How do immigrants use parental leave in Sweden?

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Introduction:
- Immigrants in Sweden
- Parental Leave
- Immigrants & Parental leave
- Theory of disadvantage

Projects:
- Immigrant women who gave birth in Sweden
- Women immigrating with child/ren
- Immigrant Fathers
Immigrants in Sweden

- Foreign-born 15% of the population but a larger share of the population in childbearing ages
- Immigrant women have higher fertility, partly because of the migration effect of newly arrived immigrants but also higher risk of third and fourth child
  - TFR 2.2 for foreign-born and 1.8 for Swedish-born
- Poor labour market situation, especially for immigrant women

- How does parental leave system affect the situation; incentive to work or obstacle?
Parental Leave in Sweden

- Sweden has residence-based, universal social policies directed towards working individuals
- Individual policies with emphasis on gender equality
- Parental-leave benefit is based on prior earnings and a flat rate for parents not active in the labor market.
- Parental leave is 8 months to each parent, but parents can transfer days (except quotas)
- Can be used until the child is 8 years old (since 2014 to 12 years)
• Differences in labor market situation and fertility behavior lead to the expectation that parental leave use will vary.

• As family policy is closely connected to labour market participation, parental leave use becomes a reflection of labour market integration.

• The question of immigrants’ parental leave use is of major policy relevance, and is emerging on the agenda in Swedish politics.

• *Do Sweden need to restrict the generous and flexible policy?*
Theory of disadvantage

- Immigrant -> disadvantage in the labour market
- Women -> double disadvantage
- Particular geo-cultural groups -> triple disadvantage

- A job before childbearing may be seen as impossible
- In turn, no job before childbearing results in a low benefit during parental leave
- After leave, even harder to get a job?
Theory of disadvantage

- Earnings-related benefits and job protection during leave normally serve as protection and an incentive to combine work and children.

- However, the same policy may have a negative impact for immigrants, resulting in low benefit level during parental leave and a more disadvantaged situation after leave.

- No easy solution: generous benefits to non-working parents provide incentives for women to stay out of the labour market.
Data

- SWEDISH POPULATION REGISTERS (yearly information on demographic, socio-economic, migratory... characteristics)
  - Country of birth & Citizenship
  - Net days of parental leave
  - Labor market participation
  - Parity
  - Migration date (year)
Immigrant women who gave birth in Sweden
Aims

• This study investigates:

  – whether there are differences in use of the parental leave between immigrant and Swedish-born women.

  – whether there are differences in the use by timing and duration
Results

Number of Parental leave days one and two year after birth by immigrant background

a) Year 1

b) Year 2
Conclusions

• Immigrant mothers use parental leave more intensively than Swedish-born mothers.

• Longer time in Sweden leads to pattern similar to Swedish-born mothers.

• Labor market status explain part of differences, especially for newly arrived immigrants.

• Immigrant women are less able to exploit the flexibility of leave, perhaps caused by un-observed characteristics on labor market and/or lack of knowledge of parental leave regulations.
Women migrating with children
Women migrating with children

• During the first years immigrants have lower employment rates and lower earnings

• In Sweden, parental leave benefits are based on residency and leave can be used until the child is 12 years old.

• Newly arrived immigrant parents get access to whole leave.
Research Questions

1) Do immigrants use parental leave to different degree during their first year in Sweden?

2) Will parental leave use restrict or facilitate the entrance to the labor market?

Aim: shed light on how parental leave policy affects the integration of immigrants; Parental leave as obstacle or facilitator?
First Conclusions

• Use of parental leave varies extensively between mothers of different origins
• It seems that parental leave is associated with labor market participation rather than limits it
• What happens after leave?
Immigrant fathers’ use of parental leave in Sweden
Research questions

- Are immigrant fathers less able to use leave because of their more precarious situation?
  - Do they “adapt” with time in Sweden?
  - Do they follow the same development of increasing leave use?

Outcome

- Fathers’ parental leave days during the child’s first two years:
  - 0 days
  - up to the quota
  - more than the quota
Do immigrant fathers increase leave use with time in Sweden?

Distribution of fathers, by time since migration and length of parental leave use, 1995-2010
Do immigrant fathers’ leave use change over the period 1995 to 2010?

Distribution over time of fathers who took more than the quota, 1995-2010
Conclusions

- Immigrant fathers use parental leave
- Immigrant fathers do increase leave use with time in Sweden
- Over time, Swedish-born fathers increased their leave-use more than immigrant fathers
- Differences in leave use between immigrant and Swedish-born fathers persist, even when socio-economic and demographic characteristics considered
Implications

- Need of interventions with information regarding rights and benefits to all parents in Sweden.

- Labour market conditions are crucial for leave use, attention needed to the interaction between these two policy areas.