

# Engaging Men in Unpaid Care Work:

AN ADVOCACY BRIEF FOR EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

ADVOCACY BRIEF



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# Introduction

**Unpaid care work is often considered a secondary issue, but it's one of the key drivers of women's inequality.**

Unpaid care work is often considered a secondary issue, but it's one of the key drivers of women's inequality. In Eastern Europe it is also an element in continuing low fertility as the prospect of having to shoulder most of the unpaid care forces women to choose between having children and having a career.

Over the past 10 years, new data on men and gender relations has emerged from the region. Such data provides evidence on ways in which equality in caregiving is good not only for women's empowerment and children's well-being, but how men's caregiving is also good for men themselves. Research shows<sup>i</sup> that involved fathers feel more emotionally connected to their partners and to their children, and that they live happier, longer lives. This advocacy brief explores how men's (and women's) beliefs, attitudes and practices, as well as weak societal support for shared caregiving, impact gender equality at the household level. This advocacy brief highlights the need to transform men's gender-inequitable practices in relation to family life – and dismantle the underlying factors that perpetuate inequality.

This advocacy brief contains key recommendations for policymakers and practitioners on how to transform the state of fathers in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. These recommendations will serve as advocacy “action points” for countries that belong to the Eastern European and Central Asia (EECA) MenEngage Platform<sup>ii</sup>. The EECA MenEngage Platform is a network initiated by the EECA Regional Office of UNFPA, the United Nations reproductive health and rights agency, in collaboration with Promundo-US, MenEngage Alliance and UNFPA Country Offices in the EECA region.<sup>iii</sup> This regional platform seeks to provide a collective voice on the need to challenge

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<sup>i</sup> See *State of the World's Fathers* available at <https://sowf.men-care.org>

<sup>ii</sup> EECA MenEngage Platform <http://eecamenengage.net/en>

<sup>iii</sup> The region includes Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, as well as Kosovo (UNSCR 1244).

harmful gender norms, including through the engagement of men and boys alongside women and girls, to build and improve the field of practice around gender-transformative programming and advocating before policy-makers at local, national and regional levels.

This advocacy brief uses data from the United Nations, particularly UNFPA and UNICEF; the International Men and Gender Equality Studies (IMAGES) conducted in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Moldova; the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); the International Labour Organization; country-driven time-use research studies such as those from Ukraine; and other existing reports and publications on fatherhood and caregiving from global and regional partners in the EECA region. It also draws on analysis and recommendations from the MenCare Campaign's State of the World's Fathers 2015 report (<https://sowf.men-care.org>). Additionally, the evidence presented here builds upon the good practices and lessons learned resulting from the partnership between UNFPA's EECA Regional Office and Promundo on engaging men and boys. As part of this partnership, Promundo and UNFPA have conducted regional mappings of male-engagement initiatives, carried out trainings on gender-transformative approaches and collaborated on research, policy advocacy and programming.



PHOTO: UNFPA KYRGYZSTAN

# 2

## Why an advocacy brief on men and fatherhood?

*I remember my father teaching me to ride a bike. He bought it, brought it home and then ran beside me as I rode the bike. It was great! There were many wonderful moments [with my father], but I remember the bike best.*

—Male focus-group respondent, Kyrgyzstan<sup>1</sup>

**Fatherhood is a promising entry point to challenge inequitable divisions in the paid and care economy, improve sexual and reproductive health and rights, and prevent violence against women and girls.**

There has been increasing recognition among researchers, policymakers, development practitioners and activists of the crucial role that men and boys play in promoting gender equality. The need to promote positive gender norms around masculinity is now reflected in the global gender-equality agenda. Evidence shows that men’s gendered beliefs, perceptions and practices have an enormous impact on the lives of women and girls. For example, if a man believes he should be the sole decision-maker in the household, this limits women’s and girls’ agency over their own health and family resources. Rigid ideas about what it means to be a man are also often harmful to men and boys themselves; if norms on the gendered division of labour stipulate that it is not manly to take care of children, for example, generations of men have reduced empathetic ties towards younger people. As stated by UNFPA, “working towards gender equality – by empowering women and engaging men – is fundamental to achieving a host of development outcomes, including reducing poverty, improving health and addressing other population concerns”.<sup>2</sup> Fatherhood, in particular, is a promising entry point to challenge inequitable divisions in the paid and care economy, improve sexual and reproductive health and rights, and prevent violence against women and girls.

Attention to the importance of men’s roles in caregiving and domestic work is not new. Global discussions about men’s and women’s domestic roles date back to the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, and to the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing. Both of these meetings, with strong global consensus, articulated

the obvious roles of men in gender equality and caregiving, and these roles have since been revisited many times in other meetings and agreements. Over the years, many leading voices on women's rights have proclaimed that full social, cultural, political and economic equality for women and girls requires a revolution in the lives of men and boys – including in men's participation in domestic life.<sup>3</sup>

However, despite landmark conventions on the importance of men's roles as caregivers, these global visions have not translated into tangible societal changes. In the EECA region, women are still more burdened by household chores than men, spending an average of three more hours on household chores per day, even though they work only 1.5 hours fewer in the paid workplace.<sup>4</sup> There is also relatively weak support for parents who wish to be both caregivers and participate in the workforce. Instead, governments in many countries grant generous leave provisions after birth for mothers while providing little incentive to encourage men to take on their fair share of childcare. Additionally, a decrease in the provision of public childcare services and an increase in fees have resulted in only 16.5% enrolment of under-3 children in nursery school.<sup>5</sup> Such cultural and structural factors influence couples' desire for children, and the role men and women expect to have for themselves after their child is born. In societies where women are expected to shoulder the burden of both childcare and domestic work, they may be more hesitant to have children. Indeed, high rates of childlessness among women (particularly higher-educated women) may be partly attributed to the conflict between having a career and motherhood.

**Despite landmark conventions on the importance of men's roles as caregivers, these global visions have not translated into tangible societal changes.**

### Timeline on United Nations Conventions and caregiving<sup>iv</sup>

**1979** – The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) requires that State Parties take all appropriate measures “to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women” (Article 5). The division of unpaid care work is clearly such a practice. More specifically, CEDAW also notes that State Parties must ensure “the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children” (Article 5).

**1989** – The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Article 18, states that both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child. In addition, General Comment No. 15 (2013) on “the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health” highlights the importance of engaging fathers in children’s well-being, maternal and child health and nutrition, and family planning and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) issues, as well as the importance of quality time spent between fathers and their children, especially for positive role-modelling for boys.

**1994** – The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) calls for “the equal participation of women and men in all areas of family and household responsibilities, including family planning, child rearing and housework”.

**1995** – The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action stresses the importance of addressing the gender imbalance in paid and unpaid care work.

