

**THE ORGANISATION AND DIVISION OF
CAREGIVING WORK AMONG PARENTS IN
NORWAY. EVIDENCE FROM FOCUS GROUPS
WITH FULL-TIME WORKING MOTHERS AND
FATHERS**

**REPORT FROM THE GENDER PAY GAP AND GENDER
CARE GAP PROJECT**

Ragni Hege Kitterød

Institute for social research
Report 2016:03

The organisation and division of caregiving work among parents in Norway. Evidence from focus groups with full-time working mothers and fathers

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Care Gap Project

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PO Box 3233 Elisenberg

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ISBN (print): 978-82-7763-496-8

ISBN (online): 978-82-7763-497-5

ISSN (print): 0333-3671

ISSN (online): 1891-4314

www.samfunnsforskning.no

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Preface

This report presents results from focus group interviews with full-time working parents in Norway, conducted as a part of the *Gender Pay Gap and Gender Care Gap* project, which was funded by an EEA-grant and headed by Professor Carles X. Simó Noguera and Professor Capitolina Díaz at the University of Valencia. One main objective of the project was to analyse, both statistically and discursively, the gender wage gap and the relationship between the gender wage gap and the gender care gap in different types of welfare states, namely Spain, Norway and Iceland. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used. The quantitative analyses are based on various internationally harmonised surveys, while the qualitative analyses are based on focus group interviews carried out among parents in dual-earner couples in the participating countries, and individual interviews carried out with key people in businesses, at workplaces and in unions. The Norwegian research team also received some funding from the Centre for Research on Gender Equality (CORE) at the Institute for Social Research in Oslo. In addition to this report, the Norwegian team has written a report based on the individual interviews.

I am grateful for the constructive comments and advice I received from the project leaders, Professor Carles X. Simó Noguera and Professor Capitolina Díaz at the University of Valencia, as well as from my colleagues, Mari Teigen and Sigtona Halrynjo at the Institute for Social Research.

1 Introduction

In 2015, Norway participated in the *Gender Pay Gap and Gender Care Gap* project, which was funded by an EEA-grant and headed by Professor Carles X. Simó Noguera and Professor Capitolina Díaz at the University of Valencia. One main objective of the project was to analyse, both statistically and discursively, the gender wage gap and the relationship between the gender wage gap and the gender care gap in different types of welfare states namely Spain, and Norway and Iceland. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used. The quantitative analyses are based on harmonised surveys from various countries¹, while the qualitative analyses are based on focus group interviews carried out among parents in dual-earner couples and individual interviews carried out with key people in businesses, at workplaces and in unions in Spain, Norway and Iceland.

This report analyses the focus groups interviews from Norway. The participants in the focus groups were full-time working mothers and fathers, and the main aim was to capture their understandings and associations regarding a possible gender care gap and gender pay gap in the Norwegian society at large as well as in their own families. The participants were asked in particular about the division of paid work and various types of childcare and housework in their own household and among couples in Norway more generally, what they thought about the way they themselves and their partner shared the family work and what they believed that their partner thought about this, what could be done to improve the reconciliation of work and family life for parents, either by politicians, employers or by the parents themselves, and what

¹ The surveys include the Wage Structure Survey, European Survey on Income and Living conditions and the Harmonized European Time use Survey.

could be done in order to reduce the gender-related care gap in Norway.

In order to understand the discussions in the focus groups and the ideas and opinions put forth by the participants, some information about the Norwegian context and the participants in the focus groups is crucial. For instance, it is important to know that today's parents benefit from generous parental leave rights and have access to high-quality childcare facilities that are heavily subsidised. These benefits are taken for granted by most parents and shape the way they plan and organise their everyday lives and their reasoning about when to have children (Ellingsæter and Pedersen 2015). It is also important to know that both women and men are expected to participate in the labour market, including when they have young children, and that there are now very few full-time housewives in Norway. I start by providing an overview of the work-family policies and the participation of parents in the labour market in Norway, as well as their division of paid and unpaid labour, before I present the focus groups more in detail and analyse the discussions in the groups.

2 Work-family policies and practices in Norway

2.1 A dual-earner/dual-carer family model?

The Nordic countries with their well-developed policies for supporting women's paid employment and enhancing men's family role are often seen as ideal templates for promoting the dual-earner/dual-carer family model (Esping-Andersen 1999, 2009; Gornick and Mayers 2008), which has been a political ambition in many European countries in recent decades. In Norway, as in most other Nordic countries, it is now assumed that adults will provide for themselves via the labour market even when they have young children. Hence, the country comes close to what Lewis (2001) has termed "the adult worker model family". In the 1970s and 1980s, the combination of paid work and family work was seen primarily as a challenge for women, but since the late 1980s there has been a strong focus on men's family roles as well. It is argued that more paternal involvement in the family will benefit both fathers and children and also facilitate mothers' employed work. Fathers are now increasingly expected to be involved in caregiving work and to develop close emotional relationships with their children, and to undertake routine housework as well. In 1986 a commission to study men's roles was appointed by the authorities. The commission suggested several measures for promoting men's caregiving role, and in particular, their recommendation of a quota reserved for fathers in the parental leave scheme attracted a lot of attention (NOU 1991:3).² In 1993, Norway was the first country in the world to introduce a father's

² The commission was headed by Jens Stoltenberg, who later on became the prime minister of Norway (2000-2001 and 2005-2013) and is now the Secretary General of NATO.

quota in the parental leave scheme, which has later been significantly extended. Brandth and Kvande (2003) suggest that the publicly funded incentives to facilitate the combining of work and care by fathers may indicate that we have a father-friendly welfare state in Norway, rather than just a women-friendly welfare state, as suggested by Hernes (1987).

Even though Norwegian work-family policies do facilitate the combination of paid employment and childcare for both parents, some scholars have argued that the generous family-friendly policies in the Nordic welfare states have been counterproductive in attaining one of their main goals, namely gender equality (Mandel and Semyonov 2006; Datta Gupta, Smith and Werner 2008). The policies may have certain unintended consequences for the position of women on the labour market, such as the concentration of women in public-sector jobs, high part-time working rates among women, relatively few women in top positions in industry and commerce, and a persistent gender gap in wages. In Norway, concerns about the stagnant gender wage gap resulted in the appointment of an Equal Pay Commission in 2006 (NOU 2008:6). One important recommendation on how to reduce the gender wage gap was to reserve a larger part of the paid parental leave for fathers. Some researchers also maintain that the compressed wage structure in Norway makes it expensive to outsource housework tasks, which would probably otherwise facilitate long working hours for both partners in a couple (Datta Gupta, Smith and Werner 2008, Petersen 2002).

2.2 The work-family policy ingredients: parental leave, kindergartens, and cash-for-childcare

Today's parents in Norway can count upon generous work-family policies that facilitate the combining of employment and childcare. The most important ingredients include high-quality subsidised childcare and long periods of parental leave with high levels of earnings compensation as well as a cash benefit for childcare. Gender equality regarding paid and unpaid work has been an important goal of the work-family policies, but there has also been a strong focus on parental choice and flexibility in parents' employment and childcare arrangements. Since some policy measures, such as paid parental leave

and subsidised kindergartens may promote women's employment and a dual-earner/dual-carer family model, while other measures, such as the cash-for-childcare benefit for small children, may encourage a more traditional division of labour between parents, it has been argued that Norwegian work-family policies have been more ambivalent than the policies in the other Nordic countries, which have for several decades more unambiguously supported a symmetrical family model where both parents participate to the same extent in paid and unpaid labour (Ellingsæter 2007). However, elements that promote traditional family practices, such as the cash-for-childcare scheme and tax deductions for couples in which one of the partners has no or a very low income, are now gradually being reduced, while the parental leave scheme and the kindergarten coverage have been greatly improved in recent decades. People are now given more explicit political encouragement to pursue continuous labour market participation, preferably on a full-time basis, even when they have small children (NOU 2004:1).

The parental leave scheme

The paid parental leave scheme in Norway was significantly extended in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and reached 42 weeks with full pay or 52 weeks with 80 percent wage compensation in 1993 (see table 1 for an overview of the development of the parental leave scheme). Nine weeks (three weeks before delivery and six weeks after delivery) were reserved for the mother, and a fathers' quota of four weeks was introduced. If not used by the father, these four weeks would be forfeited. During the 1990s and 2000s the parental leave period was further extended and is now 49 weeks with full pay or 59 weeks with 80 percent wage compensation. 13 weeks (3+10) are reserved for the mother and 10 weeks for the father, while the remaining weeks (26 or 36 weeks depending on the compensation rate) can be shared according to the parents' wishes. People with very high incomes do not necessarily receive full income-compensation, however, since there is a cap equivalent to six times the basic national insurance amount, which is now NOK 90,000, or approximately 9,700 Euros. However, public-sector employees and some private-sector employees have agreements that guarantee full income compensation even though their income exceeds the ceiling.

Table 1. Parental leave in Norway 1977-2014

Year	Total leave (100/80 % compensation)	Reserved for the mother (before/ after delivery)	Reserved for the father	Joint period (100/80 % compensation)
1977	18 (100%)	6		12
1986	18 (100%)	6	-	12
1987	20 (100%)	6	-	14
1988	22 (100%)	6	-	16
1989	24/30	6	-	18/24
1990	28/35	6	-	22/29
1991	32/40	8 (2+6)	-	24/32
1992	35/44.4	8 (2+6)	-	27/36.4
1993	42/52	9 (3+6)	4	29/39
2005	43/53	9 (3+6)	5	29/39
2006	44/54	9 (3+6)	6	29/39
2009	46/56	9 (3+6)	10	27/37
2011	47/57	9 (3+6)	12	26/36
2013	49/59	17 (3+14)	14	18/28
2014	49/59	13 (3+10)	10	26/36

Leave entitlements require employment in 6 of the last 10 months prior to delivery. If parents do not fulfil these requirements, they receive a lump sum of approximately 44,000 NOK. However, even if the father fulfils the requirements for pre-delivery employment, he cannot make use of the joint period unless the mother is occupied with employment or studies or has severe health limitations. These rules do not apply to the fathers' quota, however. In 2013 the fathers' quota was extended to 14 weeks, but only one year later, in 2014, it was reduced to ten weeks by a right wing government. The total length of the parental leave was not reduced, however. The government has also suggested making it easier for the parents to transfer their reserved weeks to each other. This has met a lot of opposition and at the moment, it is uncertain whether such rules will be implemented.

In addition to the paid parental leave, each parent is entitled to one year of unpaid leave with job protection after the paid leave period. Moreover, mothers who breastfeed are entitled to some time off every day in order to breastfeed their child. Employees with children aged less than 12 are also entitled to leave during a child's illness: 10 days

per employee with one child and 15 days with more children. The right applies independently to mothers and fathers.

The fathers' quota has been a success in terms of take-up, in that the large majority (more than 90 percent) of the eligible fathers take all or part of the quota (Grambo and Myklebø 2009). However, the part of the parental leave that can be shared between the parents is usually taken by the mother. Moreover, the mother is not required to take up work or study while the father uses his quota, so that both parents may in principle stay at home at the same time. The father may also use his quota during the mother's holiday period. When the quota was introduced in 1993, the father had to use it all in one single block and within the child's first year. However, in 2007 the quota was made more flexible and may now be taken on a part-time basis and/or split into separate blocks until the child is three years old. Although increased flexibility probably enables more fathers to make use of the quota, qualitative studies suggest that flexible usage may be a double-edged sword in that it may make it more difficult for fathers to draw a firm boundary between work-demands and time for childcare (Brandth and Kvande 2015). It may also require the mother to step in when the father needs to work. Hence, the father may end up more as the mother's helper than as the main carer, and it may be difficult for the mother to take up full-time employment. Some studies suggest that fathers acquire improved parenting skills during their parental leave, particularly if they take leave without the mother's presence (Brandth and Kvande 2003, Bungum 2013). Researchers therefore worry that flexible use of the quota may work against the aim of making fathers into more competent carers (Brandth and Kvande 2015).

