

# A new father's role?

## Employment patterns among Norwegian fathers 1991-2001<sup>1</sup>

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*Norwegian work-family policies aim at promoting equal division of paid and unpaid work among mothers and fathers. During later years however, we have witnessed a shift in policies, from making it easier for mothers to take up paid work, to the encouragement of fathers to participate more actively at home. Today fathers are expected to take their share of the unpaid work, especially in the care of small children. Whether, and to what extent, this new father's role has affected fathers' labour market behaviour has until now been little examined. In this article we utilise especially prepared Labour Force Survey data on parents with children under the age of 16, to analyse changes in fathers' employment patterns and working hours from 1991 to 2001.*

### Introduction

In most Western countries the family model with the father as a sole provider and the mother as a full-time homemaker is in full retreat. In Norway, as in the other Scandinavian countries, the increase in the number of dual-earner families has been made possible by the introduction of a variety of work-family policies aimed at supporting flexible solutions for parents in combining family responsibilities and paid work. In these countries the work-family tension in families with two employed parents has been modified by state policies.

In much of the Norwegian public debate on the family during later decades, a family model where both fathers and mothers combine income generating work and unpaid family work has been an implicit ideal. Still, during the 1970s and 1980s reconciling work and family life was mainly defined as a challenge for women, and the political concern was to make it easier for mothers to combine paid work and domestic work. The 1990s however, represent a shift in Norwegian work-family policies, as higher political priority was gradually given to increasing fathers' participation in family care. In 1986 a Government Commission on the role of men was appointed, and the commission influenced Norwegian public opinion and policies considerably during the 1990s. The commis-

sion especially put the role of men as *fathers* on the political agenda, focusing both on the fathers' duties and their rights to spend time with, and care for, their children (NOU 1991:3). In the following years several initiatives were taken to encourage the active involvement of men in care activities. Hence, in Norway as in the other Scandinavian countries, the concept of the "caring father" was politically institutionalised well before it was made a political topic in other countries (Leira 2002). However, as we shall see in this article, there is still a considerable distance between ideals and reality. The family model with fathers as sole providers is still far from replaced by a gender-equal breadwinner model.

Whereas mothers' employment patterns are continually monitored through the national Labour Force Surveys (LFS) and various analyses of these (for example Ellingsæter and Wiers-Jenssen 1997; Jensen 2000; Kjeldstad 1993, 1991; Statistics Norway 2003), fathers' paid working hours have been less systematically studied in Norway. Hence, in spite of much focus on the so called "new father's role" during recent decades, information on possible alterations in fathers' employment patterns has been sparse. One reason for this is that it is more complicated to identify fathers than mothers in the LFS because complete information on the participants' household members is not recorded. However, by linking data on own children from the Central Population Register with LFS, it is possible to identify fathers with children at different ages. In this article we discuss changes from 1991 to 2001 in employment patterns and working hours among married/cohabiting fathers with children 0-15

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years of age.<sup>2</sup> We look at contractual/usual working hours as well as actual working hours, and we differentiate between fathers with children in various age groups. As many of the family policy reforms in the 1990s were directed particularly at parents with very young children, we focus especially on fathers with children 0-2 years of age. Although the main topic of the article is fathers' labour market behaviour, we also want to make some comparisons with the development for mothers in order to illustrate the diminishing, but still quite significant, gender differences in this field.<sup>3</sup>

Before discussing the empirical analyses we give a brief account of some of the family policy reforms in Norway during the 1990s. We also mention some key issues regarding men's and women's labour market behaviour in Norway and point out some of the regulatory aspects in the Norwegian labour market. Data and definitions are accounted for in the text box on page 42.

### Recent family policy reforms in Norway

Except for an expansion of the rights to paid vacation from 21 to 23 days a year from January 1. 2001, there have been only few and insignificant changes in the general working time and vacation regulations in Norway during the period under consideration. However, in the field of family and gender policies, many important reforms that might affect parents' time use have been implemented. The parental leave scheme in Norway was substantially developed during the 1990s, and the total length of the parental leave now adds up to 52 weeks with 80 percent wage compensation, or 42 weeks with 100 per cent compensation. In connection with the extension of the parental leave in 1993, a father's quota was introduced, reserving four of the compensated weeks for fathers. The intention was to promote fathers' participation at home, both during the four weeks of leave, and in the longer run, also to ensure that the benefits and burdens of family life as well as working life are distributed more equally between men and women. Whereas fathers' ordinary leave entitlements previously were partly dependent on the mother's employment end earnings prior to delivery, fathers have recently, in July 2000, acquired more independent rights.

Furthermore, a time account scheme was introduced in 1994 in order to make possible more flexible uses of the parental leave. The scheme allows parents of small children to combine parental benefits with reduced working hours. The total period of parental leave remains the same, but it can be stretched over a longer period of time. In 1998/99 a "cash for care"

reform was introduced, implying that parents with small children (1-2 years of age) who do not use publicly subsidised childcare, will get paid in cash an amount equivalent to the state subsidy for a place in the public kindergarten. The aim of the reform was threefold, namely that parents should be given the opportunity to spend more time with their children, to give families a real choice in relation to the mode of care they want, and to equalise support between families with respect to state subsidies received for childcare, regardless of the form of care used (St. prp. no. 53 (1997-98)).

In Norway, family policies and gender equality policies have been closely intertwined, and the family policy reforms implemented during the 1990s were meant to serve a mixture of purposes. One important objective has been to encourage a more equal sharing of income generating work and unpaid family work among mothers and fathers and also to strengthen the father-child relationship. As far as gender equality is concerned, it has been maintained that some of the reforms might work in opposite directions. Whereas the father's quota encourages fathers to increase their contribution in family work, the "cash for care" reform is more likely to cement a traditional gender division of labour (Leira 1998). The "cash for care" reform has been disputed, and the opponents warned, among other things, that a likely outcome might be that many mothers, but few fathers, would reduce their working hours.

Several analyses have been undertaken in order to evaluate the possible effects of the reforms. By and large, the father's quota is seen as a success, in that the great majority of the eligible fathers utilise the "mandatory" weeks (Brandth and Kvande 2001). Still, rather few take more than four weeks of leave, except from a couple of weeks off after the birth of the child. A slight increase has been seen however, following the implementation of more independent rights for fathers in 2000 (The National Insurance Association 2002). The "cash for care" reform has been thoroughly assessed regarding outcomes in various areas (see Baklien et. al 2001 for a summary). Special attention has been paid to possible changes in parents' employment patterns, but alterations have been more carefully analysed for mothers than for fathers. Various data sources and methods give somewhat different results, but it seems safe to conclude that at least in the short run, the reform caused a significant, but fairly modest, reduction in mothers' employment, whereas fathers' employment was hardly affected. While both the father's quota and the cash for care-scheme are widely used, the time account scheme is hardly utilised at all (Brandth and Kvande 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Employment patterns and working hours among single mothers and fathers based on the same data sources have been analysed in Kjeldstad and Rønsen (2002).

