Parents are spending an increasing amount of time on their children

Danish parents today spend more time on their children than earlier generations of parents.

The myth that a more demanding labour market is making greater demands of parents, and that children are paying the price, thus proves to be – a myth. In fact there are not many places in the world where children’s conditions are as good as in Denmark – if we measure children’s welfare by how much time their mothers and fathers spend together with them.

This is shown by a recent study from the Rockwool Foundation Research Unit. For the first time ever Danish families – approximately 6,000 (of these 3,500 with children) – were asked about their consumption of both money and time, with a special focus on children.

It turns out that today both fathers and mothers spend more time on their children than was registered in earlier studies of how families spend their time. For instance, in 2008 a father with children under 18 living at home spent a daily average of one hour and 27 minutes on so-called primary child care, i.e. activities like bathing them, doing homework, playing ball or talking with them. Twenty years ago, in 1987, such fathers spent less time, namely one hour and 11 minutes per day. The same trend can be observed for mothers. They spend two hours each day on their children, whereas back in 1987 they spent one hour and 32 minutes.

The study also shows that child care in Denmark is more equally distributed between families than in a number of other countries. “However, that does not change the fact that there continue to be big differences in how much time parents spend together with their children. Those who spend most time on child care spend 5-6 times as much time as those who spend least,” says Senior Researcher Jens Bonke from the Rockwool Foundation Research Unit.

Ambitious parents

“The study shows that present-day parents have more free time than earlier generations. If they feel under pressure and stressed, then the explanation is not that they work more hours. The explanation is rather that they have higher ambitions in relation to their role as parents. They spend a large proportion of their time together with their children.” Jens Bonke continues.

One of the study’s other findings is that the most significant cost of having children is precisely time. Half of the total cost of having children comes from the time when one could have worked and earned money, if one hadn’t spent the time on one’s children.
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Adults in families with children have less money for themselves than other adults

People who have children have less money for themselves that those who do not have children. The difference amounts to 9 percent – which corresponded to DKK 27,000 annually in a Danish family in 2006. Whereas an adult in a family with children had DKK 279,000 annually, an adult without children had DKK 306,000.

This is shown by a recent study from The Rockwool Foundation Research Unit, which compares the consumption possibilities in families with children with the possibilities in families without children. The study also shows that if it were not for the children, adults in families with children would have more money for themselves than adults in families without children, namely DKK 382,000 per year, which is 25 percent more than in families without children.

The consumption possibilities are to a very high degree related to how many people there are in a household. Of course, the more people there are, the more mouths there are to be fed, but as a rule it is not twice as expensive for two people to share a home as it is to be single. Accommodation for two persons will typically not cost the double of accommodation for one.

When calculating the consumption possibilities in a family of two adults, we therefore count the incomes of both adults in full, but when calculating the consumption possibilities per person as above, we do not divide by two. As in other studies we have chosen to divide by the square root of two – which is roughly 1.4

This means that if a two-parent family has DKK 420,000 kroner in disposable income – DKK 210,000 each – they are estimated to have the same consumption possibilities as a single person who has a disposable income of DKK 300,000.

Other things being equal, this indicates that families containing two parents, which is often the case in families with children, will have greater possibilities for consumption than singles, which may be part of the explanation why adults in families with children would be better off than others if children cost nothing.

But children do cost money, and if we take this into account, it turns out that adults without children have more money to spend on themselves than adults with children.

### Improved consumption possibilities in families with children

Since 1981 the possibilities for consumption for adults in families with children have increased by more than one-third (in fixed prices), while the possibilities for consumption for other adults have increased by only between one-fourth and one-third – 37 against 29 percent – up to 2006. This means that adults in families with children now have possibilities for consumption that are 26 percent greater than those of other adults as opposed to 17 percent in 1981.

If we take into account the fact that children also have their share of the consumption, this means that the consumption possibilities for adults in families with children constituted 92 percent in 2006 and 86 percent 15 years previously – in 1981 – in relation to those of other adults.

### Consumption possibilities in families with children are more uniform

In terms of income, families with children resemble each other more than other families. There are smaller differences in consumption possibilities, and there are considerably fewer families with small consumption possibilities, also when we take into account the fact that the children have their share of the consumption. On the whole consumption is slightly closer to the average in families with children than in other families of the same age.
Parents and non-parents work equally much

Everyone knows that it can be difficult for families with children to get the daily life of the family to function smoothly. If only because we are regularly reminded of this by the media.

