on child cognitive development (Schober 2015), the relationship between parents (Allen and Daly 2007), and continued childbearing have been observed (Duvander et al. 2010).

The research will offer insight into the functioning of various family policy models, especially for immigrants but for natives as well. The study builds on the research tradition examining the role of policy by comparing two similar countries with in-depth microdata, allowing the differentiating factors to more easily be isolated and discussed (e.g. Neyer and Andersson 2008). In the case of family policy, the setup is crucial for constructing the roles of fatherhood and motherhood and will thus have major impact on the next generation as well as on how the gendered relation between parenthood and labor-market work will be created (Halpern and Perry-Jenkins 2016).

We concentrate on two types of parental policies targeted at fathers: 1) the “Daddy days” typically used immediately after the child's birth while the mother is also at home, and 2) the

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individual leave, which can typically be used only one parent at a time. Father's individual leave, as we define it, can be reserved for fathers only (father quota) or used by either parent (shared leave). Both the Finnish and Swedish systems incorporate these types of leave. In Finland, fathers' use of leave has traditionally concentrated on the Daddy days, while the Swedish policy puts more emphasis on the individual leave (see e.g. Duvander and Lammi-Taskula 2011). This has been largely due to the differing emphases in policy design. In Finland Daddy days have existed since 1991 while days reserved for the father were introduced only in 2003, still conditional on the father's use of shared leave until 2013. For a long time these days had to be used immediately after mother's leave, but since 2007 the flexibility regarding this has been gradually increased. In Sweden days reserved for the father have existed since the mid-90s, and Daddy days since 1980. Additionally, in both countries the shared leave has been possible for fathers to use all along from the 70s, but in the absolute majority of cases mothers have used most of this leave. Unlike in Finland, parents can use parental leave flexibly during the preschool years in many different episodes if preferred.

Previous literature shows large differences in fathers' use of parental leave between Finland and Sweden (Haataja 2009). Presumably, the design of policies plays a prominent role here (see Esping-Andersen 2009, 102-103). In addition, the cross-country differences may stem from issues relating to the labor markets, workplace culture or gender perceptions. Having studied immigrant fathers' use of parental leave in Sweden, Duvander (2010) asserts that the observed gap between them and natives is most likely due to the weaker labor-market attachment, but information deficit and different preferences may also play a role. To examine the factors more carefully, we aim to disentangle the role of economic factors by controlling for aspects such as the father's share of household income and wage level.

For both countries, we use detailed longitudinal register microdata for first births between 1999 and 2009. The composition of the immigrant population, spouse immigrant status, labor-market status, demographic and socio-economic factors are considered. We use linear probability models to estimate the propensity to use parental leave among immigrant fathers in comparison to native-born fathers.

The paper is organized as follows. First we present a literature review of gendered childcare choices and its determinants. This is followed by detailed descriptions of the national contexts: their policy systems and immigration histories. Next, we move on to present the data at hand and the empirical specifications. Finally, we present the empirical results and our conclusions.

### **Why do fathers take or not take the leave?**

A large body of research has examined the determinants of fathers' involvement in childcare, and the same literature has largely been extrapolated to parental leave use as the two issues are strongly correlated. The theories are divided roughly into the economic point of view, which emphasizes the income optimization within the family (e.g. Becker 1965), and the sociological

perspective, which puts more weight on gender perceptions (Coltrane 2000). In addition, it has been argued that pressures from the workplace (Haas and Hwang 1997) and awareness about the leave (e.g. Salmi and Lammi-Taskula 2015; National Social Insurance Board 2003a) also have a major impact on leave use.

The classic micro-economic theory emphasizes the rational choice and maximization of utility within the family (e.g. Becker 1965). Applied to parental leave use, this would mean that fathers' and mothers' pre-birth wage difference would be a major determinant of the fathers' leave use. Generally, if the father's wage is larger than the mother's, it makes economic sense for the mother to use most of the leave as this would minimize the income loss. Additionally, many studies use income level per se as a central predictor. The underlying logic is that low-income families cannot afford further loss in income, which prevents the fathers from using parental leave.

Accordingly, a number of studies have found parents' labor-market statuses (Hämäläinen and Takala 2007) and income levels (Sundström and Duvander 2002, Duvander and Viklund 2014), as well as father's share of income (e.g. Saarikallio-Torp and Haataja 2016), to be of importance for parental leave use. It seems that the relationship with fathers' income is somewhat curvilinear, as the fathers with the highest income do not use the most leave.

It has also been shown that employer attitudes matter for how leave is used, especially for fathers. The reason for this is probably that the mother hardly has to negotiate for leave use, something that is still required of fathers, not least regarding when it is suitable to start the leave. Bygren and Duvander (2006) have found that fathers' leave use is highest in female-dominated, large and public workplaces, and Haas and Hwang (1995; 2007) find that the attitudes of the employer are of importance for how fathers use leave in private, male-dominated workplaces.

In some cases, the unawareness of available leave may hinder fathers' leave use. Lammi-Taskula and Salmi (2015) show that about a fifth of all fathers did not even acknowledge the existence of the Finnish two-week period reserved only for fathers in 2006. In Sweden as well, it seems that fathers – and perhaps especially immigrant fathers – lack knowledge of their leave rights (National Social Insurance Board 2003a).

The sociological theories maintain that the role of the father and fathering practices are dependent on gender attitudes among parents. For instance, in their survey Salmi and Lammi-Taskula (2015) found that the main reason behind fathers' non-take-up of leave lay, not in the family's finances, but in the prevailing gender norms. In 2006, the male breadwinning model was still seen as the default in Finland. In contrast, in Sweden parents cite economic and work reasons as major determinants of their leave division (National Social Insurance Board 2003b).

Moreover, fathering practices are found to vary by culture, which is partly explained by different gender attitudes (e.g. Lamb 1987; Hofferth 2003). Finland and Sweden receive immigrants from countries where traditional gender norms prevail in multiple measures (World Economic Forum

2015). Cultural gender views may hence be a potential cause behind the immigrants' reluctance to use the leave. Immigrant fathers in Sweden interviewed by Johansson and Klinth (2008) offer a more adapted view, maintaining that it is mostly economic restrictions that hinder fathers' involvement in childcare. Moreover, in their study Roer-Strier et al. (2005) point out that interviewed immigrants (in Canada) are well aware of the different gender expectations in Western countries and, as a result, usually mix ingredients from both cultures into their fathering practices.

Some studies indicate the reshaping of fathering practices through acculturation in the host country (Capps et al. 2010; Jain and Belsky 1997), with the authors maintaining that acculturation should not be interpreted as time spent in the country. However, recent results from Sweden (Mussino et al. 2016) suggest that immigrant fathers increase their leave use with time spent in Sweden, indicating adaptation to the leave use pattern of Swedish-born fathers. A similar adaptation pattern has also been found for immigrant mothers in Sweden (Mussino and Duvander 2016).