<sup>3</sup> Gender differences in the labour market behaviour of Norwegian parents are discussed in more detail in another paper from the project mentioned in footnote 1 (Kitterød and Kjeldstad 2002).

### Labour market regulations and labour market participation in Norway

The Work Environment Act in Norway regulates the daily and weekly working hours. The maximum ordinary working time is 40 hours weekly. However, according to collective agreements in all industries and sectors 37.5 hours per week is the standard working time. Overtime is regulated to be maximum 10 hours a week as a rule, 25 hours during 4 successive weeks, and 200 hours a year. The Work Environment Act states each individual's right to reduced working hours due to medical, social and other important welfare reasons. The employer is obliged to comply with the needs of the employee - or otherwise, prove that it will be of great inconvenience to the company to do so. In addition, employees with responsibility for children 12 years and younger are entitled to leave during children's illness: 10 days per year per employee with one child and 15 days with more children. This right applies independently to both mothers and fathers.

Male labour market participation has been fairly stable in Norway during the 1980s and 1990s. The participation of women however, especially mothers with small children, has increased significantly. Today the total employment rates of men and women differ with only eight percentage points (75 and 67 percent respectively in 2001). The proportion of all employed men working full-time, has been stable at 90 percent throughout the period. At the same time women's full-time proportion increased from 48 percent in 1980 to 57 percent in 2001 (Statistics Norway 2003). During the 1990s the shift from part-time to full-time was especially significant among mothers (Ellingsæter and Wiers-Jenssen 1997; see also table 7 in this article).<sup>4</sup>

Whereas Norwegian fathers rarely work part-time, there has been much focus on fathers' long working hours. In the 1980s, the Level of living surveys showed that a significant number of fathers with small children had weekly working hours far exceeding normal hours, and that such arrangements were increasing (Ellingsæter 1991). More recent surveys indicate that such arrangements became slightly less common in the 1990s (Kitterød and Roalsø 1996). As these analyses were based on relatively small samples and a less detailed registration of working hours than what is done in the LFS, the conclusions are somewhat uncertain. Hence, analyses of fathers' working hours based on the LFS are needed in order to enhance our knowledge of changes in fathers' labour market behaviour.

The labour market in Norway, as in the other Nordic countries, is among the most gender segregated of the western world (Kjeldstad 2001; Melkas and Anker 1998). This is mainly due to the large female domi-

nated public sector of the Nordic countries, and is a result of the welfare state monetising women's traditionally unpaid work. Also, but on a smaller scale, there are certain sectors of the economy that are still strongly male dominated, in the private sector, especially in some traditional manufactory industries. Differences between women's and men's work hours are often structured by occupational and company culture. Abrahamsen (2002) finds, for example, that the norm about the "normal worker" and the "normal working hours" is stricter in male dominated than in female dominated occupations. The work culture at male dominated working places is often characterised by extensive hours, while part-time work is punished with regard to promotion and payment (Ellingsæter 1999a). Still, many fathers now reflect actively on how to practice their fatherhood and whether and how to adjust their working hours to their parental responsibilities (Brandth and Kvande 1999).

The years 1987-1993 were characterised by economic recession in Norway and unemployment rates were relatively high. As men more often than women work in the private sector, they were more severely affected by the economic downturn. Consequently their unemployment rate was higher. Among parents, however, the unemployment rate of mothers exceeded the rate of fathers throughout the 1990s (Kjeldstad and Rønsen 2002). This is mainly associated with the particularly low unemployment rate of fathers. Unemployment is more a youth and old age phenomenon among men than women in Norway. Thus, the unemployment rates of fathers of small children were low throughout the period under consideration here.

### A Labour Force Survey analysis of fathers' employment 1991-2001

#### Increased employment and some more temporary absence

During the second half of the 1990s we saw a slight increase in the employment rates among married/cohabiting fathers in Norway, – a development that is consistent with the economic recovery during the period. In 2001 94.2 percent of the fathers with children 0-15 years of age were employed, – 2.5 percentage points more than the minimum in 1993 (table 1). There are only minor differences in employment rates between fathers with children in various age groups. Fathers with the youngest children (0-2 years) had an employment rate of 94.0 percent in 2001, – an increase of almost 4 percentage points since the minimum in 1994 (figure 1). However, there was no increase in the percentage of fathers actually at work in the survey week in this period. Whereas about 82 percent of the married/cohabiting fathers with children 0-2 years of age

<sup>4</sup> During the 1980s part-time work in Norway underwent a process of normalisation in which working conditions and behaviour of the employees changed. The proportion of employees with short part-time work decreased, job security for part-time workers improved, and part-time workers increasingly joined a union (Ellingsæter 1989). Thus, part-time arrangements in Norway now bear few signs of marginality (Bjurstrøm 1993).

### Concepts and definitions in LFS

The concepts and definitions in the Norwegian LFS are in accordance with recommendations given by ILO<sup>1</sup>. Data are collected by telephone interviewing, and the sample comprises 24 000 respondents each quarter. People are asked about their relations to the labour market in one specific week. The reference period is one week each month.

*Employed persons* are those who performed work for pay or profit for at least one hour in the survey week, or who were temporarily absent from work because of illness, vacation, permission leave, etc. Both employees, self-employed and unpaid family workers are included. Conscripts are classified as employed persons. Persons engaged in government programs to promote employment are included if they receive wages. In table 1 and figure 1 in this article we look at employed fathers and differentiate between those *being temporarily absent*, and those *at work*, which means that they actually did perform some income generating work during the reference week.

*Contractual/usual working hours* refer to the weekly number of working hours according to the work contract. Absence from work because of illness, holidays, parental leave, etc. is not subtracted, and overtime is not included. Employees whose contractual working hours vary from week to week, give information on the actual survey week as well as the average of their contractual working hours per week. In this article the average numbers are used. For employees without an agreement on working hours, for self-employed and for unpaid family workers, data on their usual weekly working hours are used (average during the last 4 weeks). For those having more than one job, working hours in all jobs are included in the figures in this article.

We differentiate between fathers with contractual/usual working time 1-19 hours per week (short part-time); 1-36 hours per week (long part-time); 32-40 hours per week (normal full-time work); 41-49 hours per week; and 50 hours or more per week. The general rule is that contractual/usual working hours below 37 hours per week is counted as part-time. However, if the contractual working hours in the profession is less than 37 hours, employees are classified as full-time workers even if they work less than 37 hours. Hence, the category capturing normal full-time work is labelled "32-40 hours" in this article. We also show the average contractual/usual working hours for different groups of parents.

<sup>1</sup> A more detailed documentation of the Norwegian LFS is given in Bø and Håland (2002).

*Actual working hours* refer to the number of hours actually worked during the reference week. Overtime and other extra work is included, and absence because of illness, vacation, parental leave, etc. is excluded. As is the case for contractual/usual hours, actual hours in primary jobs as well as possible secondary jobs are included in the figures in the following. We differentiate between six categories: Temporarily absent the whole reference week; working 1-19 hours; working 20-36 hours; working 37-40 hours; working 41-49 hours; and working 50 hours or more. We also show the average actual working hours for various groups of employed parents, and for all fathers and mothers in various groups. Whereas average actual working hours are usually calculated only for persons actually at work during the reference week in the LFS reports, in this article we calculate averages for all employed persons. Those not at work at all in the survey week are assigned to zero hours.

