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# Family policy support for the earner-carer and traditional family models

An application of SPIN data to Lithuania and Sweden,  
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**Abstract:** Family policies influence how men and women structure their time in the labour market and in the home. Analyses based on expenditure data, regime types and single policies, however, cannot represent how policies support individuals' labour market attachment and care for children. SPIN data offer a tool for measuring the extent to which family policies support the earner-carer and traditional family models. This large-scale database offers harmonized data on social policies over time for a wide range of countries. It has allowed scholars to empirically push the frontiers of research on the intersection of gender equality, family and employment dynamics, and social policy. We use the cases of Lithuania and Sweden to describe how measures of earner-carer and traditional-family support were constructed and compare the policy developments over time. We highlight areas of convergence and divergence in family policy in these two countries with very different histories.

**Keywords:** Family policies, Lithuania, Sweden, Social Policy Indicator Database (SPIN), earner-carer support, traditional-family support

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## Introduction

Social policies are a key tool governments have to address societal developments and respond to social needs. How policies shape behaviour and social structures is a fundamental question in understanding intended and unintended effects of policies. Low fertility is one issue that has worried policy-makers, as it has become a widespread feature of post-industrial Eastern and Western countries since the last quarter of the 20th century. Low fertility contributes to a shrinking labour force and many fear that this might make it difficult to sustain an ageing population. Family policies have been suggested as a remedy to low fertility because they offer support to families. This support may affect the division of paid and unpaid work in the family to different degrees. Family policies can support a stay-at-home mother/male-breadwinner family, that is a gender-traditional family, and/or a family in which both parents are in paid work and share the upbringing of their children, that is an earner-carer family.

Discussions among researchers and policy-makers, however, have not only been about a remedy to low fertility, but also about gender equality. McDonald (2000) and Goldscheider, Bernhardt and Lappegård (2015) argue that supporting both partners' earning and caring and enhancing gender equality may be a precondition to increase fertility. They maintain that as long as women have to do most of the unpaid work at home at the same time as being in paid work, a common feature of post-industrial societies, they will rather forego childbearing than shoulder the dual burden of work and care or give up employment altogether for having children (England 2010; McDonald 2000; Goldscheider et al. 2015). Therefore, family policies facilitating the combination of paid and unpaid work for both mothers and fathers would make it easier for couples to have the number of children they want.

Research has shown that family policies may have an impact on fertility, but the results are not consistent (Gauthier, 2007; Neyer, 2005). We argue that the conceptualizations and measurements of family policy have contributed to this inconclusiveness. Some research has, for example, used gender regimes to denote a country's support to different family models (Pfau-Effinger, 1998). Classifications based on regime types make it difficult to capture how family policies vary over time. There is also the danger that regime-type

approaches mix causes and outcomes in their typologies (see argument in Korpi & Palme, 1998). Another example is the conceptualization of family policies on a continuum from support of a gender-traditional family model to support of an earner-carer family model (Mandel & Semyonov, 2006). The drawback here is that countries' family policies can support both family types simultaneously to different degrees. Lastly, the use of expenditures on family policies in total, on single policies or on combinations of policies as measures (for example Luci-Greulich & Thévenon, 2013), has the drawback that it captures governmental spending, not the amount to which individuals are entitled.

Thus, we argue that in order to assess the relationship between family policies and fertility, we need a different approach and conceptualization of family policies. First, we need to acknowledge an essential feature of family policies, namely that they are multidimensional (see Ferrarini, 2003; Korpi, 2000). Multidimensionality refers to two aspects: On the one hand, it denotes that family policies usually comprise several policies that may belong to different policy fields, such as parental leave policies, child subsidies, tax policies. On the other hand, it signifies that family policies may have different functions, such as supporting a gender-egalitarian or a gendered family model. Often, the functions are not clear cut; they may be ambivalent or even contradictory. Some policies may support a gender-egalitarian behaviour and others a gendered behaviour. Second, we need to acknowledge that family policies are time-variant. Changes in family policies may shift the functions of family policies, for example, towards more forceful support of a gender egalitarian family behaviour or towards a stronger support of a gendered family model. Third, we also need to consider what individuals can expect to receive when they have a child and whether this support backs a more gender-egalitarian childrearing behaviour or a traditional gender-divided family form. To study the link between family policies and fertility we need measures that capture these various dimensions of family policies. The Social Policy Indicator Database (SPIN) provides such measures. SPIN is a longitudinal database that acknowledges a variety of different policies that support families. Moreover, it synthesizes these policies into indicators of two types of family support simultaneously offered in many countries and thus captures not only what a prospective parent can expect to receive when on leave with a new-born child, but also what share of the support favours a gendered and what share a gender egalitarian behaviour.

We introduce the logic behind the SPIN data in the next section, detailing which policies fit within the two measures and how they are calculated. We then describe the measures specifically as they refer to Lithuania and Sweden from 1995 to 2015, illustrating both how the measures reflect the policies and how support for earner-carer and traditional family arrangements have shifted over time in the two cases. These developments in Lithuania and Sweden are then contextualized by locating them among other countries for which these measures have been produced in the SPIN database. In addition, we survey the literature in which the measures have appeared and provide an overview of the wide range of contemporary social issues to which these measures have been applied. Finally, we discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the approach used to assess the orientation of family policy toward earner-carer and traditional family arrangements, specifically in light of Lithuania's and Sweden's family policy development.

## **Background**

Contrary to most other databases, the SPIN database is a theory-driven database. It is based on the so-called institutional or social rights approach (Ferrarini, 2003; Korpi, 2000). This approach to classifying social policies builds on T.H. Marshall's idea of social citizenship and the social rights citizens of a country have as written down in country legislation. According to Marshall (1950), citizens in a country have civil, political and social rights. He argues that social citizenship entitles citizens to at least a basic level of welfare. Building on that idea, Korpi and Palme (1998) developed indicators<sup>1</sup> that are based on legislation of social insurances, capturing what citizens are entitled to receive when they are not able to be in paid work. An important indicator developed in this connection is what a typical worker earning an average production worker's wage is entitled to receive in percent of her/his wage, called the replacement rate.

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<sup>1</sup> At first, the data collected covered information from 18 OECD countries on four main social insurances connected to working life; unemployment, sickness, work accident and old age. As of 2019, the Social Policy Indicators database (SPIN), as it is called now, covers additional social insurances and social assistance programs for up to 34 countries (see [www.spin.su.se](http://www.spin.su.se)). One of the modules included in SPIN is the Parental Leave Benefit dataset (PLB). The data available cover institutional information on parental leave insurance for 18 OECD countries from 1930-2010. During 2020 more data on other features of family policies will be released and the coverage will be extended to Eastern European countries.