Although most entitled fathers make use of at least some of the fathers' quota, their leave uptake and the length of their leave vary with workplace factors as well as with the parents' education and income (Lappegård 2012). For instance, fathers in public-sector jobs tend to take more leave than fathers' in private-sector jobs, and there is a positive correlation between the father's use of leave and his own and his partner's education and income. However, many fathers in top professions limit their uptake although most of them make use of at least some of the non-transferable leave (Halrynjo and Lyng 2013). In these professions, there seems to be a negative association between leave uptake and career development. Fathers who make use of the quota are less likely to be top managers than fathers who do not take

any leave at all, and fathers who take more than the quota have the lowest probability of career development. Within elite professions absence from work during the leave period entails a risk of "falling behind" on the career track (ibid).

The cash-for-childcare benefit

In the late 1990s, a cash-for-childcare benefit was introduced in order to enable parents to spend more time with their children, give parents more flexibility in their childcare choices and distribute public transfers more equally between users and non-users of subsidised childcare (St.prp. no 53. 1997-98). All parents with children aged 1-2 who did not use state-funded childcare were entitled to the benefit, and part-time users could have a reduced benefit. Parents do not have to look after their children themselves in order to receive the benefit, but can use it to hire a private childminder. Since 2012 only parents with children below two years of age have been entitled to the benefit, and in 2014 the monthly sum was raised significantly (see table 2 for information about the main changes in the benefit). In 1999, the benefit was claimed for as many as 77 percent of children aged 1-2 years, but the high take-up rate was mainly due to the lack of formal day-care for children in this age group. Over the years, the take-up rate has diminished as childcare coverage has improved, and in 2014 parents claimed the benefit for only 23 percent of the children of an eligible age (Egge-Hoveid 2014 and 2015).

Table 2. The cash-for-childcare benefit in Norway 1998-2014

Date	Age of eligible children (months)	Benefit per month (no day care)
01.08.1998	13-24 months	3 000 NOK
01.01.1999	13-36 months	2 263 NOK
01.08.1999	13-36 months	2 263 NOK
01.01.2000	13-36 months	3 000 NOK
01.08.2003	13-36 months	3 657 NOK
01.01.2006	13-35 months	3 303 NOK
01.08.2012	13-18 months	5 500 NOK
01.08.2012	19-23 months	3 303 NOK
01.08.2014	13-23 months	6 000 NOK

Kindergartens

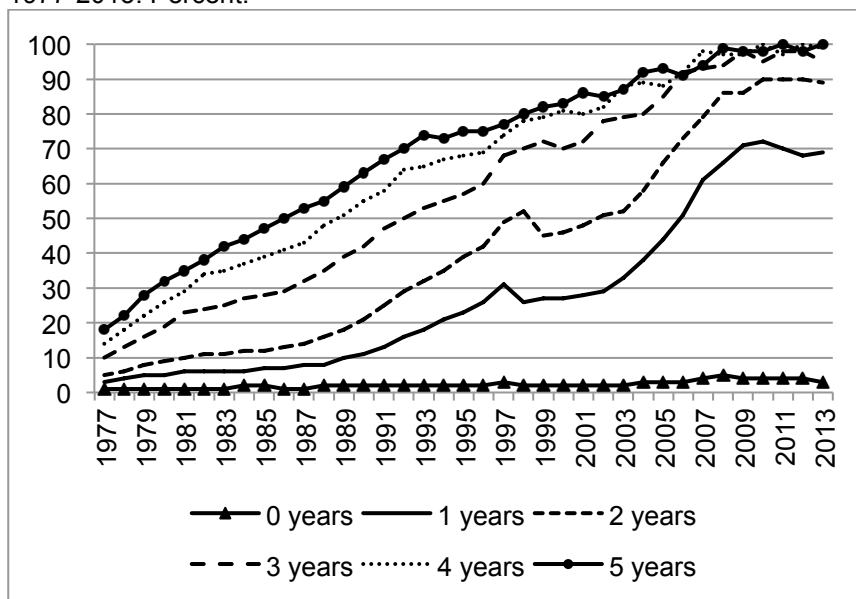
Historically, there has been a large unmet demand for day-care in Norway, particularly for the youngest children. Compared to the other Nordic countries, Norway has also been a laggard in this area. The childcare system has evolved gradually and in a complex interplay of supply and demand-side factors (Ellingsæter and Gulbrandsen 2007). Following a political agreement in 2003 on the expansion of the day-care sector, the percentage of children in publicly subsidised day-care grew quickly, and today 80 percent of children aged 1-2 and 97 percent of children aged 3-5 attend a kindergarten. The change in coverage for children at different ages is shown in Figure 1. Following a price cap reform in 2004 the price of day-care was significantly reduced, and from 2009, all children who reach the age of one by the end of August in the year of application are guaranteed a place in kindergarten. The long period of parental leave that is available means that very few children below the age of one are enrolled in kindergarten. About half of the kindergartens (47 percent in 2014) are run by the municipalities themselves, and the other half are run by private operators, either on a profit or a non-profit basis. The private kindergartens are publicly funded and are required to have the same parental fees as the public kindergartens.

The day-care attendance is mostly on a full-time basis. Opening hours are usually from seven or eight o'clock in the morning until five o'clock in the afternoon, but most children either come later in the morning or leave earlier in the afternoon (Moafi and Bjørkli 2011). Some children attend day-care on a part-time basis, although this is now fairly uncommon. There are also very few kindergartens that are open during evenings or nights. High-quality kindergartens are now seen as important arenas for learning social and cognitive skills and also for securing equal opportunities and reducing inequality between children from various social backgrounds in Norway (NOU 2012: 1). Socio-economic differences in kindergarten attendance were reduced in the 2000s, with usage increasing more among parents with lower incomes and education than among other groups (Kitterød, Lyngstad and Nymoen, 2012). Most parents now look upon kindergartens as a good childcare arrangement for children, including for the youngest ones. When mothers in Norway entered the labour market in large numbers in the 1970s and 1980s, the public childcare coverage was still fairly modest, and many parents hired a private childminder (Leira

1993). The increase in labour market participation among mothers is shown in figure 2. Today, most children in Norway attend a kindergarten irrespective of their parents' employment.

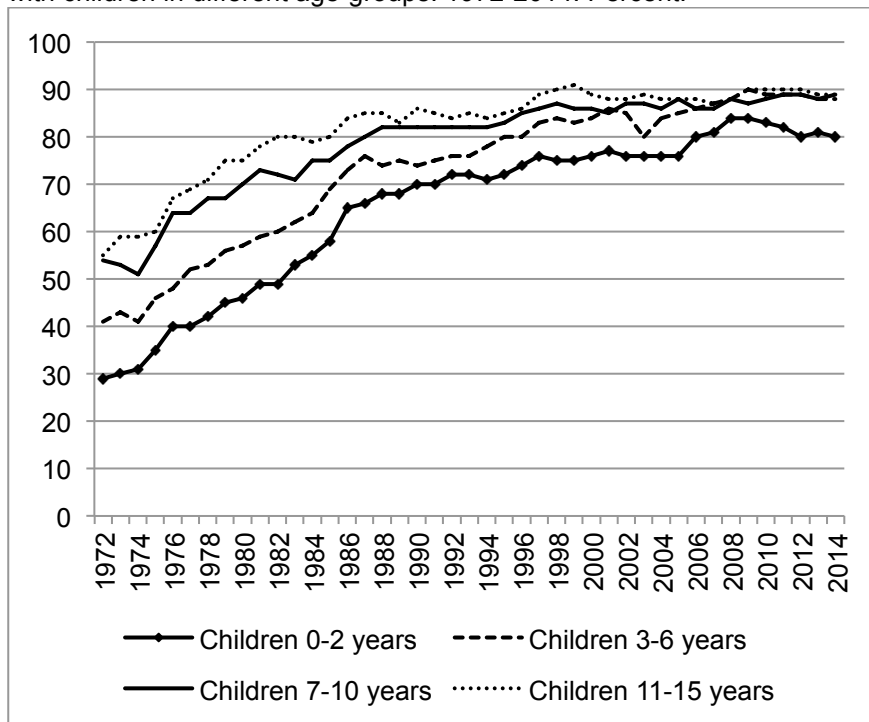
When children start school, the large majority participate in an after-school programme (Moafi and Bjørkli 2011). These may be quite expensive, however, as they are usually not subsidised and some parents may not be able to afford to make use of the programmes.

Figure 1: Children in different age-groups in kindergarten in Norway. 1977-2013. Percent.



Source: Children in kindergarten, Statistics Norway

Figure 2: Labour force participation among married/cohabiting mothers with children in different age-groups. 1972-2014. Percent.



Source: Labour Force Survey, Statistics Norway

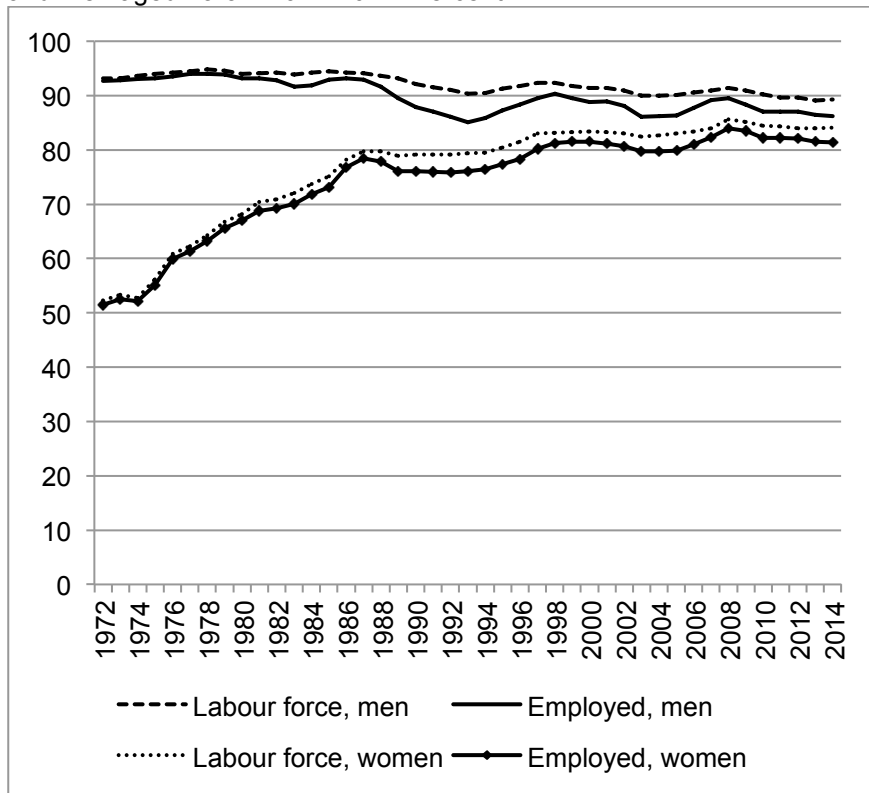
2.3 Parents' employment and domestic work

Employment rates and working hours

Women's employment has risen sharply in the past decades, and is now nearly as high as men's in Norway. For instance, in 2014, 81 percent of women and 86 percent of men in the age group 25-54 years were gainfully employed (figure 3), and there are now few full-time housewives in Norway (Kitterød and Rønsen 2013a). Women outside the labour force are mostly students or have a disability pension, and women who regard themselves as full-time housewives are overrepresented among those with a lower level of education and/or health restrictions. However, part-time work is still common among women in Norway, although few work very short hours (less than 20 hours per week), except for younger and older women (see figure 4). Part-time working mothers usually work almost full-time, and some

would prefer to say that they work reduced hours. In most cases the women opt voluntarily to work part time, although some would also prefer longer hours (Kjeldstad 2006). Involuntary part-time work is particularly common in the health-sector, where many jobs are organised as part-time jobs. The Norwegian Work Environment Act states that parents have right to work reduced working hours unless this is of significant inconvenience to the employer. In spite of increasing numbers of women working full-time, they rarely work extended hours, which is defined as being significantly more than the standard working week of 37.5 hours.