**2015** – The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework recognizes engaging men and boys as a key strategy to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls. For UNFPA, transforming gender norms and changing gender-discriminatory practices is important for achieving the following SDG targets:

- » Eliminate all forms of discrimination, violence and harmful practices against all women and girls (targets 5.1; 5.2; 5.3).
- » Ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development (target 4.7).
- » Ensure access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (target 5.6); and ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes (target 3.7).
- » Promote shared responsibility of unpaid care and domestic work (target 5.4).
- » Support women’s equal rights to economic resources, such as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources (target 5.a).
- » Ensure women’s political participation and leadership (target 5.5).
- » Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels (target 5.c).

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<sup>iv</sup> Excerpted with permission from Levkov, R., et al. *State of the World’s Fathers: A MenCare Advocacy Publication*. Washington, D.C.: Promundo, Rutgers, Save the Children, Sonke Gender Justice and the MenEngage Alliance, 2015.

# Why is fatherhood important for men?



*As a young man, my father... couldn't spend time with us; he was a steel worker who laboured hard. But one time he said, "Come, let's play football." We played all day and I got tired. I was so happy, and I learned. Even though I am fat now, I can still play well since that day.*

—Sami, Turkey<sup>6</sup>

Fathers offer one of the greatest opportunities to push the gender-equality agenda forward faster than ever before. As stated in the State of the World's Fathers report,<sup>7</sup> fathers' relationships with children in all communities, and at all stages of a child's life, have profound and wide-ranging impacts on children that last a lifetime.<sup>8</sup> Overall research on fathers' impact on children's lives suggests that: fathers matter for children's emotional and intellectual development; fathers matter as children grow up and not just in the early years of life; fathers may matter differently for boys and girls in some households and in some parts of the world; and fathers hold an important caregiving and developmental role in their own right and as co-caregivers with mothers and other caregivers.<sup>9</sup>

**Research shows that men who report close, non-violent connections with their children live longer, have fewer mental and physical problems, are less likely to abuse drugs, are more productive at work and report being happier than fathers who do not report this kind of connection with their children.**

By expanding the definition of fatherhood for men beyond being sole financial provider and protector for the family, space is created for men to connect with others in relationships of greater emotional honesty and empathy.<sup>10</sup> Research shows that men who report close, non-violent connections with their children live longer, have fewer mental and physical problems, are less likely to abuse drugs, are more productive at work and report being happier than fathers who do not report this kind of connection with their children.<sup>11, 12, 13</sup> Men themselves change in diverse ways, biologically and psychologically, when they take on caregiving roles. In short, fathers influence their children's development and children influence their fathers' development. Fathers who are more involved also have female partners who report greater relationship satisfaction and stronger feelings of support. As this advocacy brief will show, fathers' involvement is necessary to ensure the continued empowerment of women.

# 4

## How do men and women spend their time in the EECA region?

*In order to understand how unpaid care work is distributed among men and women and how this is underpinned by gender-inequitable norms (amongst other factors), we need to know how men and women use their time differently. For this, we will look at data from time-use studies that measure the tasks men and women carry out throughout the day. Given the limitations around the accuracy of time-use studies,<sup>v</sup> this analysis will focus on patterns of inequality rather than compare specific disparities in time use between countries.*

Globally, most societies are still a long way from achieving equality between men and women when it comes to unpaid care work in the home. What do we mean by “unpaid care work”? The former UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Ms. Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, defines it as including:

*“Domestic work (meal preparation, cleaning, washing clothes, water and fuel collection) and direct care of persons (including children, older persons and persons with disabilities, as well as able-bodied adults) carried out in homes and communities”, with no financial payment.<sup>14</sup>*

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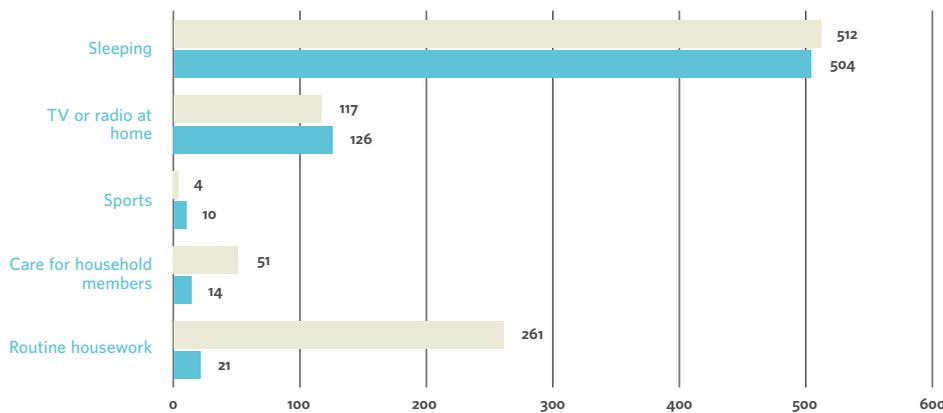
<sup>v</sup> *“Time-use surveys tend to measure visible tasks more effectively than supervisory, organizational and multitasking care activities. For example, time spent preparing a meal should be easy to measure, but women may at the same time be looking after or feeding children, or undertaking a number of other household tasks that make a single task difficult to measure in terms of time. National-level estimates of time use also tend to ignore the class and generational differences in the organizations of care that influence the relationship between women’s paid work and unpaid work.” Excerpted from State of the World’s Fathers, pp. 68-69.*

Those who take on the role of caregiving vary across cultures. Responsibility may fall mostly on fathers and mothers in nuclear family structures, or may be shared more broadly across extended families and community members. Regardless of the family structure, however, existing data shows that the care of children and domestic chores falls squarely on the shoulders of women and girls. In fact, there is no country in the EECA region where men share the unpaid domestic and care work equally with women. For example, in Turkey, women spend four more hours a day on routine housework and care for household members than men do, while men spend 21 more minutes a day than women watching TV, playing sports and sleeping (Figure 1).

Existing data shows that the care of children and domestic chores falls squarely on the shoulders of women and girls.