The contextual norms for some immigrant groups are also likely to be affected by the expectations the host country has for them to be "traditional" (Boyd 1984, Mulinari 2008). In Sweden, for example, this relates to the roles they take on in the new country (Government Commission 2012).

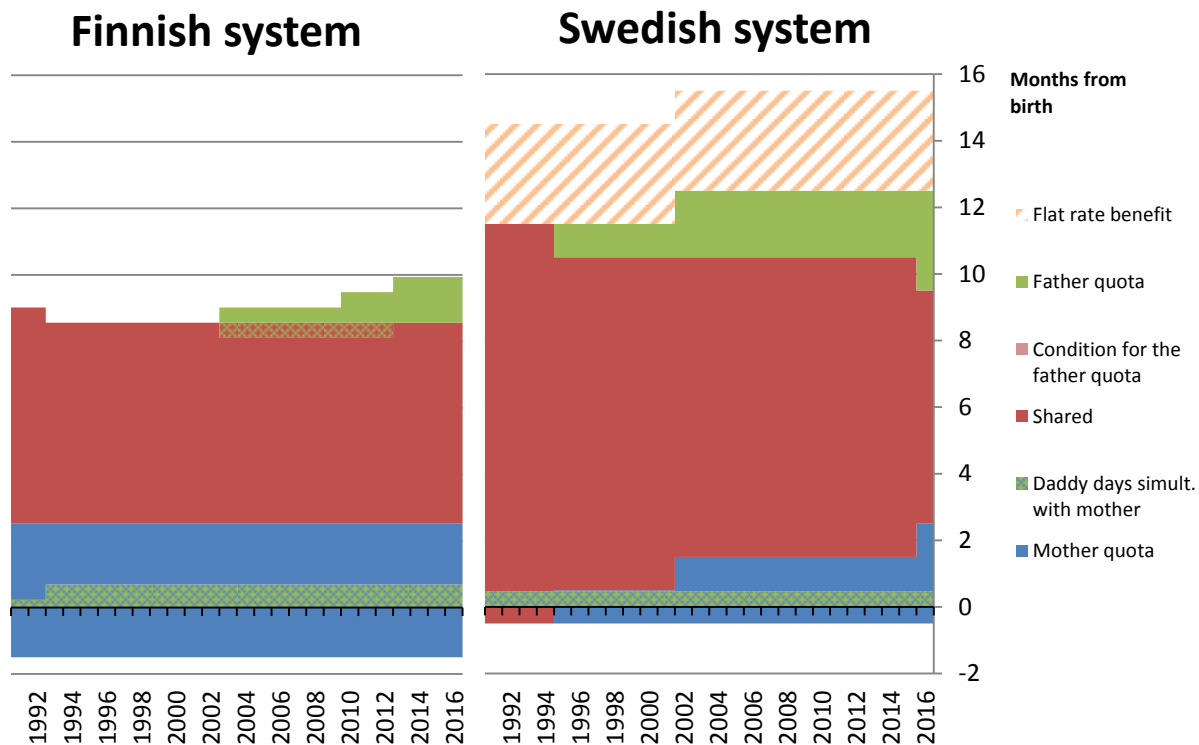
In sum, the immigrant-native gap in fathers' leave use can stem from multiple factors: economic restrictions; an insecure position on the labor market; information deficits; gender attitudes; expectations; and how they are received by the national welfare system, concerning both legal regulations and individual contacts. However, the role of policy design, especially for immigrants, is still an under-researched matter that we examine more in-depth in this article.

## **Empirical setting**

### **The policy systems**

The Finnish and Swedish family benefit systems can both be portrayed as belonging to the Nordic family benefit models (e.g. Haataja and Nyberg 2006). They feature relatively long periods of leave, and quotas reserved for each parent. However, there are also a number of nuances and differences that may be of importance for their usage by various groups of parents. In both countries the current parental leave system originates from the 1970s, when it replaced earlier systems of maternal leave (Lammi-Taskula 2007; Lundqvist 2012). Both systems have developed since then. As depicted in Graph 1, the lengths of spells in legislation differ greatly both between the countries and over the past 25 years.

Graph 1a-b. Development of parental leave legislation in Finland and Sweden 1991-2016.



Parental leave for fathers are divided into three different segments. In temporal order, the first is the “Daddy days”, the leave taken simultaneously with the mother. In Finland, since 1993, the Daddy days have lasted three weeks and, until 2013, were to be used during the first eight months of the child’s life. In Sweden, two weeks of Daddy days were introduced in 1980 so that employed fathers could be off work during the child’s first period. The days are to be used during the child’s first two months. Unlike in Finland, the Swedish Daddy days are targeted exclusively at fathers in the labor force.

The major part of parental leave is the shared part that can be used by either of the parents (red block in Graph 1). It is noteworthy that there is a conceptual difference between the two countries in the design of the shared part. In Finland, it is not reserved for either parent specifically. When it is applied for, other parent’s consent is not formally verified; in practice, the one who applies for the leave first gets it. In Sweden, the shared part is split between the parents and the other’s consent is required for any transfer of days. The shared part has been used mostly by the mother in both countries, but more so in Finland (Haataja 2009).

The third type of parental leave is the quotas. In Finland, a period of four months is reserved for the mother. The leave reserved for fathers was introduced in 2003, giving them access to two “bonus weeks” (green block) only if they used the last two weeks of the shared parental leave (green-red block). The bonus weeks were increased by two weeks in 2010. The condition

regulating the access to them was abolished in 2013, which can be interpreted as the introduction of a Finnish father quota in its true meaning. However, our analysis concentrates on the period when the conditional quota was in force and a few years before (births in 1999-2009).

In Sweden, the mother and father have quotas of the same length. Since their introduction in 1995, the Swedish quotas have been part of what can be considered a gender-neutral parental leave whereby the two parents have the same rights. The first quota month was extended with a second month in 2002, at the same time as the entire leave was extended with one month. A third month was added in 2016. In addition, since 2008 fathers have been encouraged to use parental leave through an extra tax credit, called the equality bonus. However, this bonus has not visibly affected the take-up (Duvander and Johansson 2012).