The various measures for employment and working time in the LFS serve different purposes and may also give somewhat dissimilar pictures regarding parents' working hours. As entitlements and rights are often based on the contractual working hours, knowledge about people's contractual arrangements is important. However, actual working hours give a better description of how parents really spend their time and also of the difference in time spent on paid work between fathers and mothers.

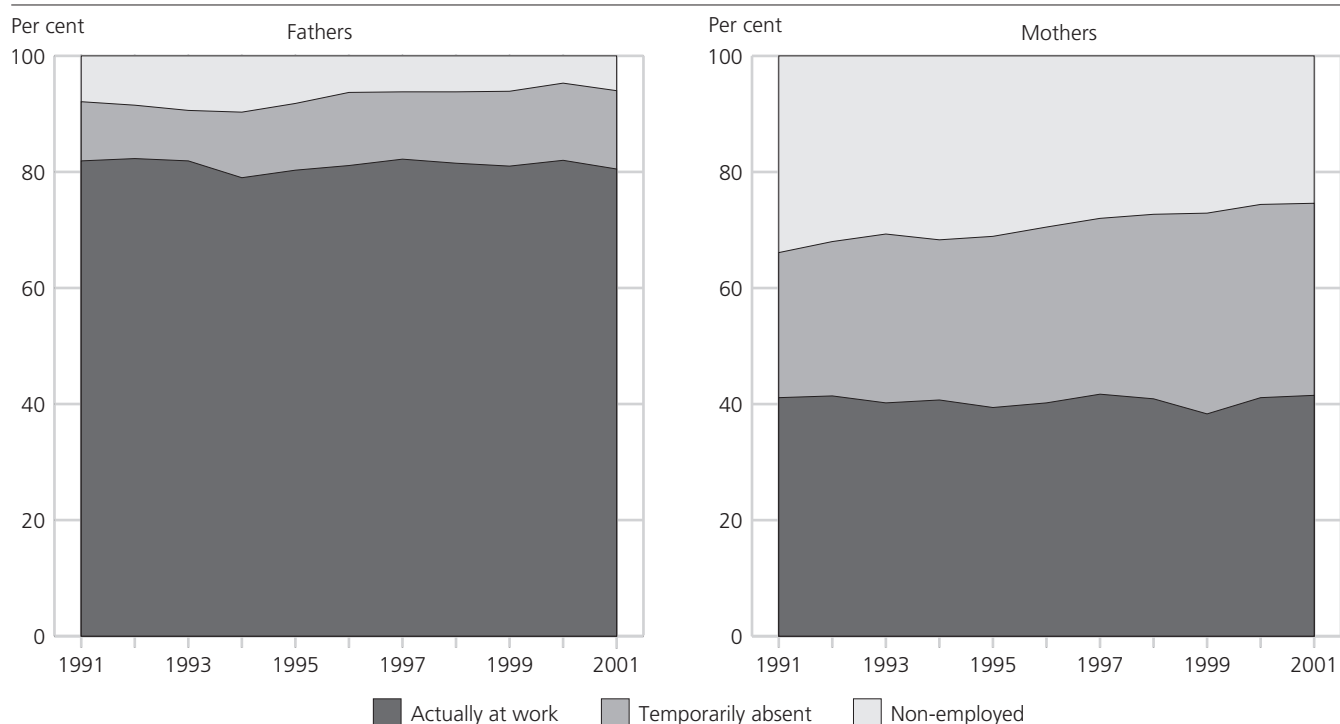
In order to be able to define groups of married/cohabiting fathers and mothers in the data, information on biological and adopted children from the Central Population Register is linked on the Survey data. We do not have information on other children in the household. Hence, persons without own children in the household, but living together with a partner's children, are not included in the analyses in this article. Information on whether people are married or cohabiting is collected both from the survey and the register. In some cases (about 5 per cent of all parents interviewed in the LFS) there is inconsistency between these sources. Such persons are excluded from the analyses. This differs from what is being done in the regular reports from the LFS, where classification of people as married/cohabiting is based solely on information given in the interview.

The data presented here are based on large samples. The sub-samples of married/cohabiting fathers and mothers with children in the various age groups in the tables vary between 2000 and 4000 in the years under study.

was actually at work in the survey week in 1991, the percentage in 2001 was 80.5. There was, however, a significant, albeit modest, increase in the proportion being temporarily absent in the survey week. In 2001 13.5 of the fathers with very young children was temporarily absent from work, - 3.3 percentage points more than in the beginning of the 1990s.

These changes most probably reflect the increasing use of the improved parental leave schemes during

the period. However, both the level of, and the increase in, fathers' temporary absence is far below that of mothers (figure 1, table 7). In 2001 as much as one in three mothers with children 0-2 years of age were temporarily absent from work, - an increase of 8 percentage points since 1991. This reflects the fact that in Norway as in most other countries, mothers are still the primary users of parental leave. It is also worth noticing that although the employment rate among mothers with children 0-2 years of age increased sig-

**Figure 1. Percentage actually at work, temporarily absent and non-employed among married/cohabiting fathers and mothers with youngest child 0-2 years. 1991-2001. Per cent**

Source: Labour Force Surveys, Statistics Norway.

**Table 1. Percentage of men employed, temporarily absent and actually at work among married/cohabiting fathers with children in various age groups. 1991-2001. Percent**

