

“Forced” Paternity Leave The Icelandic experience



Three main currents in gender relations in the last decades



- 1. Mothers enter the labour market
- 2. Socializing of child care
- 3. Increased participation of men in family life

The new legislation. May 2000



- Maternity/Paternity leave – 9 months
 - Not assignable rights 2 x 3 months:
 - Mother: 3 months
 - Father: 3 months (as from January 1, 2003)
 - Joint right: 3 months
- Ends when the child reaches 18 months
 - Special provisions in case of multiple birth, stillbirth, miscarriage and illness of mother and newborn child

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Rights to payments

- 80% of average wages for the last 12 (24) months
 - Ending 2 months prior to birth
- Minimum payments for those with low wages (in part-time work)
- Payments through a special fund
 - Financed by insurance levy = % of wages – paid by the employers



Flexibility

- When in agreement with the employer the parent can take the leave:
 - In fragments (at least one (two) week(s) at a time)
 - With part-time work (f.ex. 50% work – 50% leave)
- If no agreement with the employer the worker has the right to take the leave all at one's
- The parents can divide/take the joint part of the leave as they wish



Common provisions

- Protection against dismissal
- Accumulation of rights

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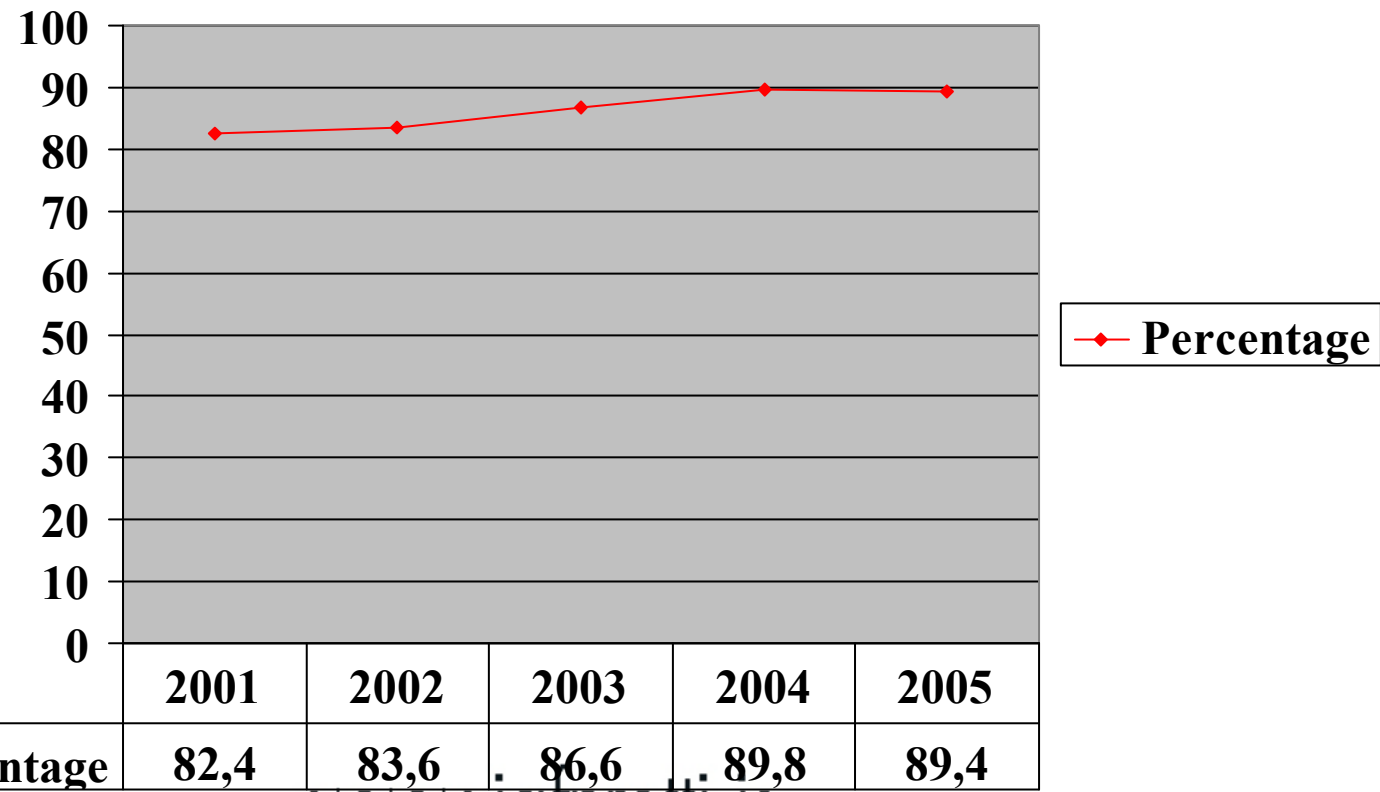
Goals

- That the child will enjoy close contact with both the father and the mother
- Make it possible for both men and women to combine paid work and family life