Figure 3: Labour force participation and employment among women and men aged 25-54. 1972-2014. Percent

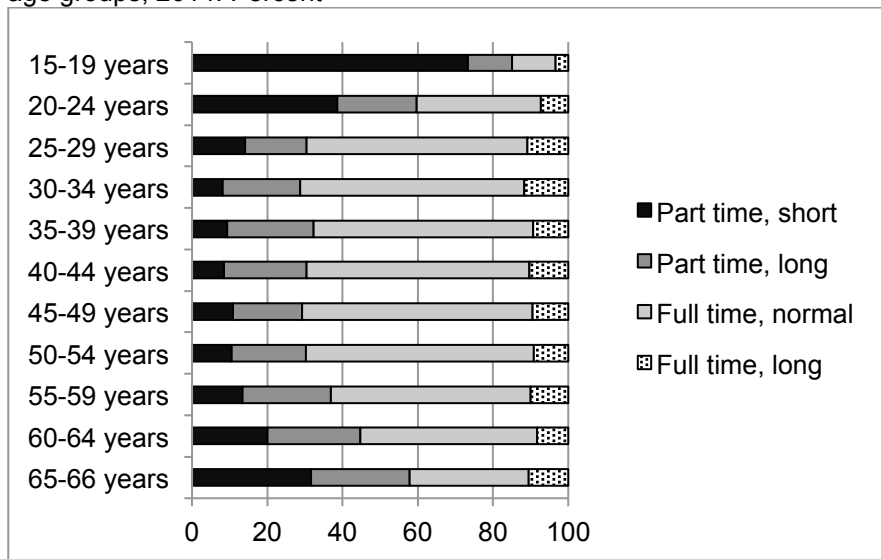


Source: Labour Force Survey, Statistics Norway

Unlike women, men rarely work part-time, but often work extended hours – that is at least 40 hours per week (see figure 5). The difference between men's and women's working hours is partly due to the high gender segregation in the Norwegian labour market, with high percentages of women in the public sector and in education, health and social work, and the concentration of men in the private sector and in manufacturing and finance (Reisel and Teigen 2014). The fact that Norway has such a strongly gender segregated labour market and at the same time high female labour force participation has been called “the Norwegian gender-equality paradox” (Birkelund and Petersen 2010). However, Reisel and Teigen (2014) maintain that this may not be a paradox at all since the strong growth in women's labour market participation in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s coincided with the expansion of the welfare state and the service sector. Hence, there was a strong demand for labour in occupations such as school-teachers, preschool teachers, nurses and public home-helpers. Most men already worked full-time and could not meet this demand, so the women's labour supply represented an important resource. Women also entered higher education in large numbers in these decades. Some of the caregiving tasks that women had previously done on an unpaid basis in their own families were now instead performed as paid work on the labour market.

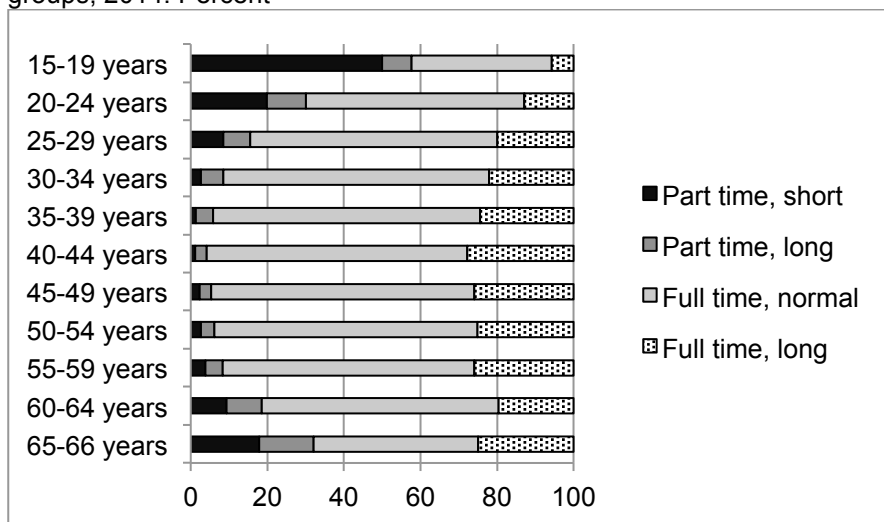
Many of these new jobs were designed as part-time jobs as they were performed on a shift- or rota basis, and many women preferred part-time jobs as publicly-funded childcare was scarce and after school programmes almost non-existent. Moreover, men were not yet expected to step in at home to the same extent as today. There have been some changes in the gender balance in some occupations in recent decades with highly educated women entering previously male-dominated professions such as lawyers, medical doctors and veterinaries. More occupations have thus become gender balanced, and more men become nurses and preschool teachers (Reisel and Teigen 2014). However, as long as many female-dominated professions in the service sector are lower paid than many male-dominated professions, men may be reluctant to make untraditional choices regarding their education and occupation.

Figure 4: Contractual work hours among employed women in different age groups, 2014. Percent



Source: Labour Force Survey, Statistics Norway

Figure 5: Contractual work hours among employed men in different age groups, 2014. Percent



Source: Labour Force Survey, Statistics Norway

Working hours in couples

It is now quite common in Norway for both partners in a couple to work approximately the same number of hours, although the female partner still works less in a significant proportion of couples. Women now outnumber men in higher education. However, there are still few so called “role reversal couples” in Norway in which the female partner spends more time working than the male partner (Kitterød and Rønsen 2012). When the woman works the most, her partner often has health problems, is retired or unemployed. In dual-earner couples where both partners have paid work as their main activity, women with longer hours than their partner are often well-educated, self-employed, managers, have no young children or have a partner in the public sector. The gender-segregated labour market seems to play an important role for the relationship between the partners’ paid work hours. Women in female-dominated occupations are particularly prone to work less than their partner, and the same is true for women with a partner in the private sector, which indicates that men in private-sector jobs can usually count upon a spouse who shoulders most of the family work (ibid).

In Norway, elite professionals are characterised by gender equality in terms of career preferences and work-family preferences. However, in practice there is a marked pattern of gender-dependent career progression and gender-dependent work-family adaptations. Fathers tend to work more than mothers, have higher earnings and more successful careers, and take less responsibility for family and children (Halrynjo and Lyng 2010).

Domestic work: Evidence from time use surveys

Diary-based time use surveys in which people write down the activities they have carried out during the course of a day, reveal that time use patterns for mothers and fathers have converged significantly in Norway in recent decades, in that, on average, fathers do more housework and childcare and spend somewhat less time on the labour market than before, while the opposite changes are found among mothers (see table 3) (Kitterød 2013). Fathers with young children have increased their family work more than those with school-aged children, but apart from this, more active and involved fathering practices are found in most groups of fathers in present day Norway (Kitterød and

Rønsen 2013b). Mothers' housework time has been dramatically reduced in the last decades, particularly in the 1970s, but was levelling out in the 2000s. However, mothers on average spend more time on family work than fathers, and the difference is more pronounced regarding routine housework than is the case with childcare. Nevertheless, fathers still do significantly more maintenance work than mothers (Kitterød 2013).

In spite of converging working time patterns, mothers seem to be responsible for the family logistics in most couples, for organising, planning and coordinating the different tasks and for "seeing the big picture" (Aarseth 2011, Smeby and Brandth 2013). In a qualitative study of middle class parents in Norway, Smeby and Brandth (2013) examined under what conditions the fathers would have the main responsibility for certain types of planning and organising, which are usually done by mothers (for instance, arranging a birthday party or preparing the children's bags for kindergarten). One important finding was that fathers need to be given, as well as to claim, space to acquire knowledge and experience of the management of everyday life, and that mothers must be willing to give up their control.

It has been maintained that the new and involved fathering practices primarily involve taking care of children, while men are more unwilling to do routine housework such as cleaning and cooking, and also that parents have more conflicts over housework than childcare (Brandth and Kvande 2003). However, the increase in fathers' family work in Norway involves both routine housework and childcare (see table 3) and most fathers now do at least some housework every day. For instance, the time use surveys show that whereas 51 percent of fathers with children below the age of 15 spent at least some time on housework on an average day in 1971, 83 percent of the fathers performed at least some housework on an average day in 2010 (Kitterød 2013). Fathers' housework time has increased on working days as well as at weekends (ibid). Hence, it seems that performing housework is now a part of most fathers' everyday life in Norway.

Table 3. Time spent on paid work¹ and family work among married/cohabiting parents with a youngest child aged 0-14. Average per day, hours and minutes.

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Fathers					
Paid work	6.14	5.49	5.35	5.30	5.16
Family work	2.31	2.51	3.10	3.20	3.50
Routine housework	0.35	0.44	0.44	0.55	1.04
Maintenance work	0.46	0.40	0.34	0.38	0.41
Active childcare	0.23	0.40	0.58	0.50	1.03
Other family work	0.47	0.48	0.54	0.58	1.02
Number of observations (days)	1,297	1,100	812	810	885
Mothers					
Paid work	1.18	2.02	2.31	3.12	3.42
Family work	7.25	6.12	5.56	5.12	5.18
Routine housework	5.00	3.29	2.42	2.07	2.03
Maintenance work	0.12	0.14	0.15	0.14	0.18
Active childcare	1.20	1.35	2.00	1.38	1.43
Other family work	0.53	0.54	1.00	1.13	1.15
Number of observations (days)	1,405	1,195	1,028	826	909

¹ Includes time spent on paid work as well as travelling time to and from work.
Source: The Norwegian times use surveys, Statistics Norway.

The so-called “doing gender perspective” has been central in explaining the gendered division of housework in couples (Bittman, England, Folbre and Matheson 2003). This theory posits that both men and women continuously construct and reconstruct their gender identity. For men, this entails undertaking typical masculine tasks and avoiding activities with female connotations, such as for instance housework, while housework may strengthen women’s gender identity. The fact that most fathers now undertake some housework on a daily basis in Norway may suggest that housework is no longer incompatible with a masculine identity in Norway. This is in line with Cooke’s (2006) finding in a study of the relationship between couples’ division of housework and the risk of divorce in different countries. She found significant country differences in “doing gender” effects, with smaller effects on divorce rates in countries with a high level of gender equality than in countries with more traditional gender practices and norms.

While family work, and particularly routine housework, is often portrayed as a burden and something that the people try to avoid, it has been emphasised that today's parents, particularly middle class mothers and fathers, may see the home as an arena for creative self-fulfilment and romantic imaginary (Aarseth 2008, 2009). For instance, making good and healthy meals that the family members can enjoy together may be perceived as an enjoyable project that parents spend a lot of time on when they have the possibility to do so. Most parents also enjoy spending time with their children. Today's mothers and fathers face strong expectations regarding active involvement in their children's schoolwork and hobbies. Parents are required by the school to ensure that children do their homework properly, and many children need a lot of transportation to and from various leisure activities. Parents are also expected to watch their children's sporting events and to help organise the teams as well as other leisure activities.