When it comes to the father quota, it can be noted that Finland is following the Swedish system in small steps and with a lag of many years. Like previously, Sweden has somewhat acted as an example in family policy (Hiilamo 2002). However, large differences remain. For instance, total parental leave is approximately five months longer in Sweden. Additionally, what is not visible in Graph 1 is the flexibility of the Swedish parental leave system. Parents in Sweden can use the benefit part-time, or postpone using it until the child turns eight years old (12 years old since 2012). However, the possibility to utilize the flexibility depends greatly on the labor-market status and economic restrictions of the parent (Duvander and Viklund 2014). In Finland, the flexibility is much more limited. The benefit has to be used in one spell starting approximately five weeks before delivery. However, the flexibility for paternal leave has been increased since 2007; currently, fathers can postpone their leave until the child turns two.

While all mothers with custody who reside in Finland or Sweden have a right to parental leave, fathers' eligibility for benefits differs between the two countries. In Sweden the entitlement is tied to the custody of the child which, in the case of separation, typically remains with both parents. In Finland, the father's entitlement is tied to marriage or cohabitation with the mother. This cross-country difference has direct implications for immigrant fathers, as single and separated parents are overrepresented among immigrant populations in both countries (own calculations; Tervola 2015). On the other hand, mother's cohabitant partner without legal custody is entitled to use the paternal benefits in Finland but not in Sweden.

The compensation level is somewhat lower in Finland than in Sweden. In Finland the replacement rate is 60-70 percent of earlier income, depending on year and income. However, employers often supplement the rate to full replacement. The parents who had no income before using the leave receive a flat rate of 20.9 euros per day (2016, converted to a scale of seven days a week). In Sweden the earnings-related part was originally 90 percent of earlier income, but was reduced in the 1990s to 80 percent and in the mid-2000s to 77.6 percent. Also, in Sweden it is common for the employer to top up the benefit, often to 90 percent of the preceding income. Parents who had no previous income will receive a flat rate, which up until 2002 was six euros a



day but has since been increased stepwise to today's 25 euros a day. The Daddy days are only paid for fathers in employment, and are also replaced at 77.6 percent of the father's income.

In Finland, 9 out of 10 families prolong their care period using the home care allowance after the parental leave. The allowance can be paid until the youngest child turns three. Salmi and Lammi-Taskula (2015) maintain that the popular use of the home care allowance is a major hindrance to fathers' use of parental leave, as the father is not allowed to use the leave while the mother is receiving the home care allowance. Moreover, if the mother intends to use the home care allowance, the father is likely to be discouraged to use his short leave between the mother's periods of parental leave and home care allowance, especially as she then has to stop being the caretaker for a short period. In 19 cases out of 20, the mother is the one who uses the home care allowance. Immigrant families use the allowance more often and for longer periods than natives do, reflecting partly their weaker labor-market attachment (Tervola 2015). Sweden had its own home care allowance from 2008 to 2015. However, it was only introduced in the municipalities that chose to do so, and the take-up rates remained a fraction of those in Finland (2% in 2013, see Duvander and Ellingsæter 2016).

It is thus clear that the Daddy days are somewhat more flexible and more generous in length in Finland than in Sweden, while the opposite is true for use of the father quota and the shared part in the parental leave system. Moreover, during our study period the Finnish system did not incorporate the father quota in its true meaning but rather two or four bonus weeks conditional on the father's use of the shared part and, consequently, conditional on negotiation with the mother. This is one potential reason why fathers' take-up rates have remained lower in Finland. This study may reveal whether immigrant fathers behave differently in the absence of a true quota.

## **Immigration to Finland and Sweden**

Despite of some common features, the immigrant populations in Finland and Sweden have a number of dissimilarities. Sweden has a more extensive immigration history, which has led to a more substantial immigrant population (14% vs. 4% born abroad in 2009). In addition, while refugee migration is present in both countries, it has been more prominent in Sweden.

Finland was a country of emigration practically until the 90s. Especially in the 70s, its over-supply of workers led to high flows of labor migrants to particularly Sweden. But at the start of the 90s, changes to Finnish immigration policy and the disintegration of the Soviet Union turned the country's net migration positive. Finland suddenly faced simultaneous immigration flows from neighboring Russia and Estonia, as well as refugee migrants from more distant countries such as Yugoslavia and Somalia. The migrants from Russia were mostly Ingrian Finns, with a centuries-old Finnish ancestry (Dhalmann and Yousfi 2010, 222-226.). At the turn of the millennium Finland was receiving refugees increasingly from Iraq, Somalia and Afghanistan. In addition, a growing number of migrants were moving from other EU countries, mainly due to family reasons but also as labor migrants.

Already at the end of World War II, the arrival of refugees from Germany and the neighboring Nordic and Baltic countries turned Sweden into an immigration country. During the 70s immigration from Finland increased drastically, while labor migration from outside the Nordic countries decreased under the effect of the new immigration policy. Refugees from Chile in particular continued to come intermittently.

In the mid-80s, the decades of refugee flows to Sweden began: first from Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey and Eritrea; and at the end of the decade, from Somalia, Kosovo and the countries of the former Eastern Communist Bloc. During the 90s, with the breakdown of Yugoslavia, 100,000 individuals from the Balkans – mainly Bosnians – found a new home in Sweden (Lundh 2005; Statistics Sweden 2016). After the turn of the millennium immigration from within Europe started rising again, mainly as a consequence of the Schengen Agreement. At the same time, refugee migration from Iraq started to rise again.

During our study period the major immigrant groups in Sweden originated from Finland, Iraq and the former Yugoslavia (Statistics Sweden 2016). In Finland, most had been born in neighboring Russia and Estonia, followed by immigrants from the former Yugoslavia and Somalia (Statistics Finland 2016). As recently as 2015 both countries faced unprecedented numbers of asylum-seekers, which is further likely to add to the share of immigrant population in the coming years.

## Data

For both countries, we use detailed longitudinal register microdata for children between 1999 and 2009. The large time span of 11 years enables us to separate integration effect from cohort effect. For Finland, we use data consisting of a 60 percent random sample of all mothers giving birth in each year (see Juutilainen 2016 for details). For Sweden we use the STAR (Sweden over Time: Activities and Relations) database, which contains information on the total population.

We restrict the analysis to couples cohabiting with each other during the two years after the child's birth. In this way, families with separated, emigrated or deceased parents are excluded from the analysis. Moreover, we concentrate on first births, or more accurately, on parents with only one child in their household at the end of the birth year. Consequently, not all parents in the data are necessarily first-timers, as their previous children may not live in the same household. However, we argue that the possible mismatch is irrelevant to the study. This definition also entails that parents of twins and adopted children are excluded.

The data are complemented with parental information concerning country of birth, year of migration, age, labor-market status, and income before the child's birth. For immigrants arriving during the year the child was born, we use the income information from the birth/arrival year. A person is regarded as employed when his annual wage exceeds the threshold of twice the first

decile of monthly wage in the annual wage distribution. Further, we control for wage level by dividing the wages into terciles.

