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**From Women's Rights
to Gender Equality Policies
Example: Finland's Parental Leave Policy
by Ronald Wiman
Finnish National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL)**

Equality – Oriented Social Policies are Drivers for Social and Economic Development

- **Gender equality policies are elements in broader equity orientation**
- Long history of gender equality policies in Nordic Countries
 - Hundred years of promotion of women's rights
 - Women's role in national reconstruction and development
 - Gender equality mainstreaming
 - Men's role and potential contribution coming into focus
- Finland and other Nordic Countries are examples on how rapid economic growth and equity can be combined (The World Bank 2006)
- Gender equality is a joint interest of men and women, including mothers and fathers
 - Example: parental leave system in Finland
- Gender equality is a **joint mission** of women and men

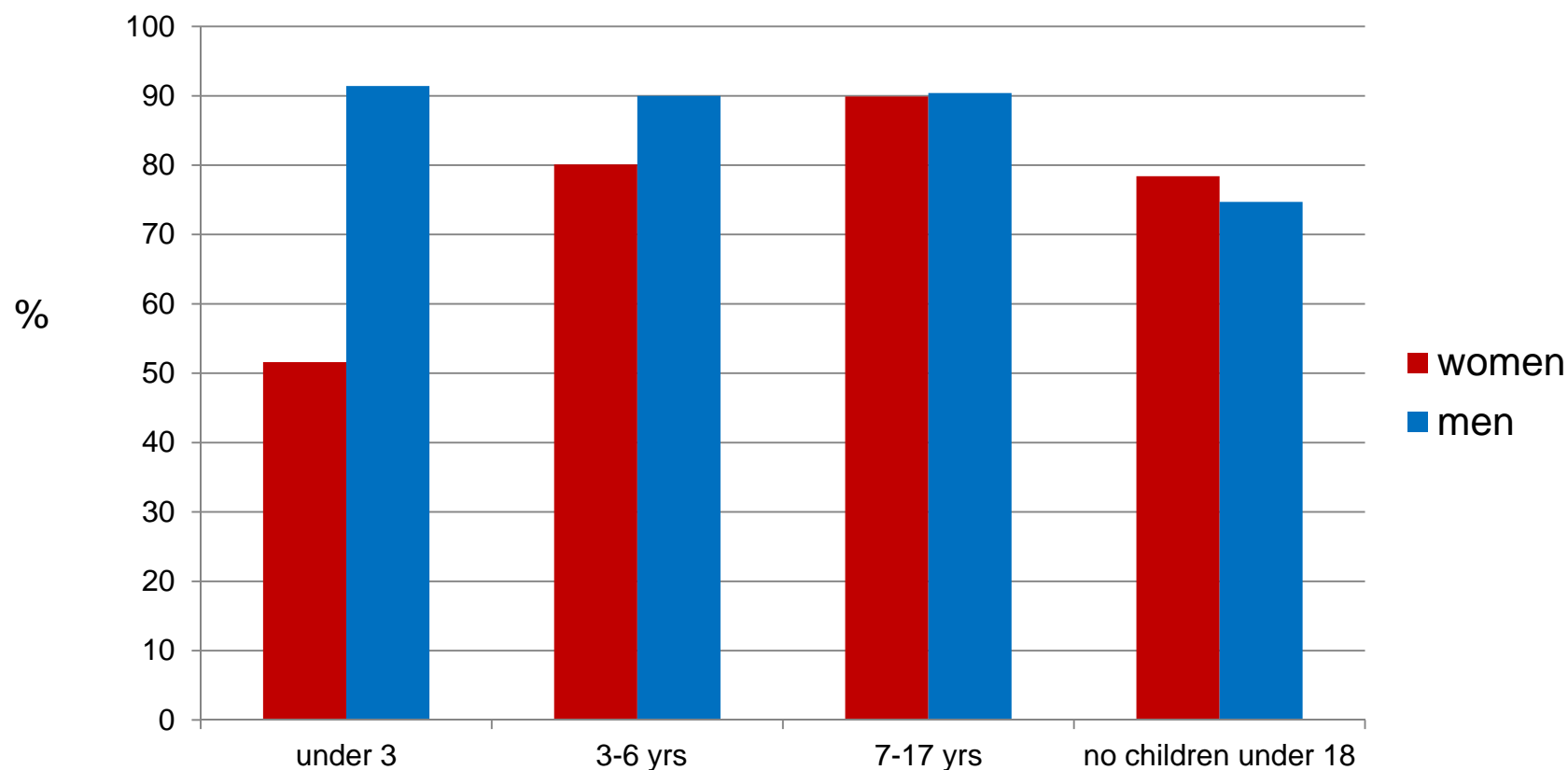


Decent Work – A Right For All

- Work has instrumental and intrinsic value for human beings – for men and for women
- Decent work (ILO) =
 - Right to work
 - Rights at work
 - Right to negotiate
 - Right to social protection
- Finland has one of the highest labor force participation rates of women (including mothers) – and very high well-being of children (UNICEF)
- A flexible and *realistic* choice between work and family is supported by reasonable level of **enabling social policy measures** (in cash and in kind)



Employment Rate in Finland (2012), by gender and the age of youngest child



Source: Dr. Johanna Lammi-Taskula/ Data:Labor Force Survey/Statistics Finland

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Parental Leave Entitlements in Finland

Month	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
M other 17,5 weeks	++++	++++	++++	++++	++							
E ither 26 weeks					++	++++	++++	++++	++++	++++	++	
F ather 3+6 weeks	+++										++	++++
Other entitlements supporting families' freedom of choice												