Work-family arrangements in couples

Many couples, particularly among the highly educated, do indeed strive at achieving an equal division of paid and unpaid labour (Aarseth 2009). Using a multinomial latent class model to develop a typology of dual-earner couples with children, Kitterød and Lappegård (2012) found that equal sharing of both family work and paid work is practiced by four out of ten couples in Norway and is most likely to occur when the partners are well educated and work regular hours and the father is in public-sector employment. The authors were not able to single out a so-called role-reversal couple type in their analysis, that is a couple-type in which the mother performs more paid work than the father and the father conducts more family work than the mother. This partly has to do with the fact that the few mothers who work long hours in the labour market usually have a partner who also works long hours himself. About a quarter of the couples have a so-called neo-traditional division of labour in that they have moved away from the traditional male-breadwinner/female-homemaker model, but women still work significantly less than men in the labour market and continue to do the majority of the housework and childcare. This arrangement is most likely when the partners have a lower level of education, the mother has health problems and the father has private sector-employment. The rest of the couples, about one third, have a so-called gender-equal light

arrangement, meaning that although both partners do spend similar amounts of time on employment as well as on family work, the female partner still does less paid work and more family work than her partner.

It may, however, be difficult to realise two ambitious and time consuming careers at the same time within one family in Norway, especially in the private sector. The typical pattern is that the mother's career has to take a back seat. Despite gender equal ideals and preferences, the prioritising of family life over working life as the main arena for self-realisation is accepted among mothers across educational differences. This facilitates the shift to a more regulated and family friendly job, often in the public sector, among highly educated mothers (Halrynjo 2014).

Both fathers and mothers now work less when they have young children

In spite of reduced gender differences in paid and unpaid work, parenthood still seems to reinforce a traditional division of labour in many countries (Anxo, Mencarini, Pailhé, Solaz, Tanturri and Flood 2011). The presence of children in the household, and particularly young children, tends to imply more paid work for fathers, while mothers usually decrease their paid work and increase their domestic work. However the extent to which parenthood intensifies a traditional division of labour has been shown to vary significantly across countries and is dependent on societal and institutional factors (ibid). In particular, work-family policies that promote mothers' paid work and fathers' family involvement are seen as important in order to lessen the impact of children on gender differences in terms of time-allocation (Cooke and Baxter 2010, Gornick and Mayers 2008). In Sweden, a typical social-democratic society with high gender-equality ambitions and generous work-family reconciliation policies, Dribe and Stanfors (2009) showed that although there were still notable gender differences in time use in 2000, parenthood did not reinforce a traditional division of labour to the same extent as it did in 1990. In 2000, fatherhood changed the time use for men more similarly to the way motherhood changed the time use for women, with less time in paid work and more time in unpaid family work.

A similar pattern has been identified in Norway. For instance, utilising the Norwegian Labour Force Survey 2005, Dommermuth and Kitterød (2009) found that although men's *contractual working hours*

were not significantly affected by their parental status, men did curtail their *actual working hours* when they had young children, particularly when there was only one child in the household. In line with this, analyses carried out on the Norwegian Time Use Surveys from 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010 show that, in 2010, fathers with children under the age of three spent significantly less time on paid work than fathers with the oldest children (13-19 years of age). A similar relationship was not found in earlier time use surveys, however (see table 4, which is taken from Kitterød and Rønsen 2014). Although the analyses are based on cross-sectional data, the results suggest that fathers in Norway now reduce their time input in paid work when they have young children, not by scaling back their contractual hours, but by working less long hours and by taking parental leave. Fathers with young children also spend more time on family work than fathers with older children, and this association was stronger in 2010 than in 1980, 1990 and 2000 (see table 4). As for mothers, it is now only those with the youngest children who spend less time on paid work than those with the oldest children, whereas in 2000, mothers with a youngest child aged 2-3 also spent less time on paid work than those with the oldest children, and in 1990 and 1980, having children in the age group 4-12 also negatively impacted on mothers' paid work hours.

The uptake of leave by fathers may facilitate employment opportunities for mothers so that the latter have shorter spells out of work when children arrive. Using the panel of respondents in the Norwegian Labour Force Survey, Rønsen and Kitterød (2015) found that although the fathers' quota was implemented in 1993, it was not until the mid and late 2000s that mothers entered work faster after delivery than before. They argue that the quota may have been too short in the beginning (only four weeks), and that the lack of public childcare for young children probably made it difficult for mothers to return to work immediately after the parental leave. The expansion of the fathers' quota and the availability of more and cheaper public childcare have made it easier for mothers to have shorter spells at home following the birth of a child. Moreover, employers may gradually have become more accustomed to fathers taking parental leave and now

Table 4. Results from OLS regressions of time spent on paid work and family work among married/cohabiting parents with children aged 0-19, 1980-2010. Estimates in minutes per day.^{1,2}

	Mothers				Fathers			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Paid work								
Age, youngest child (ref: 13-19 years)								
0-1 years	-150.0	-175.2	-181.1	-149.7	-28.4	-23.8	22.2	-93.6
2-3 years	-100.9	-153.3	-98.8	-31.2	15.7	35.8	13.9	-28.5
4-6 years	-78.7	-117.9	-29.0	1.3	-7.1	20.7	18.9	-34.9
7-12 years	-46.7	-86.1	29.1	-2.9	26.1	12.3	15.6	0.0
Family work								
Age, youngest child (ref: 13-19 years)								
0-1 years	220.0	167.8	182.8	184.0	31.6	76.0	49.4	108.8
2-3 years	102.0	129.0	84.3	87.9	34.8	42.3	24.2	96.3
4-6 years	65.0	79.0	42.2	33.8	40.3	35.6	31.5	82.6
7-12 years	41.1	34.4	2.7	-4.8	12.9	3.2	-7.2	1.2
N (days)	1,466	1,242	982	1,149	1,366	1,060	964	1,133

¹ Adjusted to take into account number of children and day of the week.

² Numbers in bold are statistically significant at the 0.05-percent level, and numbers in italics are significant at the 0.10-percent level.

Source: The Norwegian time use surveys, Statistics Norway.

more or less take for granted that having children implies some absence from work for fathers as well as mothers. Even though the quota was initially probably too short to lead to a major role reversal between mothers and fathers, it may have influenced the ways that parents, employers and the general public think about parenthood and equal sharing. In addition, the new emphasis on day-care for all children may have led to more favourable attitudes towards working mothers and non-parental care, including regrading very young children.

Equal total workload, but still some specialisation in full-time working couples

Researchers in many countries have worried that increased labour market participation among women will result in them having longer total working hours than men, particularly when they combine full-time work with young children (Milkie, Raley and Bianchi 2009; Sayer, Engeland, Bitman and Bianchi 2009). In her famous book, *The second shift*, Hochschild (1989) argued that full-time work implied a double burden for mothers in the USA. Since fathers did not increase their domestic work in response to their partners' paid work, mothers had to do a "second shift" in addition to their paid job (the first shift). This resulted in considerably longer total workloads for women than for men. Subsequent analyses using diary-based time-use surveys have debated and nuanced these findings. Much of the research in this field applies to so-called liberal welfare states such as the USA, Australia and Canada, where family- and labour market policies have not caught up with the changes in women's labour force participation. Shorter standard working hours and more developed family policies are supposed to facilitate more egalitarian gender patterns of work and family life (Gornick and Mayers 2008, Stalker 2011).

Using the Norwegian Time Study 2010, and adding time spent on paid work, unpaid family work and education, Kitterød and Rønsen (2013c) found that, in Norway, full-time work (at least 35 hours per week) for both partners in a couple now implies approximately the same total workload for fathers and mothers, both for those with preschool children³ and for those with school-aged children (see table 5). However, mothers on average spend somewhat more time on family work than fathers, but this is counterbalanced by fathers' longer paid work hours. Diary-based time use studies have been criticised for underestimating the family work carried out by mothers because it is usually more fragmented than the family work carried out by fathers, because planning and management responsibilities are not well

³ Parents in couples in which either the mother or the father had parental leave at the time of the survey are omitted from the analyses.

documented, and because childcare is often undertaken alongside other activities, such as for instance cooking, and are thus not properly documented in the time diaries (Mattingly and Bianchi 2004, Lee and Waite 2005). However, Kitterød and Rønsen (2013c) also find when using more extensive measures of the parents' childcare time, that mothers and fathers have approximately the same total workload in Norway. Analyses of the parents' perceived time-pressure corroborate this result (ibid).

Table 5. Total workload among married/cohabiting parents in couples in which both partners work full-time (at least 35 hour per week), by age of the youngest child. 2010. Average per day, hours and minutes.

	Mothers	Fathers
Children 0-6 years		
Paid work	4.36	4.58
Family work	5.07	4.40
Education	0.02	0.06
Total workload	9.45	9.44
N (days)	238	197
Children 7-19 years		
Paid work	5.04	5.45
Family work	3.55	3.02
Education	0.01	0.00
Total workload	9.01	8.47
N (days)	335	315

Source: The Norwegian time use surveys, Statistics Norway.

3 Participants in the focus groups

The focus group sessions were conducted by Opinion AS in the beginning of January 2015, in accordance with the guidelines from Kuo Experience Research, a market research company in Spain that was responsible for collecting a large part of the qualitative data in the project. First there was a two hours session with two parallel groups, one with women and one with men, and then, the two groups met in order to compare and discuss each others' viewpoints. Both groups were led by a female moderator. The groups consisted of full-time working mothers and fathers (not couples) with at least one child, who lived in the Oslo area of Norway.⁴ The group sessions were filmed and transcribed by Opinion AS, before the material was handed over to the project team. The team watched the films several times and tried to systematise and contextualise the discussions that took place in the groups.

The focus groups consisted of six mothers and five fathers (see table 6 for an overview). All the participants held a university degree. The mothers were, on average, somewhat older than the fathers, and also had somewhat older children. For instance, three of the six mothers only had school-aged children, while all the fathers had at least one child below school age. This may affect the way they define care and their conceptions about what tasks to include and how these are divided between the parents. Older children may help out with housework, and at least one of the mothers had delegated some of the

⁴ According to the guidelines, the focus groups should also include participants who lived with their parents, but since is very unusual for adults to live together with their parents in Norway, none of the participants lived with their parents.

Table 6. Participants in the focus groups ¹

Age	Occupation, participant	Education, participant	Age, children	Income, couple, NOK	Age, partner	Occupation, partner
WOMEN						
41	Healthcare, nursing	University, Master's degree	5	1,500,000	45	Consultant
42	Public administration, economy	University, Master's degree	7, 10, 13	800,000	40	Engineer, Consultant
44	Lawyer	University, Master's degree	8, 11, 15	1,200,000	44	Teacher, youth school
32	Kindergarten	University, Master's degree	0, 1	900,000	35	Programmer, IT
37	Academic consultant, teacher	University, Master's degree	1, 4	1,500,000	42	Coaching/ developing leaders
45	Telecom	University, Master's degree	12, 15	1,200,000	48	Salesman
MEN						
35	Government, consultant, economy	University, three years or more	2	1,200,000	–	–
36	Administration at university	University, three years or more	3, 14	800,000	–	
37	IT / Solutions	University Master's degree	1, 5	2,000,000	–	Economy
37	Engineer, research in genetics, hospital	University, three years or more	2	1,000,000	–	Lawyer
44	Public sector, finances	University, four years	4, 9, 12	1,300,000	–	Nurse

¹ Information regarding the partner's age and occupation was not provided by Opinion AS. However, some, but not all, participants provided this information during the group discussions.

cleaning to one of her teenagers. On the other hand, older children usually need a lot of transportation to and from various leisure activities and parents have to assist them with their homework. They also go to bed later than younger children, which may leave little room for parents to work from home in the evenings.

