

Dare to share

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Germans are considered to have some of the most egalitarian attitudes in the world when it comes to sharing responsibilities between mothers and fathers, second only to Sweden, according to a survey of the International Social Survey Programme. But how does this attitude translate into practice?

Not as well as it could, is the overall assessment of *Dare to Share: Germany's Experience Promoting Equal Partnership in Families*. True, in the decade to 2012, the share of people opposing the employment of mothers of pre-school-age children halved (interestingly, with more people against in the former West German than in the East).

But in reality, the main earner model continues to dominate in German families, with fathers working long hours and mothers working part-time. Income inequality is one reason for this: young men often earn more than young women, so when starting a family, the loss of income for the family is deemed smaller when the woman reduces working hours rather than the man. Mothers bear some 62% of unpaid work and take care of the children at home. This locks in traditional gender patterns, whereas a more equal sharing of responsibilities would improve the well-being of families, the report argues. For instance, ensuring women are in paid work reduces a family's risk of poverty, while fathers' involvement in parenting is associated with cognitive, emotional and health benefits for the child. As with many OECD countries, women's educational attainment outpaces men's in Germany, with 32.1% of 25-to-34 year-old women having completed tertiary education, compared to 27.9% of their male peers. This suggests potential gains for the economy if fewer women stayed at home.

Dare to Share: Germany's Experience Promoting Equal Partnership in Families proposes several policy recommendations, such as continuing to increase investment in early childhood education and care support, greater investment in care out of school hours, encouraging fathers to take up parental leave and adjusting the tax-benefit system to encourage couples to share paid work evenly. The parental leave reform of 2015 should be properly evaluated and developed too.

References

OECD (2017), *Dare to Share: Germany's Experience Promoting Equal Partnership in Families*, OECD Publishing, Paris <http://dx.doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264259157-en>