FIGURE 1

Time spent on unpaid care work, leisure and sleeping in Turkey

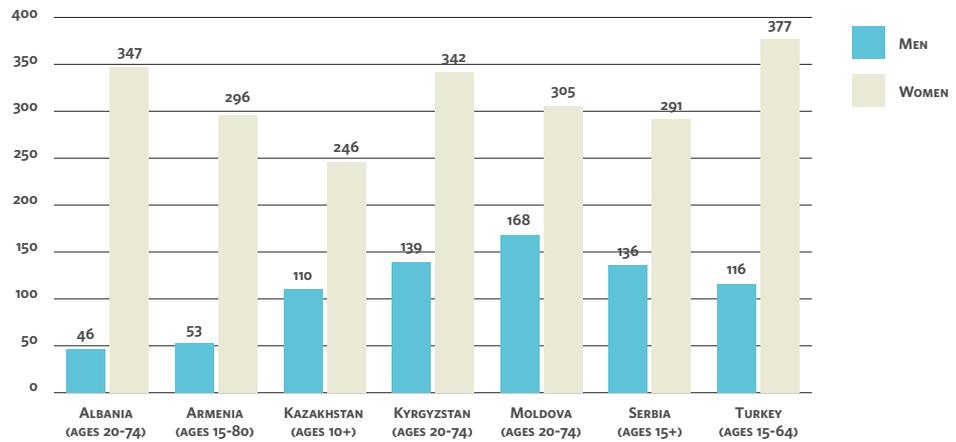


Turkey's trend is echoed in other time-use studies which show that across Albania, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Serbia, women's time spent on unpaid and domestic work exceeds men's on average by 205 minutes (Figure 2). In Ukraine, nearly 57% of women report that their male partners spend less than five hours to none at all per week to care for family members such as children, elderly family members or persons with disabilities.<sup>15</sup>

There is a large and persistent gender divide in unpaid care work in the region.

FIGURE 2

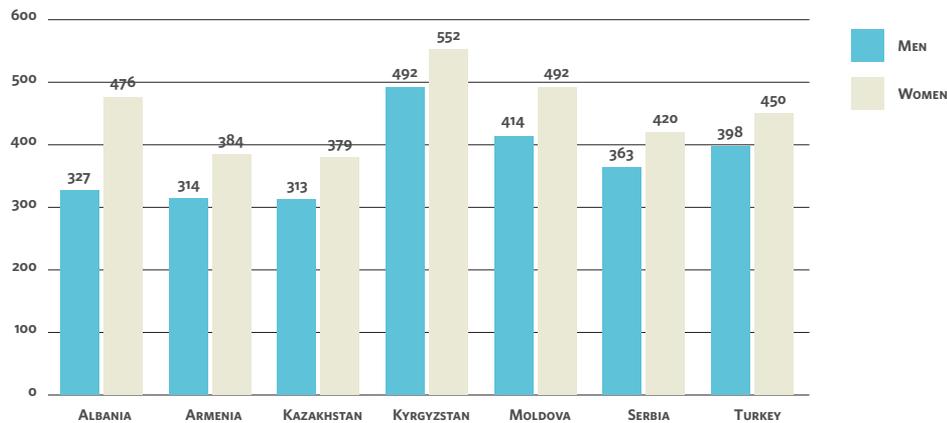
Time spent on unpaid and domestic work (minutes/day)



It is also important to note here the wide variation in gender gaps between these countries. These variations may be due to differences in the ages included across the various studies, the decline in the amount of time spent by women on these activities, the affordability of paid domestic help and other cultural and contextual factors. Not only this, but national-level data within countries obscures the gaps between rural areas and capital cities, for example, where the cost of living in a city often necessitates dual incomes (and women doing less domestic work), while rural areas may rely more on traditional gendered divisions of both income-earning and caregiving roles. However, what is clear is that there is a large and persistent gender divide in unpaid care work in the region.

Some argue that the wide gender gap in time spent on unpaid care work may be partially explained by women’s low levels of participation in the paid workforce and men’s roles as the primary breadwinners. However, as seen in Figure 3, women still spend more time than men on unpaid care work and paid work combined. This phenomenon is known as the “double burden”, a common and gendered experience where women must earn an income to support the family in addition to shouldering the majority of household and caregiving tasks. In some countries, the double burden may be especially acute for those women who work over 40 hours a week. In Kyrgyzstan, of those men and women who work over 40 hours a week, women were twice as likely as men to work over 61 hours per week. Employed women were also less likely to have time off, or, if they had days off, were offered fewer days than employed men.<sup>16</sup>

**FIGURE 3** *Time spent on paid and unpaid work combined (minutes/day)*

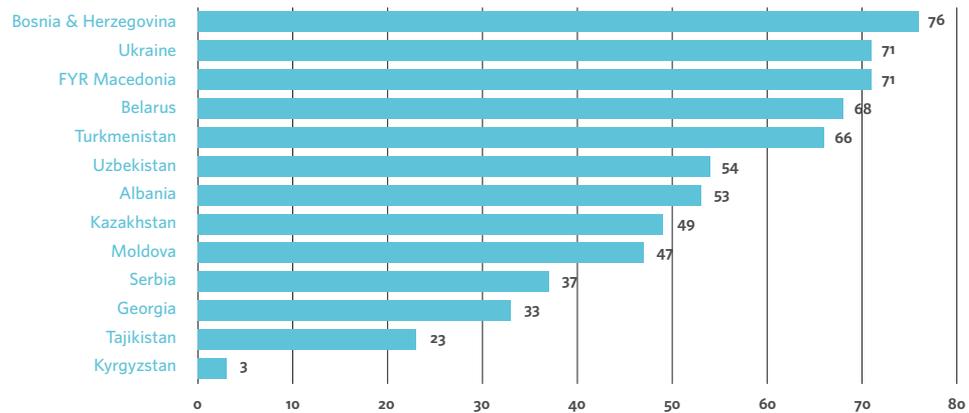


This is not to say that men are completely absent from performing caregiving chores inside the home. The data presented indeed shows that men do perform these roles at home, albeit in limited ways. Figure 4 looks at the percentage of fathers with children aged 36 to 59 months who engaged in one or more activities to support learning and school readiness in the past three days. These activities included:

- Reading books to the child
- Telling stories to the child
- Singing songs to the child
- Taking the child outside the home
- Playing with the child
- Spending time with the child naming, counting or drawing

In most countries where data is available, at least one in every three fathers reported being engaged in at least one activity to support the learning of their young child. Such findings may highlight positive entry points to promote early fatherhood and male involvement more broadly in the care of children, whether it be through early-child-development centres, pre-schools or parent-teacher associations.

**FIGURE 4** Percentage of fathers engaged in one or more activities to support their children's learning



Source: UNICEF Global Databases, 2016, based on Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) data.

Across many countries, men were far more likely to engage in activities such as playing or talking with children than in more laborious, but still important, parenting tasks. In Georgia, research found that men with children aged 6 and younger were much more likely to talk with their children about problems or play with their children than they were to engage in child-related domestic chores such as preparing food for children or changing diapers.<sup>17</sup> In Moldova 66% of men report “rarely” or “never” bathing children while 61% report that they played with children at home several times per week.<sup>18</sup>

The unequal distribution of these different types of work is deeply problematic given the greater societal value assigned to paid work, and the reduced access to social contact, play, education and financial resources that girls and women experience as a result of their caregiving roles.<sup>19</sup> Global research shows that women’s lack of participation in the workforce results in their being more likely than men to have lower-paid jobs and part-time jobs, and to earn less than men do. In Ukraine, research findings on women’s labour-force participation found that at every level, the “returns on education” are far less for women than for men, meaning that women are paid far less than their male counterparts even if they have similar levels of education.<sup>20</sup> Knowing these common gendered challenges well, women are placed in the difficult position of having to decide between motherhood and their career. Such challenges coupled with lack of public social services (e.g. childcare)

and supportive policies (e.g. parental leave for both mothers and fathers) impact family planning decision-making. Indeed, weak public support for parents who wish to combine paid work with family responsibilities is an important barrier to family formation in the region.

