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Does time count? Immigrant fathers' use of parental leave in Sweden

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Abstract:

The aim of this study is to investigate immigrant fathers' use of parental leave in Sweden. We find that immigrant fathers do take parental leave, but not to the same extent as Swedish-born fathers do.

Our most important finding is that immigrant fathers increase their leave use with time spent in Sweden, indicating an adaptation to the leave use pattern of Swedish-born fathers. However, immigrant fathers do not increase their use to the same extent as native fathers over the period 1995 to 2010. We also find that labour market status is a strong determinant of parental leave use, which is likely to be caused by the economic incentive to work before using the leave as it substantially increases the benefit level.

1. Introduction

The aim of this study is to investigate immigrant fathers' use of parental leave in Sweden. Sweden has a relatively large immigrant population, an universalistic welfare state with residence-based benefits, and a comparatively gender-equal use of parental leave. Of all fathers, around 80% use the leave before the child turns two years old (Swedish Social Insurance Agency 2011). Even though family policies strongly emphasize gender equality, there are major differences in leave use between groups of fathers, notably between fathers with different origins (Duvander and Eklund 2006, Duvander and Johansson 2012). As the immigrant population is presently increasing sharply, it is of major importance to learn more about what is associated with immigrant fathers' leave use.

Swedish parental leave includes 480 benefit days per child, of which 390 days are paid at about 80% of previous earnings and 90 days are paid at a flat rate. Parents' leave is job-protected, and can be used until the child is eight (12 for children born in 2014 and after). The benefit is individual: half of the days are the mother's and half are the father's. If either of the parents wants to use more, the other has to actively consent to this. However, a few months are reserved for each parent and cannot be transferred, commonly referred to as Daddy's quota. The introduction of one reserved month in 1995 was successful in increasing fathers' leave use (Duvander and Johansson 2012); it has increased since then, not least with the introduction of the second reserved month in 2002. However, even today, mothers take about three quarters of all leave days (Duvander and Johansson 2012). From 2016 there are three reserved months, and the topic of gender-equal leave is high on the political agenda.

A study by Mussino and Duvander (2016) has shown that immigrant mothers use more parental leave the first year after their child's birth, but fewer days the second year of the child's life,

compared to Swedish-born mothers. With time in Sweden and with an improved labour market position, immigrant mothers increasingly use the leave like Swedish-born mothers.

However, knowledge about immigrant fathers' involvement in childcare is limited. A few studies indicate that immigrant fathers are overrepresented among non-users of parental leave, and that there is heterogeneity by country of origin (Duvander and Eklund 2006). However (at least in the 1990s), the immigrant fathers using leave seem to use more days than the Swedish-born fathers (Swedish Social Insurance Agency 2011). Thus, in modelling the parental leave use, we believe it is important to keep the more heterogeneous use among immigrant fathers in mind. It is also likely that patterns of use change over time as the composition of the immigrant group changes. The development of leave use among fathers has been fast, and we know that immigrant and native-born fathers have reacted to different degrees to the introduction of the reserved months (Duvander and Johansson 2014). In this study, we are interested in investigating not only the difference between immigrants' and natives' use of parental leave, but also the differences within the group of immigrants, with particular focus on the duration of stay in Sweden.

Like in many other developed countries, the employment rates of immigrants in Sweden have been lower than those of their native-born counterparts. In 2013, only 56% of immigrants of working age (16-64 years old) were employed, compared to 77% of Swedish-born (and the differences between men and women were only 1% percentage points for Swedish-born and 5% for foreign-born. These are important predictors of parental leave use, as the benefit is primarily earnings-related. In addition, temporary employment may not be job-protected during leave, and can thus entail an obstacle to leave use.

An understanding of immigrants' parental leave use patterns will offer insight into how the welfare system works for subgroups of parents in Sweden and how important labour-market

integration is for using family benefits. Moreover, the focus on fathers will contribute to an improved understanding of the gendered nature of immigrant reception in Sweden.

Men's parental leave use

Over time, men's share of parental leave use has gradually increased, from around 1% in the 1970s to over 25% today (Swedish Social Insurance Agency 2014). Previous research has addressed men's use of parental leave in Sweden from both the individual and the institutional-level perspectives. A higher income increases leave use for both the mother and the father, but the relationship for fathers is curvilinear, indicating that the fathers with the highest income use slightly less leave (Duvander and Johansson 2012, Sundström and Duvander 2002). In addition, more educated fathers use more leave. Fathers also use more leave if the mother has a higher education (Hobson, Duvander and Halldén 2006).