Moreover, it is important to note that one of the male participants grew up in Turkey. Even though he had spent most of his adulthood in Norway, Turkey, which offers less state support for dual-earner families and more traditional gender role practices and attitudes, constituted an important basis for comparison when it comes to his views on families' daily life organisation and on maternal and paternal roles in Norway. Another male participant had grown up in the southern part of Norway, where family practices and ideals tend to be more traditional than in the rest of the country, and particularly in the Oslo area (Magnussen, Mydland and Kvåle 2005). Although the sector of work is not reported for all the participants, we know that at least three of the fathers are employed in the public sector; this is often looked upon as being more family friendly than the private sector (Halrynjo and Lyng 2009), in which the majority of men work in Norway. However, public sector jobs are generally less well paid than private sector jobs. Moreover, we noted that one of the male participants had taken a major part of the joint parental leave for one of his children, which is still quite uncommon in Norway.

As for the mothers, four of them had public sector jobs, while two of them worked in the private sector. One mother (a lawyer in the private sector) earned more than her partner (who was a school teacher), which is still not very common in Norway (Skrede and Wiik 2012). However, there was also one mother (who worked in a kindergarten) who earned far less than her partner, and brought this up several times during the group session in order to explain how this affected their division of the parental leave and also their general standard of living. One of the mothers mentioned that she and her partner had wanted to have children earlier, but that it took a long time for her to get pregnant. Another mother mentioned that she was quite "old" when she met her partner and was really eager to start a family when they met. This may impact her attitudes and practices when it comes to the division of childcare with her partner. For instance, she revealed that she would have liked to have more parental leave herself instead of sharing it with the partner, and also that she accepted being

the one who got up with their daughter every morning, also during weekends, since her partner was not a morning person at all. Furthermore, two of the participants in the group reported that they purchased private cleaning services, and one mother said that although they did not have a private cleaner at the moment, they usually had one. It is still fairly uncommon to purchase domestic cleaning services in Norway, although the percentage of households using such services is higher in the Oslo area than elsewhere in the country, and is also more common in high-income families than in families with less income (Kitterød 2012). It is also fairly uncommon to have a live-in domestic help. There was no mention of private cleaners by any of the fathers.

In both groups, health related issues were brought to the fore as a factor that either temporarily or permanently impacted the partners' allocation of housework and childcare. One of the males had a partner who was ill at the moment, which meant that he himself had to do more family work than he usually did, while his partner concentrated on the tasks that she could presently manage. One of the female participants had problems with her back and was therefore unable to clean the house and do other strenuous tasks. Moreover, one of the female participants had a partner who was currently on parental leave, which meant that he performed more housework and childcare than would be the case once he was back at work.

It can also be noted that all the participants except one were in their late twenties or early or mid-thirties when they became parents, which means that they had probably finished their education and were well established on the labour market. This is important since the right to paid parental leave presupposes that people have had paid work prior to the birth of the child. However, one of the male participants had his first child at the age of 21, and neither he nor his partner had finished their education when they became parents. This may affect his views on the design of the Norwegian work-family policies.

In both groups, the discussions on a possible care gap and on the gender related division of labour sometimes referred to the participants' own practices and opinions, and sometimes to norms and practices in society at large.

4 Discussions in the focus groups

The moderator started by introducing the topic to be addressed by the focus groups (see section 1) and informing the participants that the research project was led from Spain and that some of the questions may therefore not fit particularly well in the Norwegian context. This may have affected the participants' answers, at least in the beginning of the group session. For instance, some of the parents seemed to compare Norway with countries with more traditional gender roles and less well-developed work-family policies when they talked about what it meant to be a man or a woman in present day Norway. Apart from this, it is worth mentioning that the mothers seemed to feel more comfortable with the topic and the discussions in the group from the very beginning, while the fathers needed a bit more "warming up" before they relaxed and spoke uninhibitedly. Discussions were also more lengthy and detailed in the group with mothers than in the group with fathers. However, in both groups, there was a lot of laughing and joking during the discussions.

4.1 What does it mean to be a man/woman in present day Norway?

Fathers

The fathers emphasised that men in present day Norway are clearly expected to be actively involved in family work in addition to having a career. They stressed that fathers in Norway probably do more housework and childcare than Spanish fathers, and also far more than their own fathers and grandfathers, who had a more traditional division of labour at home. Combining housework, childcare and paid work was described as quite demanding, but the fathers also regarded it as a privilege to have the opportunity to develop close emotional ties with their children and be actively involved in the children's daily lives. At least one of the fathers stressed the importance of the fathers' quota in

the parental leave scheme in this context and said that it is crucial that fathers make use of the quota so that it is not scaled back by the authorities. According to one of the participants, fathers may need to be “kicked into it (care work)” by the quota, which is in line with Brandth and Kvande’s (2003) suggestion that the fathers’ quota may work as a “gentle force”.

Although the men mentioned both housework and childcare when talking about their family duties, they focused mostly on childcare. This may reflect the fact that one important topic in the focus groups was a possible gender-related care gap in Norway. However, it became apparent during the course of the focus groups that both mothers and fathers see routine housework as a central part of taking care of children and running a family. Although the fathers portrayed Norwegian fathers as co-parents who share housework and childcare equally with their partners and spend the same number of hours in the labour market, they sometimes said that men are expected to “help out” with housework and children, and are “requested” to do family work. This may suggest that they still do not regard fathers as fully responsible for family work in line with mothers. It is a bit unclear, however, whether participants referred to their own families or to Norwegian men in general in this part of the discussion. They stressed that although the official norms in Norway prescribe an active father’s role, norms and practices vary across different parts of the country and between urban and rural areas. In general, equal sharing of housework and childcare and full-time work for both parents was said to be most common in the Oslo area and among highly educated parents. The fact that both partners usually have full-time employment in the Oslo area was largely attributed to the high living expenses in this area, but it was also mentioned that both partners probably wanted to have an interesting job and therefore preferred to stay in the capital city.

While the fathers agreed that there are now high expectations regarding involved and active fathering practices in Norway and also a strong discourse on gender equality, one of them pointed out that it is still not fully accepted that the father is the main caregiver in the family. He and his partner had met a lot of scepticism when she had taken only twelve weeks of parental leave for one of their children, while he used the rest of the leave. He found this strange and unfair, and underlined that there are still strong norms prescribing that mothers

should be the main carers for young children in Norway. This is in line with Elwin-Noack and Thomsson's (2001) finding in a Swedish study that, even though there is a strong and dominant discourse on equality, there is a parallel discourse on motherhood and what it takes to be a good mother.

Mothers

When asked what it means to be a woman in present day Norway, the female participants stressed that women now have the same rights and possibilities as men, that there is a high level of gender equity in Norway, and that work-family policies are more developed than in many other countries. This facilitates the combination of employment and childcare for both women and men and also allows people to plan their household finances and when to have children. In particular, the mothers pointed out the importance of the generous parental leave scheme and the fathers' quota which may further men's involvement in the family. They stressed that it is important that fathers spend some time alone with the children during the quota, so that they get a better understanding of the children's needs and of the housework that needs to be done. Even though some of the mothers would have preferred to have a longer parental leave themselves, they realised that their partner had learned a lot by having sole responsibility for the child for a few weeks or months. This is highlighted by the following quote from one of the mothers: "Of course, I would never deny him to stay at home – it was very important for the attachment (between the father and the child). He turned from nose clip to changing diapers".

The mothers also stressed the importance of the flexibility of the Norwegian work-family policies in that the cash-for-childcare benefit and the right to unpaid parental leave with job protection may allow one of the parents to stay at home longer than the paid parental leave period. While some claimed that the high living expenses in the capital-city area require both partners to work full-time, others stated that it is possible to manage with less than two incomes for a while if you accept a more modest standard of living. Although the mothers stressed the generosity and flexibility of the Norwegian work-family policies, it was also pointed out that income differences between the partners may limit their choice when it comes to parental-leave use. As female-dominated professions are often less well paid than male-dominated professions, the couple may lose more if the father, rather than the mother, takes

parental leave or works part-time. One of the mothers, who worked in a kindergarten, was very upset because when she and her partner had to wait a few months for a place in the kindergarten for their child, she was the one who had to stay at home because she earned less than her partner. This had not been discussed at all, but was taken as a given by everybody. On the other hand, another mother (a lawyer) commented that her partner had taken a few months of unpaid leave when their children were small, as his income was lower than hers.

When asked by the mediator to mention the values that women in Norway hold today and to characterise the mother's role versus the father's role, the mothers suggested that women may have higher standards than men when it comes to cleanliness and tidiness, and that there may still be some "maternal gatekeeping" in some couples, in that women are unwilling to entrust certain responsibilities and tasks to men. However, they also stressed that today's fathers, including their own partners, do their fair share of housework and childcare, and that taking care of children has become a natural part of the father's role in Norway. A couple of decades ago it was quite rare to see a man pushing a pram in public, whereas now, one often sees groups of fathers who socialise and take care of their babies. They also stressed the importance of the fathers' quota in the parental leave scheme which "forces" fathers to stay at home with their children for a few weeks so that they have the opportunity to learn how to be the sole caregiver for a baby. However, one of the mothers reminded the others that some fathers do not make use of the quota, perhaps because they find it too strenuous to take care of a baby on their own, or, as suggested by another mother, that they believe that they have such important jobs that they cannot be absent for three months.

4.2 What is meant by caregiving work and how is it organized in the participants' households?

Fathers

When asked what is meant by caregiving work in the home, the fathers said that it involved taking care of their children, spending time with them, being available whenever the children needed them and creating a safe environment both in terms of economic resources and daily care. They also stressed that it requires a lot of planning and cooperation

between the parents in order to organise the family's everyday life, particularly when it comes to dropping off and picking up children at/from kindergarten. When asked by the moderator if caregiving work may also be rewarding for the fathers themselves, the fathers agreed that raising and taking care of children involves a lot of pleasure, although it is also very demanding since you always need to be available, have little time on your own and cannot see your friends so much as you would like to. This two-sidedness is illustrated by the following quote from a father with three children: "Raising children in Norway is quite demanding and is very hard work. My life before and after having children are two different things. You have a lot of restrictions and you cannot always do the things that you would like to do. You cannot meet your friends or play football whenever you want, you have to be considerate. Still, I believe it is worth having children. It gives a lot of pleasure. Actually, it is the meaning of life and is really rewarding".

When asked to explain how they organised the care work in their own families and how different tasks were divided between the parents, the fathers provided fairly detailed accounts of both housework and childcare activities and described themselves as actively involved in a wide variety of tasks. The allocation of tasks varied a lot across the families, however, and also over time in each individual family. Tasks were allocated between the parents according to each partner's preferences and skills, but arrangements and parental meetings in the kindergarten or at school had a high priority and should not be missed by either the father or the mother. While some tasks, for instance vacuuming and laundry, were usually allocated to either the father or the mother, the fathers also described a flexible organisation of childcare and housework. For instance, if one parent had a busy period at work, the other parent temporarily took the main responsibility for both housework and childcare. The parents also stepped in for each other if something unexpected happened in the afternoon or the evening so that the parent who was supposed to pick up the children in kindergarten was not able to do so. However, even though the fathers believed that, on the whole, housework and childcare tasks were fairly evenly divided in their families, they were not always willing to live up to their partners' standards and expectations regarding tidiness and cleanliness.

When asked to mention the various types of caregiving work that needed to be undertaken in their families, the fathers were fairly detailed, although somewhat less detailed than the mothers. The tasks that they mentioned included cleaning, cooking, vacuuming, dropping off and picking up children at/from the kindergarten, driving children to and from leisure activities, helping with homework, shopping for groceries, changing diapers, putting the children to bed, giving them a bath, helping with you-tube and videos, making lunch-bags, dressing the children, finding suitable clothes for each day and taking children out to play. Although it varied a lot how the different tasks were divided between the partners, most chores were undertaken by both partners even though they were not equally divided. However, picking clothes for the children in the morning was typically done by the mothers, while the fathers typically helped with technical equipment. The fathers seemed to be fairly satisfied with the division of the above mentioned tasks in their families.