**Weak public support for parents who wish to combine paid work with family responsibilities is an important barrier to family formation in the region.**



PHOTO: THE GATE AGENCY

# 5

## Reasons why fathers are not contributing their fair share of work in the home

What keeps men from fully sharing the unpaid care work in the home, whether it is preparing food for children, looking after elderly parents or sick family members, or changing diapers and cleaning toilets? The reasons often fall into one – or several – of the following categories:

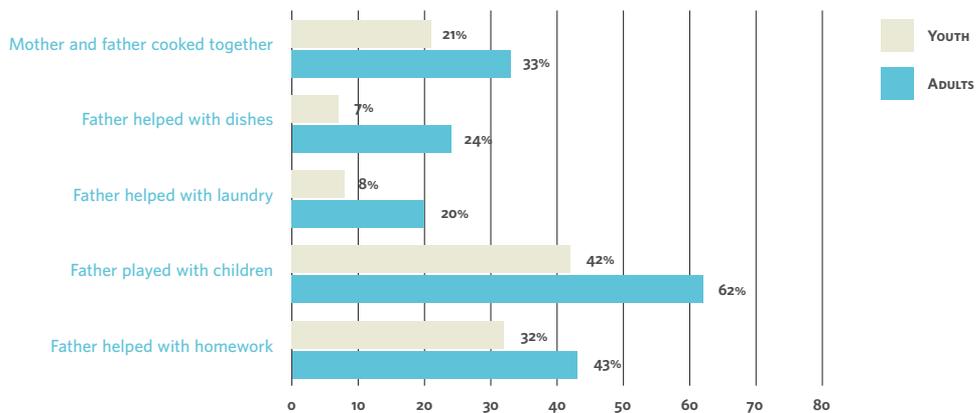
- Gender-inequitable norms that reinforce the idea that caregiving is “women’s work”.
- Economic and workplace realities and norms that drive household decision-making and maintain a traditional division of labour.
- Lack of policies that support gender equality at the household level and create opportunities for women and men to participate equally in the workplace.

### A. Gender-inequitable norms

Many of the widely held beliefs and social “rules” about what it means to be a man or a woman are acquired through years of constant socialization by families, schools, government, media, social networks, work and other areas of life. Girls and boys learn from an early age that some types of work are valued while others are not, and such lessons stay with them as they become adults. As such, the stigmatization around care work may leave many boys and men uninterested, ill-prepared and lacking confidence in their roles as gender-equitable fathers, while making women and girls feel mostly responsible for such tasks. In a few countries, we see intergenerational changes in caregiving sometimes going in an even less progressive direction due to rapid economic, political and social changes. For example, youth in Kyrgyzstan aged 16 to 18 are much less likely to regularly see their father sharing household and caregiving chores with their mother than today’s adults did when they themselves were young (Figure 5).<sup>21</sup> Research

in Georgia also found similar trends, with older generations more likely to report gender-equal involvement in childcare than younger generations who grew up in the post-Soviet period. The region has seen increasing movements to “re-traditionalize” women’s roles, thereby challenging gender equality by focusing mainly on women’s reproductive function and motherhood, while also restricting men’s roles as fathers, limiting their emotional engagement with their children and partners.

**FIGURE 5** Fathers’ participation in household chores in Kyrgyzstan



In Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Georgia, a majority of men and women in each setting agree that it is the mother’s responsibility to change diapers, give children a bath and feed children (Table 1). In Georgia, both men and women share similar levels of agreement that women’s primary roles should be within the home, with 79.5% of men and 74.2% of women agreeing with this statement. In Kyrgyzstan, a participant in qualitative interviews explained men’s lack of participation in this way:

*It is considered more appropriate that the wife take care of the children alone, that it is her duty as a mother. The husband generally takes little responsibilities in the matters of housework and taking care of the children.*

Again, such beliefs have repercussions on women’s choices related to child-bearing. For example, in Ukraine, nearly 38% of women strongly agree that a woman should be prepared to “sacrifice her job for the sake of the family”.<sup>22</sup>

**TABLE 1** Gender attitudes: percentage of men and women who “strongly agree”, “agree” or “partially agree” with the following statements<sup>vii</sup>

	AZERBAIJAN		MOLDOVA		BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA		GEORGIA	
	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN
Changing diapers, giving a bath and feeding kids is the mother’s responsibility.	93	82	85	75	53		80	74
A man should have the final word about decisions in his home.	91	75	86	50	49		87	70
Men have to share the work around the house with women, such as doing dishes, cleaning or cooking.	53	72						
Providing daily care for children is as important as providing for them financially.	90	97						

Such findings also highlight the relational aspect of gender and power between men and women. In other words, not only men but also women may doubt whether men can be good caregivers or as good as mothers at caring for children.<sup>23</sup> This lack of confidence or perceptions from other family members such as mothers-in-law may also further stigmatize and discourage men from participating in care work. To add further dimension to this perspective, the home is often the only domain where women hold power and make decisions in a world dominated by men; some women may actually feel threatened by men who wish to be more involved. Men’s participation may signify a woman’s failure to fulfil her societal obligations.

<sup>vi</sup> Grey boxes indicate that there is no data available on the item.

Regardless, such rigid gendered perceptions of women's roles shape how societies value girls and women. For example, a man from Azerbaijan stated:

*Now I have a daughter, but I would like at least one son as a successor of my generation to carry on the family name or lineage.*

Just as women's roles as caregivers and nurturers are societally ascribed, so are men's "high-value roles" as protectors of home, family lineage and country. Such beliefs have been found to contribute to alarmingly high levels of gender-biased sex selection in the South Caucasus and parts of South-Eastern Europe.<sup>24</sup>

**Just as women's roles as caregivers and nurturers are societally ascribed, so are men's "high-value roles" as protectors of home, family lineage and country.**

## **B. Economic and workplace realities and restrictions**

In situations of economic insecurity, harmful gender roles can become further entrenched. For example, a Roma father living in the Balkans said the following:

*My father used to work as a wage earner, from time to time, while my mother used to beg for money in villages close to our community, trying in that way to collect money for our daily needs. I do not have a lot of good memories from that period. As in other Roma families in our community, taking care of daily chores was clearly defined and divided between men and women – mothers were taking care of us children and the house alone, while fathers were out of the house almost [the] whole day trying to provide support for [their] family.*