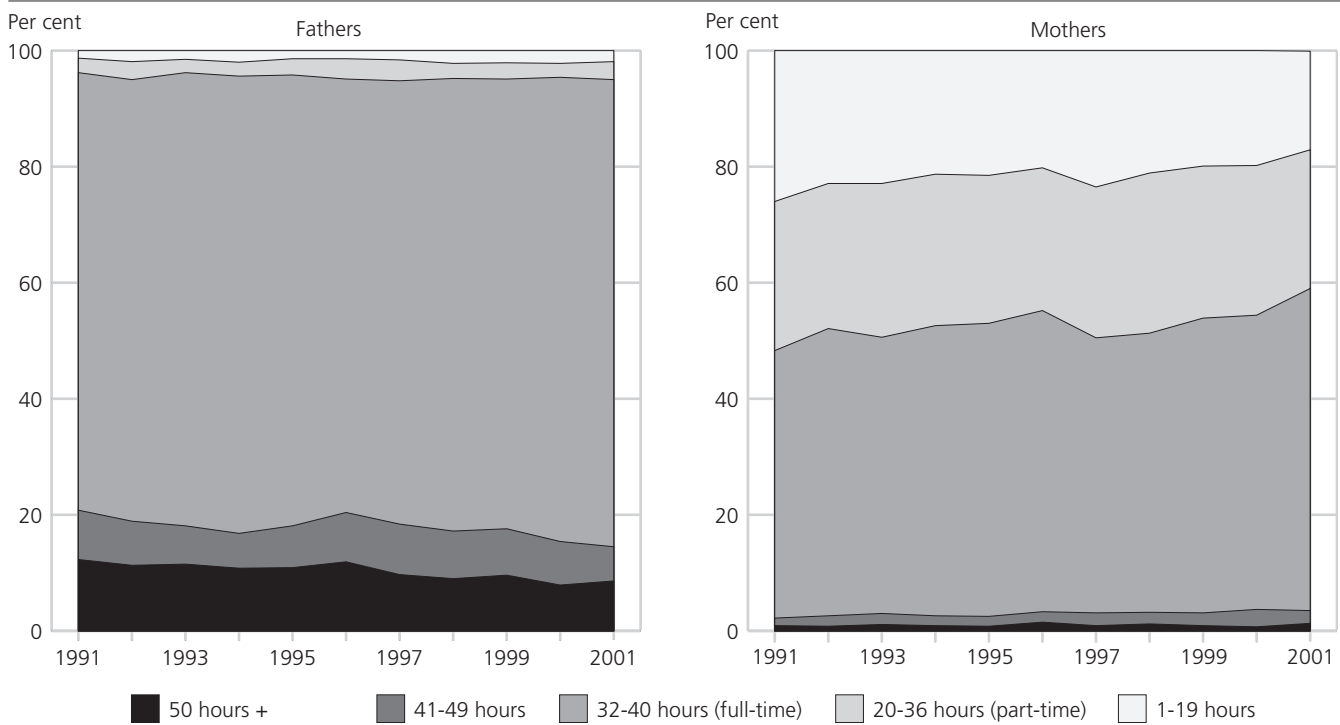
	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Change 1991-2001
<b>Children 0-2 years</b>												
Employed persons	92.1	91.5	90.6	90.3	91.8	93.7	93.8	93.8	93.9	95.3	94.0	+1.9
Temporarily absent	10.2	9.2	8.7	11.3	11.5	12.6	11.6	12.3	12.9	13.3	13.5	+3.3
At work	81.9	82.3	81.9	79.0	80.3	81.1	82.2	81.5	81.0	82.0	80.5	-1.4
<b>Children 3-6 years</b>												
Employed persons	93.6	91.1	92.0	93.2	94.9	93.4	94.3	95.3	95.1	94.4	93.5	+0.1
Temporarily absent	11.0	8.9	8.0	9.3	9.3	9.8	9.8	11.6	10.6	11.3	11.4	+0.4
At work	82.6	82.2	84.0	83.9	85.6	83.6	84.5	83.7	84.5	83.1	82.1	-0.5
<b>Children 7-10 years</b>												
Employed persons	94.9	93.5	92.1	93.2	93.3	94.9	95.2	95.2	94.0	93.9	95.5	+0.6
Temporarily absent	11.4	10.4	9.2	9.5	9.3	11.5	10.8	9.6	11.9	13.4	11.4	-
At work	83.5	83.1	82.9	83.7	84.0	83.4	84.4	85.6	82.1	80.5	84.1	+0.6
<b>Children 11-15 years</b>												
Employed persons	94.6	92.4	92.5	93.6	92.1	93.0	93.8	95.1	94.0	94.1	93.1	-1.5
Temporarily absent	10.9	9.8	9.7	9.6	9.0	11.6	10.0	9.8	11.9	11.8	12.6	+1.7
At work	83.7	82.6	82.8	84.0	83.1	81.4	83.8	85.3	82.1	82.3	80.5	-2.3
<b>Children 0-15 years</b>												
Employed persons	93.4	92.2	91.7	92.4	93.3	93.7	94.2	94.8	94.3	94.5	94.2	+0.8
Temporarily absent	10.8	9.5	8.8	9.8	9.9	11.4	10.6	11.1	12.3	12.4	12.3	+1.5
At work	82.6	82.7	82.9	82.6	83.4	82.3	83.6	83.7	82.0	82.1	81.9	-0.7

Source: Labour Force Surveys, Statistics Norway

nificantly, with 8.5 percentage points from 1991 to 2001, there was almost no increase in the proportion of mothers actually at work in the survey week. The considerable rise in the proportion of mothers being temporarily absent in the survey week followed from the improved parental leave rights during the 1990s.

A similar development was seen among Swedish mothers in connection with the extension of the parental leave schemes in Sweden in the 1980s (Jonung and Persson 1993).

**Figure 2. Contractual/usual working hours among employed married/cohabiting fathers and mothers with youngest child 0-2 years. 1991-2001. Per cent**



Source: Labour Force Surveys, Statistics Norway.

Hence, among parents with very young children we see large and rather persistent gender differences in both employment rates, temporary absence from work, and proportions actually at work. Due to an increase in mothers' employment during the 1990s, the gender gap in employment rates was slightly reduced during this decade. Yet, the gender difference in the proportion actually at work among parents with very young children remained fairly stable. In 2001 the proportion of fathers actually at work was still 39 percentage points above the proportion of mothers. Thus, the redefinition of the father's role in Norway to comprise more active involvement in family life is not yet reflected in the employment rates. However, the modest growth in temporary absence among fathers with very young children shows that rising employment during the economic upturn in the second half of the 1990s did not imply more fathers actually at work. This might be seen as a signal of an expanding family role among Norwegian fathers. It remains to be seen, however, if the more independent parental leave rights for fathers in 2000 will eventually be reflected in more temporary absence among fathers with young children.

**Contractual/usual working hours: Little part-time, but decreased long hours for fathers**

Changing cultural norms towards more active fathering have not resulted in more part-time work among Norwegian fathers. In 2001 still only about 4 percent of the employed fathers with children 0-15 years of age had a contractual part-time arrangement, and there was almost no increase to be seen from 1991 to

2001 (table 2). Also fathers with very young children (0-2 years), have a fairly low and stable part-time rate, only 5 percent in 2001 (figure 2). Accordingly, part-time adjustment in the labour market is still a far more common strategy among mothers than fathers in Norway. In spite of somewhat reduced part-time rates during the 1990s, approximately 50 per cent of employed mothers with children 0-15 years had contractual part-time work in 2001 (table 7). Among those with children 0-2 years of age the part-time rate was 41 per cent at that time (figure 2). The lower part-time rate among mothers with very young children is partly due to the fact that many of the mothers with small children and formal full-time arrangements were actually not at work during the survey week, mostly because they were on parental leave. Hence, their full-time arrangements refer to their working hours prior to the leave period.