But in reality parents have just as much time left as non-parents when the day’s work has been done. In fact it turns out that parents have a little more leisure time than non-parents. While non-parents have 16 hours and 15 minutes of leisure time daily, parents have an extra quarter of an hour – namely 16 hours and 28 minutes.

Leisure time is the time left after work at one’s job, transport to and from one’s job and ordinary housework (cooking, washing up, doing the laundry, cleaning and shopping). Leisure time is, then, all the time one has for oneself or one's children, and this has increased over the past 20 years.

On the basis of three measurements of time consumption carried out 1987, 2001 and in 2008 respectively, it can be seen how much leisure time adults in families with and without children respectively have at their disposal on average for each of the seven days of the week. As can be seen from Table 2, since 1987 parents have obtained an average extra 36 minutes at their disposal per day (weekdays and weekend days), corresponding to four hours a week. For other adults the figure is 15 minutes a day, which corresponds to a little less than two hours per week.

Children mean less time for oneself

Although there is no big difference in the leisure times available for families with and without children, this says nothing about whether families with children are more exposed to stress than families without children.

In the first place there are differences in how good parents are at organising the life of the family. Secondly, it is precisely in one’s leisure time – as defined above – that parents have to be together with and look after their children. Therefore the figures say nothing about whether parents have cut down on their sleep, for instance, in order to obtain more (leisure) time with their children.

If we look at the time parents have for themselves, here defined as time when they are not working, doing housework or giving their children primary care, it proves, not surprisingly, to depend on how many children they have, and how old they are. If there are three children, for instance, the youngest of whom is less than three years of age, the time parents have for themselves is reduced by 17 hours a week, that is, by 2½ hours a day.

It is also the case that the younger the children are, the more the parents’ daily leisure time is reduced, but that there are advantages of scale in having more than one child. Parents do not spend twice as much time on two children as on one child.

Specialisation

When children arrive, a specialisation occurs in men’s and women’s consumption of time. As might be expected, mothers spend more time on housework than other women.

 Fathers on the other hand, spend more time at work than other men and also in relation to women. A specialisation thus takes place when a couple has children: her working time in the home increases and so does his working time at the job. Together with the child care, this means that both men and women have less time for themselves compared with before they had children.

The explanation why he increases, while she reduces the time spent at the job is probably the simple one that he earns more than she does. Therefore by increasing the time worked he can compensate for her reduced working time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily leisure time – not working time</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hours:minutes per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-parents</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Families without children are singles between 25 and 55 and couples, in which the husband is 25-55 years old, excl. students. The figures are the average per day in a week consisting of five weekdays and two weekend days.

Source: The Rockwool Foundation Research Unit.
Parents do not give an equal amount of child care – but the differences are less than in other countries

Although Danish families resemble one another more than families in other countries, there are nevertheless differences in the amount of time Danish parents spend on their children.

At one end of the scale 10 percent of all families spend just under 6 hours per week on child care when their youngest child is less than three years old. At the other end 10 percent of all families provide more than 30 hours of child care each week.

The pattern for families in which the youngest child is more than two years of age is the same. Some parents spend little time – others a lot.

In general parents’ time spend on their children falls as the children grow older. When the youngest child is between 3 and 5, 10 percent of the families spend 3 hours a week, while the families that spend most time spend just under 18 hours a week on primary care. 10 percent of the families state that when the child is 6-11 or 12-17 years old, they do not spend time on child care. In contrast, the families that give most care spend 12 and 4 hours respectively. Here we are only speaking of so-called primary care – the time in which parents do something together with their children, such as looking after them, playing ball with them or doing homework with them.

Smaller differences in Denmark

If, for instance, we compare Denmark with Canada, Great Britain and the USA, it can clearly be seen that the consumption of care time in Danish families with children is more uniformly distributed than in families with children in the other countries. The care time given varies quite simply less from family to family than in the other countries.

The Rockwool Foundation Research Unit has calculated a so-called Gini coefficient for the time fathers and mothers spend with their children. The Gini coefficient shows how far a country is from having an entirely equal distribution of a good in society. In this case how far one is from a situation in which all families provide exactly the same amount of care time for their children. If only one family in an entire country spent time on providing care for their children, while all the others spent no time, the Gini coefficient would be 1. If, conversely, all families spend the same time, the coefficient will be zero. A low coefficient close to zero therefore reflects an equal distribution.