So for some families, men's lack of participation is a product of economic insecurity combined with inequitable social and gender norms. In Turkey, low pay, informal-sector employment and long working hours coupled with gender expectations to fulfil their traditional roles as caregivers have resulted in the lowest levels of women's workforce participation in all of Europe.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, such difficult economic constraints can actually push parents to take on non-traditional gender roles. Countries with high unemployment and migration for work to other countries see a direct influence on women's and men's roles. In such situations, women have often taken on the role of breadwinner and men the role of primary caregiver. A quote from a respondent from Moldova elaborates on this phenomenon:

*My wife went to Italy for work and I stayed [behind] with our three children, the youngest being 4.5 years old. There was nobody to help me and I learned how to clean and cook... Now cooking is easy for me.*

**Research from Moldova shows that many fathers want to be more involved in the lives of their families, with almost 59% of men reporting that they would work less in order to spend more time with their children.**

Such findings are consistent with other global qualitative research that finds that life circumstances are often as responsible for men taking on primary caregiving roles as having more egalitarian attitudes towards care work.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, there are fathers who wish they could push back, or challenge rigid gender roles. Research from Moldova shows that many fathers want to be more involved in the lives of their families, with almost 59% of men reporting that they would work less in order to spend more time with their children.<sup>27</sup> Similar research in Armenia found that more than half of men recognize that they spend too little time with their children on account of work, and 51% of men would work less if they could spend that time with their children.<sup>28</sup>

### **C. Lack of policies that support gender equality at the household level and create opportunities for women and men to participate equally in the workplace**

Restrictive agendas embraced by governments in the EECA region are doing away with the sense of collective responsibility for care. Ideas of “individual responsibility” and traditionalism that favour a rigid division of gender roles have been used to justify cutbacks in social services, health care and childcare, and to limit the expansion of parental leave. In countries with a Communist past this may be felt particularly acutely, given previous levels of access to state-sponsored childcare services. So, even in places where women and men want to share family responsibilities more equally they face workplace challenges due to the lack of available gender-sensitive family-friendly policies.

That being said, the EECA region saw one of the largest increases in paternity-leave provisions for the period between 1994 and 2013, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), with four countries (Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan and Serbia) introducing this entitlement in 2013. Albania and Turkey have also passed similar policies for fathers in recent years. However, the region still ranks behind developed economies, including those in Western Europe, North America, Australia and Japan.<sup>29</sup>

As the table of parental-leave policies in Annex 1 shows, in places where childcare policies do exist they are often targeted only towards women. In fact, in some countries such as Moldova, which provides up to 126 days of fully paid maternity leave and additional partly paid leave until the child is 3 years old, generous benefits can often discourage employers from hiring women of reproductive age because they do not want to risk losing an employee for such an extended amount of time.<sup>30</sup> Similarly in Ukraine, women in both rural and urban areas cite issues related to maternity leave and motherhood as the main reason why employers undervalue women as workers. Indeed, research shows that depending on the design of the leave policies, they can promote gender equality or they can reproduce inequality.<sup>31</sup>

In places where childcare policies exist, they are often targeted only towards women.

There is demand, however, to reshape these unbalanced policies that reinforce inequitable gender norms. The 2009 “Resolution concerning gender equality at the heart of decent work”, adopted by the ILO at the 98th Session of its International Labour Conference, called for governments and others to develop policies that support a more equal division of work and family responsibilities; these included paternity and/or parental leave, with incentives to encourage men to use it.<sup>32</sup>

Most progressive leave policies for fathers include non-transferable quotas and adequate financing that can lead to much greater use of leave. Under the right conditions and with the right incentives, paternity and parental leave show great promise for increasing fathers’ participation in their children’s lives.<sup>33</sup> Other best practices to encourage fathers’ use of leave include:

- Generous non-transferable quotas that are not dependent on their partner or their employer (individualizing parental leave entitlements)
- Paid leave
- Universal coverage with few eligibility restrictions
- Collective financial mechanisms that pool risk (rather than employer-based liability)
- Scheduling flexibility that provides the option, for example, for part-time leave<sup>34</sup>

In studies across the European Union, insufficient compensation was the reason most cited by fathers for not taking leave, and higher levels of income replacement were associated with greater use of paternity leave.<sup>35, 36, 37</sup> According to State of the World’s Fathers, men’s persistent pay advantage

over women means that fathers' use of leave most often represents a greater drop in family income than when mothers take these days. This is a major reason that it is women who take leave.<sup>38</sup>

**In the 1970s, Sweden became the first country in the world to introduce a gender-neutral paid parental-leave allowance.**

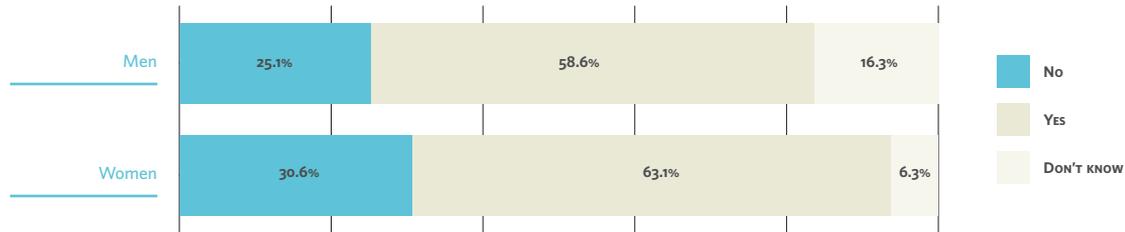
In the 1970s, Sweden became the first country in the world to introduce a gender-neutral paid parental-leave allowance. This policy involved paying 90% of wages for 180 days of leave per child and parents were allowed to decide how to allocate those days. Within this model, men only took 0.5% of available parental leave. In 1995, in addition to increasing the amount of parental leave, policymakers introduced the first “daddy month”. Under this reform, if each parent took at least one month of leave they could add an additional month to their total allowance. In this way, men were incentivized to take leave, otherwise they would lose out on opportunities to earn additional leave to take care of their child. Today, men in Sweden take up to a quarter of available parental leave. A study by the Swedish Institute of Labour Market Policy Evaluation showed that a mother's future earnings increase on average 7% for every month the father takes leave. It concluded that among those with university degrees, a growing number of couples split the leave evenly; some switch back and forth every few months to avoid one parent assuming a dominant role in childrearing or being away from their job for too long.<sup>39</sup>

**A study showed that in Norway and Sweden couples who shared parental leave after the birth of their first child were more likely to have another child.**

A separate study conducted in Norway and Sweden showed that couples who shared parental leave after the birth of their first child were more likely to have another child than couples in which only the mother made use of her leave entitlements.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, men who made use of paternity leave were more active in taking care of a child after the leave than men who did not take advantage of their entitlement.