The vast majority of Norwegian employed fathers, about 79 percent of those with children 0-15 years of age, have ordinary full-time work (32-40 hours per week), and such arrangements became somewhat more common during the 1990s, with an increase of approximately 6 percentage points from 1991 to 2001. However, long weekly hours still represent a rather common option among fathers. In 2001 some 17 percent of the employed fathers had contractual arrangements exceeding ordinary full-time work. It is important to bear in mind that contractual/usual working hours in this article include working hours in both main jobs and possible second jobs. The rather high

**Table 2. Contractual/usual working hours among employed married/cohabiting fathers with children in various age groups. 1991-2001. Percent**

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Change 1991-2001
<b>Children 0-2 years</b>												
1-19 hours	1.3	1.9	1.5	2.0	1.4	1.4	1.6	2.2	2.1	2.2	1.9	+0.6
20-36 hours (part-time)	2.5	3.1	2.3	2.4	2.8	3.5	3.6	2.6	2.8	2.4	3.1	+0.6
32-40 hours (full-time)	75.3	76.1	78.1	78.7	77.7	74.7	76.5	78.1	77.4	80.0	80.5	+5.2
41-49 hours	8.5	7.6	6.6	6.0	7.2	8.5	8.7	8.2	8.0	7.5	5.9	-2.6
50 hours +	12.3	11.3	11.5	10.8	10.9	11.9	9.7	9.0	9.6	7.9	8.6	-3.7
<b>Children 3-6 years</b>												
1-19 hours	1.0	1.2	1.3	0.9	1.1	1.2	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.5	1.4	+0.4
20-36 hours (part-time)	2.8	1.7	1.9	2.3	2.5	3.0	2.9	2.5	3.3	3.5	2.6	+0.2
32-40 hours (full-time)	72.1	74.9	74.9	76.7	77.3	74.2	74.2	76.1	77.1	76.8	78.6	+6.5
41-49 hours	9.3	7.6	8.8	8.0	7.0	8.3	7.9	9.0	8.1	8.0	7.2	-2.1
50 hours +	14.8	14.6	13.2	12.1	12.2	13.2	14.1	11.3	10.5	10.2	10.4	-4.4
<b>Children 7-10 years</b>												
1-19 hours	1.4	0.9	1.0	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.0	1.0	1.9	1.9	1.3	+0.1
20-36 hours (part-time)	2.1	2.7	2.3	2.4	2.2	3.1	2.5	2.1	3.0	2.3	2.6	+0.5
32-40 hours (full-time)	69.8	71.6	74.4	75.2	73.7	70.6	73.8	74.9	73.0	74.9	78.2	+8.4
41-49 hours	9.3	8.0	8.3	7.6	9.3	9.4	8.4	8.5	9.3	9.4	7.3	-2.0
50 hours +	17.4	16.8	14.0	13.4	13.5	15.6	14.3	13.5	12.8	11.4	10.6	-6.8
<b>Children 11-15 years</b>												
1-19 hours	1.3	1.0	1.8	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.4	1.0	1.0	1.8	+0.5
20-36 hours (part-time)	2.8	2.7	2.1	1.7	2.1	1.8	2.7	3.0	2.9	1.9	2.4	-0.4
32-40 hours (full-time)	71.9	74.0	73.2	73.0	75.1	72.4	72.5	71.5	75.0	76.9	76.7	+4.8
41-49 hours	8.8	8.8	7.7	8.5	8.6	10.4	9.6	8.2	7.2	7.5	7.9	-0.9
50 hours +	15.2	13.5	15.1	15.5	13.1	14.5	14.2	16.0	13.8	12.7	11.1	-4.1
<b>Children 0-15 years</b>												
1-19 hours	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.5	1.5	1.7	1.6	+0.4
20-36 hours (part-time)	2.6	2.6	2.2	2.2	2.5	2.9	3.0	2.5	3.0	2.6	2.7	+0.1
32-40 hours (full-time)	72.6	74.4	75.4	76.2	76.3	73.3	74.5	75.6	75.6	77.4	78.7	+6.1
41-49 hours	9.0	8.0	7.8	7.5	7.8	9.0	8.6	8.5	8.1	8.0	7.0	-2.0
50 hours +	14.7	13.7	13.3	12.7	12.2	13.5	12.8	11.9	11.4	10.2	10.0	-4.7

Source: Labour Force Surveys, Statistics Norway

**Table 3. Average number of contractual/usual working hours among employed married/cohabiting fathers with children in various age groups. 1991-2001**

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Change 1991-2001
Children 0-2 years	39.9	39.6	39.5	39.3	39.5	39.9	39.5	39.3	39.4	38.8	39.1	-0.8
Children 3-6 years	40.7	40.6	40.2	39.9	39.7	40.3	40.5	39.9	40.0	39.8	39.9	-0.8
Children 7-10 years	40.9	41.0	40.7	40.2	40.4	40.7	40.6	40.4	40.2	40.1	40.0	-0.9
Children 11-15 years	40.3	40.0	40.4	40.8	40.2	41.0	40.8	41.2	40.7	40.6	39.9	-0.4
Children 0-15 years	40.4	40.2	40.1	40.0	39.9	40.4	40.3	40.1	40.0	39.7	39.7	-0.7

Source: Labour Force Surveys, Statistics Norway

percentage of fathers with contractual/usual working hours exceeding the collective agreement of 37.5 hours per week probably reflects that some have more than one job. It is also due to the fact that many self-employed fathers work long hours. The percentage of fathers with long hours is far above the rate for mothers, with only 4 percent having such agreements (table 7). Nevertheless, there was a slight decrease in long-hours arrangements among fathers during the 1990s. From 1991 to 2001 the proportion of employed fathers with long hours decreased with about 7 percentage points. It was first and foremost the extended working hours (50 hours + per week) that became less common. Hence, if the new father's role has affected fa-

thers' contractual working hours, the outcome is not more part-time work, but somewhat less long hours. This goes for those with very young children as well as for those with somewhat older children.

The average number of contractual working hours among employed fathers is presented in table 3. In 2001 the average for fathers with children 0-15 was 39.7 hours per week. The reduction from 1991 to 2001 was fairly modest, only 0.7 hours. Fathers with very young children have somewhat shorter average weekly working hours than those with older children. As can be seen from table 2, this is not due to more part-time work in this group, but to less long hours

**Table 4. Actual working hours among employed married/cohabiting fathers with children in various age groups. 1991-2001. Percent**

