

Family Policy Knowledge Across the Life Course

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People's knowledge of the existence of social support programmes and their entitlements has for long been identified in the literature as one of the main determinants of benefit take-up. Despite that, the empirical evidence that would describe and analyse the degree of knowledge in the general population is rather scarce. Yet, particularly in situations that can be anticipated and planned, sufficient knowledge of welfare support may facilitate people's ability to cope with potentially adverse effects of their new situation. One such example is the transition to parenthood, which is disproportionately affecting women's labour market activity and prospects compared to those of men. In the family policy research, the issue of policy take-up is often mentioned in the context of fathers' persistently low use of their paternity and parental leave entitlements. Though little do we know about whether men are aware of these policies and their own entitlements.

In this research, I am interested whether and how people develop their knowledge of family policies. Does their knowledge increase as they age and transition to a stable relationship, or when they start planning a family? Or does it only increase when expecting a child, or even following childbirth? Are women more aware of family policies and their entitlements compare to men? Does knowledge differ by socio-economic status? And finally, are people more knowledgeable about policies with a long tradition compared to policies introduced more recently? I use data from the module "Family Policy Awareness" designed specifically for this purpose. It was fielded in the Netherlands as a special study within the LISS Panel data collection in October and November 2021. The sample was limited to all women and men who were between 20 and 40 years old at the time of the data collection. The policies in question are maternity, paternity and parental leave, childcare allowance and child benefits.

Preliminary Results

Figure 1. Responses to a question “Have you heard of the following policies?”

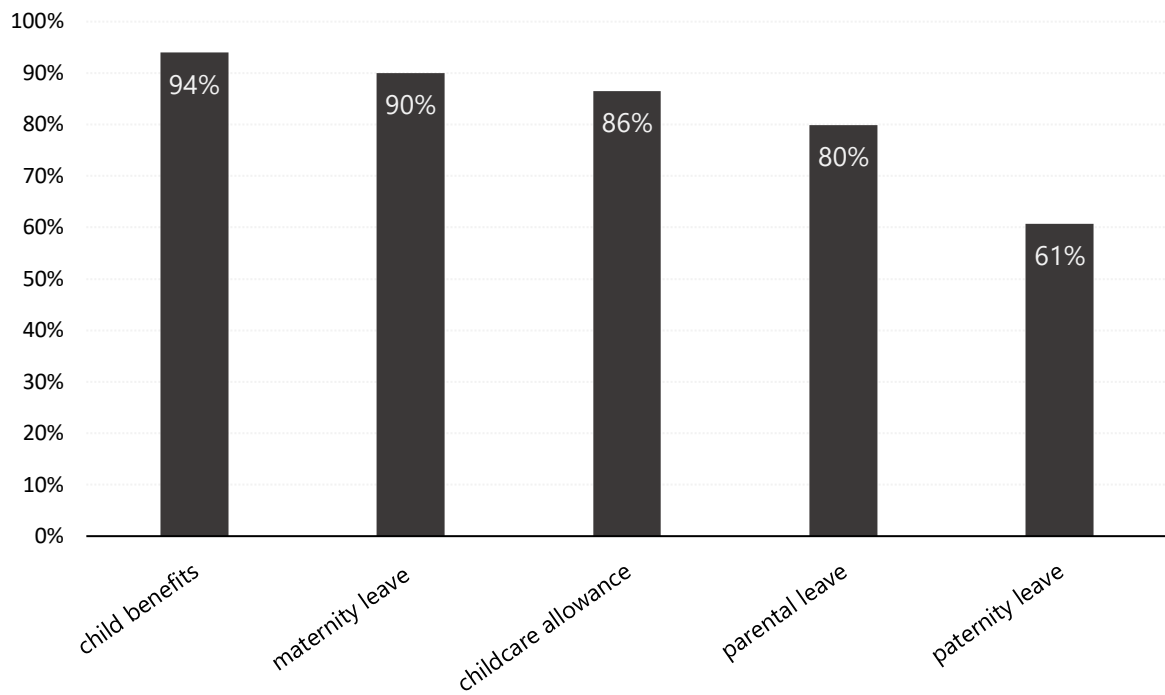
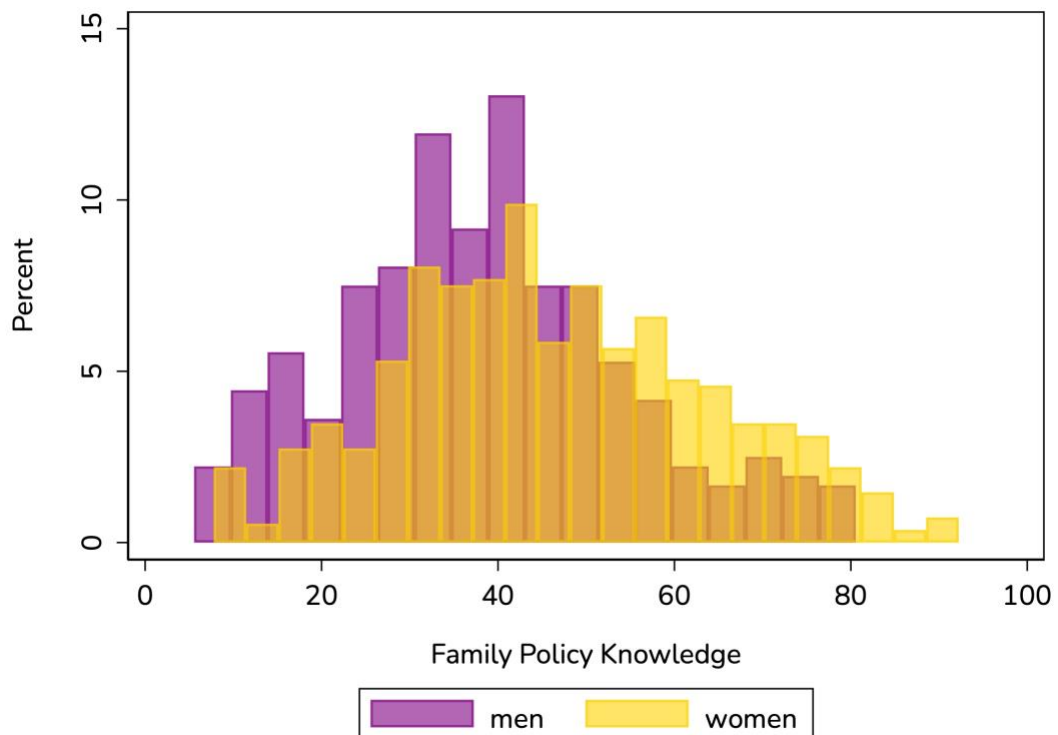


Figure 2. Gender differences in family policy knowledge



Note: Family Policy Knowledge scale (x-axis) corresponds with the percentage of correctly answered questions about individual family policies.

Figure 3. Family policy knowledge across the life course