And the distribution is more equal in Denmark than in the other countries. This applies to both mothers and fathers. The Gini coefficient for mothers is just over 0.4 in Denmark, while it is almost 0.5 in the other countries. The Gini coefficient for fathers is 0.5 in Denmark, while it is 0.6 or more in the other countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gini coefficients for child care time in Denmark and selected countries</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The figures for Denmark are for 2001, for Canada 1998, for Great Britain 2000-2001 and for the USA 2003.
Source: The Rockwool Foundation Research Unit.

In Denmark there is less spread – among families – in the care time that children receive. There is greater equality among mothers and fathers in Denmark than is to be found in other countries.
Mothers’ lead in care time is narrowing

Compared with fathers, mothers spend more time together with their children, irrespective of whether the children are babies, young kids or teenagers. But the difference between mothers and fathers is today far smaller than it was formerly.

This is shown by a study of the time parents spend together with their children. A large number of parents – nearly 2,000 in 2001 and as many as 3,500 in 2008 – have registered on a form what they spend their time on in the course of a day and a night. Among other things, the results show how much time the parents spend on their children, and how much they are together with them.

As appears from Table 5, in 2001 a typical mother with a 0-2-year-old child spent more time on her children than the typical father. She spent 3 hours and 25 minutes daily on children against his 1 hour and 32 minutes. Thus, she spent 123 percent more time than he did when there was a 0-2-year-old child in the family inasmuch as we take into account only those parents who were active on the day when the registration took place.

In 2008 the gap between the time mothers and fathers spent on their children had narrowed considerably. Where in 2001 mothers spent far more than twice as long as fathers on child care, the difference in 2008 was 50 percent. The same trend can be seen for the parents of older children. While mothers in 2001 spent 69 percent more time than fathers on child care in families where the youngest child was 3-5 years old, this difference was narrowed to 26 percent in 2008.

The difference between fathers and mothers in relation to the 6-11-year-olds has also been narrowed:

Where in 2001 mothers spent 48 percent more time than fathers on child care, the difference in 2008 was 39 percent. Mothers spent an average of 1 hour an 19 minutes, while fathers spent 57 minutes on their children.

Children are receiving more and more parental care

The time that parents spend on their children has increased markedly in the course of the past 20 years.

In 1987 the parents of 0-2-year-olds spent approximately one and a half hours daily on child care – but in both 2001 and 2008 this time had been increased by one hour per parent to just over 2.5 hours. Here we take into account both parents who spent time on their children on the days when time registration took place and parents who did not.

That it is especially the youngest children that have more time today together with their parents may be connected, among other things, changes in the rules for parental leave. This may have increased the time spent by mothers in particular outside the labour market and thereby their possibilities for giving care.

What would seem to be more surprising is that this increase in the children’s time together with their parents also applies to older children, since the same period has seen a marked increase in the “institutionalisation” of children. Back in 1987 seven out of ten 3-5-year-olds were looked after in kindergartens, day care and the like. In 2008 the figure was nine out of ten.

The trend has been even more marked for slightly older children, the 6-11-year-olds. In 1987 two out of ten attended an after-school institution – twenty years later the figure was seven out of ten. At the same time the proportion of mothers in full-time

| Time spent by fathers and mothers on their children in 2001 and 2008 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2001 | 2008 |
| | Fathers | Mothers | Mothers’ extra time in % | Fathers | Mothers | Mothers’ extra time in % |
| 0-2-year-olds | 01:32 | 03:25 | 123 | 02:01 | 03:08 | 55 |
| 3-5-year-olds | 01:11 | 02:00 | 69 | 01:34 | 01:58 | 26 |
| 6-11-year-olds | 00:52 | 01:17 | 48 | 00:57 | 01:19 | 39 |
| 12-17-year-olds | 00:30 | 00:41 | 37 | … | 00:45 | … |

Note: Only fathers and mothers who have stated that they gave child care on the days when the registration was performed have been included.

Source: The Rockwool Foundation Research Unit.
Mothers undertake most of the developmental care

Child care can be divided into two types, namely developmental and non-developmental care, where the former involves such activities as reading, sport, doing something cultural or playing a game together and the latter involves activities like bathing, providing food, accompanying the child to and from school or other institution or leisure activities.