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Change 1991-2001
<b>Children 0-2 years</b>												
Temporarily absent	11.1	9.2	9.6	12.5	11.6	13.4	13.2	12.3	14.5	13.1	14.4	+3.3
1-19 hours	2.6	3.4	3.5	2.7	2.7	4.2	5.8	4.9	4.0	4.9	4.0	+1.4
20-36 hours	12.8	14.3	13.9	14.3	15.2	14.3	15.7	13.9	15.3	15.6	15.2	+2.4
37-40 hours	39.3	40.3	40.0	38.4	40.2	36.1	34.7	37.7	34.7	38.5	37.6	-1.7
41-49 hours	15.4	16.8	16.5	16.1	15.2	15.1	15.7	16.4	15.3	13.9	13.6	-1.8
50 hours +	18.8	16.0	16.5	16.1	15.2	16.8	14.9	14.8	16.1	13.9	15.2	-3.6
<b>Children 3-6 years</b>												
Temporarily absent	12.7	8.8	7.8	9.1	8.9	9.6	9.5	13.0	12.0	12.0	12.2	-0.5
1-19 hours	2.0	2.9	2.9	1.8	2.7	3.5	4.3	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.5	+1.5
20-36 hours	12.7	11.8	13.6	12.7	14.3	14.9	14.7	13.8	14.5	16.2	15.7	+3.0
37-40 hours	36.3	39.2	38.8	40.9	40.2	35.1	35.3	35.8	37.6	37.6	40.0	+3.7
41-49 hours	16.7	17.6	17.5	17.3	17.0	17.5	17.2	17.1	16.2	15.4	14.8	-1.9
50 hours +	19.6	19.6	19.4	18.2	17.0	19.3	19.0	17.1	16.2	15.4	13.9	-5.7
<b>Children 7-10 years</b>												
Temporarily absent	12.0	9.7	8.6	11.6	8.6	12.2	10.1	8.9	12.7	13.0	11.9	-0.1
1-19 hours	2.7	2.8	2.9	1.4	2.9	4.1	3.8	3.8	2.5	3.9	3.6	+0.9
20-36 hours	12.0	12.5	11.4	11.6	11.4	13.5	13.9	15.2	15.2	14.3	14.3	+2.3
37-40 hours	33.3	36.1	40.0	40.6	40.0	33.8	35.4	35.4	36.7	39.0	40.5	+7.2
41-49 hours	17.3	16.7	17.1	17.4	17.1	16.2	16.5	16.5	15.2	14.3	14.3	-3.0
50 hours +	22.7	22.2	20.0	17.4	20.0	20.3	20.3	20.3	17.7	15.6	15.5	-7.2
<b>Children 11-15 years</b>												
Temporarily absent	11.5	11.8	11.6	9.1	9.8	11.3	12.0	9.0	13.9	12.5	13.6	+2.1
1-19 hours	2.3	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.4	3.8	4.0	5.1	2.5	3.8	3.7	+1.4
20-36 hours	11.5	11.8	11.6	11.4	12.2	12.5	14.7	14.1	13.9	13.8	16.0	+4.5
37-40 hours	37.9	41.2	38.4	39.8	39.0	36.3	34.7	35.9	35.4	40.0	37.0	-0.9
41-49 hours	16.1	15.3	16.3	17.0	18.3	18.8	16.0	15.4	16.5	13.8	14.8	-1.3
50 hours +	20.7	17.6	19.8	20.5	18.3	17.5	18.7	20.5	17.7	16.3	14.8	-5.9
<b>Children 0-15 years</b>												
Temporarily absent	11.8	10.6	9.6	10.8	10.6	12.1	11.3	11.9	13.3	12.6	13.1	+1.3
1-19 hours	2.4	2.6	2.7	2.4	2.4	3.6	4.6	4.0	3.3	4.0	3.7	+1.3
20-36 hours	12.3	12.7	12.6	12.4	13.5	14.2	15.1	14.2	14.5	15.2	15.3	+3.0
37-40 hours	37.0	39.1	39.3	39.8	39.5	35.4	35.0	36.1	36.1	38.4	38.5	+1.5
41-49 hours	16.3	16.6	16.8	16.6	16.7	16.5	16.4	16.4	16.0	14.6	14.6	-1.7
50 hours +	20.2	18.5	19.0	17.9	17.2	18.1	17.6	17.4	16.8	15.2	14.8	-5.4

Source: Labour Force Surveys, Statistics Norway

among those with children below 3. For those with very young children the average weekly working hours decreased with 0.8 hours from 1991 to 2001. The fact that fathers with young children on the average have shorter contractual working hours than fathers with older children may indicate that young children impact fathers' working arrangements so that very long contractual hours are to some degree avoided during the children's early infancy. However, considering the increased focus on more active fathering throughout the 1990s, we would have expected a more clear decrease in working hours for this group.

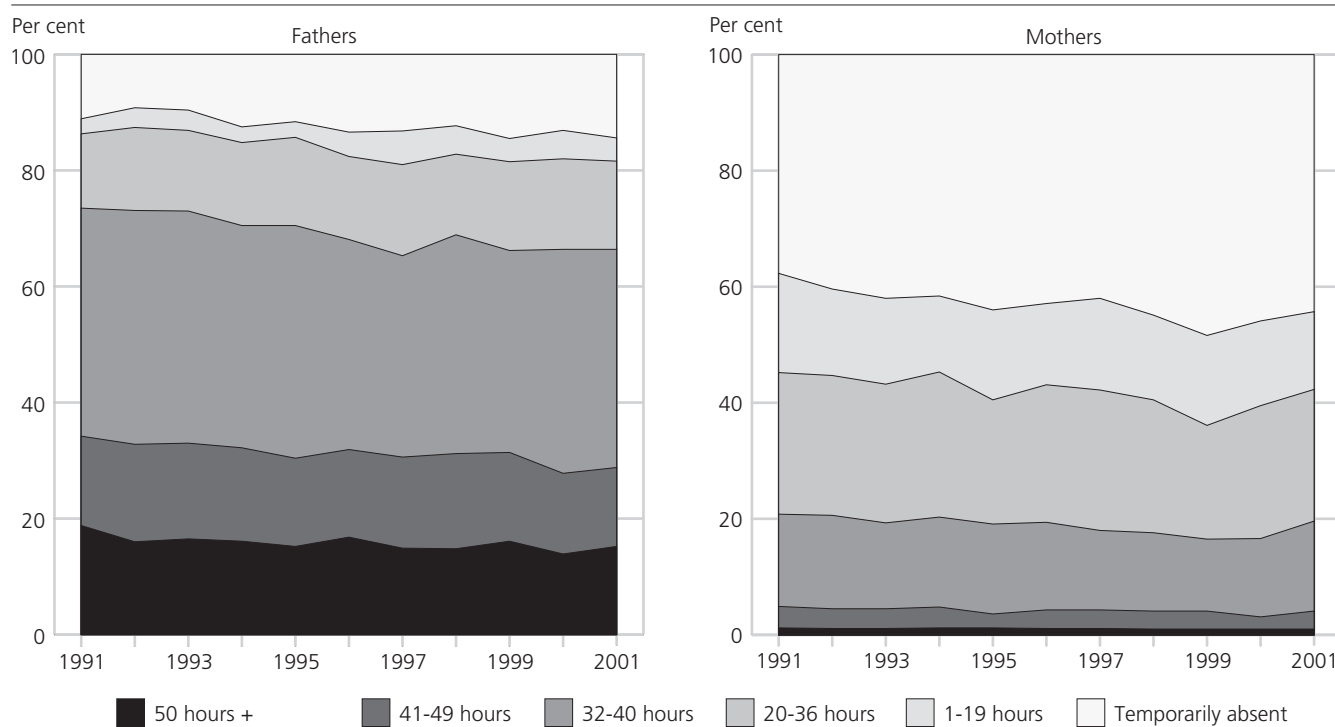
#### **Actual working hours: Declining averages among employed fathers**

People's actual working hours in the survey week may differ from their contractual hours either because they work less than agreed upon, or because of extra work or overtime. Table 4 shows that Norwegian fathers did reduce their time spent on income generating work somewhat from 1991 to 2001. However, considering the intense focus on the new father's role in the peri-

od, and also the improved leave schemes for fathers, the change in their actual working hours has been fairly modest.

