

A Song about 573,566 Families.
Families and family policies in the 2000s.

Eds. Anita Haataja, Ilpo Airio, Miia Saarikallio-Torp and Maria Valaste

Laulu
573 566
perheestä

Lapsiperheet ja perhepolitiikka 2000-luvulla

TOIMITTANEET
ANITA HAATAJA, ILPO AIRIO, MIIA SAARIKALLIO-TORP JA MARIA VALASTE



Contents

FOREWORD

INTRODUCTION

Anita Haataja, Ilpo Airio, Miia Saarikallio-Torp and Maria Valaste
Families with children in the 2000s

Vesa-Pekka Juutilainen
The data used in the book

THE AIMS AND OUTCOMES OF FAMILY POLICIES

Anita Haataja
Large and small reforms in family leaves and benefits for families with small children

Miia Saarikallio-Torp and Anita Haataja
**Fathers' use of family leave has become more common.
Which fathers take family leave and which do not use it at all?**

Karoliina Koskenvuo
The effect of family leaves on pension from the 1980s to the 2000s

Maria Valaste
**Child home care allowance or day care?
Alternatives to the child home care allowance and its potential impacts on the demand for day care and parents' labour supply**

Jussi Tervola
**Parent at home, child in day care?
Examining immigrant families' care choices in Finnish policy context**

Pertti Honkanen
Unemployment and social transfers of parents with small children

THE ROLES OF MOTHERS AND FATHERS IN CHILD CARE AND IN PAID WORK:
A COMPARISON OF ATTITUDES IN EUROPE

Milla Salin, Mia Hakovirta and Minna Ylikännö
Attitudes towards the earner-carer models in six European countries

Minna Ylikännö, Mia Hakovirta and Milla Salin
**How to share family leaves between the mother and father?
The attitudes in Finland and in other European countries**

FAMILIES FACING CHALLENGES

Ilpo Airio

What effect does the marital status of first-time mothers has on the risk of separation?

Mia Hakovirta, Milla Salin and Anita Haataja

Can a single parent bring up children as well as a couple?

Attitudes towards single parenthood among Finnish citizens in 2002 and 2012

Elina Ahola

Role of child maintenance allowance in the livelihood of single-parent families

Heikki Hiilamo and Elina Ahola

Does the birth of a disabled child increase the risk of divorce?

A register study from Finland

Laura Kallioma-Puha and Päivi Tillman

A mother is always a mother.

The challenges in everyday life for caregivers of children.

FOREWORD

Based on research, the articles of this book “sing” about those 573,566 families which in 2014 had children under 18 years old according to the Statistics Finland. The title of the book refers to a song called “Laulu 20 perheestä” (Song about 20 families in English) recorded in 1969. The song mentions important Finnish industrial dynasties which were claimed to have been the real rulers of Finland. Most of the families with children do not have much influence in society. Each family is different, but together families with children form a population group with a great importance to society. The majority of the parents of families with children belong to the working age population carrying a great responsibility on their shoulders for the funding of the welfare state. The influence in society of families with children is, above all, shown in that the makers of the future grow in the families with children.

It is no coincidence that this book focuses on families with children, especially on families with small children. The initial push for the design of the book was given by the material from Kela’s research project on families with small children and about their situation in the 2000s. Many of the book’s articles make good use of that “LAPE Data”.

The book project organised two seminars attended by the writers, who presented manuscripts and commented on them. The editors also came up with their own suggestions for changes. In addition to these processes, Jussi Tervola’s article went through the academic reference method: that is, two external, unnamed referees have evaluated the manuscript. The editorial board of Kela’s research publications takes the responsibility for the implementation of this method of referencing. The method was settled upon to ensure that the article would satisfy universities’ requirements on thesis-level articles.

Finally, apart from thanking all the authors of the book, we would like to thank our excellent publication office staff for copy editing our publication.

Helsinki, April 2016

Anita Haataja, Ilpo Airio, Miia Saarikallio-Torp and Maria Valaste

INTRODUCTION

Anita Haataja, Ilpo Airio, Miia Saarikallio-Torp and Maria Valaste

Families with children in the 2000s

At the turn of the decade, a new project called ‘Families with children’ was launched at Kela’s Research Department. The research data covered 50–60 per cent of mothers who gave birth between the years 1999 and 2009 as well as their families. The research data enables us to study child care choices in families, the duration of the care periods, changes in family structures and income issues from different perspectives; it also enables us to study mothers and their families in small demographic groups. Most of the articles in this book are based on this LAPE Data, but other survey data are also used (see Juutilainen’s article in the next chapter).

Before the recession of 2009, the 2000s had in many ways been favourable time for families with children, especially compared to the previous decade. The birth rate increased and the number of first births kept rising. This meant that the number of new families increased as well. At the same time, mothers’ participation in the labour force in particular increased. It is notable, though, that the poverty rate among families with children and income inequality still remained higher than before the big recession of the early 1990s. Great transformations in family structures that began in the 1990s slowed down or even came to a halt in the early 2000s. For example, the share of single parents stagnated at approximately one-fifth the total number of families with children.