We analyze the binary take-up of the two types of parental leave: Daddy days and the individual leave. To simplify the analysis we do not distinguish between the use of the quota and the shared part, but rather define them as the father's individual leave. However, we acknowledge that there are some fundamental differences between the two parts. Primarily, the shared part requires more negotiation between parents as it also affects the mother's time with the child.

In spite of Swedish Daddy days being targeted exclusively at fathers in the labor force, we concentrate on all fathers. We do this because the available data has no specific information on employment spells but only the annual wage, and we thus have no satisfying way to identify the eligible fathers. Secondly, including all fathers facilitates the comparison with Finland. We control for labor-market status and wage level the year before childbirth to increase the comparability.

Immigrants are defined as people born abroad. To control for the socio-cultural background, we aim to compare immigrants of as specific origins as possible. This is encumbered by the country-specific immigrant compositions and the small number of cases in the Finnish data, as well as the fact that the grouping of the origin countries in the Swedish data has been previously defined by Statistics Sweden.

We end up using four relatively comparable groups prevalent in both countries: fathers from the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Turkey, and the Horn of Africa (which contains mostly immigrants from Somalia and Ethiopia). The comparability of these groups may be somewhat weak in the Swedish and Finnish populations generally, but our analysis focuses on more specific groups: fathers who had their first child during 1999-2009. This narrows down the examined immigrant cohort. To increase comparability, we excluded fathers who had migrated before 1990; these were mainly Turkish immigrants in Sweden.

In Finland these groups together constitute 21 percent of the immigrant fathers in the data, while this figure for Sweden is 43 percent. The largest immigrant groups in Finland, namely Russians and Estonians, are not examined distinctly due to aggregated grouping with other nationalities in the Swedish data and a consequent lack of comparability. However, like the rest of the immigrant fathers, they are included in two more heterogeneous and less comparable groups: fathers from Western countries and from other countries. Western countries include OECD countries in Europe and the Anglosphere (except Turkey and Estonia, which was aggregated together with other Baltic countries in the group "Other"). In sum, we categorize immigrants in four accurate, and two less accurate, groups by country of birth.

Table 1 presents the basic data description by immigrant group. The largest of the specific groups is the former Yugoslavia, and the smallest is the Horn of Africa. The number of observations used is much higher in the Swedish data: in the Swedish data the immigrants constitute 11 percent of all fathers, while in Finland this figure is 4.5 percent. The average take-up of Daddy days during the study period is similar between Finnish and Swedish natives, but among immigrant groups there are differences. Much larger differences are observed when looking at fathers' individual leave: the take-up in Finland is a fraction of that in Sweden for all groups.

**Table 1. Basic data description. Parents with first child born between 1999 and 2009.**

	n of couples <sup>1</sup>		distribution, %		use of Daddy days, %		use of individual leave, %	
	Swe	Fin	Swe	Fin	Swe	Fin	Swe	Fin
Natives	336 563	125 193	88.0	95.4	74	76	87	12
Former Yugoslavia	9 224	400	2.4	0.3	50	43	69	2
Horn of Africa	1 432	189	0.4	0.1	35	28	54	1
Iraq	7 384	307	1.9	0.2	31	19	48	1
Turkey	2 497	373	0.7	0.3	29	30	48	2
Western	8 904	1 631	2.3	1.2	59	62	72	15
Other	16 546	3 143	4.3	2.4	43	43	59	4

<sup>1</sup> For Sweden the number of observations is the total population, and for Finland it is the 60% sample.

## Methods

Our aim is to compare the take-up of immigrant fathers' parental leave across Finland and Sweden. As argued by Neyer and Andersson (2008), a reliable cross-country comparison of family policies requires an in-depth analysis that takes into account the individual contexts. Consequently, we use regression to control for underlying socio-economic and demographic differences from natives. We run the regressions separately for both countries and for both policies: the Daddy days and the individual leave. In addition, to separate the integration trends effectively we run a regression from which natives are excluded.

Comparing regression coefficients from two different samples can be problematic when it comes to dichotomous dependent variables. Generally, the dichotomous variable is regarded as a truncation of a latent continuous variable whose variance affects the regression. Dependent variables from different samples are likely to have unequal variances. In addition, logistic regression is heavily exposed to the omitted variable bias (see e.g. Mood 2010). The solution suggested by Mood (2010) is to use a linear probability model (LPM) instead of logit or probit models. Linear probability models are not biased by omitted variables to the same extent. In addition, linear regression models may be easier to interpret as an approximation of the marginal

effect on the probability (e.g. Hellevik 2007). However, Holm et al. (2015) have also highlighted a number of integrity problems when comparing LPM coefficients across samples. For instance, the differences in the variance of latent variables are likely to also affect LPM coefficients.

Horrace & Oaxaca (2006) note that the division of using LPM and logit runs mainly between disciplines: sociologists tend to use more logit and LPM is more common among economists. To ensure the robustness of our analysis, we ran both logit and LPM models. We found that they incorporate only minor differences and, most importantly, end up with the same conclusions. Only 0.2 percent of LPM predictions fall below 0 or above 1. Consequently, we feel safe in reporting results from LPM.

Swedish parents can extend or postpone the use of parental benefit for an eight-year period. To simplify, we chose to follow the fathers' use of parental benefits in Sweden only during the birth year and two consecutive years. As most of the leave is used during the first two years (see Swedish Social Insurance Agency 2016), the binary take-up is not largely affected by the truncation. For Daddy days that are used at the time of the birth, we use the information from the birth year and one consecutive year. The discrepancies in the lengths of the follow-up are taken into account by controlling for month of birth.

In the Finnish data we observe the use of parental benefits per child, while the Swedish data are constructed at parent level. For Sweden, it is impossible to separate the parental benefit paid for the first child from that paid for consecutive children. Multi-child families may have more days of parental leave available during the follow-up, which in turn increases the probability that fathers will use the leave. Consequently, we ran a validation test by controlling for the additional births during the two follow-up years. The changes in the immigrant-native gaps are negligible. Because of this, and the fact that the decision to have consecutive children can be seen as endogenous to the father's take-up of leave, we report only the results in which the additional children are not controlled for.