Both for fathers with very young children, and for those with older children, there was a development towards more fathers working less than full-time and fewer working long hours. Whereas fairly few fathers have contractual part-time work, quite many actually work reduced hours during the reference week, and such adjustments became more widespread throughout the 1990s. In 2001 about 19 percent of the employed fathers with children 0-15 years of age worked 1-36 hours in the surveyed week, and this was about 4 percentage points more than in 1991. The pattern among fathers with very young children differs very little from the pattern of fathers with older children in this respect (figure 3).

The observed decrease in long hours actually worked among fathers is in accordance with the trends in their contractual/usual working hours, and is also

**Figure 3. Actual working hours among employed married/cohabiting fathers and mothers with youngest child 0-2 years. 1991-2001.**  
Per cent

Source: Labour Force Surveys, Statistics Norway.

**Table 5. Average number of actual working hours among employed married/cohabiting fathers with children in various age groups. 1991-2001**

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Change 1991-2001
Children 0-2 years	37.3	37.1	37.4	36.3	36.1	35.5	35.0	35.1	34.9	34.1	34.4	-2.9
Children 3-6 years	38.2	38.5	38.6	37.9	37.7	37.2	37.1	36.2	36.6	36.0	35.1	-3.1
Children 7-10 years	38.3	38.8	39.0	37.7	38.3	36.9	37.3	37.4	36.4	34.9	36.1	-2.2
Children 11-15 years	37.9	37.4	38.3	38.9	38.0	36.8	36.8	37.5	36.4	36.0	35.0	-2.9
Children 0-15 years	37.9	37.9	38.2	37.6	37.4	36.5	36.5	36.4	36.0	35.2	35.1	-2.8

Source: Labour Force Surveys, Statistics Norway.

consistent with results from Level of Living studies in Norway. In spite of this decrease, long actual working hours are still quite widespread among fathers. Approximately 30 percent of employed fathers with children 0-15 years worked more than 40 hours a week in 2001. This was about 7 percentage points less than in 1991, but still it is significantly higher than the proportion of fathers formally holding such arrangements, and also far above the level among mothers. Only 8 percent of the employed mothers with children 0-15 years worked more than 40 hours a week in 2001, and the proportion stayed almost unaltered during the 1990s (table 7).

The enhanced opportunities for parental leave during the 1990s could give reason to expect more temporary absence among employed fathers with young children. However, the changes in this respect are modest, and also a great deal smaller than what is found among mothers. Only about 14 percent of the employed fathers with children 0-2 years of age were

temporarily absent from work the whole survey week in 2001, - 3 percentage points more than in 1991 (figure 3). In contrast, as much as 44 percent of the employed mothers with very young children were temporarily absent in 2001, - 6.5 percentage points more than in 1991. Again, this reflects the fact that mothers continue to take the bulk of the parental leave period. It is also somewhat surprising that temporary absence is not particularly more common among fathers with very young children than among those with older children. As the opportunities for paid leave are most favourable during the child's first years, we would expect a somewhat more marked difference between fathers in accordance with the age of children.

In order to get a better overview of the aggregate changes in fathers' and mothers' actual working hours, and also a more concise measurement of the difference between actual and contractual hours, we have calculated the average actual working hours in the survey week from 1991 to 2001 (tables 5 and 7).

**Table 6. Average number of actual working hours among all married/cohabiting fathers (employed and non- employed) with children in various age groups. 1991-2001**

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Change 1991-2001
Children 0-2 years	34.2	33.9	34.1	33.0	33.2	33.1	33.0	32.9	32.6	32.3	32.3	-1.9
Children 3-6 years	35.6	35.3	35.6	35.4	35.6	35.0	35.0	34.3	34.7	34.2	33.1	-2.5
Children 7-10 years	36.4	36.4	35.5	34.9	35.8	35.0	35.5	35.6	34.4	32.8	34.2	-2.2
Children 11-15 years	35.8	34.6	35.4	36.4	35.4	34.3	34.5	35.8	34.2	33.8	32.8	-3.0
Children 0-15 years	35.3	34.9	35.1	34.8	34.9	34.3	34.4	34.4	33.9	33.3	33.0	-2.3

Source: Labour Force Surveys, Statistics Norway

Employed fathers with children 0-15 years of age worked 35.1 hours per week on the average in 2001. This was 2.8 hours less than in 1991, and also somewhat below the average contractual/usual hours of fathers. The decrease in fathers' actual hours in the 1990s was more pronounced than the decrease in their contractual hours, and accordingly, the difference between actual and contractual hours became a bit more marked.

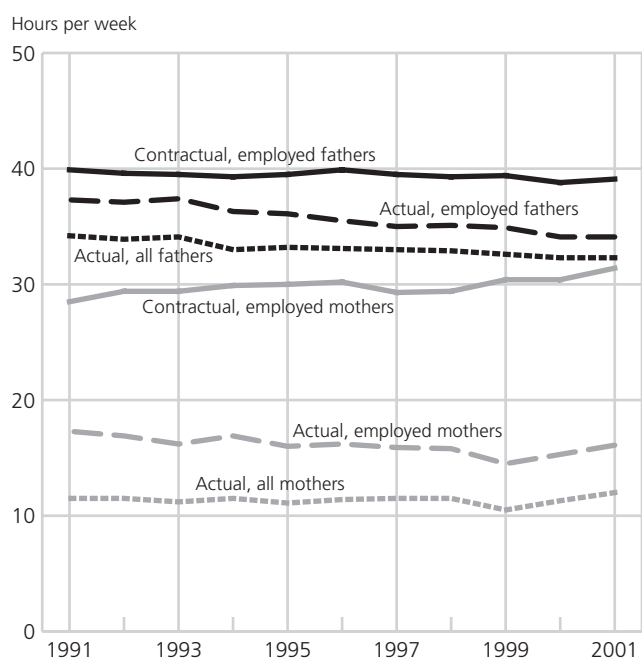
Despite a certain decrease in fathers' actual working hours since the beginning of the 1990s, fathers' time spent on income generating work still far exceeds that of mothers. This is the case irrespective of the age of the youngest child, but is particularly prominent among parents with very young children (figure 4). Looking at parents with children below 3 years of age, we find that employed mothers actually worked only 16.1 hours per week on the average in 2001, while the fathers worked 34.4 hours. In 1991 the corresponding averages were 17.3 hours for mothers and 37.3 hours for fathers. Accordingly, the gender difference was barely reduced at all from 1991 to 2001. In 2001 employed mothers still worked on average less than half of what employed fathers did.

**Including the non-employed in the averages gives a somewhat different picture of parents' working hours**

In previous sections we have analysed fathers' weekly working hours by looking at contractual/usual weekly hours and actual weekly hours for those who are employed. Changes in fathers' time spent on gainful work can also be assessed by calculating the average working hours for all fathers, both employed and non-employed. This measurement captures the effects of employment rates as well as actual working hours among the employed. Working hours among the non-employed are set to zero. Hence, this way of calculating produces somewhat lower average working hours than do calculations including employed fathers only.