In regard to family policies, Korpi (2000) created a typology based on both the institutional or social-rights approach and a gender approach. This typology captures to which degree family policies support a gender-equal and/or a gender-traditional division of paid and unpaid work. Countries were said to have earner-carer forms of family support when their policies attribute high levels of support to earner-carer families, in which both partners work and share childrearing, and when they have low levels of support to a gender-traditional family behaviour. When low support is given to both types of division of work in the family, countries are said to have market-oriented family policies. When high levels of support are directed to a gender-traditional division of work in the family, and low support is allocated to an earner-carer family, countries are deemed to have traditional-family policies. When high support is assigned to both family arrangements, countries are said to have a contradictory family policy model (see Ferrarini, 2003; Korpi, 2000; Korpi, Ferrarini, & Englund, 2013). This approach accounts for the multidimensionality as well as the potential ambiguities of family policies by measuring the extent to which both family arrangements are supported in a country. Moreover, it allows policies to change over time and does not use static regime types. Finally, it avoids the use of expenditures that measure total governmental spending on families by taking into account what individuals can expect to receive.

The information in the Parental Leave Benefit dataset builds on this logic. Here replacement rates are calculated for every fifth year for parental leave insurance, childcare leave, and child benefits given in cash and through tax deductions, as well as tax rebates given to a male breadwinner, also called marriage subsidies.

The model family used for the calculation of the replacement rates consists of two grown-ups and two children. One of the children is the new-born for which one of the parents is on leave, the other child is below school age. The inclusion of a second, older child in the model family allows the measure to estimate what is allocated to a two-child family in cash child benefits, where some allocations depend on the age of the child.

Parental leave insurance is the income-related benefit paid to the parent on leave after the

birth of a child, including income-related maternity leave benefit. To meet the eligibility requirements for income-related parental leave benefits in all countries, the parent on leave is assumed to have worked for two years on an average production workers' wage before going on leave with the new-born. Since the amount of parental-leave payment, the length of payment and sharing options between parents differ among countries, the measures in the Parental Leave Benefit dataset are standardized in the following way: Information on leave duration allocated to the mother, the father, and leave that can be shared among the parents is collected and summarized. In addition, the level of the weekly and yearly income-related benefit in a country's currency is collected both gross and net of taxation. The information on cash benefits and duration per week and during the first year after the child's birth is then used to calculate weekly and yearly replacement rates. The net replacement rate for the first year after the child's birth is used to denote the extent of a country's support for earner-carer families, called earner-carer support.

To classify earner-carer vs. traditional gender support, the Parental Leave Benefit database distinguishes between income-related parental leave benefit and childcare leave. Childcare leave is a benefit mostly given in low flat-rate amounts, not related to previous employment, for leave after the termination of the income-related parental leave. Childcare leave information is collected in a similar way as for parental leave; however, the yearly standardized replacement rate for the duration of the childcare leave benefit is calculated for the 12-month period after the termination of the income-related parental leave. Cash and fiscal child allowances, as well as marriage subsidies are calculated as yearly sums, which are then divided by both the gross and net yearly wage of an average production worker. The net replacement rates for childcare leave, child allowances given in cash and through the tax system, as well as marriage subsidies are summed up to give the replacement rate denoting the extent of support to a traditional family with a stay-at-home mother and a working husband, called traditional-family support.

One advantage of calculating a yearly replacement rate in the way mentioned is that the measure takes into account both the taxation and the duration of benefits. Taking taxation into account avoids mixing taxable and non-taxable benefits that could bias comparisons between countries (Ferrarini, Nelson, Korpi, & Palme, 2013). Moreover, accounting for the

duration of benefits avoids giving too much weight to high replacement rates with short duration. These result in lower replacement rates when the duration is short. So, 100 per cent replacement during 10 weeks will result in a lower annual replacement rate compared to 70 per cent during 40 weeks. Finally, the approach also uses legislated benefit ceilings instead of formal replacement rates that do not account for earnings ceilings that might take effect for an average production worker in some of the countries (Wesolowski & Ferrarini, 2018).

The information used to construct the measures is taken from various sources, both international and national ones. One frequently used source is MISSOC, the Mutual Information System on Social Protection of the European Union (see [www.missoc.org](http://www.missoc.org)). For countries associated with the Council of Europe, MISSCEO (Mutual Information System on Social Protection of the Council of Europe, [www.missceo.coe.int](http://www.missceo.coe.int)) has been used as a source. SSPTW, Social Security Programs Throughout the World, published by the United States Social Security Administration in collaboration with the International Social Security Association, is another repeatedly used source ([www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/progdesc/ssptw/](http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/progdesc/ssptw/)). For the calculation of net wages and replacements, information from the European Tax Handbook from the IBFD (International Bureau of Fiscal Documentation, [www.ibfd.org/](http://www.ibfd.org/)) has been extremely helpful throughout the years.

## **Country comparison**

### ***Lithuania***

#### *The development of family policies in Lithuania since 1990*

According to Stankūnienė and Juknienė (2009), Lithuanian family policy started to form a few years before the Soviet Union broke apart and Lithuania became an independent country in 1991. Before the break-up of the Soviet Union, Lithuania was a Soviet republic during most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and therefore had the same family policy as other republics. At first, the goal for the development of Lithuanian family policies was to improve the economic situation of families, but after the decline of fertility to lowest low levels at the beginning of the 2000s, more pronatalist goals entered into family policy formation (Stankūnienė & Juknienė, 2009).

As early as 1989, the partly paid parental leave was expanded until the child turned 18 months old, while unpaid leave was extended until the child turned 3 years old. Although the “Population Programme of Lithuania”, developed by researchers and policymakers, suggested family policies that expanded the opportunities of parents to reconcile work and care, the conservative government in power opted to support stay-at-home mothers (Stankūnienė & Juknienė, 2009). Between 1990 and 1992 it introduced a number of low paid benefits for families to promote a gendered family behaviour. At the same time, many pre-school institutions were closed down. The family policy goals changed again with the Social Democratic Party coming to power in 1993. In 1994, under the influence of international and national initiatives, steps were taken to rather emulate the family policy of social democratic welfare states. This implied a turn to reconciliation policies supporting the combination of paid work and childcare for both women and men, in our typology called earner-carer support. However, in 1996, a conservative government came to power and the system of low paid benefits was expanded, while policies supporting work-family reconciliation were neglected, but not abandoned. After 2001, when a government that was rather social-democratically influenced came to power, work-family reconciliation policies were expanded, but the maternity (birth) grant as well as child benefits were also increased. Since 2006, fathers are entitled to receive a paternity benefit (daddy days); with a replacement rate of 100 per cent of earnings for the first month after a child’s birth. Moreover, as of 2008, the maternity and parental leave benefits amount to 100 per cent of a wage during the first year and 85 per cent for the second year (Stankūnienė & Juknienė, 2009).

Since independence, changes in government also led to inconsistencies and changes in goals and ideas from conservative and rather patriarchal focus on traditional-family support to a more social-democratic focus on earner-carer support. According to Stankūnienė and Juknienė (2009), this seems to be typical for the other Baltic countries, as well. Overall, however, one can see an expansion of what in our typology is called earner-carer support in Lithuania.