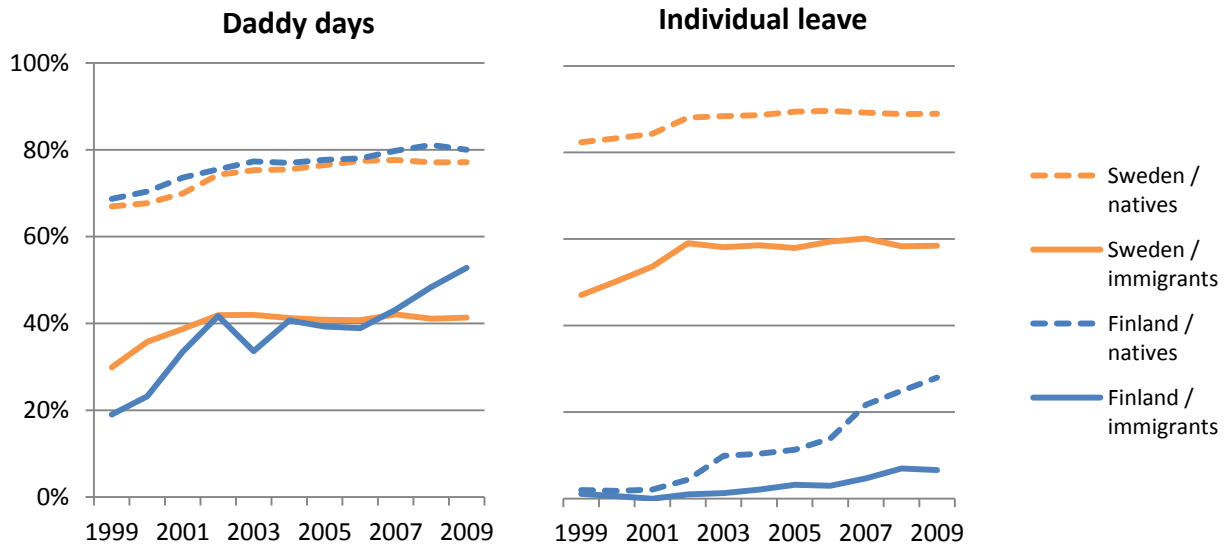
## **Take-up of parental leave in Finland and Sweden**

We analyze the fathers' parental benefits in two parts: 1) the Daddy days, used while the mother is also home, and 2) the individual leave, used by one parent at a time. The individual leave can be parental leave targeted either only at the father, or at either of the parents.

Graph 2 below shows how the different policies are used in Finland and Sweden. The Daddy days are the most common type of parental leave for fathers in Finland, while the individual leave is minor. It should be noted that immigrant fathers have clearly increased their use of Daddy days in the past ten years, while individual leave remains uncommon. In Sweden both types are widely used, the Daddy days being slightly more uncommon than the individual leave. However, Daddy days are used by similar proportions of fathers in Finland and Sweden. It should be noted, however, that in Sweden the Daddy days constitute a relatively minor part of

the father's total benefits when measured in number of days (e.g. Swedish Social Insurance Agency 2016).

**Graph 2. Proportion of fathers using different parts of parental benefits by immigrant status and birth year in Finland and Sweden.**



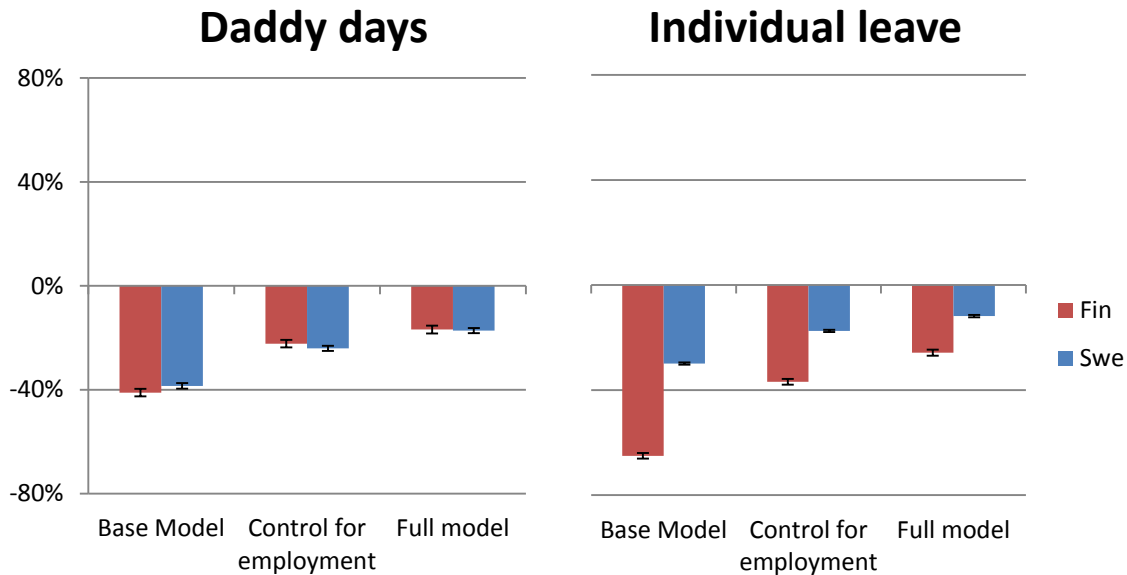
Note: In order to highlight the immigrant effect, only immigrant-immigrant and native-native couples are included in the Graph.

The take-up rate of native fathers exceeds that of immigrants for both types of leave and for both countries. What is most striking in Graph 2 is that immigrants' take-up seems to follow that of natives rather than of immigrants in the other country. This implies the strong role of policy rather than socio-cultural background. However, background can still affect the take-up in relation to natives. To examine the issue in more detail, we move to analyze the relative immigrant-native gaps in more specific groups while controlling for other determinants of fathers' leave use.

### What lies behind the differences between natives and immigrants?

The immigrant-native gap in all parental leave use is largely caused by the differences in labor-market status. Graph 3 shows that the gaps are almost halved in both Finland and Sweden after employment is controlled for. Taking into account further factors like wage level or immigrant status of spouse (full model) does not alter the picture to the same extent.