The introduction of the first reserved month had a strong effect on fathers' uptake of parental leave, whereas the effect of the second month was somewhat more modest (Duvander and Johansson 2012). While the first month in 1995 equalized leave use among fathers, creating a norm of one month's for fathers, the second month in 2002 increased leave use among some fathers, but the group of immigrant fathers was not affected as much. One likely reason for this is the lack of stable labour-market attachment and thereby income in this group, which leads to a low benefit while on leave (Duvander and Johansson 2014). Other research has also claimed that some men may have more restrictions in taking leave than others, not least depending on their workplace (Haas, Allard and Hwang 2002, Bygren and Duvander 2006).

With this paper, we want to contribute to the existing literature by answering the following research questions:

- Do immigrant fathers use parental leave?
- Do immigrant fathers increase their leave use with time in Sweden?
- Does immigrant (and Swedish-born) fathers' leave use change over the period 1995 to 2010?
- What factors are associated with immigrant fathers' leave use?

We expect to find differences in leave use between immigrant and Swedish-born fathers, not only because immigrants have limited economic resources, but also because knowledge and dissemination of the leave system may be lacking. We also expect to discern some variation in leave use between immigrant fathers by different durations of stay in Sweden. Further, we expect individual characteristics of the mother to have an impact on the fathers' leave use.

Data & method

To address our research questions, we use data from the population registers covering the entire population living in Sweden (STAR - Sweden over Time: Activities and Relations). Individuals enter the register at birth within the country, or upon immigration. Swedish population registers collect all demographic events by date. Children are linked to parents using a personal identification number, if the parents are or have been Swedish residents. We also have access to yearly information on educational level, income, labour-market attachment, and social-insurance benefits, including parental leave benefit days.

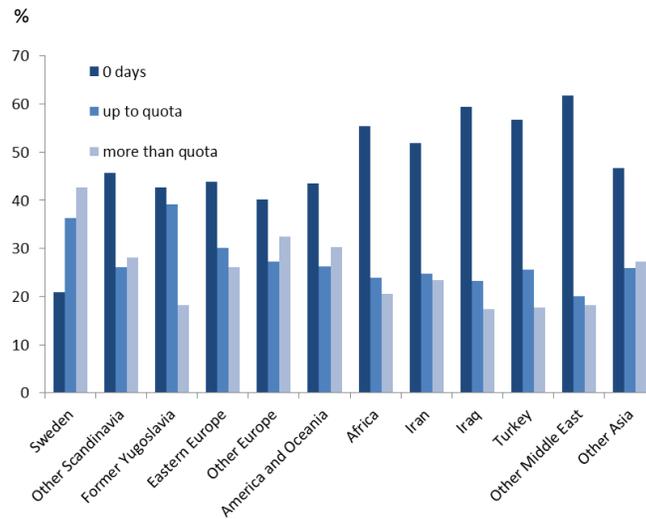
Data on parental leave days are collected annually and are related to the parent, rather than the child for whom the leave is used. In order not to confuse parental leave for different siblings, we focus on first-born children. To measure parents' leave for the same amount of time we focus on

children born in December, and as mothers often use most of the leave during the first year after a child's birth we follow children for two years. We drop fathers who had a second child in this two-year interval. The period investigated is 1995 to 2010. We use multinomial logistic regression to investigate the length of parental leave use among immigrant fathers, while different characteristics are taken into account. The outcome is categorized into: 0 days, uptake to the quota (30 days until 2001 and thereafter 60 days), and uptake of more than the quota. We present the relative risks of taking 0 days and taking more than the quota, with a reference group of taking up to the quota. We also present some descriptive findings to answer our research questions.

Are immigrant fathers using the leave?

Our descriptive results confirm great differences in fathers' parental leave use by place of birth. Figure 1 indicates that it is common among native-born fathers to use more than the quota, whereas taking no leave at all is more prevalent among immigrant fathers of all origins. However, there is strong heterogeneity between fathers of different origins. About 60% of fathers from Iraq and other Middle Eastern countries do not use any parental leave. They are closely followed by fathers from Turkey, Africa, and Iran, with more than 50% not taking any parental leave. Men from the former Yugoslavia use up to the quota in about 40% of the cases, which is the highest percentage among this use category. These groups have been in Sweden for different lengths of time, and they also have very different situations on the labour market.