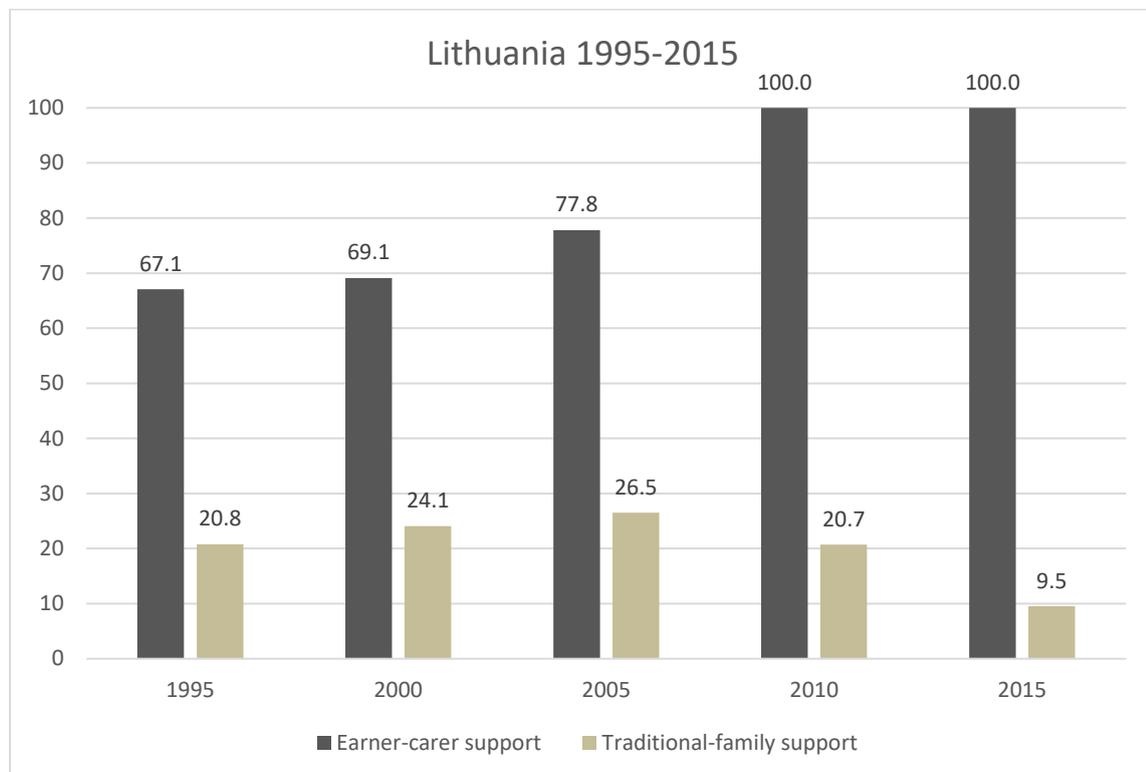
Aidukaite (2019) states that after the financial crisis of 2008-2010, retrenchment of social policies took place and in the field of family policy especially family benefits were cut down.

Earnings-related maternity and parental leave benefits were reformed, and parents can now choose between a one-year leave at 100 per cent replacement of earnings or two years leave with a rate of 70 per cent of previous earnings during the first year and 40 per cent of earnings during the second year. The paternity leave of one month after the child’s birth has been kept in place (Aidukaite, 2019). Thus, in terms of the typology used in this paper, it is rather the traditional-family support that decreased, while earner-carer support increased and was diversified.

*Earner-carer support and traditional-family support in Lithuania 1995-2015*

Using SPIN Data, we describe family policies in Lithuania from 1995 to 2015 using the typology of earner-carer and traditional-family support, as defined in the background section. Figure 1 shows the replacement rates of earner-carer support and traditional-family support from 1995 to 2015 for every fifth year. The replacement rates show how much an average production worker can expect to receive in percent of her/his annual net wage when on leave with the new-born (second) child.

**Figure 1.** Earner-carer support and Traditional-family support in Lithuania, 1995-2015



Source: PLB, 2020 (data not yet released)

In 1995, earner-carer support was made up of 8 weeks maternity leave at a replacement rate of 100 per cent and 44 weeks of shareable dual parental leave at 60 per cent of previous earnings until the child's first birthday. This summed up to an annual net replacement rate of around 67 per cent of an annual net wage for an average production worker (4326 Lithuanian litas, LTL) for the first year after the child's birth). Traditional-family support was made up of a maternity grant of 360 LTL and 540 LTL in cash child benefit in total for 12 months, summing up to almost 21 per cent of an annual net wage for an average production worker.<sup>2</sup>

In the year 2000, as in 1995, earner-carer support consisted of 8 weeks maternity leave at a replacement rate of 100 per cent and 44 weeks of shareable dual parental leave at 60 per cent of previous earnings until the child's first birthday. This summed up to an annual net replacement rate of around 69 per cent of an annual net wage for an average production worker (7790 LTL) for the first year after the child's birth. An earnings ceiling was in place, but the average production worker's wage does not hit the ceiling. Traditional-family support comprised a maternity grant of 750 LTL and 1125 LTL in cash child benefit in total for 12 months, summing up to around 24 per cent of an annual net wage for an average production worker.<sup>3</sup>

In the year 2005, earner-carer support was made up of 8 weeks maternity leave at a replacement rate of 100 per cent and 44 weeks of shareable dual parental leave at 70 per cent of previous earnings until the child's first birthday. This summed up to an annual net replacement rate of around 78 per cent of an annual net wage for an average production worker (11 146 LTL) for the first year after the child's birth. An earnings ceiling was in place, but the average production worker was not affected by it. Traditional-family support was made up of a maternity grant of 1000 LTL, 1725 LTL in cash child benefit and 229 LTL in fiscal child benefit in total for 12 months, summing up to almost 26.5 per cent of an annual net

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<sup>2</sup> Sources 1995: SSPTW 1995, law on state benefits for the family 1994, law on state social insurance 1993, Provisional law on income tax of natural persons 1990 (as of 1993); government regulation on minimum amounts Jan 4 1995, answer from Ministry of Social Security and Labour 130426.