Every single government programme of the first 15 years of the 2000s has contained explicit aims to develop the family leave system. Equality among men and women and the sharing of family leaves have been of utmost importance. It was thought that even employers would benefit from the sharing of family leaves because the expenditures could be divided more evenly among female- and male-dominated employers.

The first part of the book, *‘The aims and outcomes of the family policies’*, consists of six articles. The first two articles focus in more detail on the reforms in family leave policy and outcomes from the perspective of a father’s choices. The third article analyses the impacts of family leaves on pensions, especially with respect to pension reforms in the long run. Taking child care leave after parental leave is often an alternative to placing the child in day care and having mothers with children try to find employment after parental leave, but the statistics are scarce on the child day care option. The fourth article presents microsimulation methods that have been developed to assess the outcomes of alternative care policy options. The fifth article analyses empirically how immigrants choose the care options for their older siblings (3–5 years of age) compared with the original Finnish population, especially when they simultaneously receive a child home care allowance for the youngest child under 3 years of age. The last article in this section assesses transfers and unemployment of mothers who gave birth in 2004 and how unemployment has impacted their child care periods and employment status between the years 1999 and 2010.

Numerous public discussions in the 2000s have focused on the topic of families with children. The discussions reflect attitudes – and how attitudes and changes in attitudes have created the grounds for Finnish family policies. It is interesting to also compare attitudes internationally. The second part

of the book, *'The roles of mothers and fathers in child care and in paid work: a comparison of attitudes in Europe'*, deals with these questions from two different perspectives.

The last part of the book deals with families in challenging situations. The articles assess whether there is a greater risk of divorce among cohabiting couples compared with married couples, whether attitudes towards single parents have changed over the years and the extent to which the public maintenance allowance has an effect on the livelihoods of single parents. The last two articles focus on families with disabled children and address several fundamental questions: Has the disability of the child impacted the risk of divorce for such parents? What kinds of challenges do mothers caring for disabled children face as part of the current care provisions?

Vesa-Pekka Juutilainen

The data used in the book

The articles in this book draw their information from a number of different data sources and data sets that provide information on families with children in the 2000s. The most important data set is the register-based Families with Children Data Set (the so-called LAPE Data), which was formed by the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela). The Families with Children Data Set represents mothers who have given birth to a child between 1999 and 2009 as well as their families. We can use both a 50 and a 60 % sample of these mothers. Annually, we obtain information on more than 33,000 families in which a child is born. The data represent a combination of multiple different data sources: social security benefits paid by Kela, information on the overall population and companies managed by Statistics Finland as well as data about unemployment and activation measures from the Finnish labour administration.

LAPE Data consist of the following sources of information:

- Women who gave birth between the years 1999 and 2009
- Spouses of the women, 1999–2010
- All of the women's children
- Maternity, paternity and parental allowances, 1999–2013
- Child care allowances, 1999–2013
- Child maintenance allowance, 2009–2010
- Multiple other benefits paid by Kela, 1999–2010
- Day care notifications made to Kela, 2007–2010
- Population information compiled by Statistics Finland, 1998–2013
- Data from the Finnish Financial Supervisory Authority, 2000–2013
- Information on companies compiled by Statistics Finland, 1998–2012
- Information on unemployment and activation measures compiled by the labor administration, 2001–2010

The articles use data sets from the larger LAPE Data that have then been tailored to suit each separate theme. These data sets can be used both for longitudinal and cross-sectional studies. Because of the large sample size, the data can also be used for research on smaller population groups.

Other data sources used in the book are derived from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) survey, a survey on family carers done by Kela, the Family Leaves 2013 survey and SISU register data. Each article focuses in more depth on the definitions with respect to the research questions and data sets.

THE AIMS AND OUTCOMES OF FAMILY POLICIES

Anita Haataja

Large and small reforms in family leaves and benefits for families with small children

The 1980s and first decade of the 2000s were important periods in terms of developing family leave and benefits policies. This article focuses on these reforms, especially in the 2000s. All separate family leave schemes were organised under a special section of the Labour Contract Act in 2001, even though the concept of 'family leave' was introduced already in 1998. Benefits during the leaves, such as parental leaves and child-care leave, are each regulated by separate laws.

All Finnish family leaves offer employees the right to return to their former jobs or a similar type of job as they used to have before going on leave as well protection against dismissal. However, the other social rights of the leave schemes, such as the accumulation of pension rights or paid vacation vary a great deal. Some of the leaves are fully paid or compensated with earnings related benefits, while other leave schemes only offer basic benefits or can only be used entirely at an employee's own expense.

Combining family leave and benefits is not always as straightforward as it might seem. For example, benefit payments for maternity leave start 30 working days before the calculated date of birth of the child, irrespective of when a mother may choose to begin her leave later or she will have temporary interruptions from leave for work. The benefit days cannot be postponed, and benefits are paid at a minimum level based on work days.

