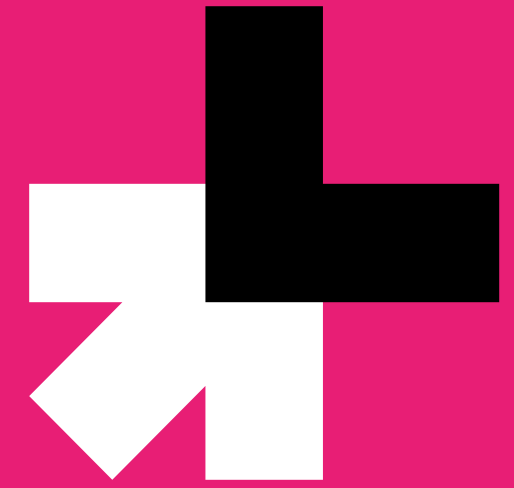


**Proven
Solution**

Economic Justice



HeForShe

Sweden

Promoting gender equal parenting

Global Context

Political will and decisions are key to achieve gender equality. In Sweden, access to affordable child care, a more equal division of parental leave and individual taxation are essential reforms that have had an important impact on women's labour market participation, earnings, well-being and bargaining power in the household.

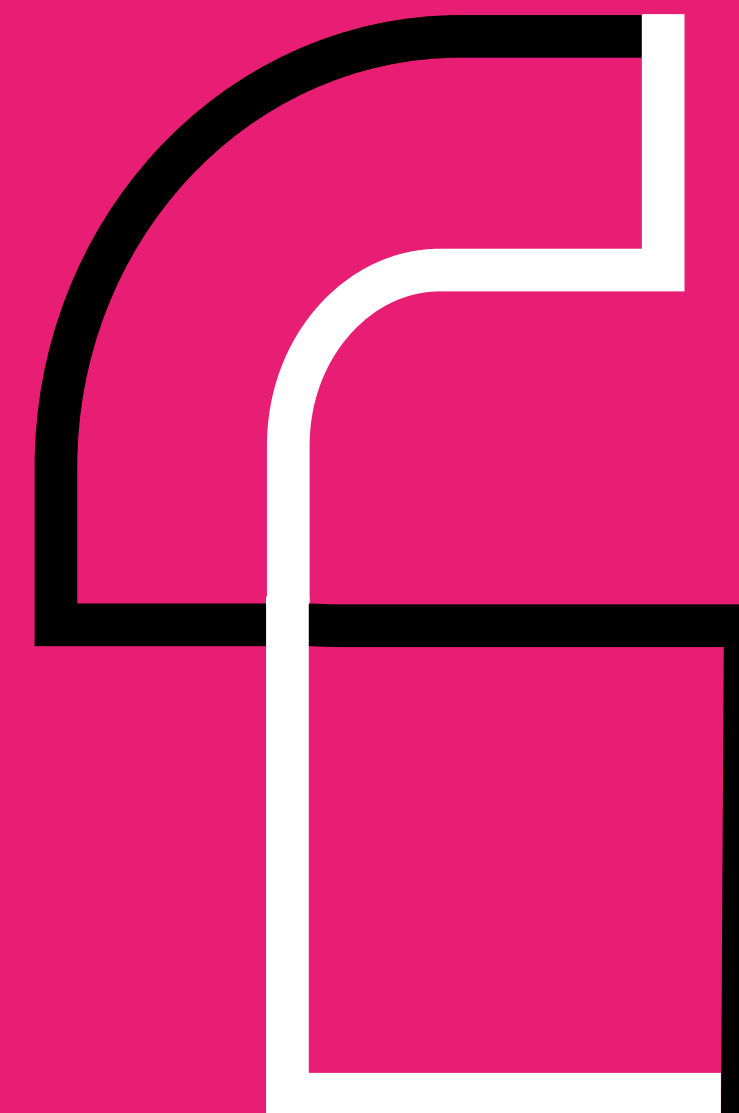
Despite the gender-neutral parental leave scheme in Sweden, women use most of the parental benefit days. By promoting fathers' use of parental leave women's opportunities in the labor market is supported, fathers' sharing of childrearing and unpaid household work increase and parenting becomes more gender equal, benefiting children, family and society.