Figure 1 Distribution of fathers, by country of birth and length of parental leave use, Sweden, 1995-2010

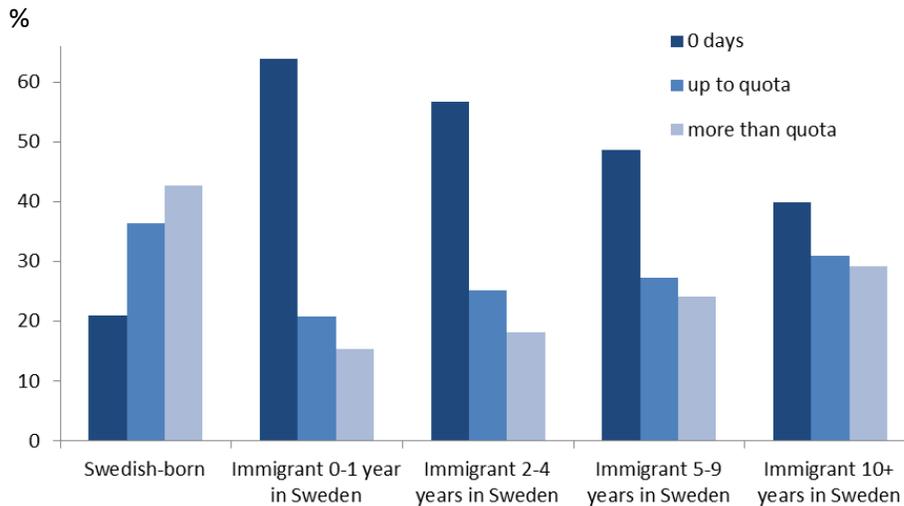


Source: authors' own calculations based on STAR

Do immigrant fathers increase leave use with time in Sweden?

Looking at fathers' uptake of parental leave by duration of stay in Sweden, we find some sign of adaptation to that of the native-born fathers. Figure 2 displays that the newly arrived immigrants do not take parental leave, and that time spent in the country increases leave use. However, even among the immigrant fathers who have been in Sweden for ten or more years, the percentage using no days is double that of the native-born fathers.

Figure 2 Distribution of fathers, by time since immigration and length of parental leave use, Sweden, 1995-2010



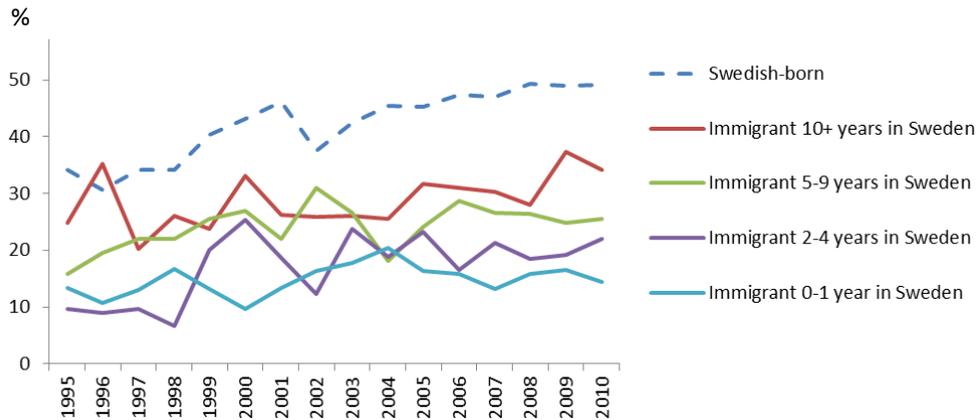
Source: authors' own calculations based on STAR

Does immigrant (and Swedish-born) fathers' leave use change over the period 1995 to 2010?

Swedish-born fathers, in line with the literature (Duvander and Johansson 2012), gradually increase their leave use over the observed period (see Figure 3). In 2002 the definition of the quota changed from 1 to 2 months, which explains the small negative peak.

In comparison, immigrant fathers did not increase their leave use to the same extent. It seems that leave use among immigrant fathers is only slightly increasing, but is fluctuating due to the small numbers. The percentage of taking leave of more than the quota is the highest among those who have been in Sweden for a longer period of time. Nonetheless, the gap between native and immigrant fathers becomes larger at the end of the period.