The greatest reforms in the 2000s pertain to the introduction of fathers' individual rights for parental leave (fathers' month), part-time care leave schemes and improvements in the public compensations paid to employers who pay full wages to their employees during maternity leave or who pay full wage from the vacation time to their employees who have accumulated vacation during their maternity and parental leave. Additionally, parental leave rights for LGBT parents and other non-traditional families were developed with respect to traditional couples' rights, even though there still are some scarcities. For example, an absent parent, even one who has shared custody of the child, is not entitled to take parental leave.

There were also some principle reforms in entitlement rights with respect to earnings related to higher parental leave benefits instead of basic benefits. These reforms decreased the number of basic beneficiaries by approximately 30 000 mothers during the first years of the 2000s. The improvements affected, e.g. the benefits paid to unemployed parents. Likewise, those mothers whose next child was born before the first child was 3 years of age and who did not work between childbirths became entitled to receive the same level of benefits as they received after the first child had been born.

Family leave 2016	Period length	Benefit/allowance and financer	Payment period/bases/until
Special maternity leave	According health risks at work during pregnancy	Special maternity allowance, Sickness insurance*	According to leave period
Maternity leave	ca. 4 months	Maternity allowance, -"-	105 work days
Paternity leave	ca. 9 weeks	Paternity allowance, -"-	54 working days
Parental leave	ca. 6 months	Parental allowance, -"-	158 working days
Child-care leave	ca. 26 months	Child home care allowance, municipalities	If child is less than 3
Partial care leave	ca. 2 years	Flexible care allowance, -"-	If child is less than 3
	ca. 3 years	No payments	Child 3–5 years of age
	ca. 3 years	Partial care allowance, -"-	Child 6–8 years of age
– child's special needs	ca. 12 years	No allowances	Child 8–18 years of age
Temporary care leave for sick child	4 days	No allowance, sometimes paid leave	Child under 10 years of age
Other types of family leave	according to agreements	Often allowances paid by the municipalities for caring for close relatives	For children, parents or own spouse with serious illnesses

*Sickness insurance, see <http://www.kela.fi/web/en/families> and <http://tem.fi/documents/1410877/2918935/Employment%20Contracts%20Act/b0fca473-f224-46b9-974c-acd153587680>

Miia Saarikallio-Torp and Anita Haataja

Fathers' use of family leave has become more common. Which fathers take family leave and which do not use it at all?

In 2003, Finland has joined the other Nordic countries in encouraging fathers to share in child-care responsibilities. It did so by extending parental leave with a so-called fathers' month. Fathers' month was a combination of parental leave and extra weeks for only fathers. In order to be entitled to two new fathers' week ("bonus weeks") the father had to share at least two weeks of parental leave. In the subsequent ten years, the fathers' month (bonus weeks) was extended by two extra weeks. In the early 2000s, approximately two thousand fathers shared in parental leave, but 10 years later about 20,000 fathers shared in the parental leave responsibilities by taking the fathers' month. The rapid change in the number of fathers taken parental leave, was mainly due to many improvements in the flexibility and length of fathers' rights since 2003.

Paternity leave legislation has been in place since 1978 and the option to sharable parental leave since 1980. Paternity leave became very popular already in the 1990s. Until 2013, the intention of paternity leave was to take it simultaneously when mother is on maternity or parental leave. However, a certain number of fathers did not make use of any of the options.

This article analyses on the one hand fathers who shared in parental leave and used their full quota of fathers' month, while on the other hand it focuses on fathers who did not make use of the family leave option. Our longitudinal data has revealed that there are still fathers who do not take advantage of any of the options. Their share decreased from 30 % to about 20 % of all fathers in the period 2000–2004, but after that the share has remained about the same. Thus, fathers who choose to make use of the new options seem to be the same fathers who also make use of traditional paternity leave.

The survey is based on longitudinal register data on two-parent families who received their first child between the years 2000 and 2008, with follow-up until 2013. The final analyses consisted only of couples where the father was employed before the birth of the first child. As outcomes, we found that those fathers who used the father's month differed from the fathers who did not take advantage of any type of family leave, especially based on their socioeconomic status, but also with respect to their spouse's possessions. Furthermore, more than a third of all fathers who did not use any leave option were employed in small male-dominated enterprises compared to fathers (10–20 %) who made use of the fathers' month or paternity leave.

So far, employers of those persons working in small and female-dominated companies have argued that organising paid leave for mothers is both challenging and expensive for small, female-dominated enterprises in Finland. We suggest that it may be even more challenging with respect to family leave policies, which aim at equal sharing, to develop means that encourage fathers and create incentives for their employers to support fathers' rights to take family leave.

Karoliina Koskenvuo

The effect of family leaves on pension from the 1980s to the 2000s

The expression ‘what goes around comes around’ captures the logic of the earnings-related pension system. Pension accrues for all earnings throughout a person’s working career. Long family leaves and absences from the labour market mean lower incomes at retirement age – more often for women than for men.

