

# The Modern Father – Changing Preconditions for Fatherhood

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An increasing gender equality, both in terms of earnings and parental responsibility, has radically changed what it means to be a father. Has this change had an impact on which men become fathers and which fathers play an active role in caring for their children and taking parental leave? The authors of this report find that the social skills of men have become more important in relation to becoming a father. This is in line with the new fatherhood ideal where fathers are expected to be highly engaged in parenting and childcare.

Despite multiple reforms aimed at encouraging fathers to take parental leave, a non-negligible share of fathers still choose not to take any leave before the child turns two. We find that while some of the fathers not taking any leave exhibit poor health or have criminal convictions, they are not particularly different in these aspects compared to the total population of fathers. Instead, we observe a clear trend indicating that the fathers not taking any leave increasingly face economic constraints in terms of having a low income and earning less than the mother. We show that fathers not taking any leave and mothers living with such fathers have become more likely to conform to traditional gender norms. The results suggest that reforms reserving additional months for each parent will have a limited impact on fathers who do not take any parental leave. Instead, policies may need to target fathers’ lack of economic resources or gender norms of both parents.

In summary, the results of this report point to the need for measures focusing on supporting the development of social skills among men at young ages, supporting fathers with limited financial resources, and breaking traditional gender norms.

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