It is interesting to note that none of the fathers mentioned paying bills, taking care of household finances or doing maintenance work in this part of the discussion, since these chores were mentioned at a later stage. This may have been because of the wording of the question asked by the moderator, which explicitly asked about the division of caregiving activities. Although both fathers and mothers see paying bills and doing maintenance work as important tasks, they may not regard them as caregiving work in the strictest sense.

Mothers

According to the mothers, caregiving work means taking care of other people and particularly their own children, ensuring that the children are in good health, that they feel safe and trust that they will be taken care of, that they thrive at home and that they trust their parents and dare to bring up difficult topics. They also mentioned that care includes setting clear limits for what the children are allowed to do and what they are not allowed to do, and providing the family with sufficient economic resources.

As already mentioned, the mothers discussed some topics in more detail than the fathers. For instance, there was a discussion on how much “service” one should give to older children and what one should expect them to manage on their own and whether one should accept

that the partner may have lower or different standards or conceptions when it comes to caregiving work than one has oneself. One mother mentioned that she and her partner disagreed on whether they should remind their 13 year old son to wear mittens on cold days, or to instead let him freeze and learn the “hard way”. She herself could not bear to think of that her son might freeze when he forgot his mittens, while her partner believed that their son was old enough to look after himself. The mothers also discussed whether they should accept being responsible for packing both their own and their children’s luggage when they were travelling somewhere, while their partner was only responsible for his own stuff. Would they be good caregivers if they delegated such tasks to the partner or to the children themselves and accepted that some clothes might be forgotten?

Most of the mothers accepted that packing the luggage and ensuring that children were well equipped for their leisure activities was their responsibility because they were better at planning and remembering everything than their partners. The following quote from a mother with two children aged twelve and fifteen illustrates this: “When they were so old but had not brought a party dress, even though the father knew that we were invited for dinner at Grandma’s. He then says that they will have to wear their woollen clothes - they should be able to remember these things themselves. And when my fifteen year old son sets off for his skiing training, I ask if he has remembered everything and he says yes. Then I ask if he has his headlamp, and he says that I did not tell him to. Yes, but you should know that you need it because it is very dark, I say. And what about your cap? Where is it?, he asks. I remind him that he has told me not to be pushy and remind him about everything. Well, but you need to be pushy about the right things, he says.” However, one mother who had a demanding job and also a higher income than her partner maintained that it is important to delegate certain tasks and responsibilities to the partner or to older children. If something is left behind when the family leaves for a holiday, you just have to accept it and not waste your energy on being irritated.

The mothers also discussed whether they had something to learn from their partners when it comes to prioritising playing with the children over certain housework tasks. On the one hand, they believed it was a good thing that their partners played with the children even though there were housework chores that needed to be done. They

could see that both the father and the child enjoyed themselves. On the other hand, they believed it was unfair that the mother had to take care of the housework, while the father spent time with the children. However, they also admitted that maybe they should sometimes relax their standards and expectations regarding cleanliness and tidiness and instead concentrate on having a good time with the children.

The mothers provided very detailed accounts of the organisation and division of the caregiving work in their families. The main picture was that both partners were responsible for housework as well as childcare tasks, although it varied a lot which parent who did most of the different chores. The mothers depicted their partners as responsible fathers who were involved in almost all types of housework, including cooking, cleaning and shopping for groceries, and also in all types of childcare, rather than just the most pleasant tasks. Most of them had very busy schedules with demanding jobs and children that required a lot of attention and assistance. The younger children needed to be looked after all the time and the older children needed help with their homework and a lot of transportation and administration related to their leisure activities. It took a lot of planning and organising in order to coordinate all the different activities. There was a lot of cooperation between the parents, but most of the mothers believed that they themselves took the main responsibility for seeing the big picture, organising holidays and birthday parties etc. and setting the standards regarding cleanliness and tidiness. They were also responsible for delegating certain tasks to the father or to older children. However, in two of the families, some of the cleaning had been outsourced to a private cleaner. We do not know which parent had initiated this, but one mother stated that her partner had made it clear before they married that he could not stand cleaning the house. She had answered that if he refused to do it, she would not do it either, so they employed a private cleaner.

When asked to mention the various types of care work that needs to be done, the mothers spent longer describing this, had more lively discussions and gave more detailed answers than the fathers. The following tasks were mentioned: buying clothes for the children, cooking, shopping for groceries, doing laundry, dropping off and picking up children, getting up early with the children at the weekend, dressing children in the morning, staying in contact with friends and

family, arranging birthday parties, gardening, taking care of the car, driving the car, household finances, socialising with the children, helping children with homework, clearing snow, organising contact with doctors, dentists etc., clearing up and cleaning the house, and doing maintenance tasks (“being a handyman”). Most tasks were undertaken by both parents, but the mothers believed that they spent more time than their partners on certain tasks and depicted themselves as the main organisers in the family. They also complained that their partners did not always live up to their expectations when it comes to tidiness and cleanliness. However, they admitted that their partners were often responsible for things that they themselves were not fond of doing, such as paying the bills, taking care of the household finances and tax returns and constructing and repairing various equipment in and around the house. Although some of the mothers did most of the gardening, they agreed that their partners spent more time than them on constructing and repairing furniture and other equipment and on painting and redecorating the house.

4.3 Work-family balance

Fathers

When asked whether their family duties had any impact on their jobs, the fathers said that they probably made more use of flexible hours than they would otherwise have done and that they also used the opportunity to do some paid work at home in the evenings. Most of them believed that their own and their partner’s jobs were equally demanding, and they described a lot of planning, cooperation and coordination in order for both parents to be able to work full-time. In particular, taking the children to kindergarten and picking them up involved coordination and planning. One father had marked in his outlook calendar when to drop off and pick up the children, so that his colleagues and superiors would not book a meeting for him at these times. Another father shared a calendar with his partner on his mobile phone in order to coordinate the allocation of tasks related to their children. It was also common that one partner took the children to the kindergarten in the morning while the other went to work very early in the morning and left earlier in the afternoon in order to pick up the children.

Since the fathers believed that both partners worked approximately the same number of hours in the labour market, they maintained that the family work was not allocated according to the partners' working hours, but according to both partners' skills and preferences. However, they admitted that habits may also play a role and the parents may become stuck in a certain pattern if one of them usually took care of a certain task. They also believed that their partners had a better overview than themselves regarding certain family tasks and what needed to be done, particularly with regard to the children's clothes. The mothers also more often initiated new purchases for the house as well as redecorating and refurnishing the house. However, some of the fathers were responsible for buying groceries and knew better than their partners what they needed to buy.

Mothers

The mothers believed that they had become more efficient at work after they had children, but one of them stated that she had become somewhat less productive since she had to leave earlier in the afternoon. However, her superiors were very supportive and understood her situation very well. One of the mothers had worked reduced hours for a while when she had young children. She was very grateful for this and stated that she and her partner had agreed to accept a more modest standard of living for a while in order for her to be able to work part-time. One mother said that she might work reduced hours for a while when her partner ended his parental leave, but she was not sure whether they could afford this since she did not earn much as a pre-school teacher.

Some of the mothers had also changed to a more family-friendly job. For instance, the mother who was a nurse had quit a job where she worked shifts and found a job with regular day time work. She was very satisfied with this even though the salary was somewhat lower. The mother who was a lawyer had quit a job with management responsibilities when the children got older and found a job without management responsibilities and with more predictable working hours. She found it more difficult to have management responsibilities when the children were older, because they went to bed later so she could not work in the evening. She was very happy with her new job, although her income had been somewhat reduced. One mother had had a job in

which she travelled a lot when the children were young, which she thought was good as her partner had developed closer ties with the children as he had to take care of them on his own. The mothers all said that they had discussed the adjustments that they had made with their partners and that their partners agreed with the course of action. Moreover, two of the mothers mentioned that their partners had changed to new jobs after they had children, in order to create a more family friendly arrangement, one by reducing the commuting time, and the other by working fewer hours, although not part-time.

However, even if the mothers themselves had full-time jobs, they knew other mothers that worked reduced hours. Their general impression was that it is quite common that mothers work part-time, while fathers work full-time, and that this is due to the wage difference in the couple. They explained that it was difficult for them to work part-time because the housing expenses in Oslo are so high. They could of course move to a smaller city and buy a cheaper house, but then they would perhaps have to accept a less interesting job.

4.4 Is there a care gap in Norway?

Fathers

The moderator explained that in Spain, there is a care gap with women taking more responsibility at home and for old parents than men, and asked whether there is a care gap in Norway as well. According to the fathers, the care gap is more across generations and families in Norway than between men and women. They stated that more women than men have care professions and work part-time in Norway, and because they earn less than their partners, they often do more caregiving work for children and old parents. However, they believed that there are larger differences between families than between women and men, in that some families have more knowledge about their entitlements to various benefits from the state and from their employer than others have. They also believed that there is a huge care gap between the generations, as old people are taken care of in nursing homes and not by their own children and many people rarely visit their old parents. Moreover, children may spend a long time in kindergartens instead of with their parents, which was also thought of as a type of care gap.

When asked for remedies to close the care gap, the fathers suggested that people could accept a lower standard of living in order to afford to work less, and also that cheaper housing in Oslo would be a key factor.

Mothers

The mothers believed that at the societal level there is a care gap in Norway, as women more often than men stay at home or work part-time. They were less certain whether there was a care gap or not in their own families, since both they and their partners worked full-time. However, when the moderator asked what they could tell their partners in order to convince them that there actually is a care gap and to make them take more responsibility at home, they agreed that their partners could take some more initiative. But they also stated that it was not that their partners were unwilling to perform certain chores, it was just that they sometimes needed to be told very explicitly what to do, for instance regarding arranging a birthday party. Hence, the mothers thought it was important to clearly delegate certain tasks to their partners. Unfortunately, there was only a very brief discussion on a possible care gap in Norway in the focus group with mothers since they were about to run out of time and had to move on to the next topic.

4.5 Understanding the partner's point of view

Fathers

When asked to describe the division of care work in their families from their partner's point of view, the fathers spent a lot of time thinking and making notes. While pretending to be their partners some of the fathers (in the role of mothers) said that they were fairly satisfied with the division of childcare and housework at home and that the different tasks were allocated according to each partner's skills and time availability. The partner who was currently ill emphasised the importance of cooperation and both parents' willingness to find the best possible solutions. However, some of the fathers believed that their partners thought that they (the fathers) did not do their fair share at home and spent too much time at work. And even though the partners spent almost the same amount of time on housework and childcare, the fathers believed that their partners would characterise themselves as the

“driving force” at home, and would like the fathers to take more initiative, be more active with the children and help with their upbringing, participate more in planning and organising things that needed to be done, not spend so much time on the computer, exercise more, and also be more concerned with their partners’ (the mothers’) needs. Although the fathers admitted that housework and childcare was still not equally divided between themselves and their partners, they believed that no tasks are inherently male or female and that all tasks can in principle be equally shared by men and women.

Mothers

As the group was about to run out of time, they mothers could not spend much time on this part of the discussion, and they had far less time to prepare and make notes than the fathers did. Pretending to be their partners, some of them said that they believed that their partners (the mothers) were fairly satisfied with the division of labour at home, although they believed that their partners took more responsibility than themselves, at least for certain tasks. Some of them said that this was a good solution because the partner was better at doing certain types of housework than themselves, did it faster and also could more easily see what needed to be done. They also said that they themselves contributed as much as they could, but that they had demanding jobs and that their employers required them to prioritise the job.

