

Mummy or daddy, that is the question:

What factors promote or hinder the parental leave take-up of fathers in Germany?

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Abstract

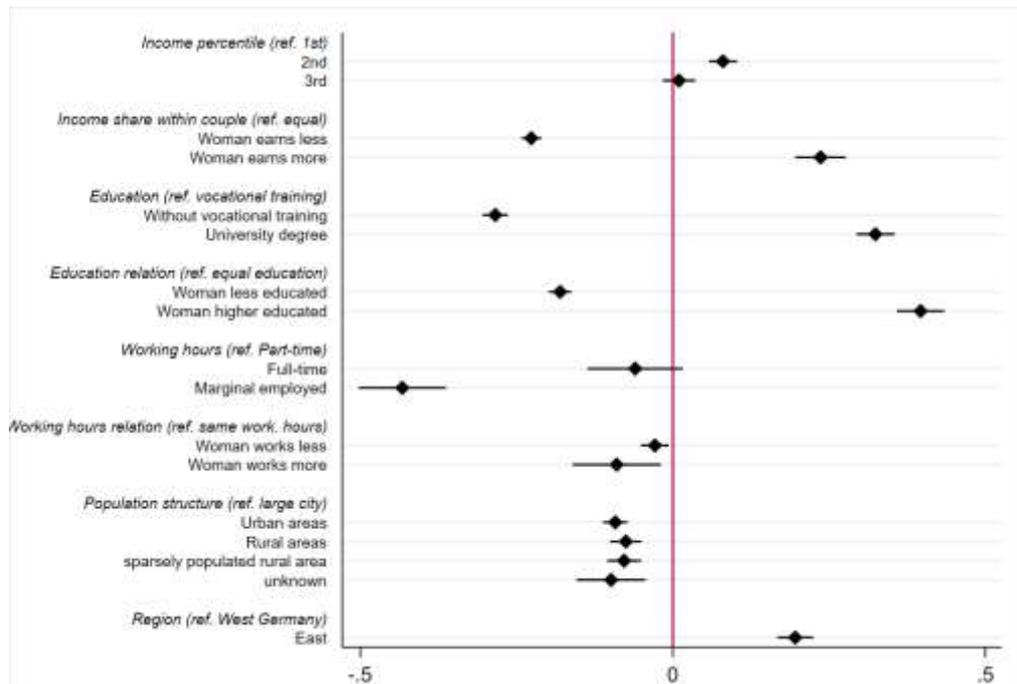
In 2007, a comprehensive parental leave reform in Germany created new incentives for fathers to participate more in childcare: The reform introduced a *daddy quota* that extends the regular twelve months of paid parental leave by two months if each parent takes at least two months of leave. Despite these incentives, in 2018, more than half of fathers in Germany did not claim any parental allowance. Of the fathers who claimed parental allowance, three quarters only took the two months that would otherwise expire (Destatis, 2021). Prior studies highlight that the general hesitancy in parental-leave take-up by fathers is stratified by socio-economic and educational differences. Yet, the analyses either lack long-running, longitudinal data on parental leave duration or employment patterns (Geisler & Kreyenfeld, 2019; Reich, 2011; Samtleben et al., 2019; Trappe, 2013a), neglect partner characteristics (Trappe, 2013b) or focus on subgroups such as academics (Brandt, 2017).

Our study circumvents these limitations by exploring how individual-, couple-, and firm-level factors are related to fathers' parental leave take-up and its duration. Our data derives from the Integrated Employment Biographies (IEB) of the IAB and contains the complete employment biography, including firm characteristics, for married couples in which both partners were employed subject to social security at some point between 2001 and 2014 (Bächmann et al., 2021). In total, our analytical sample contains more than 114,000 married couples who became parents for the first time between 2007 and 2013. The rich information on both partners' employment biographies allows us to better approximate couples' decision-making processes. Various theoretical approaches argue to take a couple perspective: New home economics (Becker, 1991) as well as the resource-bargaining perspectives (e.g. Lundberg & Pollak, 1996) suggest that each partners' labor market opportunities influence their participation in childcare (and homework). However, from a doing-gender perspective (West & Zimmerman, 1987), men should generally be less involved in care (and housework); regardless of – or even despite – the labor market opportunities of their partner.

In line with official statistics, the majority of fathers in our data do not take parental leave at all indicating a two-stage decision-making process: a first decision is whether to take any parental leave, while the second decision concerns the possible duration. To incorporate this multi-stage decision, we use an exponential hurdle model (first stage: parental leave take-up (yes/no) | second stage: duration of parental leave).

Figure 1 provides preliminary results supporting both new household economics and bargaining as well as identity theories. In line with the former, fathers take longer employment interruptions when their wives have higher income than they do. In line with identity theories, fathers with indicators for more egalitarian gender roles (higher education) or in a more egalitarian contexts (Eastern Germany, larger cities) take longer parental leave. Moreover, we find first hints towards the doing gender perspective as fathers tend to take shorter leave if their wives work more hours than they do. In a next step, we plan to investigate possible heterogeneity in couples' decision-making processes between subgroups, e.g. different income groups.

Figure 1: Double hurdle model for fathers' parental leave take-up



Coefficient plot, estimates are reported as average marginal effects, 95 % CI. Model controls for nationality of both partners, fathers' age, labour market and unemployment experience, firm size, industry, and proportion of women in firm.

Source: IEB V13.00.01-171010, own calculation.

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