<sup>3</sup> Sources 2000: SSPTW 1999, SSPTW 2002, Missceec 1999, Missceec 2002, Missceo 2000, law on state benefits for families with children, answer from Ministry of Social Security and Labour 130426.

wage for an average production worker.<sup>4</sup>

For 2010, earner-carer support encompassed 8 weeks maternity leave at a replacement rate of 100 per cent and 44 weeks of shareable dual parental leave at now 100 per cent of previous earnings until the child's first birthday. This summed up to an annual net replacement rate of 100 per cent of an annual net wage for an average production worker (18 155 LTL) for the first year after the child's birth. Again, the earnings ceiling did not affect the average production worker.<sup>5</sup> Traditional-family support was constituted of a maternity grant of 1000 LTL, 1794 LTL in cash child benefit and 540 LTL in fiscal child benefit in total for 12 months, summing up to almost 21 per cent of an annual net wage for an average production worker.<sup>6</sup>

In 2015, Lithuania joined the Euro zone. Earner-carer support consisted of a maternity leave at 100 per cent of earnings paid for 8 weeks after birth. Thereafter, parents could draw dual parental leave at 100 per cent of earnings until the child turned 1 year old. This summed up to an annual net replacement rate of 100 per cent of an annual net wage for an average production worker (6662 EUR) for the first year after the child's birth. The average production worker's wage did not hit the earnings ceiling.<sup>7</sup> Traditional-family support comprised a maternity grant of 418 EUR plus 216 EUR in cash child benefits in total for 12 months, summing up to a mere 9.5 per cent of an annual net wage for an average production worker.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Sources 2005: *Missoc 2005, Missceo 2005, SSPTW 2004 and 2006, national laws, direct information, European Tax Handbook 2005, OECD Babies and Bosses, Volume 3 and Synthesis.*

<sup>5</sup> There was also the possibility to continue on parental leave for one more year at 85 per cent of previous earnings, but our measure of earner-carer support only takes into account the duration of earnings-related leave during the first year after the child's birth.

<sup>6</sup> Source 2010: *Missoc 2010.*

<sup>7</sup> Parents could choose between two options for parental leave, 100 per cent of earnings until the child is 1 year old or 70 per cent of earnings until the child is 1 year old and 40 per cent of earnings until the child is 2 years old. For the calculation of earner-carer support, the first option maximizing parental leave during the first year was chosen. A paternity leave (daddy days) of 1 month at 100 per cent of earnings was given simultaneously with maternity leave and is therefore not included in earner-carer support.

<sup>8</sup> Sources 2015: *11th International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research 2015, Missoc 2015.*

### *Changes over time captured in the measure*

As Figure 1 shows, the level of earner-carer support increased gradually from around 67 per cent to 100 per cent of an average production worker's yearly net wage over the time period from 1995-2015. The level of traditional-family support, however, first increased from around 21 per cent in 1995 to almost 27 per cent in 2005, only to clearly decrease down to around 10 per cent in 2015. This mirrors the description of Stankūnienė and Juknienė (2009) of a shift in focus of family policy depending on which parties were in power. The focus on traditional-family support increased, while earner-carer support stayed about the same until it was clearly increased under a social-democratically influenced government. By 2015, the replacement rate for traditional-family support had decreased, which Aidukaite (2019) attributes to the economic crisis that took place in 2008-2010. We need to point out that the development of the replacement rate does not solely reflect increases or decreases of benefits and thus political decisions about family benefits. The replacement rate is also driven by the development of the average production worker's wage. For example, between 2005 and 2010, wages increased substantially, while benefits increased only slightly. The result of these different developments is that cash benefits in 2010 replaced a lower share of an average production worker's wage than in 2005 – despite the increase in benefits.

### **Sweden**

#### *The development of family policies in Sweden since 1990*

According to Kälvesten (1955), family policy in Sweden was expanded after the Myrdals drew attention to the risk of depopulation in their seminal book *Kris i befolkningsfrågan* (*Crisis in the Population Question*) in 1934. Most relevant for our comparison is the income-related, gender-egalitarian parental leave insurance that was first introduced in 1974 and was developed mostly by the social-democratic and liberal parties (Ferrarini & Duvander, 2010). We will, however, concentrate on the development since 1990 to give the reader the possibility to compare the development of family policies in Sweden and Lithuania during the same time period.

During the economic crisis in the 1990s, the level of the parental leave benefit was cut back to 75 per cent and then increased again to 80 per cent of the pre-leave wage (Ferrarini &

Duvander, 2010). At the end of the rule of a coalition of conservative and liberal parties from 1991 to 1994, the government announced that one month of parental leave will be reserved for each parent, becoming effective by 1995. The same year, shortly before the social-democratic party regained power, a home care allowance was introduced, but was in place only for a few months. In 2002, during the social-democratic rule, the reserved period for one parent was extended from one to two months and the duration of parental leave from 15 to 16 months. 13 months were paid at 80 per cent of pre-leave income, while 3 months were paid at a low flat-rate amount.<sup>9</sup>

As of 2008, the centre-right government that had come to power in 2006 revived the home-care allowance of the early 1990s. The new regulation permitted municipalities to pay a flat-rate allowance of maximally 3000 SEK per month for children up to age three provided they did not use public childcare. The home-care allowance constituted a paradox among the otherwise gender-egalitarian, labour-market oriented earner-carer Swedish family policies (Lundqvist, 2011). To counter this move towards a traditional family model, the government introduced a tax relief for couples in which the father used more than the legally allocated share of parental leave, the so-called “gender-equality bonus” (Ferrarini & Duvander, 2010; Lundqvist, 2011). Ferrarini and Duvander (2010) warned that the introduction of the home care allowance might lead to increased inequality in care and undermine the gender-egalitarian reconciliation of work and child rearing. Neither the home-care allowance nor the gender-equality bonus gained popularity. Only half of the municipalities offered the home-care allowance benefit, only 4% of all parents took it. 90% were women and most had only a weak attachment to the labour market (Duvander & Ellingsæter, 2016). Not least because of an initially complicated regulation, the gender equality bonus was equally unsuccessful. It did not immediately or noticeably increase fathers’ use of parental leave or promote gender equality (Duvander & Johansson, 2012).

When the social-democratic party regained power with the help of the Green and the Left party, it abolished the home care allowance in 2016 (Sveriges riksdag, 2016), and the

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<sup>9</sup> These 3 months paid at flat-rate existed since 1980, when this benefit’s duration was expanded from one to three months (SOU 2017: 101, 2017).

gender-equality bonus in 2017. Instead, in 2016, it extended the reserved part of parental leave to three months, so that the current regulation allocates three months of the income-related parental leave to one parent, three months to the other, and seven months that can be shared as parents prefer (Försäkringskassan, 2019). The introduction and every expansion of the reserved part of the leave increased fathers' uptake of parental leave, but the most influence on fathers' uptake of parental leave was related to the first reserved month in 1995 (Försäkringskassan, 2019).

Ferrarini and Duvander (2010) state that parental leave is used by basically all mothers and around 90 per cent of fathers. The high earnings-ceiling ensures most parents 80 per cent of their pre-leave income. Commonly, collective bargaining agreements state that the employer pays an additional 10% below the ceiling and 90% above the ceiling. Since most parents are covered by collective agreement, this reduces the income loss during parental leave substantially. Parental leave in Sweden is also very flexible; benefits are calculated in days and can be drawn in full, half-days, quarter-days or one eighth of a day shares. If a parent takes only part of a day, the leave extends accordingly. Flexibility has, however, been reduced somewhat since 2014 as a larger part of parental insurance has to be taken before the child turns four years (Duvander, Ferrarini, & Johansson, 2015).