However, they believed that their partners (the mothers) had higher expectations and standards at home than they had themselves, and that it was difficult for them to accept that everything needed to be perfect all the time. They stressed that they took a lot of responsibility for the children, though, and one “father” also said that “he” had to take care of the household finances (loans, bills, tax returns etc.) because his partner did not want to do this. They also believed that their female partners should more explicitly delegate certain tasks to them instead of complaining that they did not see what needed to be done. They were not unwilling to perform more housework, but thought that they sometimes wanted more explicit guidelines. When asked what they believed that their partners (the mothers) would like them to do more of, the “fathers” said they would like their partners to drive the car more often and to take care of the household finances. Their partners would probably also say that they spent too much time on the computer and on reading scientific articles.

4.6 The joint group session

The fathers and mothers subsequently met for a joint session, in order to share their experiences and discuss each others' viewpoints. There was mainly one spokesman from each group, and the two moderators made contributions on several occasions. When asked whether they had become aware of things that they had not thought of before, the fathers said that perhaps they ought to do some more cleaning and clearing up at home, while the mothers thought that perhaps they needed to communicate better with their partners, lower their standards and expectations at home and set aside more time for their partners. As for the division of labour at home, the mothers believed that women on average took 60-80% of the care work, that women were the managers of the "firm", and the "project leaders", with the main responsibility for organising the family's everyday life. However, they pointed out that fathers do contribute a lot regarding childcare, cooking and shopping for groceries, although they never buy clothes for the children.

Both the men and the women believed that there are some unwritten rules for the allocation of certain tasks in their household, although each partner's skills and preferences were probably more important, as well as the adoption of habits and routines.

Regarding the relationship between caregiving work and wages, the fathers emphasised that they collaborated extensively with their partners with the allocation and organisation of family tasks so that both partners could work the same hours in the labour market. A lot of communication and cooperation was needed in order for things to run smoothly. Some of the fathers had been granted more flexible hours and the opportunity to work from home in order to be able to reconcile work and family, and one of them stressed that he had actively supported his partner when she wanted to switch to another job in order to develop her career. However, they believed that, in general, women more often than men work-part time in Norway since they usually have lower wages.

The moderator of the mothers' group summarised the mothers' thoughts about their partners' views on the allocation of caregiving work in their home in the following way: The partners (the fathers) would like the mothers to lower their expectations and standards and accept that everything does not need to be perfect all the time, take more responsibility for driving the car and for the household finances,

not provide so much assistance to the children all the time but let them manage things more on their own, be more clear and explicit if they want their partners to do more housework, accept that things are not always done immediately, and put more time aside for their partners. When asked to comment upon this, the fathers emphasised the importance of explicit communication if mothers want the fathers to do more housework or childcare, rather than only hinting at things.

The fathers' assumptions on their partners requirements for themselves were summarised as follows: To be more active, more mentally present, focus more actively on the children, participate more actively in rearing the children, change diapers, vacuum, clean the house, pick up the children from kindergarten more often, spend less time on the computer and watching television, get up earlier in the morning, make dinner, clear up more, do not have a hangover because of too much alcohol the previous evening, give more attention to their partners and accept the "stupid" things that women like to do, such as for instance shopping.

The mothers believed that the fathers were being too hard on themselves, but thought it was a good thing that they realised that they could do more cleaning and vacuuming, get up earlier in the morning and watch less television. However, they emphasised that the fathers did spend a lot of time with their children, although they did not always see the housework that needs to be done.

The mothers and the fathers had different conceptions of the how much of the family work that each partner did and, not surprisingly, the men believed that the family work was more evenly divided between the partners than the mothers did. It also became apparent that the two groups did not totally agree on which tasks to include in the calculations. However, there was a general agreement that women more often than men are the "managers" of the firm, see the big picture, have higher standards and expectations at home, and spend more time than men on some routine housework tasks but less time on certain types of maintenance work, such as washing the car.

When asked whether they could think of any measures from the state or from employers that may help reduce the care gap between women and men, the fathers stressed that it is very important not to reduce the fathers' quota. Another suggestion was to extend the opening hours at kindergartens and after school programmes and to have more shops open on Sundays in order to make people's everyday

lives less stressful. However, all things taken together, both groups seemed to be fairly satisfied with the family-policy measures in Norway, although it was stressed that it may be a drawback that parents are not entitled to paid parental leave if they do not have paid work prior to the birth of the child. Even though the parents believed that generous work-family policy measures are important in enabling parents to be able to combine paid work and children, they also underlined that parents could take more responsibility themselves if they want a less stressful schedule. For instance, one could accept a lower standard of living in order for one of the parents to be able to work reduced hours. The parents also thought that lower housing prices in Oslo would be very helpful, as both parents would not then need to have full-time work.

5 Summary and discussion

A symmetrical family model in which mothers and fathers share paid and unpaid work equally between them has been a political ambition in Norway for decades. One important strategy in achieving gender equality has been to strengthen women's economic independence through increasing their labour market participation. In the 1970s and 1980s, the reconciliation of employment and family work was regarded primarily as a challenge for women, but since the late 1980s there has been a strong focus on the family role of men as well. More involved fathering practices are supposed to be beneficial for fathers and children as well as enhancing women's employment prospects.

Today, parents in Norway can rely on generous work-family policies that ease the combination of paid work and childcare for both mothers and fathers, such as high-quality publicly subsidised childcare and a long period of parental leave with wage compensation and job protection as well as quotas reserved for each parent. Elements that promote traditional family practices, such as the cash-for-childcare benefit and tax-deductions for couples in which one partner has no or a very low income, have gradually been reduced in recent years, while the kindergarten coverage and the parental leave scheme have been greatly improved. These policies are now taken for granted by most people and shape parents' everyday life organisation, their reasoning on when to have children, and their conceptions of what it takes to be a good mother or a good father (Ellingsæter and Pedersen 2015). In particular, the non-transferable fathers' quota is thought to be an important factor in shaping fathers' parental practices and promoting more involved fatherhood. Some studies suggest that fathers acquire improved parenting skills while on parental leave, particularly if the mother works or studies at the same time and the father therefore has sole responsibility for the child (Brandth and Kvande 2003, Bungum 2013).

Mothers' and fathers' time use patterns have converged significantly in recent decades with mothers spending more time on the

labour market and less time on family work than before, and fathers spending more time on family work and somewhat less time on the labour market. Women now have almost as high employment rates as men, although they are more likely to work part-time and less likely to work long hours, which is partly linked to the gender segregated labour market in Norway with women and men concentrated in different sectors and occupations (Reisel and Teigen 2014). Public sector jobs are usually regarded as more family friendly than private sector jobs, but are also less well paid. On average, mothers still spend somewhat more time than fathers on family work, and are usually the main organisers in the family.

Although women on average spend less time on the labour market than men, and more time on domestic chores, an increasing percentage of couples now work approximately the same number of hours on the labour market and share housework and childcare tasks fairly equally between them. This is particularly likely among highly educated parents, and when the father works in the public sector.

The participants in the focus groups in this study were highly educated parents in couples in which both partners had a full-time job. Although both the mothers and the fathers believed that, at the societal level and particularly in the Southern part of the country, there may still be a gender-related care gap with women working part-time or staying at home with children more often than men, mainly because the women often earn less than their partners, they portrayed themselves as fairly equal-sharing couples. Both parents were involved in most types of housework as well as childcare, and there was a lot of cooperation and coordination between the parents in order to allow both of them to be able to work full-time and at the same time perform the necessary housework tasks and create a good atmosphere at home for the children. Most parents saw their own and their partners' jobs as equally demanding, and both fathers and mothers had made certain changes in their job arrangements in order to obtain a better work-family balance, for instance by changing from shift work to regular hours, by reducing commuting time and by more seldom working long hours or by having less management responsibilities. One of the fathers had also marked in his Outlook calendar when he would pick up the children from kindergarten so that no one would book a meeting for him at those times. The parents stepped in for each other at home if one of them had

a busy period at work. The fact that both partners had adapted their employment to family demands is important because fathers' work schedules have traditionally been seen as more rigid and unchangeable, and less negotiable than mothers' work schedules (Andenæs 1996; Elwin-Noack and Thomsson 2001).

The fathers and the mothers both claimed that household and childcare tasks were mostly allocated according to each partner's skills and preferences, and that no tasks had inherently masculine or feminine connotations. Routine housework as well as childcare was conceived as being compatible with a masculine identity, and the parents were well aware of the huge changes in fathering practices in recent decades. There are now few signs of the fathers "doing gender" by avoiding routine housework, although they might of course find certain tasks (for instance cleaning) rather boring. Fathers also enjoyed spending time with their children and were heavily involved in their daily activities. Although they sometimes thought it was demanding to fulfil today's expectations of active fatherhood and combine employment and childcare, they found it rewarding and pleasurable to be "hands-on fathers" and not only the mothers' helpers. Both the fathers and the mothers stressed the importance of the fathers' quota in the parental leave scheme, since they had experienced that spending time with a baby without the presence of the mother gave the fathers the opportunity to become more competent care-givers. They also stated that the quota should not be scaled back or abolished, which has been suggested by the current right-wing government in Norway.

Even though most family tasks were performed by both parents, the fathers and the mothers both agreed that selecting clothes for the children in the morning and buying clothes for the children were mainly done by the mother, while the father was usually responsible for certain types of maintenance work, taking care of the household finances and helping children with technical equipment. Hence, even though there was not much specialisation in these couples in the sense that one partner focusing on paid work and the other one on unpaid family work, there is a specialisation regarding certain types of housework and childcare. The parents also agreed that the mothers were the managers and the "driving force" in the family and had higher standards and expectations than fathers regarding tidiness and cleanliness, and for monitoring and assisting the children in different ways.

The mothers would have liked the fathers to take more initiative at home and do more cleaning and clearing up, but at the same time they found it difficult to entrust certain responsibilities to the fathers. Hence, there may still be some “maternal gate-keeping” in these couples, but the mothers admitted that they would have to communicate better with the fathers if they wanted to delegate more responsibility to them. The fathers were not reluctant to do more housework or childcare, but they asked for more explicit guidelines. However, the mothers also admitted that they might have something to learn from the fathers in terms of the fathers prioritising having a good time with the children over certain housework chores, and also that they perhaps could relax their standards at home somewhat. In particular, it is worth noting that two of the mothers, who had private-sector jobs and sometimes needed to work long hours or to go on business trips, had delegated more responsibility for housework and childcare to the fathers and tried to accept the fathers’ ways of doing things.

Although both mothers and fathers believed that housework and childcare tasks were primarily allocated between themselves and their partners in accordance with each partner’s skills and preferences, the size of their incomes was also of relevance. The parent with a lower income was the one who took unpaid parental leave if necessary and who worked reduced hours in the labour market if this was needed and prioritised by the parents. This was the case irrespective of whether it was the father or the mother who had lower income. At least one of the mothers spent more time on the labour market and had higher earnings than her partner and thus had a so-called “role-reversal” arrangement. There was no mention of either parent feeling humiliated or threatened by this arrangement. On the other hand, it was pointed out by one of the fathers that in spite of the widespread discourse on gender equality in Norway, it is still not fully accepted that the father is the main caregiver in the family. He and his partner had encountered a lot of scepticism when he had taken the majority of the parental leave for one of their children while the mother returned to work. He thought this was strange and believed that there are still strong expectations for mothers to be the main carers of young children in Norway. This is in line with Elwin-Noack and Thomsson’s (2001) finding in a Swedish study that, in spite of the dominant discourse on gender equality, women still face stronger expectations than men regarding taking care of the family.

