

Do collective agreements influence parental leave take up in Sweden?

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Ann-Zofie Duvander
Department of Sociology
Stockholm University

Karin Halldén
Institute for Social Research
Stockholm University

Alison Koslowski
School of Social and Political Science
University of Edinburgh

Background

The division of parental leave is known to be a major watershed for continued division of labor between parents and one of the major reasons for a skewed division is the economic compensation during leave. In addition to the Swedish parental leave benefit of 77.6 % of earlier earnings, most of the labor market is covered by collective agreements that stipulate enhanced payments during parental leave. The main division of agreements is between the 1) state, 2) municipality and county and 3) private sector, but particularly within the private sector, a number of different agreements exist. In the 2000s, collective agreements became much more generous in the municipal and private sectors, catching up with the state sector. The difference in agreements for different segments of the labor market is likely to influence parental leave use, but a major problem of effectiveness of agreements is that they are not always known about.

Objective

In this paper, we focus on whether collective agreements matter for parental leave take-up. We will compare how parental leave is used in the beginning of the 2000s and a decade later, when agreements are more generous. Our focus will be on mothers and fathers in different sectors and with different income levels, thus differently affected by the change in the agreements.

Data and methods

The study will use register data on parents to children born in 2000 and 2010 of different sex and with different income level (the year before becoming parents). Administrative data on parental leave days is the dependent variable of interest and how it changes over time. We will descriptively compare the amount of parental leave used by different groups of parents during the two years following birth to investigate whether the increased generosity in agreements will change the number of days used.

Results

We expect differences between parents across the three sectors with a similar level of income to decrease as the agreements in private and municipal sector are catching up with state sector.

Conclusion

The study will deepen understanding of how and whether the level of economic compensation during leave matters for take-up, even in an already generous statutory system. .