Figure 3 Fathers who took more parental leave use than the quota, Sweden, 1995-2010

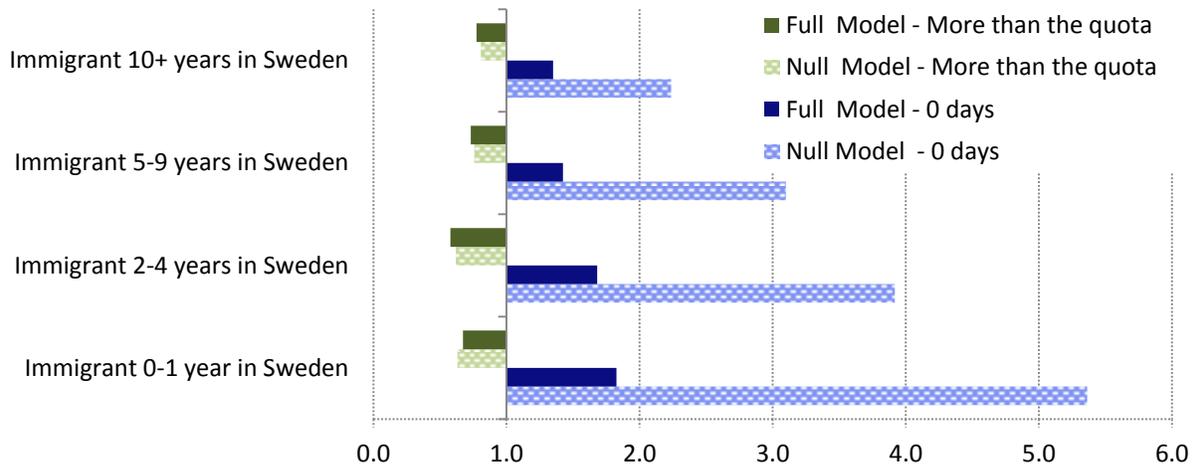


Source: authors' own calculations based on STAR

What factors are associated with immigrant fathers' leave use?

To provide an insightful picture of immigrant men's leave use, we estimated multinomial regression models to predict the fathers' risk of using 0 days or more than the quota versus a reference group of fathers taking up to the quota. Figure 4 shows the predicted risks from both the null model and the full model, where we control for socio-demographic and economic characteristics of both the parents. In the null model, we control only for duration of stay in Sweden. It is clear that differences in leave use between immigrant and native fathers diminish as immigrant fathers' time spent in the country increases. Nonetheless, the immigrants who have spent more than ten years in the country still have a higher relative risk ratio (RRR) of using 0 days, compared to the native-born fathers. The risk of using more than the quota is also somewhat lower for the immigrant fathers, but is not affected by the control variables to the same extent.

Figure 4 Relative Risk Ratios (RRR) of parental leave use, Sweden, 1995-2010. Using 0 days or more than the quota compared to the quota (reference), during the first two years. Reference category Swedish-born fathers.



Source: authors' own calculations based on STAR

When we control for individual characteristics of the father and the mother (see Table 1) the differences by duration persist, even if they diminish. Also when individual characteristics are controlled for, the newly arrived immigrants who became fathers in Sweden are still more likely to take 0 days than those who had been in Sweden longer.

Even if our main interest is to analyse whether the use of parental leave days differs between native-born and foreign-born fathers, we would also like to highlight the importance of the man's labour-market attachment, and in general how women's characteristics impact the decision to take parental leave. Weak labour-market attachment (e.g. low income) significantly increases fathers' probability of taking no parental leave, and decreases their likelihood of taking a leave of more than the quota. Further, fathers with the strongest earning power tend to take no leave. In addition, our results demonstrate that the mother plays an important role in the father's uptake of parental leave. First, for all fathers in Sweden, having a Swedish partner significantly decreases their likelihood of taking no parental leave, whereas it does not make much difference in their use of more than the quota. Second, in cases when the mother has low income, the father is more likely to take no leave,

probably as his income is more important. Further, fathers with a partner with strong earning power are more likely to take a leave of more than the quota, probably because these mothers have stronger incentives to return to work.