Interest in distributing childcare tasks more equally extends beyond the policy level. Data from Azerbaijan shows that there is desire from both men and women to share equal amounts of parental leave, with 63% of women and nearly 60% of men saying that they believe men and women should take equal amounts of childcare leave (Figure 6).<sup>41</sup>

**FIGURE 6** Men's and women's attitudes about sharing leave to take care of children in Azerbaijan



### Measuring the benefits of paternity leave: an experiment in Norway

In the 1990s, researchers Andreas Kotsdam and Henning Finseraas saw an opportunity to assess the impact of leave policies on the household division of labour by comparing parents who had children in the two years before and the two years after Norway's introduction of its "Daddy's Quota" - which reserves 14 weeks of total parental leave exclusively for fathers - in 1993. Using records from the relevant time periods, they surveyed thousands of people who had become parents between the years 1991 to 1993 and 1993 to 1995. By including all fathers before and after the change in legislation, they generated results that could not be explained simply by the attitudes of those men who chose to take leave.

This research showed that the impact of Norway's policy change has been strong and lasting. Surveyed almost 20 years after the reform, parents with children born after the implementation of the reform reported 11% less conflict over household work than did those who became parents before the policy changed. These parents did not differ from pre-reform parents in their attitudes towards gender equality, which likely indicates the wide range of factors and norms that shape those attitudes. Support for public childcare, however, was 18% higher in the group whose children were born in the two years after the new policy. And what about household work? Here the result was most dramatic: when it came to washing clothes, for example, the post-reform parents were 50% more likely to divide the task equally than the pre-reform parents were.

*Adapted from State of the World's Fathers, page 104.*

### The MenCare Parental Leave Platform

The MenCare Campaign asserts that leave for fathers — in conjunction with leave for mothers and additional structural solutions, and when enshrined in national policies — has the power to contribute significantly to the recognition and redistribution of care work and to transform deeply rooted inequalities between men and women. MenCare is calling on governments and employers to adopt parental-leave policies that are:

- » Equal for women and men.
- » Non-transferable between parents.
- » Paid according to each parent's salary.
- » Adequate in length for each parent, with a minimum of 16 weeks for each.
- » Offered with job protection.
- » Encouraged and incentivized.
- » Inclusive for workers of all kinds.
- » Combined with subsidized, high-quality childhood education and care, and other policies to ensure equity in all caregiving, particularly in low-income settings.
- » Supportive of diverse caregivers and caregiving.
- » Enshrined and enforced in national law and in international agreements.

*For more in-depth information on parental-leave policies that work, go to <http://men-care.org/what-we-do/advocacy/paid-parental-leave/>.*

# Conclusion and recommendations



In conclusion, there are promising opportunities to promote gender equality both at home and in the workplace. Women want men to participate more in childcare and domestic chores and many men would be more involved if they could. However, due to the persistence of harmful gender norms and poor public support, women (and some men) face difficult choices when it comes to growing their families. In such situations, they adopt intermediate solutions by deciding to have fewer children, accepting lower professional positions and/or lower pay, and maintaining gendered divisions of labour. From an economic perspective, the inability of women to combine childrearing with participation in paid work impedes the social and economic development of the EECA region. Policies that reinforce the traditional division of labour also further push women to withdraw from public activities, while at the same time depriving men of the opportunity to care for their children. More must be done to create conditions to destigmatize care for men and further empower women in the workplace.

Here are recommendations to take advantage of the progress made in the region thus far:

**Work with school administrators, teachers and other key decision-makers to further encourage men's involvement with their children** in school and day care, and promote that more men become involved in teaching and early childhood care. As the data show, many men are already involved – albeit in limited ways – in the lives of their children. Many fathers care about their children's educational development and want them to succeed in life. Men's involvement in children's education could be a crucial entry point to reach them where they are.

**Advocate for expanding paternity leave**, building on successful examples of such policies in Nordic countries such as Sweden and Norway. The Western Balkans region leads the way in the number of paternity-leave policies currently being implemented in the EECA region. Paternity leave can and

Women want men to participate more in childcare and domestic chores and many men would be more involved if they could.

Workplaces should be encouraged to promote flexible work options such as allowing men to be able to work part time when they have children.

should be expanded further. Emerging research from places such as Azerbaijan shows that both men and women believe that fathers should share an equal amount of parental leave with their partners. Women cite – and research supports – that employers look less favourably upon women of reproductive age especially in places that offer generous maternity leave and no paternity leave. Expanding paternity leave is an important policy for gender equality that is good for men, women and children.

**Support work-life balance.** Regional- and national-level policies from governments must guarantee dignified work and adequate pay to support an equitable work-life balance and financial stability for all caregivers and their children. Workplaces should be encouraged to promote flexible work options such as allowing men to be able to work part time when they have children. Such policies should not inhibit women’s economic empowerment.

**Transform gender stereotypes about caregiving and men’s role in it at the societal level** such as through the MenCare campaign.<sup>vii</sup> The data from the EECA region show how both men and women hold very rigid ideas about men’s and women’s roles at the household level. It is possible to challenge these gender-inequitable notions in positive ways. Campaigns on positive fatherhood involvement have already been launched across the region from the Balkans to Kyrgyzstan. These campaigns show how caregiving – and the expectation that everyone will engage in it – needs to be taught and supported.

**Promote educational programmes in the public education system to give boys and men the skills and knowledge to take on new roles in households,** including school-based “life skills” courses for boys. Global research shows how gender norms are learned early on in a child’s life and that those boys who saw their own fathers participate in care work were much more likely to do so when they, too, became adults. The education system can be an excellent place to reshape gender norms for the better by training teachers and administrators to encourage boys’ and young men’s involvement in caregiving and domestic chores.

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vii See MenCare at <https://men-care.org/>

**Limit the data gaps on gender dynamics to better advocate for men's involvement.** Though a growing number of countries in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region are gathering more data on gender relations and time use, there are many places where this is lacking. We need better quality time-use data from men and women, boys and girls. In all countries, we need this data to be collected at regular intervals to enable examination of changes over time.