+Until 3rd birthday of the child: Freedom of choice between

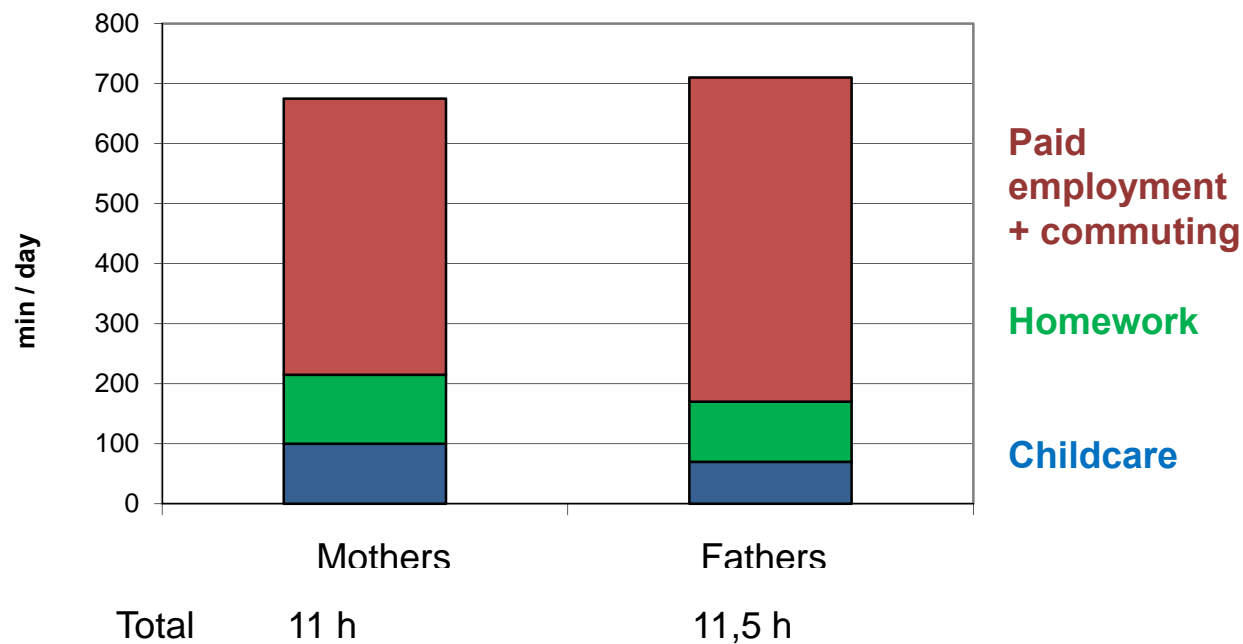
a) Public (affordable) day care or

b) Home care subsidy

+ The 'Father's Month' can be used until the child is 2 years old



Time Use by Parents with Children Under School Age (During weekdays)



Source: Dr. Johanna Lammi-Taskula / Time Budget Study by Statistics Finland

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Policies Empowering Families to Make Choices

- Agreed by labor market parties:
Employers + Employees + Government