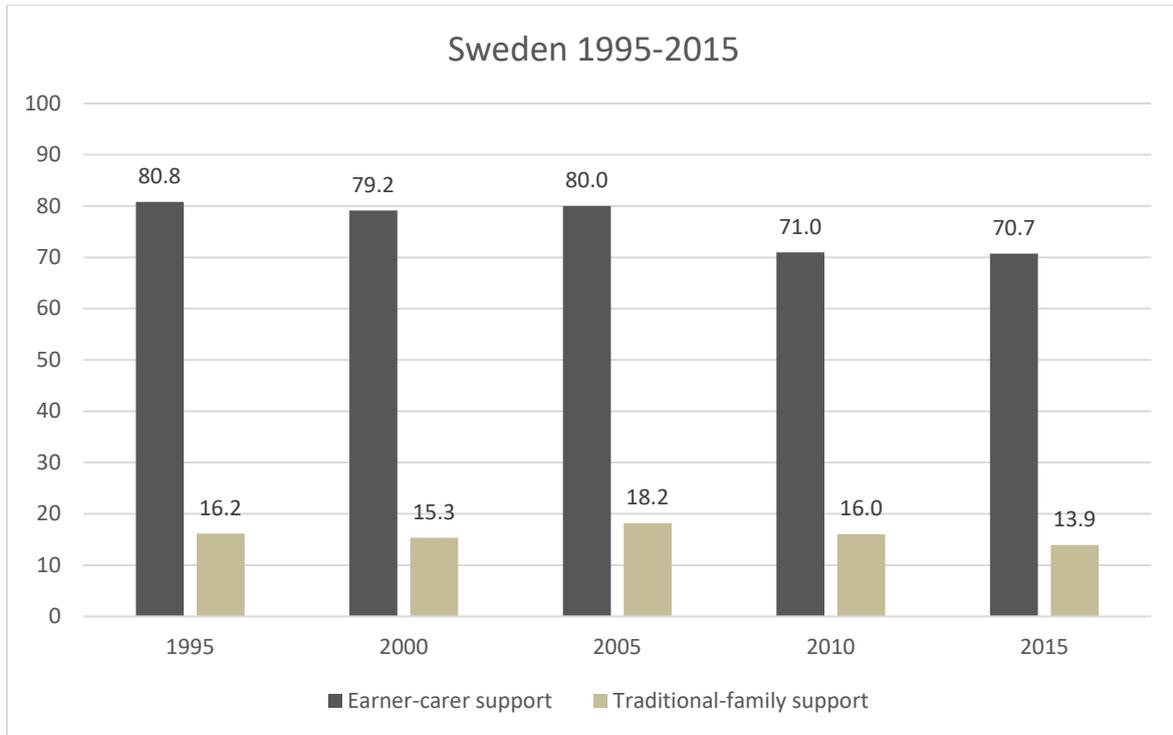
In Sweden, like in Lithuania and many other countries, family policy development was influenced by the political orientation of the different governments in power. Every time a more conservative government was in power the conservative parties introduced reforms that rather supported a traditional family model, while reforms supporting a more gender-equal division of paid and unpaid work were more on the agenda of the liberal party and strongly promoted by the social-democratic party. The practical failure of the latest home-care allowance has demonstrated that gender-equality in parental leave is by now firmly anchored in Swedish society.

#### *Earned-carer support and traditional-family support in Sweden 1995-2015*

We now turn to a description of family policies in Sweden from 1995 to 2015 using our typology of earner-carer and traditional-family support. Figure 2 shows the replacement rates of earner-carer support and traditional-family support from 1995 to 2015 for every

fifth year. To recall, the replacement rates denote how much an average production worker can expect to receive in percent of her/his annual net wage when on leave with the new-born (second) child during the first year of its life.

**Figure 2.** Earner-carer support and Traditional-family support in Sweden, 1995-2015



Source: PLB, 2020 (data not yet released)

In 1995, earner-carer support consisted of 12 months of shareable parental leave at 80 per cent of pre-leave income, with one month reserved for each parent; summing up to almost 81 per cent of pre-leave net income (134 976 SEK). Traditional-family support consisted of the three months of flat-rate paid leave after income-related parental leave at 60 SEK/day, as well as 18 000 SEK of cash child benefit, amounting to a replacement rate of around 16 per cent of pre-leave income.<sup>10</sup>

In 2000, earner-carer support consisted of 12 months of shareable parental leave at 80 per cent of pre-leave income (156 511 SEK), with one month reserved for each parent. This adds up to a replacement rate of around 79 per cent. The decline from 81% in 1995 is due to

<sup>10</sup> Sources 1995: SPIN calculations.

differences in taxation. Traditional-family support again consisted of three months of flat-rate leave after income-related parental leave at 60 SEK/day and 20 400 SEK of cash child benefit, summing up to around 15 per cent of pre-leave income.<sup>11</sup>

In the year 2005, earner-carer support consisted of 13 months of shareable parental leave at 80 per cent of pre-leave income (187 015 SEK), with now two months reserved for each parent. Important to note is that, as described in the background, only the first 12 months of this leave are included in the SPIN measure since it is calculated as the replacement rate for the leave during the first year after the child's birth. Here the replacement rate is 80 per cent of pre-leave income. Traditional-family support still consisted of three months of flat-rate leave after income-related parental leave at 180 SEK/day and now 22 800 SEK of cash child benefit, giving a replacement rate of around 18 per cent.<sup>12</sup>

In 2010, earner-carer support consisted of 13 months of shareable parental leave at 80 per cent of pre-leave income (239 282 SEK), with two months reserved for each parent (12 months coded). By then, however, the social insurance agency multiplied the pre-leave income by a factor of 0.97, so that the effective gross replacement rate was 77.6 per cent. Further, changes in taxation rules with an introduction of an earned-income tax credit lead to a higher pre-leave net income. Therefore, the net replacement rate was 71 per cent. Traditional-family support includes the three months of flat-rate leave after income-related parental leave at 180 SEK/day and 27 000 SEK of cash child benefit. The net replacement rate is thus 16 per cent.<sup>13</sup>

In the year 2015 as in 2010, earner-carer support consisted of 13 months of shareable parental leave at 80 per cent, with two months reserved for each parent (12 months coded). As the same calculation rule applied in 2015 as in 2010 and the EITC was also still in effect, the net replacement rate again is around 71 per cent of a pre-leave net income (273 445 SEK). Traditional-family support included three months of flat-rate leave after income-related parental leave at 180 SEK/day, as well as 27 000 SEK of cash child benefit. Since the

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<sup>11</sup> Sources 2000: SPIN calculations.