**Graph 3. Relative risk (immigrants vs. natives) of father using the leave.**

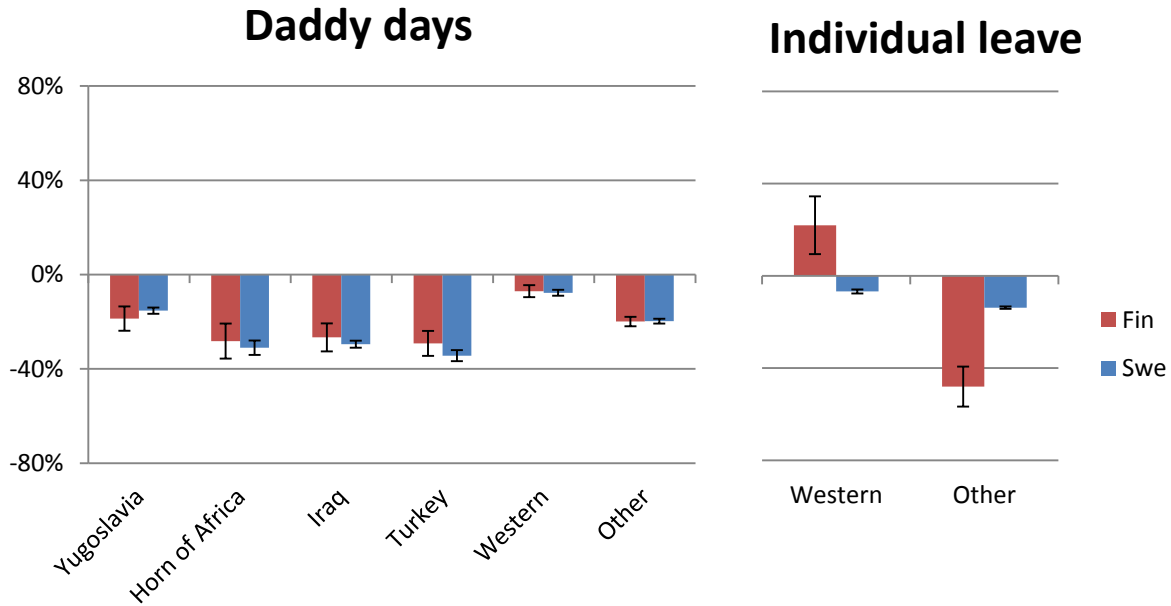


Note: Based on the LPM model coefficients divided by the natives' take-up rate presented in Table 1. Includes 95% confidence intervals. The full model controls for the fathers' and mothers' employment, fathers' wage level, fathers' share of income, fathers' age, and immigrant status of the spouse.

The relative take-up of Daddy days is surprisingly similar in the two countries. Immigrants use the Daddy days 40 percent less often than natives do, and 17 percent less often than comparable natives do. For individual leave, where the policies are more divergent, the relative take-up by immigrant fathers differs between the countries. In Finland the immigrant-native gap is more than twice as wide as that in Sweden. Controlling for employment as well as wage level and immigrant status of spouse narrows the gap in both countries. However, it remains wider in Finland after including the controls. Immigrant fathers in Sweden use the leave 12 percent less often than comparable natives do, while in Finland this figure is 26 percent.

The figures presented above do not take into account the immigrant compositions that differ between the countries. When analyzed through more accurate grouping, the situation for Daddy days does not change notably (presented in Graph 4). The differences in group-specific gaps between Finland and Sweden are statistically negligible.

**Graph 4. Relative risk (vs. natives) of father using the leave by immigrant group.**



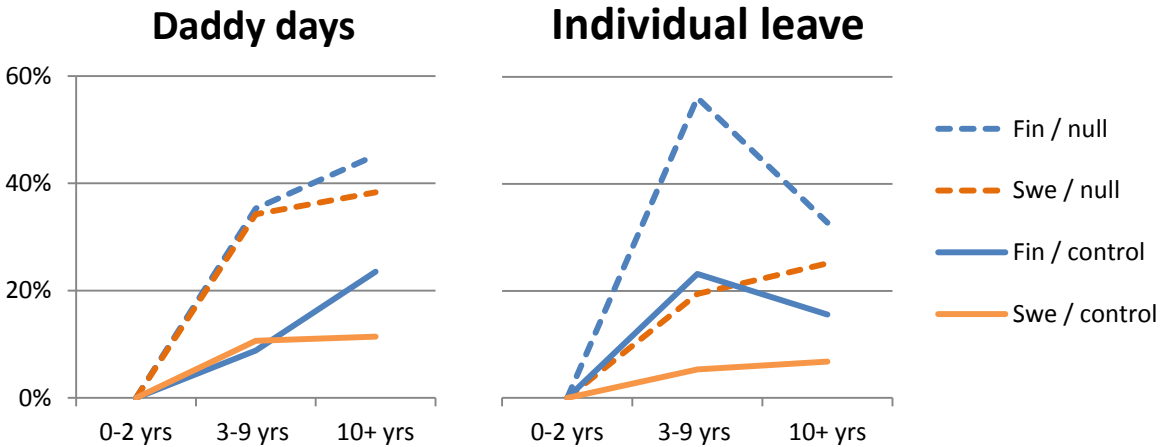
Note: Based on the LPM model coefficients divided by the natives' take-up rate presented in Table 1. Includes 95% confidence intervals. Detailed regression results are presented in Appendix Table 3.

Due to the small number of events in the Finnish data, the take-up of individual leave could not be analyzed in specific groups. Instead, we settled for separating Western immigrants from other immigrants. However, it should be noted that the compositions here are different, especially in "Other": for Finland the group is dominated by neighboring Russia and Estonia, while for Sweden Iraq and the former Yugoslavia are major groups. We can see that the gap observed for Finland in Graph 3 is completely due to immigrants other than Western ones; they use the individual leave half as often as comparable natives. Fathers originating from Western countries, in turn, use the Daddy days more than comparable natives do. In Sweden, the take-up by Western immigrants does not differ much from other comparable immigrants.

Graph 5 shows the take-up of parental leave by years since migration. It should be emphasized that this is not a follow-up and that different points in time incorporate different immigrant cohorts, although the immigrant composition by group of origin is controlled for. The take-up of Daddy days and the individual leave clearly increases with exposure in both countries. However, the trends diminish greatly when factors like employment and wage level are controlled for. In Finland there is an adaptation trend of using Daddy days, but the trend for individual leave is not statistically significant. In Sweden, immigrant fathers who have resided in the country for some time have a higher propensity of using both types of leave.



**Graph 5. Relative risk (vs. migrants who had been in country 0-2 years) of father using the leave by time since migration.**



Note: Based on the LPM models including only immigrants. Detailed regression results for controlled models are presented in Appendix Table 4.

The detailed regression results presented in Appendix Tables 3 and 4 show a couple of issues worth highlighting. Fathers having an immigrant spouse use the parental leave less than those with a native spouse do. The spouse's origin seems to matter in both countries, especially for immigrant fathers. This is likely to be due to a better awareness of the leave and integration on the father's part.

The mother's employment seems to increase the likelihood of taking the Daddy days in Finland but not in Sweden, and vice versa, to increase the likelihood of taking the individual leave in Sweden but not in Finland. So, in Sweden, a stronger attachment of the mother on the labor market contributes to leave use among immigrant fathers. For immigrant men in Finland, the mother's employment is not a significant factor for individual leave use. It is also worth noting that during the 2000s immigrant fathers in Finland increased their use of Daddy days more than native fathers did, a trend that is also visible in Graph 2. This trend is independent of change in immigrant composition, labor-market status and duration of stay. One possible explanation for it is an improved awareness and the provision of information on the leave. On the other hand, use of the individual leave has increased less among immigrants than among natives.