Women are often underrepresented in the labor market and have to a large extent the main responsibility for caring and household work. To enable parents to better balance

their work and family lives parental leave plays an important role. The difference in women's and men's parental leave uptake can have negative effects when it comes to hiring, promotion and wage setting for women. An uneven distribution of unpaid work can also cause stress and problems of balancing work and family responsibilities. The introduction of non-transferable days has increased fathers' uptake of parental benefit.

"By promoting fathers' use of parental leave women's opportunities in the labor market are supported, fathers' sharing of childrearing and unpaid household work increase and parenting becomes more gender equal, benefiting both parents and their children. Did you know that if women worked to the same extent as men, Sweden's GDP would increase by 10%, or about \$50bn? Therefore, I always say that gender equality is not only a question of moral justice. It's also one of our most powerful tools in creating a stronger and more prosperous society."

Stefan Löfven, Prime Minister Sweden



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Key Stages of Implementation

1

Step 1 Phasing out the full transferability of parental leave

Parental benefit was made gender neutral early on. A couple with joint custody of a child each have an individual right to half of the parental benefit days paid out in connection with childbirth or adoption.

Fathers' and mothers' quotas of days with parental benefit were introduced in steps, limiting the possibility to transfer days from one parent to another, starting with 30 days in 1995, extended to 60 days in 2002. As of 2016, 90 out of a total of 240 days for each parent have been made non-transferable.

Tapering the reduction in transferability gave people time to adjust to the new rules while demonstrating our commitment to achieving the new balance.

Step 2 Communicating the benefits of shared parental leave

The Swedish Social Insurance Agency, responsible for administering parental benefit, has been given the task of actively promoting a more gender equal use of parental leave and parental benefit – highlighting the upsides of sharing parental leave for both parents as well as helping and guiding parents in planning parental leave.

Communicating with parents is essential to let them know that the new system is in their best interests as well as good for the whole community. An engaging communications programme ensures that the change is not seen as a technical detail but as a strong signal for how we wish to evolve as a society.

2

3

Step 3: Measuring the impact

The introduction of non-transferable days has had a clear impact on fathers' uptake of parental benefit. Evaluations have shown that the reservation of the first month in 1995 was followed by a substantial decrease of men taking no leave and a notable increase of men taking a leave of up to two months.

The introduction of the second reserved month in 2002 was accompanied with an increase for men in taking more extended leave.

The third reserved month in 2016 also had a positive impact on men's use of parental benefit. The share of fathers claiming 90 days or more during the first two years after the birth of the child increased from 36% to 40%.

In 2019, 30% of all parental benefit days paid out were paid to men, continuing an ongoing upwards trend of more gender-equal use of parental leave.

Measuring and publishing the impact of the new system demonstrates how behaviour is changing. These metrics can inform further policy changes while also being useful for economic and social analyses.

Resources

- 📄 Evaluations of prior reserved months and of the effects on labor outcomes as well as other effects on leave sharing are important for advocating extensions of non-transferable leave. Some evaluations can be found here: www.forsakringskassan.se and here: www.inspsf.se
- 📄 Guides, tools for planning parental leave and other services that help parents prepare for parental leave is accessed at: https://www.forsakringskassan.se/privatpers/foralder/vantar_barn
- 📄 Communication materials online on the upsides of sharing parental leave can be found here (in Swedish). <https://www.forsakringskassan.se/privatpers/foralder/dela-lika>
- 📄 Older communications material on the benefits of sharing can be found on Facebook (produced by the Swedish Social Insurance Agency) <https://www.facebook.com/foralder/videos/>

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