<sup>12</sup> Source 2005: *International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research 2005*.

<sup>13</sup> Source 2010: *International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research 2010*.

amount of the cash child benefit had not increased, while the pre-leave income had, the replacement rate was around 14 per cent of pre-leave income.<sup>14</sup>

#### *Changes over time captured in the measure*

As Figure 2 shows, there are only small changes to be seen in the strength of support to both dimensions during our observation period. Effectively, however, earner-carer support has been reduced to around 70 per cent of pre-leave net income due to changes in the calculation of benefits and tax effects of the earned-income tax credit (EITC) that was introduced after the change in government in 2007. The EITC is only granted on earned income, not on parental leave benefits and thus gives a higher net income compared to before. For traditional-family support, the only changes are small fluctuations in the effect of the cash child benefit, while the 3 months of leave paid in flat-rate amounts have not changed during the time period.

#### ***Lithuania and Sweden compared to other countries***

The SPIN database offers measures of the degree of traditional-family and earner-carer support for many other countries besides Lithuania and Sweden. All measures were calculated in the same manner as described for Lithuania and Sweden and are therefore comparable across countries. Figure 3 displays the measures for the earliest period we observe (1995) and for the latest period for which we have data for all countries (2010). As evident, these measures capture significant shifts over time in policy support for earner-carer and traditional-family arrangements. In 1995 only seven out of the 32 countries for which we have data, among them Lithuania and Sweden, provided earner-carer support of more than 60% of an average production worker's wage. This support is at a level that we consider a necessary threshold to promote a gender egalitarian sharing of work and care. Only five of these countries offered earner-carer support above 80% of an average production worker's wage and thus at a level at which a gender egalitarian reconciliation of family and work may become a realistic option for many couples. In all other countries earner-carer support was below 40% of an APWW, in the majority of countries (20) even below 30%. All countries with support above 60% were either Nordic (Norway, Sweden;

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<sup>14</sup> Source 2015: *International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research 2015*.

Finland) or Eastern European countries (Hungary, Romania, Slovenia; Lithuania).

By 2010, five more countries had joined this group, two previously conservative countries (Austria, Germany) and three Eastern European countries (Bulgaria, Estonia and Latvia), so that by 2010 more than a third of our observed countries offered earner-carer support above 60% of an APWW. Most remarkably, among countries that provide support at this level, there seems to be a tendency to offer more than 80% of an APWW. As Figure 3 shows, between 1995 and 2010 only in three more countries, Canada, Portugal and Denmark, did earner-carer support increase substantially (17 to 23 percentage points); but it is still far below the 60% limit and thus the stepping stone to a dual-earner – dual-carer family policy orientation.

The comparison of traditional-family support across countries shows that in 1995 the countries that are commonly considered conservative Western European welfare states – France, Germany, Austria, Belgium – , but also Denmark and Finland as well as Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Slovenia and Estonia provided the highest traditional-family support. The benefits measured as percentage of an APWW ranged between 31% (Estonia) and 68% (France).<sup>15</sup> By 2010 Russia, Ukraine, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Bulgaria had substantially increased their traditional-family support (more than 25 percentage points), while in Denmark, Finland, and France the traditional-family support decreased noticeably (more than 10 percentage points).

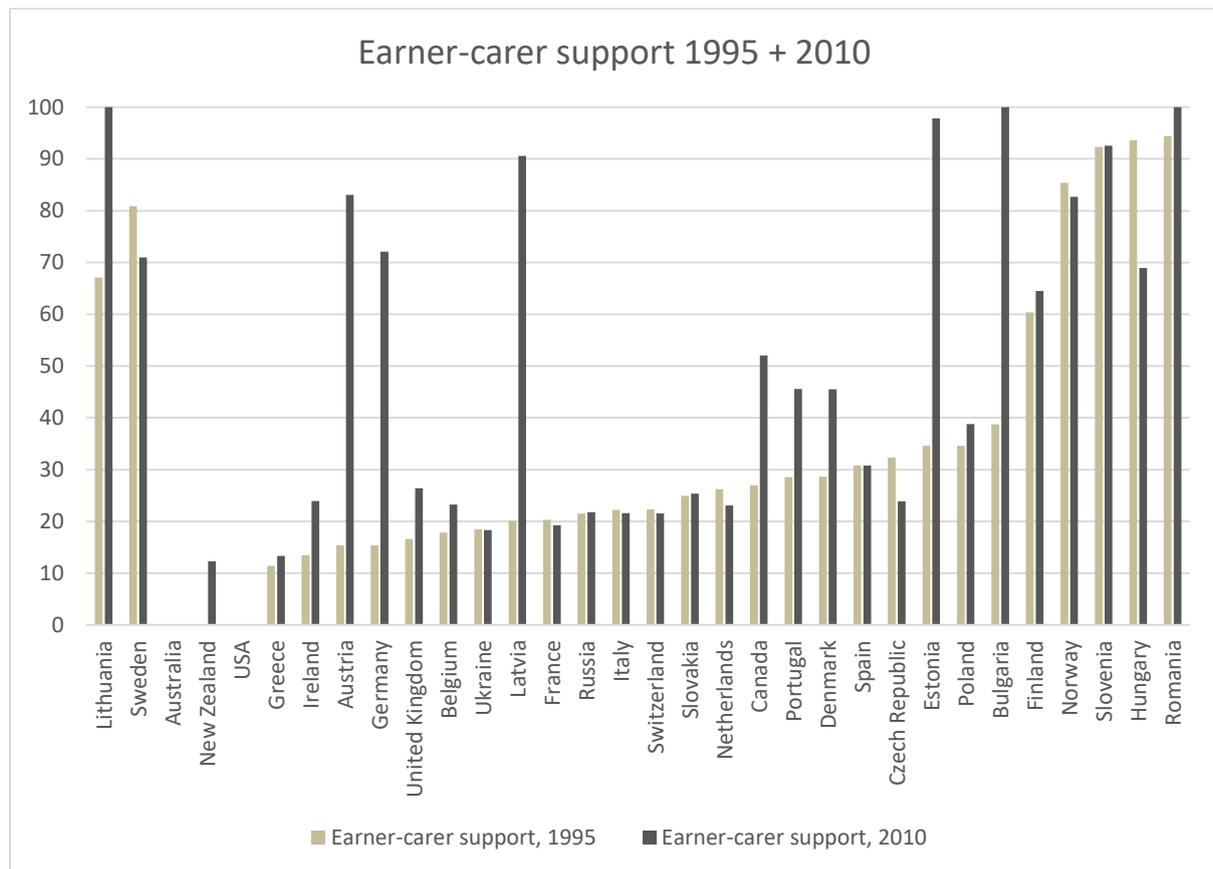
If we compare the level of traditional-family support with the level of earner-carer support among the countries that have taken the road towards a more gender-equal reconciliation of work and care, we get a more nuanced picture of their policy orientation. In 2010, Austria, Germany, Bulgaria, Latvia and Hungary combined high earner-carer support (above 60% APWW) with high traditional-family support (between 37% and 81% APWW). Their family policies seem to be ambivalent, providing support for a gender equal division of care