The father's share of the household income indicates the economic incentives for sharing the leave in the family. In theory, men with a smaller share of the household income should be more prone to use the leave. However, like in some previous studies, it seems that fathers in families with an equal income division use the parental leave more often. This holds for both countries and both types of leave.

## Conclusions

This study compared immigrant fathers' take-up of parental leave in two Nordic policy contexts, Finland and Sweden. The two countries provide similar types of parental leave for the father: Daddy days at the beginning of the child's life while the mother is at home, and the individual leave, which can mainly be used by one parent at a time. Despite the similarities, great policy differences prevail: in Finland the system of individual leave is more rigid and conditional on the mother's leave use, while the Swedish system is more flexible and offers more independence in the father's choice of use. On the other hand, the Daddy days are more available in Finland than in Sweden.

Our results suggest that policy design seems to have a surprisingly large effect on immigrant fathers' behavior. Swedish policy context encourages fathers, including immigrants, to use the individual leave much more than Finnish policy does. The effect is clearest in absolute take-up rates. For example, half of Iraqi fathers in Sweden use the individual leave while only one percent of Iraqi fathers in Finland do.

The effect is also notable relative to natives' take-up. The immigrant-native gap in the use of individual leave is more than twice as wide in Finland as in Sweden (-26% vs. -12%). Reasoning about the possible mechanism underlying this, it may be that the immigrants were affected by the lack of a "true" father quota in Finland more often than natives were. The Finnish individual leave required negotiation with the mother, and was thus potentially more affected by gender perceptions than the quota was. In addition, awareness of the Finnish bonus weeks may have also been weaker among immigrant fathers than among natives. Similarly, the possibility to postpone and extend the leave in Sweden may in turn increase immigrant fathers' possibilities to use it even in an insecure and precarious labor-market situation.

Interestingly, immigrant fathers from Western countries in Finland use the individual leave more than their native Finnish counterparts do. The group consists mainly of fathers originating from Sweden, the United Kingdom and Germany. One explanation for their high take-up may be that they work in such industries where the employer has generally more positive attitudes towards employees' take-up of parental leave. Additional analysis shows indeed that western immigrants in Finland are somewhat over-represented in professional, scientific and technical activities but under-represented in logistics and manufacturing. The latter are typically male-dominated industries and may hence support less the use of parental leave (eg. Bygren and Duvander 2006).

The cross-national differences in the take-up of Daddy days are negligible, both in absolute terms and relative to natives. Even when immigrant composition, labor-market status and income level are controlled for, there are no differences between immigrant fathers in Finland and Sweden. This further affirms our conclusion regarding the important role of policy design for immigrants: when the policy is more similar, the take-up among immigrant fathers from the same origins is at the same level.

In both countries, immigrant fathers' use of parental leave increases with time spent in the country. This is explained largely, if not completely, by their integration into the labor market and increasing wage level. A part of the observed change may also be due to an improved awareness about the leave or the adoption of more equal gender roles in parenting. This would also explain why immigrant fathers with a native spouse are more likely to use parental leave.

While this research was centered on immigrants, the results can also be interpreted to some extent within a more general frame. The comparison of similar immigrant groups is one way to account for the socio-cultural factors that likely affect the use of policy. The fact that the take-up of Daddy days did not differ between Finland and Sweden in any of the immigrant groups supports the hypothesis that the Finnish and Swedish policies for Daddy days result in similar take-up rates regardless of cultural gender perceptions.

The legislative context has changed significantly since the study period. In Finland a 2013 reform abolished the condition in the father quota, enabling fathers to use nine weeks of leave flexibly whenever they want before the child turns two. Recent statistics (Social Insurance Institution of Finland 2016) show that the take-up among the fathers in the entire population has risen by 11 percent. In this way, the Finnish system has once again moved towards the Swedish one. The reform is also likely to further increase immigrant fathers' take-up of parental leave and involvement in childcare.

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## Appendix

Table 2. The data distributions.

	All		Immigrants	
	Swe	Fin	Swe	Fin
N	382 550	131 236	45 987	6 043
Year of birth, %				
1999	7.4	8.8	5.6	6.1
2000	7.9	8.6	6.3	5.5
2001	8.2	8.7	6.5	6.1
2002	8.8	8.6	7.3	6.8
2003	9.1	9.1	8.0	7.9
2004	9.3	9.1	8.9	8.2
2005	9.3	9.2	9.3	9.5
2006	9.8	9.4	10.5	10.5
2007	9.9	9.4	11.6	12.3
2008	10.0	9.4	12.4	12.6
2009	10.3	9.7	13.6	14.3
Month of birth, %				
1	8.0	8.0	8.0	7.6
2	7.4	7.7	7.4	8.1
3	8.3	8.5	8.3	8.2
4	8.6	8.2	8.6	8.3
5	8.9	8.5	8.9	8.4
6	8.6	8.5	8.6	7.7
7	8.9	8.9	8.9	8.3
8	8.8	8.9	8.8	9.1
9	8.6	8.7	8.6	9.0
10	8.7	8.5	8.7	8.8
11	7.9	7.8	7.9	8.7
12	7.5	7.9	7.5	7.8
Father's wage level, %				
Low	23.9	25.9	31.1	30.8
Middle	29.7	29.3	14.0	14.1
High	30.6	29.4	10.0	14.4
Self-employed	5.8	6.2	4.8	5.1
Non-employed	10.0	9.3	40.2	35.6
Employed mother, %	84.8	84.6	48.4	59.0
Immigrant mother, %	15.5	6.0	70.4	49.9
Father's age, %				
< 25	10.9	19.3	16.3	18.7
25-29	33.3	33.8	31.0	30.7
30-34	34.6	27.0	29.0	27.8
35-39	14.5	11.6	15.6	12.7
40+	6.7	8.4	8.2	10.1
Father's share of income, %				
0	2.7	2.8	13.2	12.2
25	5.9	9.2	12.3	16.1
50	65.8	51.9	32.3	33.4
75	19.2	30.3	14.6	25.2
100	6.4	5.8	27.8	13.2
Father's years in country, %				
0-2			43.2	43.3
3-9			34.4	34.7
10+			22.4	22.0

Table 3. Regression results for the Daddy days. The percentage point change in the take-up.