The aim of the pension security is to prevent poverty and secure a reasonable consumption level for a person after retirement. The aim of family policy is to ensure possibilities for parents to start a family and raise the children. To what extent does starting a family and raising children result in financial difficulties, including poverty at retirement age? To what extent does it entail risks related to a person’s work career? Answers to questions such as these reflect on the relative success of pension and family policies.

In this article, the effect of different lengths of family leave on pensions from the 1980s to the 2000s is highlighted via various calculations. In addition, the phases of development with respect to pension security for those particular women taking care of children at home, the way in which family leaves are divided up and the practices and reforms related to pension accrual during the family leaves are reviewed.

Example calculations for a high and low wage earner show that losses in a person’s monthly pension increase within longer periods of child care leave. However, pension reforms, especially the major pension reform of 2005, have generally improved pension security for those persons with child care leave. Mothers working with a high salary (4,500 euros per month) in the municipal sector in the 1980s and in the beginning of 1990s; after having two children, one after the other, lost 225 euros in monthly pension. For corresponding periods of child care leave between the years 1996 and 2004, mean 160 euros and after the pension reform in 2005 135 euros losses in monthly pension. For mothers with lower earnings, 2 000 euros per month, the corresponding periods of child care leave mean about 45 to 100 euros losses in monthly pension.

For over forty years already, the aim has been to promote equality between women and men in the use of parental leaves, which would also narrow the gender gap in pensions. The “prescriptions” to further equality put forward also partly date from forty years back: for example, proposals for possibility to transfer earnings-related pension rights between partners and improvement in pension accrual while caring for a child. A newer “prescription arsenal” is represented by suggestions about more equal sharing of family leaves between mothers and fathers and increase in the earmarked leaves for fathers. For as long as the conceptions and opinions about the “malady” and its determinants represent the past and do not reflect the state of the modern world and the future, no success will be met in the advancement of equality between women and men at work, in allocation of family leaves, in wages or in pensions. Another thing that should be kept in mind is that a “medicines” that is not taken cannot be effective.

Maria Valaste

Child home care allowance or day care?

Alternatives to the child home care allowance and its potential impacts on the demand for day care and parents' labour supply

In Finland, the child home care allowance is available after the parental leave period, when the child is 9–10 months of age, if the child is not placed in a publicly organised day care. The entitlement to the child home care allowance extends to all children under school age in a family when the youngest of the children is under 3 years of age. In other Nordic countries where the child home care allowance still exists, the child home care allowance is not available to siblings older than 3 years of age.

We studied alternative child care choices in Finland. The Finnish static microsimulation tax-benefit model SISU has been utilised for such purposes. The simulations are based on LAPE data (from the year 2010), which contain administrative register data. We simulated two alternatives. In the first simulation, all siblings aged 3 years or older in families receiving a child home care allowance were no longer eligible. The second alternative was one in which children two years of age or older and their siblings were no longer eligible for the child home care allowance. In addition, we extended the first simulation to include all sibling (aged 3 years or older) who were no longer eligible for CHCA, the child day-care fees. We simulated economic and distributional outcomes for the child-care alternatives.

Individual administrative data related to time spent in day care are not available. One goal of this article was to develop a method for systematically producing new data and filling in gaps for missing data on child day cares. Other available administrative data sources were also used to fill in such missing data. The first part of the article contains a description of the data and the imputation process. The second part of the article includes simulations, results and a discussion.

Jussi Tervola

Parent at home, child in day care? Examining immigrant families' care choices in Finnish policy context

Child home care is subsidised more generously in Finland than in any other Nordic country. Consequently, fewer children in all age groups attend day care. At the same time, previous international studies show unanimously that day care would contribute to the integration of children from immigrant or disadvantaged backgrounds. The benefits of day care have been measured in the short term in terms of school success and the acquiring of language skills, but also in the long term via such proxies as future employment and educational attainments.

Based on previous evidence from Finland, immigrant families use the home care allowance for a much longer period than do native Finns. Approximately 40 % of two-year-old children with Finnish-born mothers were cared for at home compared to 60 % of immigrant children. The difference likely reflects immigrant mothers' weaker labour market situation: for many, the home care allowance may be an alternative to unemployment.

This study examines how often immigrant families make use of the home care allowance sibling supplement paid for the home care of children older than three years of age. The supplement can be paid solely to families who also have a younger child, less than three years old, in home care. Consequently, the analysis concentrates on the care choice for an elder sibling when the younger sibling is already being cared for at home.

The result of the study contradicts previous results concerning children younger than three years of age. Most families with a native Finnish background use the home care sibling supplement (80 %), but immigrant families less so (36 %). When examining the take-up by mother's country of birth, families from typical refugee countries utilise the supplement the least. Controlling for the socio-economic background of the family did not change the result significantly.