- Aims:
 - 1. Rights and well-being of children
 - 2. Enabling both parents to share the joy and responsibility of parenthood
- The System:
 - Parental leave with 70-90% pay
 - Until age 3: Right to choose
 - A. Municipal affordable day care or
 - B. Home care allowance (350-500 e/mo)
 - + Other entitlements
- Strong support by parents – both by fathers and mothers
- Need for reforms: increasing father's share



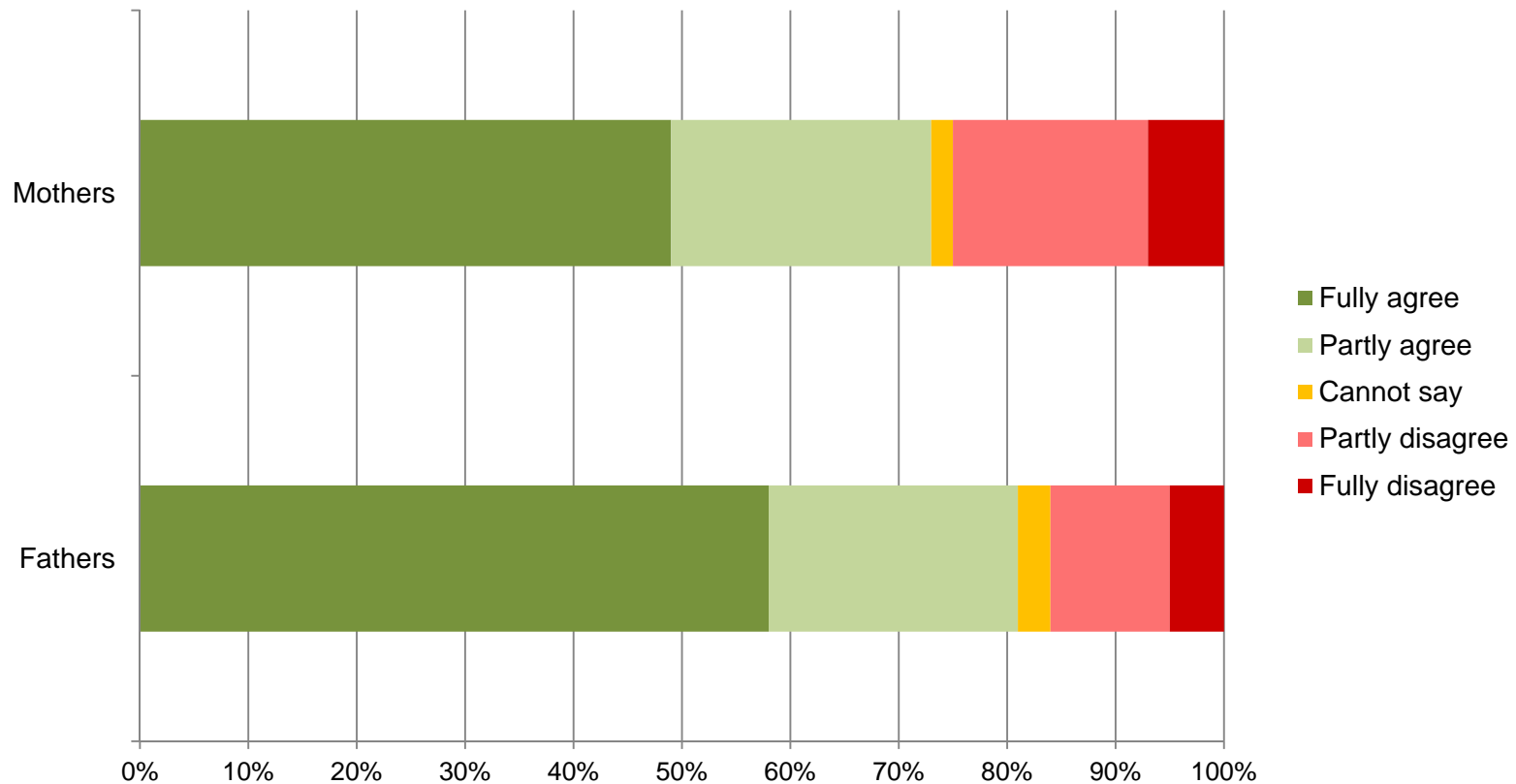
Proposal: 6 for mother + 6 for father + 6 for either =18 months