	All				Immigrants			
	Fin		Swe		Fin		Swe	
<b>Constant</b>	82.6	***	94.3	***	68.5	***	76.7	***
<b>Group (ref. Natives/Yugoslavia)</b>								
Former Yugoslavia	-14.2	***	-11.3	***	(ref)		(ref)	
The Horn of Africa	-21.5	***	-22.9	***	-9.8	*	-10.2	***
Iraq	-20.3	***	-21.8	***	-6.4		-8.0	***
Turkey	-22.2	***	-25.4	***	-5.7		-14.3	***
Western	-5.4	***	-5.7	***	10.7	***	3.8	***
Other	-15.1	***	-14.6	***	-0.6		-2.5	***
<b>Month of birth (ref. January)</b>								
2	-0.2		-0.3		2.1		0.0	
3	-1.2	*	-1.2	***	-5.1		-1.6	
4	0.5		-2.6	***	-2.8		-3.0	**
5	1.6	**	-3.9	***	-2.1		-2.6	*
6	1.7	**	-6.4	***	-1.8		-5.6	***
7	2.3	***	-8.0	***	-0.9		-7.8	***
8	1.6	**	-10.1	***	-2.7		-9.7	***
9	2.5	***	-12.9	***	-0.5		-12.1	***
10	3.1	***	-15.9	***	3.3		-12.5	***
11	2.4	***	-21.0	***	5.8	*	-15.7	***
12	1.1		-26.6	***	2.8		-19.3	***
<b>Year of birth (ref. 2009)</b>								
1999	-8.3	***	-9.4	***	-19.3	***	-6.5	***
2000	-6.6	***	-8.6	***	-13.8	***	-3.2	**
2001	-6.6	***	-6.6	***	-16.2	***	-2.7	**
2002	-2.7	***	-2.8	***	-9.0	***	0.4	
2003	-1.3	**	-1.6	***	-8.4	***	1.6	
2004	-1.6	**	-1.6	***	-9.2	***	0.3	
2005	-1.3	**	0.0		-8.3	***	1.0	
2006	-1.1	*	0.8	**	-8.4	***	1.7	
2007	0.5		0.9	**	-3.3		1.8	*
2008	1.4	**	-0.1		-0.7		-0.1	
<b>Father's wage level (ref. medium)</b>								
Employed / low wage	-17.0	***	-9.1	***	-15.7	***	-13.1	***
Employed / high wage	0.0		-3.4	***	-5.6	**	-1.6	
Self-employed	-18.5	***	-24.0	***	-30.8	***	-28.9	***
Not employed	-45.7	***	-28.9	***	-42.9	***	-30.6	***
<b>Employed mother</b>	8.3	***	-0.7	*	10.1	***	2.5	***
<b>Immigrant mother</b>	-2.3	***	-4.0	***	-3.2	*	-8.0	***
<b>Father's age group (ref. 30-34)</b>								
< 25	0.3		-1.4	***	0.9		0.8	
25-29	1.8	***	-0.3		3.1	*	0.4	
35-39	-2.8	***	-1.7	***	-0.1		-2.1	**
40+	-27.8	***	-4.9	***	-14.7	***	-5.4	***
<b>Father's income share (ref. ~50%)</b>								
0 (0-12%)	-1.7	*	-13.1	***	-5.5	*	-4.6	***
25 (13-37%)	-3.9	***	-6.1	***	-3.2		-3.0	***
75 (63-87%)	-2.4	***	-5.1	***	-1.2		-2.5	***
100 (88-100%)	-3.1	***	-5.5	***	-1.7		-0.8	
<b>Father's years in country (ref. 0-2)</b>								
3-9					3.4	*	4.1	***
10+					9.1	***	4.4	***

\*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05

Table 4. Regression results for the individual leave. The percentage point change in the take-up.

	All				Immigrants			
	Fin		Swe		Fin		Swe	
<b>Constant</b>	29.7	***	95.4	***	20.7	***	86.8	***
<b>Group (ref. Natives/Western)</b>								
Western	2.6	***	-5.9	***	(ref)		(ref)	
Other	-5.8	***	-12.0	***	-8.0	***	-3.5	***
<b>Month of birth (ref. January)</b>								
2	0.3		-0.1		2.0		-0.7	
3	0.2		-0.7	*	-1.2		-0.7	
4	0.4		-1.2	***	-0.2		-2.0	
5	1.0	*	-1.3	***	-0.9		-1.0	
6	1.2	**	-1.9	***	0.5		-2.4	*
7	1.4	***	-2.2	***	1.1		-4.0	***
8	2.1	***	-2.4	***	1.3		-4.6	***
9	3.1	***	-2.9	***	0.6		-4.8	***
10	4.2	***	-2.8	***	3.4	*	-3.5	***
11	4.1	***	-3.0	***	3.4	*	-4.6	***
12	3.2	***	-3.3	***	1.3		-5.9	***
<b>Year of birth (ref. 2009)</b>								
1999	-24.1	***	-6.5	***	-10.1	***	-5.3	***
2000	-24.3	***	-5.6	***	-10.5	***	-3.5	***
2001	-24.5	***	-4.6	***	-12.2	***	-2.9	**
2002	-22.0	***	-1.0	***	-10.4	***	1.9	
2003	-16.9	***	-0.6	*	-9.2	***	1.2	
2004	-16.3	***	-0.4		-9.2	***	1.1	
2005	-15.5	***	0.8	**	-7.2	***	1.5	
2006	-13.2	***	1.3	***	-6.5	***	3.3	***
2007	-5.9	***	0.6	*	-3.7	**	2.1	*
2008	-2.9	***	-0.2		-2.2		-0.2	
<b>Father's wage level (ref. medium)</b>								
Employed / low wage	-4.7	***	-6.7	***	-2.6	*	-11.7	***
Employed / high wage	6.3	***	-2.3	***	7.6	***	-3.0	***
Self-employed	-7.0	***	-19.8	***	-5.5	***	-28.6	***
Not employed	-7.6	***	-25.1	***	-5.1	***	-31.3	***
<b>Employed mother</b>	-0.2		2.0	***	1.5		5.2	***
<b>Immigrant mother</b>	-1.8	***	-4.3	***	-2.8	***	-7.1	***
<b>Father's age group (ref. 30-34)</b>								
< 25	-6.3	***	0.2		-0.9		2.9	***
25-29	-2.2	***	0.7	***	0.3		1.8	**
35-39	-1.3	***	-1.8	***	0.9		-2.8	***
40+	-5.3	***	-5.0	***	-1.8		-5.6	***
<b>Father's income share (ref. ~50%)</b>								
0 (0-12%)	-1.4	*	-13.8	***	-1.7		-4.3	***
25 (13-37%)	-0.3		-4.8	***	-0.8		-1.5	*
75 (63-87%)	-3.8	***	-4.7	***	-1.1		-3.5	***
100 (88-100%)	-3.5	***	-6.0	***	-3.5	**	-1.8	*
<b>Father's years in country (ref. 0-2)</b>								
3-9					1.3		2.9	***
10+					0.9		3.7	***

\*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05