The most convincing explanation for the result is the immigrant families' urge to contribute to the integration of their child. This hypothesis is also supported by international interview studies. Municipal officials may also have an impact on the situation if they encourage immigrant families to use the local day care. However, when asked about it none of the major municipalities reported having any policies in place that direct immigrant families to use the local day cares. In the end, it is always a family's decision to make.

The Finnish home care allowance is a problematic policy with respect to the integration of immigrant families. However, as the study shows, most immigrant families opt to use day care services when the child is older than three years. In August 2016, the austerity measures restricted children's subjective right to day care from full-time status to part-time status in families where one parent is at home, e.g. because they are unemployed or choose to stay at home. The reform as such could decrease immigrants' possibilities for day care use, and therefore it could hinder integration. However, the new law also allows for loopholes if day care is regarded as beneficiary in terms of childhood development. In addition, most of the major municipalities decided not to implement the reform.

Pertti Honkanen

Unemployment and social transfers of parents with small children

The article considers the effect of unemployment and social transfers on families with small children. The principal data consist of a sample of mothers who gave birth to a baby in the year 2004. We searched for LAPE data on these mothers and their spouses – including different social transfers – between the years 1999 and 2010. We also used data from the SISU microsimulation model. The focus of the paper is in the relation between unemployment and the use of child home care benefits. Unemployment was measured with the help of unemployment benefit data. Additionally, the use of various means-tested benefits was studied.

One conclusion is that unemployment has a greater effect on the length of the parents' work career than does the use of child home care benefits. This is also true of mothers. The expected length of unemployment spells is greater than the expected length of child home care spells based on data from 2012. For women, the expected total length of parental leaves and child home care spells is approximately 3.7 years, which corresponds to the expected total length of unemployment spells.

In the year 2005, the year after mothers had given birth to a new baby, approximately 80 % of all mothers took advantage of child home care benefits. The percentage of mothers using these benefits was also large in 2006. On average, the child home care spells lasted for 120–130 days in the two years following the birth. In different years, approximately 20 % of mothers had unemployment spells. Approximately 40 % of single mothers had unemployment spells before the year 2004 and approximately the same numbers in subsequent years. When the eligibility for child home care benefits expired, the number on unemployment spells increased for single mothers. This suggests that after the child home care spells, single mothers receive unemployment benefits more often than those mothers who have a partner.

Based on the data, we calculated that approximately 67 % of mothers experienced unemployment sometime during the years 1999–2010. For single mothers, the share increased to 82 %. On the other hand, 48 % of spouses experienced unemployment sometime during the years 1999–2010. However, periods of unemployment were much more infrequent for the spouses than for mothers.

When the relation between labour market status and the use of benefits before the birth of the child and after the birth of the child are studied, we can observe some quite clear dependencies. If the mother experienced unemployment spells in the years 1999–2003, the risk of experiencing unemployment spells after 2004 was about fourfold compared with mothers who did not experience unemployment during the years 1999–2003.

Another quite clear conclusion can be made about mothers who do not use child home care benefits. If the mothers did not experience unemployment before 2004, it was more probable that they did not use child home care benefits compared with mothers who experienced unemployment before 2004. So the use of child home care benefits is in some way linked to the stability a person's work career: if the career is stable, the use of child home care benefits diminishes and the child is more often put in public day care.

The observations in this article do not directly support the thesis that child home care benefits are a 'trap' impairing the economic status of women. Nevertheless, the calculations show that the abundant use of child home care benefits is linked to a fragile labour market status. The causation between labour market status and the use of child home care benefits can be bidirectional, and hence these observations still leave the exact causal relationships somewhat unclear.

THE ROLES OF MOTHERS AND FATHERS IN CHILD CARE AND IN PAID WORK: A COMPARISON OF ATTITUDES IN EUROPE

Salin Milla, Hakovirta Mia and Ylikännö Minna

Attitudes towards the earner-carer models in six European countries

and

Minna Ylikännö, Mia Hakovirta and Milla Salin

How to share family leaves between the mother and father? The attitudes in Finland and in other European countries

Welfare and welfare changes can be studied using various data and research methods. In the articles included in this book, the various studies have taken advantage of an extensive register-based dataset in order to describe the current reality of Finnish families with children from a legislative standpoint. Besides the valuable information offered in the articles in the first and third part of the book, it is important to understand the underlying factors affecting the everyday life of families. Values, norms and cultural contexts shape individuals' attitudes and they also affect behaviour. Moreover, different priorities regarding family policies are reflected in, e.g. how the child-care responsibilities are divided in families. While the behaviour of citizens can be 'guided' through political decisions, public opinion shapes policy making. Therefore, it can be difficult to make large-scale changes in the prevailing socio-political systems.