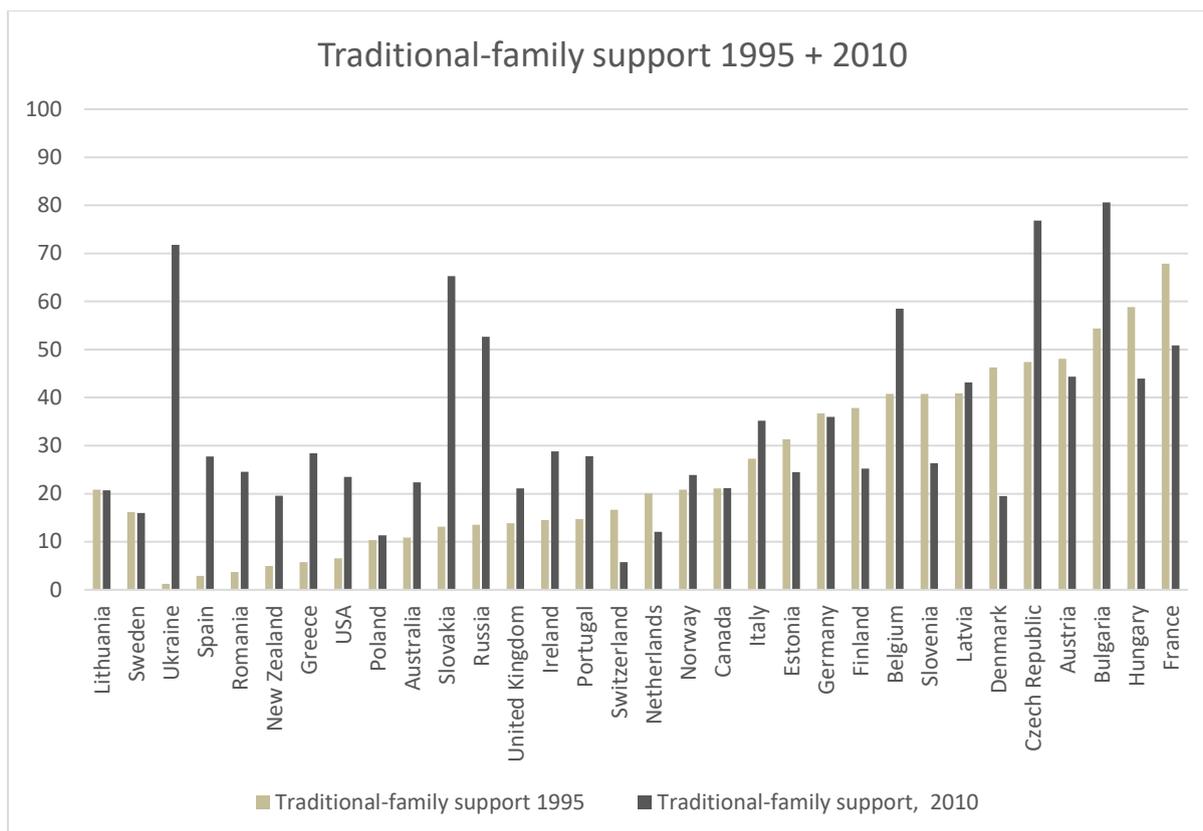
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<sup>15</sup> We take 30% as the threshold between financial support and maternal-care support. Like our thresholds to classify earner-carer support, this limit may seem arbitrary and may lead to some misclassifications (e.g. Denmark). However, we think that given women's lower wages and higher share of part-time work than men's, 30% of an average production worker's wage may already be an incentive for some couple to choose a traditional division of care and work.

and work as well as for a traditional work-care behaviour. In contrast, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Lithuania, Estonia, Romania, and Slovenia have high earner-carer support (above 60% APWW) but comparatively low traditional-family support (between 16% and 26% APWW). Their family policies are more clearly directed towards an earner-carer family model than towards a traditional one. With respect to Lithuania and Sweden, the comparison across countries revealed that both countries belong to the group of states whose family policies focused consistently on earner-carer support during the fifteen years of our observation. In this respect both countries were among the vanguards and both were more similar to each other than were the Nordic countries or the Baltic states among themselves.

**Figure 3.** Earner-carer support and traditional-family support over time in 21 countries





Source: PLB, 2020 (data not yet released)

### Applications of SPIN measures in comparative research

The measures of earner-carer and traditional-family support have been used to analyse developments of family policies and correlations with diverse outcomes, such as fertility rates, fertility intentions, women’s labour market attachment, work-family conflict, child well-being, and health. Comparative analyses have been conducted both with aggregated data as well as with harmonized individual level data. Here we illustrate the range of applications thus far for these measures with a short overview of results from inferential analyses.

In his dissertation, Ferrarini (2003) analysed the development of family policies in 18 OECD countries from 1970 to 1995, using the SPIN data, and their relations to fertility and female labour-force participation rates. He demonstrated that both types of family policies are connected to higher fertility rates, but that only earner-carer support is connected to higher female labour force participation during this time period (Ferrarini, 2003). For a later period, namely 1995-2011, results by Wesolowski and Ferrarini (2018) demonstrate that only higher earner-carer support is correlated with higher fertility rates. In addition to a different

timeframe, their study includes Eastern European countries whereas Ferrarini's (2003) study covers only Western OECD countries. The type of family policies also affects both women's and men's fertility intentions (Billingsley & Ferrarini, 2014). Using family policy measures of 21 Eastern and Western European countries, Billingsley and Ferrarini (2014) show that higher support to both earner-carer and traditional family behaviour increases women's and men's intentions to have a first child. However, only earner-carer support turned out to be positively related to parents' intentions to have a second child (Billingsley & Ferrarini, 2014). As regards actual birth, Billingsley, Neyer and Wesolowski (2018) also find that only earner-carer support is related to increased second birth rates, but that both types of support are associated with postponement of first births. Their results also suggest that childlessness is linked to traditional-family support.

Earner-carer support has also been shown to affect women's labour force attachment differently depending on women's educational level. Korpi, Ferrarini and Englund (2013) find that women with tertiary education are those most likely to be in paid work, notwithstanding which type of family the country where they live supports. However, women with lower education are more often in paid work in countries where earner-carer support is high than in countries where traditional family support is high. This suggests that earner-carer support helps them with work-family reconciliation even more than women with tertiary education. Further, connected to women's labour market attachment, Esser and Ferrarini (2010) studied the influence of family policies on women's perceived stress and work-family conflict in 20 countries and found that support for earner-carer family behaviour does not lead to higher stress and work-family conflict for women in these countries. Rather the findings show that this support facilitates work-family reconciliation for women and therefore can be said to offset stress that arises from multiple roles.