## Annex 1 - Status of parental leave in the EECA region

COUNTRY	DURATION OF PATERNITY LEAVE (NOT NECESSARILY RELATED TO CHILDBIRTH)	AMOUNT OF PATERNITY LEAVE CASH BENEFITS AVAILABLE	DURATION OF PARENTAL LEAVE	AMOUNT OF PARENTAL LEAVE CASH BENEFITS AVAILABLE
<b>ALBANIA</b>	17 weeks	100%	Mothers only: 52 weeks	First 26 weeks (including pre-birth): 80% of net pay  Following 26 weeks: 50% of net pay
<b>ARMENIA</b>	146 weeks	AMD 18000 (USD 37.5) monthly for 104 weeks	Mothers: 156 weeks  Fathers: 146 weeks (excluding 10 weeks of maternity leave)	Mothers: 104 weeks paid 52 weeks unpaid  Fathers: 94 weeks paid 52 weeks unpaid  Monthly cash benefit of AMD 18000 (approx. USD 37.5) fixed for working parents irrespective of salary amount
<b>AZERBAIJAN</b>	Two weeks	Unpaid	Mothers only: 18 weeks	34.5% of annual salary
<b>BELARUS</b>	n/a	n/a	Either parent: 156 weeks	First child: 156 weeks 35% of annual salary  From the second child on: 40% of average salary until the child reaches 3 years
<b>BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA</b>	n/a	n/a	Either parent: 52 weeks for first child  Up to 78 weeks for second and third child  May vary by region and administrative unit	Varies from 60% to 80% of the average salary according to region or administrative unit

COUNTRY	DURATION OF PATERNITY LEAVE (NOT NECESSARILY RELATED TO CHILDBIRTH)	AMOUNT OF PATERNITY LEAVE CASH BENEFITS AVAILABLE	DURATION OF PARENTAL LEAVE	AMOUNT OF PARENTAL LEAVE CASH BENEFITS AVAILABLE
<b>GEORGIA</b>	n/a	n/a	104 weeks (including 26 weeks remunerated); 28 weeks in the event of birth complications or twins	<p>Public-sector employee: 100% salary for 26 weeks, plus GEL 1000 (approx.390 USD) allowance allocated by the government</p> <p>Private-sector employee: GEL 1000 from the government; up to the employer to determine any salary reimbursement. The law does not impose any obligation on a private-sector employer.</p>
<b>KAZAKHSTAN</b>	n/a	n/a	<p>Mothers only: 18 weeks (10 before birth; eight after birth)</p> <p>Up to 10 weeks after birth in the event of birth complications or twins</p> <p>Either parent: 52 weeks</p>	<p>Both working and not working parents, women and men receive social benefits for a child under 1 year at a fixed amount allocated monthly</p> <p>first child: KZT 13.069 (approx. USD 40)</p> <p>second child: KZT 15.452 (approx. USD 46.5)</p> <p>third child: KZT 17.812 (approx..USD 53.6)</p> <p>fourth and following child: KZT 20.194 (approx USD 60.7)</p> <p>For working women and men the monthly allocation cannot exceed a total of KZT 97.836 (approx USD 294.5) in one year. This is 40% of the minimum wage times 10, and cannot be lower than the unemployment benefit.</p>

COUNTRY	DURATION OF PATERNITY LEAVE (NOT NECESSARILY RELATED TO CHILDBIRTH)	AMOUNT OF PATERNITY LEAVE CASH BENEFITS AVAILABLE	DURATION OF PARENTAL LEAVE	AMOUNT OF PARENTAL LEAVE CASH BENEFITS AVAILABLE
<b>KYRGYZSTAN</b>	The labour code does not specifically mention paternity leave; its duration is established based on agreement with the employer	KGS 700 (approx. 10 USD) assigned in one instalment only to fathers or anyone else taking on the custody role when the mother is missing	<p>10 weeks before birth and 18 weeks after birth</p> <p>20 to 25.7 weeks in the event of birth complications or twins</p> <p>Upon request an employer may grant additional unpaid leave to care for a child up to 3 years of age. The leave can be provided at any time for any period, but only working women (not men) shall be granted this additional unpaid maternity leave until the child reaches the age of 18 to 38 months.</p>	<p>For working people: First 10 days - 100% of salary From the 11th day on - KGS 1000 (approx. 14.3 USD) from government budget</p> <p>For officially registered "unemployed" people: KGS 1000 from the government budget</p> <p>If unemployed but not officially registered, parents are not eligible for cash benefits</p>
<b>MOLDOVA</b>	Two weeks	100% of salary, paid from the social assurance public budget	Either parent: 156 weeks	<p>Mother only: 18 weeks, 100% paid</p> <p>Either parent: 156 weeks, 30% paid leave until the child turns 3</p> <p>Either parent: Unpaid leave until the child turns 6 years old</p>
<b>SERBIA</b>	<p>One week ("family leave")</p> <p>Employed fathers are entitled to five days of paid leave</p>	100% paid	<p>Either parent: 52 weeks for first and second child</p> <p>104 weeks for third and each subsequent child</p>	<p>100% paid</p> <p>(based on the average basic salary of the employee for 12 months preceding the month in which the maternity leave starts)</p>
<b>TAJIKISTAN</b>	n/a	n/a	<p>Mothers only: 20 weeks - 100% paid</p> <p>25.7 weeks in the event of birth complications or twins - 100% paid</p> <p>Following 78 weeks unpaid</p>	<p>Government covers child-nutrition expenses only in an amount of</p> <p>TSZ 44/month (USD 5/month)</p>

COUNTRY	DURATION OF PATERNITY LEAVE (NOT NECESSARILY RELATED TO CHILDBIRTH)	AMOUNT OF PATERNITY LEAVE CASH BENEFITS AVAILABLE	DURATION OF PARENTAL LEAVE	AMOUNT OF PARENTAL LEAVE CASH BENEFITS AVAILABLE
<b>TURKMENISTAN</b>	<p>Paternity leave can be taken by a father only upon justification that a mother cannot take care of the child.</p> <p>In this case the duration of paternity leave is until the child reaches 3 years.</p>	n/a	<p>Mothers only: 16 weeks paid</p> <p>Either parent: 156 weeks unpaid</p>	<p>Mothers receive 16 weeks 100% paid leave.</p> <p>There is no payment for paternity leave.</p>
<b>THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA</b>	<p>Nine months for one child;</p> <p>15 months for twins or other multiple births – the same goes for mothers if fathers don't use the leave</p>	100% of salary	<p>Either parent: 39 weeks for one child;</p> <p>15 months for twins or other multiple births – 100% paid</p> <p>Mothers only: additional three months (13 weeks) – Unpaid</p>	<p>Mother or father: 39 weeks for one child;</p> <p>65 weeks for twins or other multiple births, 100% paid</p>
<b>TURKEY</b>	Five days	100% paid	<p>Mothers only: 16 weeks paid</p> <p>26 weeks unpaid</p>	<p>Mothers only: 16 weeks 100% paid</p> <p>Unpaid leave can be extended up to two years upon approval from the workplace.</p>
<b>UKRAINE</b>	n/a	n/a	<p>153 weeks can be taken by any family member (e.g. father, mother, grandparent)</p> <p>Mothers only: 18 weeks paid</p> <p>Other family members: unpaid, however their job security should be ensured by the employer</p>	<p>Mothers only: 18 weeks paid (equivalent to paid sick leave)</p> <p>Plus a one-time government aid in the amount of 44.000 UAH (approx.USD 1,600) that can be claimed by either parent. Paid in small instalments over three years.</p>