Additionally, we ran a model with only immigrant fathers to investigate in detail the impact of country of birth and whether the role of the independent variables had the same direction in an immigrant subsample. Compared to immigrants from neighbouring countries (other Scandinavia), fathers from the former Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe have a lower risk of taking 0 days, but no other differences appear to be significant. Additionally, men from the former Yugoslavia also have a lower risk of taking more than the quota. However, for immigrant fathers, having a Swedish partner not only decreases their likelihood of taking no leave, but also significantly increases their likelihood of using more than the quota. The estimates for calendar years show different patterns for the native-born and the immigrant fathers, whereby the likelihood of long leaves increases more for the native-born fathers. Additionally, living in a metropolitan area does not have the same positive association for immigrant fathers as for native fathers.

Table 1 Relative Risk Ratios (RRR) of parental leave use. Using 0 days or more than the quota compared to the quota (reference), during the first two years. Reference category Swedish-born fathers. All models are controlled for father's background (see Figure 4).

	0 days		More than the quota		Frequencies
	All	immigrants	All	Immigrants	All
Place of birth (Scandinavia)					783
Former Yugoslavia		0.52 ***		0.52 ***	1,018
Eastern Europe		0.72 *		0.90	566
Other Europe		0.81		1.06	680
America and Oceania		0.92		1.13	634
Africa		0.94		0.88	622
Iran		0.91		0.88	415
Iraq		0.81		0.79	770
Turkey		0.95		0.83	340
Middle East		1.10		1.01	413
Other Asia		0.84		1.06	721
Background partner (ref Immigrant)					33,401
Swedish	0.69 ***	0.74 ***	0.99	1.13	7,312
Woman's age (ref 26-30)					15,112
15-25	1.09 *	0.96	0.81 ***	0.91	11,958
31-35	1.12 **	1.11	1.05	1.03	9,757
36+	1.17 **	1.19	0.98	0.91	3,886
Man's age (ref 26-30)					14,089
15-25	1.10 *	0.99	0.87 ***	0.93	7,176
31-35	1.17 ***	1.04	1.10 **	1.15	12,289
36+	1.33 ***	1.13	0.97	1.09	7,159
Woman's income (ref Middle)					7,682
Unemployed or out of LM	1.53 ***	1.75 ***	1.52 ***	1.91 ***	13,389
Low	1.26 ***	1.40 **	1.07	1.13	3,373
High	1.02	1.00	1.53 ***	1.61 ***	8,138
Very high	1.21 ***	1.17	2.34 ***	2.25 ***	8,131
Man's income (ref Middle)					8,142
Unemployed or out of LM	4.23 ***	3.80 ***	0.80 ***	0.71 **	8,621
Low	1.84 ***	1.62 ***	0.88 ***	0.83 *	7,675
High	0.94	0.96	0.95	1.04	8,145
Very high	1.40 ***	1.37 *	0.95	1.14	8,130
Residence (ref Big/middle-sized cities or large municipalities)					18,745
Metropolitan areas	1.39 ***	1.15 *	1.44 ***	0.95	9,609
Suburb to metropolitan areas	1.11 *	1.03	1.12 **	1.03	6,118
Industrial municipalities	0.74 ***	0.70 *	0.68 ***	0.67 *	2,809
Rural/small/sparsely populated municipalities	1.05	1.03	0.77 ***	0.65 *	3,432

Source: authors' own calculations based on STAR

Conclusion

This paper explores fathers' parental leave use, particularly that of immigrant fathers in Sweden during the period 1995-2010. Multinomial logistic regression models were estimated for both the total population of fathers and immigrant fathers. We find that immigrant fathers do take parental leave, but not to the same extent as Swedish-born fathers do. Most notably, immigrant fathers are more likely not to use any leave, even when time in the country and labour-market status are considered. It seems that the differences between immigrant and native fathers are also increasing over calendar time. In addition, we argue that a father's use of parental leave is not just an issue for the father himself but is also a family affair, as we find that the pattern of fathers' leave days is also related to the characteristics of the mothers. Our most important finding is that immigrant fathers increase their leave use with time spent in Sweden, indicating an adaptation to the leave use pattern of Swedish-born fathers. We conclude that immigrant fathers' leave use is connected to time in Sweden and to his and the mothers' characteristics. In particular the labour market status of both parents are important, which indicated the economic incentive in the leave policy for work before using leave, seems to be efficient.

Acknowledgments

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