The second part of the book consists of two articles that utilise International Social Survey Programme ISSP 2012 survey data. The data includes information on individual attitudes towards family issues from several European as well as non-European countries. In the two articles, European countries are first compared in terms of their attitudes towards earner-carer models, and second, in terms of their attitudes towards the division of parental leave responsibilities between the father and the mother. In both articles, Sweden stands out as a country where attitudes are especially gender equal: the political choices made in the 1960s in terms of pursuing gender equality have gradually shaped individual attitudes, resulting in an atmosphere where gender equality has been strengthened and it has been possible to create a fertile ground for new ideas about fatherhood.

In the first article (Salin et al.), six European countries are compared in terms of their attitudes towards different type of earner-carer models. The countries included in the analysis are Finland, Sweden, Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Spain. The article asks several important questions: 1) How does support for different earner-carer models vary between countries? And, 2) what socio-demographic factors best explain these differences?

The results show significant variation between countries in terms of how the respondents choose to divide paid and unpaid work between the father and the mother. In the United Kingdom and Germany, the traditional earner-carer model, with the mother staying at home with the small children instead of participating in the labour market, is most common. In Finland, Spain and

France, attitudes towards sharing paid work and care responsibilities equally are more common than in the United Kingdom. However, only in Sweden did the majority of respondents report that they choose to divide paid and unpaid work equally between spouses. In addition to the differences between particular countries, socio-demographic factors also account for the variation in attitudes towards the earner-carer models. Respondents with higher education, who were employed or studying, who were not active religiously, not married, and did not have older children, tended to support more often an earner-carer model based on equality.

In the second article (Ylikännö et al.), 21 European countries are compared concerning their attitudes regarding how parental leave is divided between the father and the mother. Respondents who participated in the ISSP 2012 survey were asked whether parents should be offered paid parental leave. If they answered yes, they were further asked who should stay at home with the small child: the father or the mother, or whether the leave should be divided equally between both parents. The results show that of the countries being compared, Sweden and Russia represent the opposite ends of the scale: in Sweden, the vast majority of respondents were of the opinion that the parental leave should be equally divided between the father and the mother. In Russia, however, a clear majority of the respondents reportedly think that the mother alone should make use of the parental leave. In the Nordic countries, including Finland, attitudes are more egalitarian with respect to gender, while in the Eastern European countries mothers are clearly seen as the main caregivers in the family. Central European countries and Spain fall between these countries in terms of attitudes about the extent to which parental leave should be divided equally between the father and the mother.

The possibility for making political changes that promote a more equal division of caregiving in the families was studied by comparing the attitudes of men and women towards how parental leave responsibilities should be divided between the father and the mother. According to previous studies, the possibility for a large-scale change is the greater when the initial difference in attitudes between men and women is quite large. In Finland, this difference was the fourth largest with respect to the 21 countries being compared in the study. This means that the possibility for political reforms should be relatively good in Finland. However, the attempts to change the prevailing parental leave and care leave systems in previous years have not succeeded, and no reforms designed to create more family policies that promote gender equality have been implemented.

FAMILIES FACING CHALLENGES

Iipo Airio

What effect does the marital status of first-time mothers has on the risk of separation?

The article investigates the factors that affect the separation risk for first-time mothers. The subject of the research is the group of women who conceived their first child in 2000. The interest lies on the changes taking place in the mothers' marital status during the years following the birth of the child. The interest is focused particularly on how marriage or cohabitation at the time of the birth of the first child influences the risk of separation. According to various studies, more separations occur among common-law relationships than among married couples – but how does the birth of a child conceived together possibly change the situation?

Based on the results, mothers in a common-law relationship at the time of the birth of the first child have a greater risk to separate than married mothers. The result is in line with earlier research findings. More separations take place among couples cohabiting relationships than among married couples. The results indicate that during the observation period one mother in five who are married at the time of the birth of the first child separates. Among the mothers who were in a common-law relationship when having their first child, every third mother experienced a separation during the observation period (2000-2009).

On the whole, common-law relationships are more unstable than marriages, but one should keep in mind that a common-law relationship often is a stage on the way to marriage. More than half (52 %) of the mothers who had their first child in 2000 in a common-law relationship were married at the end of the observation period. A separation ending the partnership can prove to be a fairly amicable solution that is favoured by both partners. Regardless, it is a great life change and changes the lives of all involved.

Mia Hakovirta, Milla Salin and Anita Haataja

Can a single parent bring up children as well as a couple? Attitudes towards single parenthood among Finnish citizens in 2002 and 2012

The article looks at the attitudes of Finnish citizens towards single parenthood and the ability of single parents to successfully bring up children. How do attitudes towards single parents vary in different population groups, and have there been any changes in attitudes between the years 2002 and 2012? Attitudes towards single parents were evaluated according to the following question: 'Children are growing up in different types of families. What do you think of the following statement: Can a single parent bring up children as well as a couple?' The research material was based on ISSP's Finnish data for the years 2002 and 2012. In 2002, the number of respondents was 1,353, whereas in 2012 it was 1,171. For the purposes of this study, the data were combined and the final data set has a total of 2,524 respondents.