Table 6 demonstrates that married/cohabiting fathers with children 0-15 years of age spent on the average 33 hours per week on income generating work in 2001, - 2.3 hours less than in 1991. Hence, the increased employment rate was outweighed by the re-

**Figure 4. Average number of contractual/usual and actual working hours among employed fathers and mothers, and average actual working hours among all fathers and mothers. Figures for married/cohabiting parents with youngest child 0-2 years. 1991-2001. Hours per week**



Source: Labour Force Surveys, Statistics Norway.

duction in actual working hours among the employed. Fathers with very small children worked on the average 32 hours per week in 2001 (figure 4). This was only modestly less than fathers with older children.

Looking at all married/cohabiting parents with children 0-15 years we find that the gender difference in average time spent on gainful work became somewhat reduced during the 1990s, due to a slight increase among mothers and a small reduction among fathers. Nevertheless, the gender difference was still marked in 2001; the average for mothers was 18.7 hours per week, and this constituted only about 57 percent of the average for fathers. The gender difference is especially pronounced among parents with children below 3 years of age, where mothers' average actual working hours made up only some 37 percent of fathers'

**Table 7. Employment, contractual/usual working hours and actual working hours among married/cohabiting mothers with children in various age groups. 1991 and 2001**

	Children 0-2 years			Children 0-15 years		
	1991	2001	Change	1991	2001	Change
<b>Employment, % of all (employed and non-employed)</b>						
Employed	66.1	74.6	+8.5	74.3	81.6	+7.3
Temporarily absent	25.0	33.1	+8.1	15.0	19.1	+4.1
At work	41.1	41.5	+0.4	59.3	62.5	+3.2
<b>Contractual/usual working hours, % of the employed</b>						
1-19 hours	26.0	17.0	-9.0	26.9	17.2	-9.7
20-36 hours (part-time)	25.7	23.9	-1.8	31.2	31.4	+0.2
32-40 hours (full-time)	46.1	55.5	+9.4	37.8	47.2	+9.4
41-49 hours	1.3	2.2	+0.9	2.4	2.8	+0.4
50 hours +	0.9	1.3	+0.4	1.7	1.4	-0.3
Average among the employed	28.5	31.4	+2.9	28.0	30.7	+2.7
<b>Actual working hours, % of the employed</b>						
Temporarily absent	37.8	44.3	+6.5	19.9	23.5	+3.6
1-19 hours	17.1	13.4	-3.7	20.2	15.0	-5.2
20-36 hours	24.4	22.7	-1.7	32.3	32.6	+0.3
37-40 hours	15.9	15.5	-0.4	19.5	21.1	+1.6
41-49 hours	3.7	3.1	-0.6	5.4	5.6	+0.2
50 hours +	1.2	1.0	-0.2	2.7	2.3	-0.4
Average among the employed	17.3	16.1	-1.2	22.7	23.0	+0.3
Average among all (employed and non-employed)	11.5	12.0	+0.5	16.9	18.7	+1.8

Source: Labour Force Surveys, Statistics Norway

average hours in 2001 (figure 4). This huge gender difference reflects both the lower employment rate among mothers during the children's early infancy, and the far lower actual working hours among employed mothers than among employed fathers.

### Summary and conclusion

During the past decades Norwegian authorities have developed work-family policies aiming at a more equal division of paid and unpaid work among mothers and fathers. The combination of paid work and family care has often been framed as a challenge first and foremost for mothers, but Norwegian fathers now increasingly meet expectations of more active participation at home. Whether, and to what extent, this has affected fathers' labour market behaviour has until now been little examined. In this article we utilise the LFS, linked with data from the Central Population Register, to assess possible changes in fathers' employment patterns and contractual and actual working hours from 1991 to 2001.

Consistent with the economic upturn in the second half of the 1990s the employment rate among fathers increased somewhat and reached about 94 percent in 2001. The proportion of fathers actually at work in the reference week stayed fairly stable, whereas there was a slight increase in the percentage being temporarily absent from work. Cultural norms of more active fathering have until now not resulted in more contractual part-time work among Norwegian fathers. The vast majority of fathers have ordinary full-time work, but long working hours still represent a quite

common option. Nevertheless, we saw a certain decrease in long-hours arrangements during the 1990s. Not only fathers' contractual working hours, but also their actual working hours were somewhat reduced throughout the 1990s. It was first and foremost very long working hours that became less widespread.

Despite a certain reduction in fathers' contractual and actual working hours, and an increase in mothers' employment rates and contractual working hours, there are still huge gender differences in Norwegian parents' labour market behaviour. Part-time work is still mainly a female option, and long weekly hours are mostly found among fathers. Moreover, the substantial amount of temporary absence from work among mothers, compared to the rather modest absence among fathers, reflects that women are still the primary users of the parental leave schemes. Considering the strong focus on the new father's role in the 1990s, and also the improved leave opportunities for fathers, the change in fathers' working hours must be judged as rather modest. Significant as the reduction in fathers' long hours might be, it is still the case that fathers rarely choose part-time arrangements and only rarely make use of more than a modest share of the parental leave schemes.

Undoubtedly, although still the main breadwinners, Norwegian fathers have become far more involved in family work during the past decades. The Norwegian time use surveys show that fathers have increased their time spent on housework and family care quite substantially since the 1970s (Kitterød 2002). However, the Labour Force Surveys show that in contrast to

what is the case for mothers, fathers' adjustments in the labour market are mostly done within a full-time contract, or even a contract of long weekly hours. Part-time work and extensive use of parental leave schemes still seem to be mainly a female model. Ellingsæter (1999b) argues that short periods of absence from work, as for instance the father's quota, does not question an individual's job commitment in the same way as reduced hours over longer periods do. Maybe this is part of the explanation why most Norwegian fathers still opt for full-time arrangements in the labour market and make modest use of their leave opportunities. The strong gender segregation in the Norwegian labour market, and the overrepresentation of men in the private sector, entails that fathers often work in professions characterised by a culture where reduced working hours and long periods of leave are not warmly welcomed (Abrahamsen 2002). However, this culture may change as new cohorts of parents enter the labour market. Whether Norwegian fathers will make more pronounced adjustments to family life in the years to come remains to be seen.

Several conditions not discussed here, may of course also have significant impact on the changing gender division of paid and unpaid work within families with small children. One such important factor is the gender differences in wages. Discussing the significance of wages is, however beyond the scope of this article. Also, more detailed analyses of the LFS are needed in order to explore possible divergences in labour market behaviour between fathers in various sectors and trades, between fathers with various numbers of children, various levels of education and differences between fathers and men in other life cycle stages. In this article, we have explored parents' working hours by looking at groups of fathers and groups of mothers separately. Analyses of couples based on information on both fathers and mothers in the same household will give an even better understanding of changes in parents' labour market behaviour and working hours, and also of differences between various groups of parents.

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