COUNTRY	DURATION OF PATERNITY LEAVE (NOT NECESSARILY RELATED TO CHILDBIRTH)	AMOUNT OF PATERNITY LEAVE CASH BENEFITS AVAILABLE	DURATION OF PARENTAL LEAVE	AMOUNT OF PARENTAL LEAVE CASH BENEFITS AVAILABLE
<b>UZBEKISTAN</b>	n/a	n/a	Either parent: 156 weeks	<p>During the first 104 weeks until child reaches the age of 2, childcare allowance is paid only for families with one parent, with children with disabilities, and low-income families based on the decision of “Makhalla” self-governing bodies of citizens.</p> <p>The amount of childcare allowance is UZS 299,550 (USD 37), equal to 200% of the minimum wage established by the law (UZS 149,775 or USD 18.5)</p>
<b>Kosovo (UNHCR 1244)</b>	Two days for child birth plus two weeks paternity leave	Two days fully paid; two weeks unpaid after birth or adoption within the period until child reaches 3 years	Mothers only: 52 weeks	<p>First 26 weeks: 70% of annual salary</p> <p>Following 13 weeks: 50% of annual salary</p> <p>Following 13 weeks: unpaid</p>

## Annex 2 – Case studies

### Turning research into action: MenCare Campaign Georgia

UNFPA Georgia launched the MenCare Campaign in July 2016 as part of the United Nations Joint Programme for Gender Equality, with support from the Government of Sweden. The launch of the MenCare campaign in Georgia was preceded by the work that the UNFPA Georgia team and its partner organizations have been doing for many years. Based on the findings of the survey “Men and Gender Relations in Georgia”, conducted by UNFPA in 2013, there is a stereotyped perception in society of what jobs should be done by women and by men. Repairing and fixing household items is considered to be a man’s job, whereas looking after children, cleaning, taking care of the family and cooking are considered to be a woman’s job, which puts the burden of household work completely on women. Eight out of 10 fathers do not read books on a daily basis to their children of preschool age, do not take them to kindergarten or the playground and do not cook meals; among those surveyed, 13% seldom, and 6% never talk to their adolescent children about problems. The existing stereotypes and established clichés prevent men from taking responsibility and being equitable fathers, husbands, partners and family members.

Based on the survey findings and taking into account relevant aspects of Georgian culture and society, UNFPA has been actively working in cooperation with partner organizations to raise awareness and generate public discourse on inequitable gender roles since 2013. Campaigns and activities held within the framework of the initiative to promote men’s involvement in childcare (including “Daddy, Read Me a Book”, the TV programme “Fathers”, and “A Letter to a Child”), grabbed public attention and supported the making of social changes. On 19 June 2016, Father’s Day was marked in Georgia for the first time with the support of UNFPA.

### Caring for Equality: working with fathers to end gender-biased sex selection in Armenia

The Caring for Equality Programme by WorldVision, developed with technical assistance from Promundo, aims to contribute to the prevention of prenatal sex selection in Armenian families and communities. Many of the programme’s activities, which can be conducted with youth and with couples, seek to address the underlying roots of son preference by challenging harmful gender norms, specifically around masculinity; by promoting the inherent equality of girls and boys and the value of girl children; and by thoughtfully engaging men and boys as allies in gender equality. More specifically, it aims to:

- » Promote positive attitudes towards gender equality, and the understanding of gender equality as a “win-win” for all, by deconstructing harmful masculine and feminine stereotypes.
- » Build skills among men and boys to redefine for themselves what it means to be a man – a definition that rejects violence, respects women and girls, and shares decision-making power.
- » Create safe spaces for cross-gender dialogue between men and women in order to build mutual understanding of the challenges (and opportunities) each face in their day-to-day lives.
- » Encourage men and boys and women and girls to become – either now or in the future – involved, active parents who participate in creating gender-equal households for both daughters and sons, fostering open and emotional connections between themselves and their partners as well as with their children regardless of gender.
- » Work with men and boys as allies with women and girls in the fight to end all forms of gender-based discrimination, including prenatal sex selection.

### Positive Fatherhood: MenCare in two oblasts of Kyrgyzstan, Talas and Kemin

Men in Kyrgyzstan are not sufficiently involved in family planning, maternal health and childcare, according to the survey “Gender norms and practices in questions of maternal health, reproductive health, family planning, fatherhood and domestic violence”, conducted by UNFPA in 2013. Only one in ten men (10%) surveyed was present during childbirth. A fifth of the husbands (22% to 23%) never helped their wives take care of the baby (bathing, swaddling, laundering or bottle-feeding) and did not help with housework (cooking and cleaning). A significant proportion of the surveyed school-children held a negative opinion of young men who are interested in the progress of their partners’ pregnancies (25%), accompany their wives on hospital visits (15%) or help their partners take care of the babies (11%). Based on these results, MenCare implemented the “Positive Fatherhood” Campaign in collaboration with CSOs, the Ministry of Health and local administrations. As part of the campaign:

- » Health-care providers from the Childbirth Preparation Schools within the Centres for Family Medicine were trained on a gender-sensitive approach in working with pregnant women, and on male involvement in sessions preparing parents for delivery. An additional session on male involvement in the process of childbirth preparation was added to the schools’ training manual.
- » Teachers from vocational schools were sensitized on gender, existing gender stereotypes, how men and boys can be involved in achieving gender equality, prevention of GBV, and the role of vocational schools in educating the younger generation on living gender-equitable lives. As part of this component, boys were taught about their responsibilities to communicate non-violently with peers, both boys and girls, in their communities.
- » Students at vocational schools – boys and girls aged 14 to 16 in two districts – participated in a workshop on gender, gender stereotypes, harmful practices towards girls such as bride kidnapping, violence among peers, and family relationships, focused in particular on fathers. As a result of this workshop, the students agreed to organize peer-group discussions on the topics related to violence among peers, bride kidnapping and domestic violence. A “Boys’ Club” was also created in Kemin Oblast that aims to educate a critical group of young boys on positive masculinity and non-violent communications with peers, both boys and girls, in their communities.
- » Local government officials were trained on gender sensitization, GBV and discussions on existing gender stereotypes that affect family relationships, specifically issues that come up between couples related to family planning and childcare responsibilities.

### Supporting fathers in Turkey

The Mother & Child Education Foundation (AÇEV) in Turkey conducts research and develops and implements programmes on early-childhood education and adult education. For years, AÇEV has implemented programmes to strengthen mother-child relationships through home-based education programmes, preschool parent-child programmes and seminars. The foundation has also begun implementing a complementary programme for men called the Father Support Programme, aimed at improving fathers’ involvement in early childhood development. Special emphasis is placed on increasing awareness about raising children, child development, parenting and communication within the family. Fathers participate in this programme two hours a week for 10 to 12 weeks.

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