The results show that attitudes have changed and were more positive in 2012 than in 2002. Single parenthood has clearly become a more acceptable type of family unit during the period between 2002 and 2012. In 2002, about one-third of the respondents reported that a single parent can bring up a child as well as can two parents, whereas in 2012 almost half of the respondents agreed with the statement. However, in 2012 more than one-third of Finnish citizens doubted the ability of single parents to successfully bring up their children alone.

Gender and marital status were associated with attitudes towards single parenthood. Women were clearly more tolerant than men. This can be explained partly by the fact that single parenthood is clearly a gendered phenomenon, and the majority of single parents are women. Also, marital status is clearly linked to attitudes. The most negative attitudes to single parenthood stemmed from those living with a partner. Such respondents still ascribe to the nuclear family ideology, in which the family is based on the presence of both parents. Some respondents still seemingly view single parenthood as a threat. Divorced single parents and widows had the most positive attitudes towards single parenthood. Their own experiences and own family history most likely shaped their attitudes. Self-perceived single parenthood may increase our understanding of the various forms of family, and therefore, attitudes regarding single parents are becoming more tolerant. Older age groups had more negative attitudes about single parenthood than younger age groups.

Elina Ahola

Role of child maintenance allowance in the livelihood of single-parent families

Two issues were examined in the survey: the proportion of single-parent families receiving child maintenance allowance and how much of the income of the recipient families is in the form of child maintenance allowance.

Kela (the Social Insurance Institution of Finland) pays child maintenance allowance if the parent living outside the household is unable to pay child support because of inadequate maintenance capacity (lack of means) or fails to provide the support. Kela also pays child maintenance allowance to the sole parent in cases where the paternity of the child has not been established or the mother has adopted the child alone. The survey was based on Kela's register-based LAPE data covering families with children. The mothers included in the survey had given birth to their first child between 1999 and 2009 and were single parents in 2010.

The results show that a large proportion of single-parent families are recipients of child maintenance allowance. In 2010, about one half of all single mothers received child maintenance allowance. For about 59 per cent of all recipients of child maintenance allowance the failure of the other parent to pay child support was at least one reason for receiving this type of benefit. Child maintenance allowance accounted for an average of ten per cent of the available income in families that received this type of benefit because the parent living outside the household had failed to pay child support. In other families receiving child maintenance allowance, it accounted for an average of eight per cent of the income. A younger age of the mother, her lower socioeconomic status and a long history as a single parent as well as a large number of children and lower income increased the risk of becoming a recipient of child maintenance allowance. A situation where a long time had passed since the birth of the first child increased the risk of becoming a recipient of child maintenance allowance because of the failure of the other parent to pay child support but reduced the risk of becoming a recipient for other reasons. Furthermore, receiving child maintenance allowance because of the failure of the other parent to pay child support was more common in cities than in other population centres and rural areas.

Heikki Hiilamo and Elina Ahola

Does the birth of a disabled child increase the risk of divorce? A register study from Finland

Caring for a disabled child is more demanding than caring for a child without disabilities. This may put strain on a marriage and increase the risk of divorce. Earlier studies have shown that a disabled child may also bring couples together and strengthen a partnership. We assessed whether the birth of a disabled child increases the risk of divorce in a six-year follow-up study. We identified disabled children via the disability allowance that is paid by the Social Insurance Institution when a child has an illness or injury that creates a need for care and rehabilitation lasting at least six months and imposes particular strain on a family, requiring a greater level of commitment than the care of non-disabled children of the same age. We utilised LAPE Data from the Social Insurance Institution (Kela) on children with families between the years 2000 and 2004.

We had two control groups: the first group consisted of those families who did not receive any disability allowance during the first six years of the child's life, whereas the second group consisted of those families who did not receive any disability allowance during the first year of the child's life or who had received the allowance for less than two-thirds of the child's life before the age of six. We followed 142,736 children born between the years 2000 and 2004 until they turned 6 years of age. We analysed the risk of divorce from marriage and cohabitation relationships using Kaplan-Meier estimates and Cox regression models. As control variables, we used the partners' age, education, the type of municipality, the number of children and income.

Our results show that severe disability increases the risk of divorce. During our six-year follow-up study, 19.8% of families with children disabled at birth ended up divorced, while the share of divorces was 16.7 % for those with non-disabled children. After factoring in the controls (age, education, income level, number of children and type of municipality), the hazard ratio for divorce was 1.28 (95 % confidence interval: 1.07–1.52) for couples with children disabled at birth compared to couples with non-disabled children. Couples whose children received a disability allowance later than during the first year of life or for less than two-thirds of the child's life before the age of six had no statistically significant increase in divorce risk. Our research setting cannot demonstrate if the birth of a disabled child is the cause of more divorces. Instead, we conclude that factors relating to the parents, relatives and society may put pressure on parents and thereby increase the risk of divorce. Health care workers, including nurses, midwives, doctors and family therapists, should pay attention to supporting the parents of a disabled child, with particular emphasis on supporting them in their relationship.