Even though the members of the two focus groups represent a somewhat select group of parents in Norway with both partners working full time, at least three of the five fathers having public-sector jobs and three of the mothers usually purchasing private cleaning services, their work-family practices are interesting in that they demonstrate that fairly gender-equal practices in employment and family work can be strived for and achieved if the conditions are right. Full-time work for both parents is facilitated by the work-family policies in Norway, but also requires a lot of flexibility and co-operation on the part of the parents. In spite of generous childcare arrangements and after school programmes, parents in Norway are expected to spend a lot of time with their children and to monitor their school-work and hobbies. Both mothers and fathers find it pleasurable and rewarding to spend time with their children, although it may also be demanding and strenuous. Even though certain tasks are still undertaken mostly by the mother or the father, most tasks seem to be conducted by both parents. The parents are aware that they are lucky to live in a country with extensive policies that support and promote the combining of employment and childcare by both partners. When asked for remedies to reduce a gender-related care gap, they believed that cheaper housing in the Oslo area was more important than more extensive family policy measures. However, they believed that even in the capital city region, people could also instead work less if they accepted a lower standard of living.

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2016:03

Author	Ragni Hege Kitterød
Title	<p>The organisation and division of caregiving work among parents in Norway. Evidence from focus groups with full-time working mothers and fathers</p> <p>Report by the Gender Pay Gap and Gender Care Gap Project</p>
Summary (in Norwegian)	<p>En symmetrisk familiemodell der foreldre deltar omtrent like mye i yrkeslivet og hjemme har vært en målsetting i norsk familiepolitikk i flere tiår. God barnehagedekning og en romslig foreldrepermisjon med egne kvoter reservert for hver av foreldrene, gjør det nå enklere enn før for begge foreldre å kombinere jobb og barn. I dag har kvinner i Norge nesten like høy yrkesdeltakelse som menn, men de jobber oftere deltid og har sjeldnere lang arbeidstid. Dette henger dels sammen med det kjønnsdelte arbeidsmarkedet der kvinner og menn er konsentrert i ulike sektorer og yrker. Stadig flere par fordeler både yrkes- og familiearbeidet ganske likt, men i gjennomsnitt bruker mødre fremdeles litt mer tid på hus- og omsorgsarbeid enn fedre.</p> <p>I denne rapporten presenteres resultater fra fokusgruppeintervjuer om et mulig omsorgs-gap mellom kvinner og menn i Norge. Deltakerne var høyt utdannede foreldre i par der begge parter hadde full jobb. Selv om både mødre og fedre mente at det er et omsorgs-gap mellom menn og kvinner i samfunnet generelt ettersom kvinner oftere enn menn jobber deltid eller er hjemme med barn, framstilte de seg selv som par med høy grad av likedeling hjemme og ute. Begge foreldrene var aktivt involvert i hus- og omsorgsarbeidet, og samarbeidet godt for at begge parter skulle kunne ha full jobb. De fleste så sin egen og partnerens jobber som like krevende, og både fedre og mødre hadde gjort tilpasninger i jobben for å bedre arbeid-familiebalansen.</p>

Både fedre og mødre mente at ulike oppgaver hjemme ble fordelt ut fra partenes evner og preferanser, og at ingen oppgaver hadde klart maskuline eller feminine konnotasjoner. Både husarbeid og barneomsorg ble ansett som forenelig med en maskulin identitet, og foreldrene pekte på de store endringene som har funnet sted i fedres deltakelse hjemme de siste tiårene. Foreldrene understreket betydningen av fedrekvoten i foreldrepermisjonen siden de hadde erfart at det å ha ansvar for en baby uten at mor var tilstede, gav fedrene mulighet til å bli mer kompetente omsorgspersoner.

Selv om de fleste oppgavene hjemme ble utført av begge foreldre, var det enighet om at det hovedsakelig var mødrene som fant fram tøy til barna om morgenen og kjøpte nytt tøy til barna, mens fedrene ofte var ansvarlige for mye av vedlikeholdsarbeidet, for husholdningens økonomi og for å hjelpe til med teknisk utstyr. Det var også enighet om at det oftest var mor som hadde det overordnede ansvaret for familielogistikken og at mor hadde høyere standarder enn far når det gjaldt rengjøring og det å bistå barna i ulike gjøremål.

Mødrene hadde gjerne sett at fedrene tok mer initiativ hjemme, særlig til rengjøring og rydding, men fant det samtidig vanskelig å overlate en del oppgaver til fedrene. Det er altså tegn til en viss «maternal gatekeeping» også blant disse foreldrene. Mødrene innrømmet imidlertid at de kunne bli flinkere til å kommunisere til fedrene at de ønsket at de skulle ta mer ansvar for bestemte gjøremål. Fedrene var ikke uvillige til å delta mer, men ønsket mer eksplisitte retningslinjer.

Selv om foreldrene oppgav at familiearbeidet ble fordelt ut ifra partenes evner og preferanser, hadde størrelsen på inntekten også betydning. Det var den forelderen som hadde lavest inntekt som tok ulønnet foreldrepermisjon eller jobbet deltid i perioder, og dette gjaldt uansett om det var far eller mor som hadde lavest inntekt. Minst en av mødrene hadde lengre arbeidstid og høyere inntekt enn partneren sin, men det virket ikke som om noen av partene synes dette var ydmykende eller truende. På den annen side pekte en av fedrene på at til tross for den sterke vektleggingen på kjønnslikestilling i Norge, er det ikke fullt ut

	<p>akseptert at far er hovedomsorgsperson i familien.</p> <p>Selv om deltakerne i fokusgruppene utgjør en selektert gruppe av foreldre i Norge i og med at begge jobber fulltid og minst tre av fem fedre jobber i offentlig sektor, er deres arbeid-/familiepraksiser interessante fordi de viser at stor grad av likedeling ute og hjemme er mulig dersom forholdene ligger til rette. Gode familiepolitiske ordninger gjør det enklere for begge foreldre å ha full jobb, men to fulle jobber krever også omfattende samarbeid mellom foreldrene. Dagens foreldre forventes å bruke mye tid på barna sine og involvere seg i skolearbeid og fritidsaktiviteter. Både mødre og fedre synes det er givende å være sammen med barna, men at det kan også være ganske krevende. Foreldrene understreker at de er heldige som bor i et land med en familiepolitikk som støtter opp om toinntektsfamilien. Når de blir bedt om å nevne tiltak som kan redusere kjønnsforskjellen i omsorgsarbeid, peker de på billigere boliger i hovedstadsområdet framfor ytterligere familiepolitiske reformer.</p>
<p>Index terms (in Norwegian)</p>	<p>Arbeid-familie-balanse, familiepolitikk, kjønnslikestilling, toinntektsfamilie.</p>
<p>Summary</p>	<p>A symmetrical family model in which mothers and fathers share paid and unpaid work equally between them has been a political ambition in Norway for decades. Today, parents can rely on generous work-family policies that ease the combination of paid work and childcare for both parents, such as high-quality publicly subsidised childcare and a long period of parental leave with wage compensation and job protection as well as quotas reserved for each parent. Employment rates are now almost as high among women as they are for men, although women are more likely to work part time and less likely to work long hours, which is partly linked to the gender segregated labour market in Norway with women and men concentrated in different sectors and occupations. An increasing percentage of couples now work approximately the same number of hours on the labour market and share housework and childcare tasks fairly equally between them, although on average fathers still spend somewhat less time on family work than mothers.</p>

This report presents results from focus group interviews about a possible gender care gap in Norway. The participants were highly educated parents in couples in which both partners had a full-time job. Although both the mothers and the fathers believed that there may be a gender-related care gap at the societal level, with women more likely than men to work part-time or to stay at home with the children, they portrayed themselves as fairly equal-sharing couples. Both parents were involved in most housework and childcare tasks, and there was a lot of cooperation between the parents in order to enable them both to be able to work full-time. Most parents saw their own and their partners' jobs as equally demanding, and both fathers and mothers had made certain changes in their job arrangements in order to obtain a better work-family balance.

The fathers and the mothers both claimed that household and childcare tasks were mostly allocated according to each partner's skills and preferences, and that no tasks had inherently masculine or feminine connotations. Routine housework as well as childcare was conceived as being compatible with a masculine identity, and the parents were well aware of the huge changes that have occurred in fathering practices in recent decades. The parents stressed the importance of the fathers' quota in the parental leave scheme, since they had experienced that spending time with a baby without the mothers' presence gave the fathers the opportunity to become more competent care-givers. Even though most family tasks were performed by both parents, both fathers and mothers agreed that selecting clothes for the children in the morning and buying clothes for the children were mainly done by the mother, while the father was usually responsible for certain types of maintenance work, taking care of the household finances and helping children with technical equipment. The parents also agreed that the mothers were the managers and the "driving force" in the family and had higher standards than fathers regarding tidiness and cleanliness, and for monitoring and assisting the children.

The mothers would have liked the fathers to take more initiative at home and do more cleaning and clearing up, but at the same time they found it difficult to entrust certain responsibilities to the

fathers. Hence, there may still be some “maternal gate-keeping” in these couples. The mothers admitted that they would have to communicate better with the fathers if they wanted them to take more responsibility. The fathers were not reluctant to do more housework or childcare, but they asked for more explicit guidelines.

Although the parents maintained that household chores were allocated according to each partner’s skills and preferences, the size of their incomes was also of relevance. The parent with the lower income was the one who took unpaid parental leave and worked reduced hours, and this was the case irrespective of whether it was the father or the mother who had the lower income. At least one of the mothers spent more time on the labour market and had higher earnings than her partner. There was no mention of either parent feeling humiliated or threatened by this arrangement. On the other hand, it was pointed out by one of the fathers that, in spite of the widespread discourse on gender equality in Norway, it is still not fully accepted that the father is the main caregiver in the family.

Even though the members of the focus groups represent a somewhat select group of parents in Norway with both partners working full-time and at least three of the five fathers having public-sector jobs, their work-family practices are interesting in that they demonstrate that fairly gender-equal practices regarding employment and family work can be achieved if the conditions are right. Full-time work for both parents is facilitated by the work-family policies, but also requires a lot of flexibility and co-operation on the part of the parents. Today’s parents are expected to spend a lot of time with their children and to monitor their school-work and hobbies. Both the mothers and the fathers find it rewarding to be with their children, although it can also be demanding. The parents are aware of the fact that they are lucky to live in a country with extensive work-family reconciliation policies. When asked for remedies to reduce a gender-related care gap, they believed that cheaper housing in the capital area was more important than more extensive work-family-policy measures.

Index terms

Work-family balance, family policy measures, gender equality, dual-earner family.

THE ORGANISATION AND DIVISION OF CAREGIVING WORK AMONG PARENTS IN NORWAY. EVIDENCE FROM FOCUS GROUPS WITH FULL-TIME WORKING MOTHERS AND FATHERS

REPORT FROM THE GENDER PAY GAP AND GENDER CARE GAP PROJECT

This report presents results from focus group interviews about a possible gender care gap in Norway. The participants were highly educated parents in couples in which both partners had a full-time job. Although both the mothers and the fathers believed that there may be a gender-related care gap at the societal level, with women more likely than men to work part-time or to stay at home with the children, they portrayed themselves as fairly equal-sharing couples. Both parents were involved in most housework and childcare tasks, and there was a lot of cooperation between the parents in order to enable them both to be able to work full-time. Most parents saw their own and their partners' jobs as equally demanding, and both fathers and mothers had made certain changes in their job arrangements in order to obtain a better work-family balance.

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ISBN (print): 978-82-7763-496-8
ISBN (online): 978-82-7763-497-5
ISSN (print): 0333-3671
ISSN (online): 1891-4314