Earner-carer and traditional-family support appears to be related to child well-being and health as well. Bäckman and Ferrarini (2010), for example, study whether family policies help alleviate poverty risks of pre-school children in 21 Western and Eastern European countries. Their analysis shows that both types of family support reduce child poverty risks. They argue that earner-carer support provides an incentive for both parents to work and this results in a higher household income, whereas traditional family support reduces

poverty risks more directly through cash transfers that increase household income. Support to earner-carer families is also more effective in alleviating child poverty for single mothers (Bäckman & Ferrarini, 2010). Another study shows that family policies and economic development are correlated with infant mortality (Ferrarini & Norström, 2010). According to the authors, economic development decreased infant mortality in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while this correlation disappeared in the post-war period. For the period of 1970 to 2000, instead, it is higher support to earner-carer family behaviour that is correlated with lower infant mortality (Ferrarini & Norström, 2010). Results from a similar study including Eastern European countries confirm these findings and also show that higher family policy benefits of both types are associated with lower poverty risks and child injuries (Ferrarini & Sjöberg, 2010).

## **Discussion**

In this paper, we have presented arguments for family policy measures that distinguish between support of gender-egalitarian earner-carer family arrangements and traditional gendered family arrangements. In line with prevailing fertility theories we maintain that it is important to distinguish between these distinct orientations of family policies in fertility research, because the division of labour in the home has implications for women's childbearing behaviour.

SPIN data offer two measures of family policy that differentiate between support for earner-carer and traditional family arrangements. These measures have been applied in research on family dynamics in recent years. We outlined the principles and logic behind SPIN's complex harmonization effort and used the cases of Lithuania and Sweden to illustrate how real policies are transformed into these measures. The development of these measures over time reflects important changes in support to families in each country. Although SPIN data may provide the best measures available for comparative research of the link between family policies and fertility, it is not without limitations and in this section we discuss these in light of these two country contexts. We conclude, however, by acknowledging additional advantages to what we have already outlined that became evident in the course of this exercise.

First, one disadvantage with the approach adopted in the SPIN data is that it reflects only what a four-member family with one or two average production worker (APW) earners can expect after having a child. The model family approach has the advantage of being simple and reflecting the most common family norm in post-industrial countries or the reality for a portion of the population. It is also used in other indexes, such as poverty indexes. A comparison with alternative model families could inform us about potentially relevant variation in policy design. Incorporating eligibility criteria such as pre-requisites for receiving benefits and income ceilings would tell us whether there are substantial subgroups of individuals that receive a very different level of support than the APW model family. In particular, we could see how the replacement rate varies for groups such as high earners as well as immigrants with no work experience yet in the host country. Measures related to other model families are already being calculated by the social-policy group at the Swedish Institute for Social Research. Single parents represent another model family that would be useful to explore because some countries offer specific support to these families. Moreover, given that single parents are overwhelmingly mothers, pegging the replacement rate to a wage in a male dominated occupation (APW) may not yield the most accurate or generalizable information. Although the APW wage is widely published and easily available, it may be worth collecting information on an average female worker's wage or on average wage in areas with many women employees, such as a service worker or public employee wage, for example. This would also be more in alignment with the fact that it is the woman's wage in the family that is being replaced in the majority of the benefits.

A few other aspects in how well the measures represent the family policies and support different family arrangements became noticeable in the discussion of our specific case studies. The measures only consider the replacement rate in terms of one earner in a household when policies can be directed specifically to both parents as earners and/or offer support that is conditional on the other partner taking the benefit. A more complete picture of earner-carer support may therefore emerge with a replacement rate of both parents' income rather than one parent's income.

Third, the measures focus on the first 12 months after a child is born, as a way of estimating the share of an annual wage replaced. This narrow window of time can lead to an under-

representation of actual support received that is relevant to the division of labour. Already, SPIN data steps over the one-year boundary in an effort to capture support given through the childcare leave benefit, which increases the accuracy of the traditional family arrangement measure. By not doing the same for the earner-carer measure, the SPIN data might underestimate some of the parental leave provisions, e.g. if parental leave is shorter or longer than one year (for example Nieuwenhuis, Need, & Kolk, 2017). Deciding the correct length of time to observe is not straightforward, however, and some policy features may always be lost. At the least, the time frame considered for calculating the measures needs to be explicitly discussed in relation to whether certain policies are excluded that may be relevant to an outcome of interest.

A fourth feature to discuss is that beyond the level of earner-carer support the calculation of the earner-carer support measure in the SPIN data does not acknowledge policies that incentivize both parents taking parental leave. For example, it does not take into account the paternity leave that may be taken simultaneously with maternity leave. It also does not account for leave that is reserved for either parent. Considering the emphasis in contemporary theory and public discussion on gender equality in both the private and public spheres, this omission is important. Weighting the measures in terms of shareability or reserved months may be one avenue of bringing dual carer support into the measure, as would changing the construction to include both parents' wages potentially.

Finally, SPIN data are collected for every fifth year. Changes in between that may affect family behaviour are not reflected. Yearly data may provide a more accurate picture of the development of family support. An expansion of the database to annual data is already planned by the social-policy group at the Swedish Institute for Social Research.

This discussion of limitations illustrates the complexity of calculating a simple, comparable measure across very different policy designs. It may also hide the advantages that SPIN data have and do injustice to those who collected them. As discussed in our introduction and the background section, other databases of comparative family support may provide some of the information we found missing in SPIN but lack other features that are essential for some types of research. To our knowledge there is no other database that provides (a)

comparable, (b) standardized family policy measures (c) over time, which (d) distinguishes the aims of family policies and (e) recognizes support from different policy areas in the calculation (e.g., taxation, social insurance). The research we cited exemplifies that SPIN data can be used for research on a variety of social policy issues, both at the aggregate and individual level and are particularly useful for comparative and longitudinal research. The exercise in comparing Lithuania and Sweden revealed a few additional advantages to highlight besides the arguments stated earlier in this chapter and the brief summary above. In the discussion of why the measures were calculated as they are, we mentioned an important principle in SPIN data, which is that measures reflect what couples can actually expect to receive after having a child instead of a more abstract or aggregated level of support. This principle became even clearer when observing both changes in the policies and the measures simultaneously because it is evident that changes in other arenas such as taxation and wage setting impact the policy support. For example, we saw that two small tax-related changes essentially lowered earner-carer support by 10 percentage points in Sweden. In Lithuania, traditional-family support declined due to wage growth even when there had been small increases in benefits. These fluctuations are unintended consequences that are relevant to individuals but do not necessarily speak to any shift in policy-makers' support. They highlight the fact that individuals' experience of social insurances is vulnerable to many forces. The SPIN measures, therefore, provide an important check for analysts and policy makers to ensure that the policy continues to provide as strong a support as was intended.

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