Laura Kallioma-Puha and Päivi Tillman

A mother is always a mother. The challenges in everyday life for caregivers of children.

‘What wouldn’t one do for one’s own child?’

In this article, the focus is on parent-caregivers who provide care to a child under the age of 18. We use two different study data: a Kela survey on caregivers receiving informal care support in Finland and case law on informal care support in administrative courts as well as cases from the Parliamentary Ombudsman of Finland.

Municipalities may grant a monthly benefit, an informal care support, at minimum approximately EUR 400 before taxes, to a relative or friend providing care to a disabled, sick or fragile person. After having been found suitable, these informal carers make an agreement with the municipality, in which the duties of the carer, the pay and the services provided by the municipality to support the care activities, including days off for the caregiver, are determined.

Most of these ‘official’ informal carers provide care to elderly people. But as much as 14.2 % of these care recipients were under 18 years of age in 2014. Most often, these young recipients are intellectually or physically disabled, most often suffering from cerebral palsy. In all cases, the children have special needs. The vast majority of caregivers of children were female (91 %), while one quarter of those providing care to elderly people were men.

The caregiving situation is quite different when the person in need of care is a child: the family size is usually larger and parents are also often parenting other siblings. Another difference is that the caregiver is at a working age, not retired, and working either part-time or full time (62 %). However, some have had to give up working entirely to cope with caregiving situations. This has an effect not only on the person’s present economic situation, but also on his/her livelihood in later life. Even though informal care support accrues one’s pension, the sums are quite small since the pay is quite small. The less you get paid, the smaller your pension. As a whole, the situation is quite different compared to other caregiving situations, such as the most typical case of an old married couple.

Parents receiving informal care support report that they most often use the benefit to cover the health care costs of the child receiving care, even though the informal care support is meant to support the general livelihood of the caregiver and even though there is a separate benefit paid directly to cover the costs for a child in need. Most of the recipients under the age of 18 years also receive this disability allowance from Kela, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland. However, the survey shows that not all children who seemingly fulfil the criteria actually receive it. The sums may also be too small to cover the costs or else the parents are willing to top up the services provided.

Both our survey and the case law suggest that the municipal services provided for informal care are often focused on older people, not children. In practice, that means, for example, that the caregivers of children feel unable to use their right to days off if the substituting care is organised in an old people’s home or that the families with children do not meet the criteria for such services. Families are not treated equally either, since there are also

regional differences; each of the 300 municipalities in Finland decides on its own how to manage these services.

The authors conclude by suggesting that different services should be provided for young and old care recipients. They in particular emphasise that the livelihood of young caregivers should be guaranteed in relation to the expenses of older caregivers already drawing pension and - in the name of clarity - that the costs of treating illnesses should be compensated through disability benefits and not through the carer's pay.

Authors

Elina Ahola, MSc
Researcher, Kela, Research Department
firstname.lastname@kela.fi

Ilpo Airio, Dr.Pol.Sc.
Senior Researcher, Kela, Research Department
firstname.lastname@kela.fi

Anita Haataja, PhD, Adjunct Professor
Senior Researcher, Kela, Research Department
firstname.lastname@kela.fi

Mia Hakovirta, Dr.Pol.Sc., Adjunct Professor
Academy Research Fellow, University of Turku, Faculty of Social Sciences
miahak@utu.fi

Heikki Hiilamo, Dr.Pol.Sc, PhD, Adjunct Professor
Professor, University of Helsinki, Social and Public Policy
firstname.lastname@helsinki.fi

Pertti Honkanen, Dr.Pol.Sc
Senior Researcher, Kela, Research Department
firstname.lastname@kela.fi

Vesa-Pekka Juutilainen, MSc
Researcher, Kela, Research Department
firstname.lastname@kela.fi

Laura Kalliomaa-Puha, LL.D.
Assistant Professor, University of Tampere, The School of Social Sciences and Humanities
firstname.lastname@uta.fi

Karoliina Koskenvuo, PhD, Adjunct Professor
Head of Research Team, Kela, Research Department
firstname.lastname@kela.fi

Miia Saarikallio-Torp, MSc (Econ.)
Researcher, Kela, Research Department
firstname.lastname@kela.fi

Milla Salin, Dr.Pol.Sc
University lecturer, University of Turku, Faculty of Social Sciences
milsal@utu.fi

Jussi Tervola, MSc (Soc.Sc.)
Researcher, Kela, Research Department
firstname.lastname@kela.f

Päivi Tillman, Lic.Sc. (Soc.Sc.)
Researcher, Kela, Research Department
firstname.lastname@kela.fi

Maria Valaste, PhD (Soc.Sc.)
Researcher, Kela, Research Department
firstname.lastname@kela.fi

Minna Ylikännö, PhD (Soc.Sc.)
Senior Researcher, Kela, Research Department
firstname.lastname@kela.fi