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”The universal right of every child to daycare services is unquestionable”

Graph: Opinions of parents to two-year-old children on this statement:



Source: THL Family Leave Study 2013–2015 Dr. Minna Salmi



Gender Equality – A Joint Mission

- More equal societies do better socially and economically
- Equality - oriented social policies, including family policies that **promote gender equality and rights of the child**, are **drivers for ethically, socially and economically sustainable development**
 - Support children’s rights to development
 - Enable mothers and fathers to participate in society and working life and child care more equally
 - Are strongly supported by fathers and mothers
- Governments should equalize the length of earnings-related parental leave specifically assigned to the mother/the father →
 - Would give both parents equal right to take responsibility of childcare
 - Would equalize the labor market impact of parental leave on women/men
- **Families prefer freedom of choice, Government policies can enable or restrict their possibilities to exercise this freedom. Restrictions should be used with caution – after proper impact assessment.**

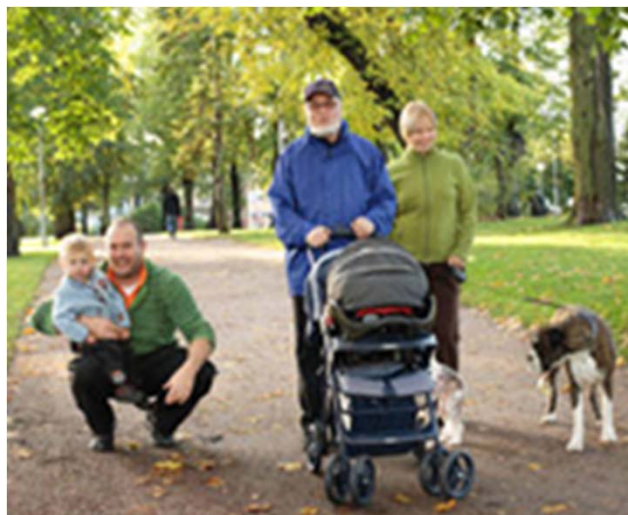


Conclusions/ recommendations for family policy development

1. Start from the universally endorsed **rights** of children, women -and men.
2. **Ask families** their realities and priorities (parents and children – and grandparents and..)
3. **Assess systematically impacts** of policies before and evaluate them after +learn from results.
4. Study and **develop the whole SYSTEM** of policies and services (Whole-of-Government – Approach)
5. **Apply globally agreed norms and principles into local context** in dialogue with local stakeholders.
6. **Involve women better** in decision making – but give also men a voice and a role in family policies.



شكرا جزيلاً Thank You



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Global Social Policy Information Package

www.thl.fi/gsp-info

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