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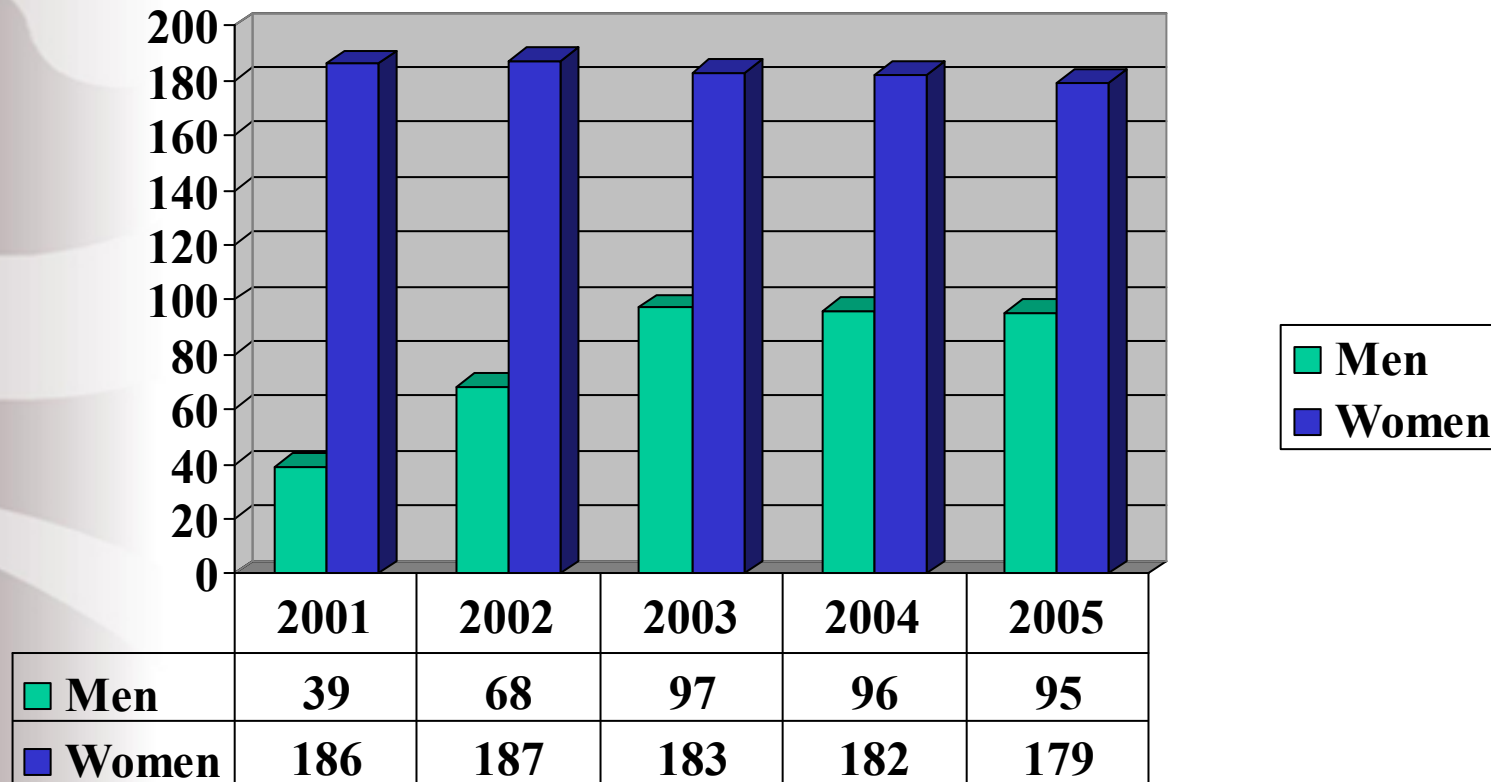


Fathers on leave





Average number of days



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Percentage not using all their individual right



	Men	Women
•		
• 2001	5,1%	0,9%
• 2002	10,1%	0,8%
• 2003	14,2%	1,0%
• 2004	17,9%	1,1%
• 2005	18,3%	0,1%

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Percentage using more than their individual right



	Men	Women
•		
• 2001	14,5%	94,2%
• 2002	13,9%	93,4%
• 2003	16,1%	90,9%
• 2004	17,1%	90,5%
• 2005	19,2%	90,4%

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Opinion polls

- Gallup Mars 2003:
 - 85% say that it is positive that men use their right to 3 – 6 months paternity leave, 99% say that it is positive that women do it.
- Women are more positive than men towards the paternity leave, younger people are more positive than older, 73,7% of employers are positive

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The experience

- I love being on paternity leave. I think it's primarily about spending good time with the baby, as much time as possible with the baby, which I find invaluable... It's also about shouldering the responsibility... Besides, I find the time that I spend with my daughter so rewarding and relaxing that I couldn't do without it.
- [Guðmundur 32 years old]



Reactions

- We don't seem to have any attitude problem here, that people look down on men on paternity leave, I think it is quite the opposite. Now you are regarded as weird if you don't use the paternity leave.
- [Ari 34 years old]



Reactions

- It didn't have any effect on me that child rearing is traditionally a woman's job. It didn't discourage me from taking the paternity leave, not at all. You just miss out on so many things in life when you hang on to old prejudices and ideas. And I found that everybody was receptive to this. There were no problems with my colleagues or supervisors, and I didn't get frowned upon. Why should I be? What's abnormal about a father taking care of his child? [Kristján 43 years old]

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Employers

- Our general policy is to accept what the prospective father suggests regarding his paternity leave, that it takes very weighty reasons for the superior to try to influence how the leave is taken. I can only recall one case where an agreement was reached to do it differently from what the employee had suggested.
- [Male manager, 57 years old. Male dominated workplace]

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Employers

- I: Do you feel there is anything negative about the parental leave and men's use of it?
- E: No, nothing. I think it is one of the biggest steps we have taken to achieve gender equality.
- [Female executive director, 39 years old. Male dominated workplace]



Icelandic results

- The only force needed to get fathers on paternity leave is real social possibilities
- Mothers who “allow” fathers to use the sharable time are stigmatized
- Fathers are doing what they have said for many years that they want to do, namely spending time with their children!

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