We find that mothers provide more of both kinds of care than fathers. 72 percent of the time mothers spend on their children is devoted to non-developmental care, while the corresponding figure for men is 65 percent. American parents exhibit the same pattern. Here, too, mothers provide more non-developmental care than fathers. However, this does not affect the fact that mothers give both more non-developmental and developmental care than fathers in both Denmark and the USA.
The level of parents’ education has much importance for the amount of time spent on the children in a family.

The longer a mother or father has attended school, the more time they state that they spend on child care. And here the differences are substantial.

In the course of a week a mother with nine years’ school attendance or with only unskilled vocational training will spend 9.5 hours on child care. It is a different matter for mothers with a long further education, who in contrast spend not 9.5 but nearly 15 hours weekly on child care, i.e. more than 50 percent more time.

In both cases this is time spent on so-called primary care, that is time when child and parent have been engaged in activities that focused on the child’s needs – providing food, bathing, reading, homework, etc. – and wishes.

Fathers exhibit the same pattern. Fathers with little education spend almost 5 hours weekly on child care, while for fathers with a long further education the corresponding figure of 8.5 hours per week is 80% higher.

**Possible explanations**

It may at first sight seem surprising that highly educated parents spend more time on their children than other parents. From an economic viewpoint one would expect that the opposite would be the case. Higher education is often accompanied by a high salary, so that it makes economic sense to spend more hours at work and fewer at home. It is quite simply expensive to replace working time with child-care time.

But a number of studies have shown that this consideration does not apply for child care. If parents with more education cut down on the time spent at home, this affects housework rather than child care. Either they do less of that sort of thing, or they pay others to do it.

The positive correlation between parents’ education and the time they spend on their children may be linked with the fact that parents with a long education believe that they are particularly good at providing child care, or at least better than others when it is a matter of their own children.

There is so much to be done when one has children. One has to know many things, for instance about health and nutrition, and one has to spend time and energy on communicating with the outside world, e.g. institutions and schools. If one is well educated, it is easier to find out what needs to be done, but it takes time, which one is prepared to spend when one’s own children are concerned.

Another possible explanation has to do with the families’ values. Perhaps parents with a higher education attach greater importance to being together with their children than those with less education. Or perhaps it is just easier to give the children attention when one is less tired on returning home from work, when there is more space in the home, etc.

Nor can the possibility be disregarded that a more traditional view of gender roles and child care is part of the explanation why men with little education spend less time on their children than others.

Finally, the actual measurement of the care given may also be part of the explanation. It is possible that more highly educated parents report providing more care for their children than less highly educated parents.

**Differences between mother and father**

Not surprisingly, it means quite a lot for a
family whether the mother and father have the same educational level or whether on the contrary there is a big difference between them in terms of education.

If they have the same – or more or less the same – educational level, then more time will be spent on the children, and the father will contribute more to their care. Together they will spend 21-22 hours a week on primary and secondary care, and the father will perform half of this.

If, however, there is a big difference in the parents’ educational level – more than 6 years – the situation in the family is different. The children are given 18 hours’ care and the mother provides most of it – her share is 62 percent. It is also the case that if both parents have the same educational level, they share more in child care – they provide care at the same time – than if the difference in educational level is larger.

The same pattern in a number of other Western countries

In the research unit’s book *Forældres brug af tid og penge på deres børn* [Time and Money Spent by Parents on their Children] it is shown that the connection between parents’ educational level and the amount of child care given is also to be found in other Western countries.

American men with further education devote just over 9 hours a week to child care as opposed to just under 6 hours for men without further education. The corresponding figures for American women are almost 14 hours a week for those with further education against just under 12 hours for those without.

More mothers work full time and spend more time on their children

That more women are on the labour market is found in many countries, and also that many mothers nowadays have full-time jobs. This, hasn’t, however, implied less time spend on child care in these families. In US, Canada and France as well as in Denmark we find that fathers and mothers working part-time, full-time and more than full-time all have increased the amount of child care during the last 20 years. In particular for US it means that mothers’ and fathers’ number of working hours has become still more independent of the time, they devote to child care.

A plausible explanation for this trend is that more people in these countries are now more educated than before, and that children have become more of a “luxery” good for modern families.

**Primary and secondary child care**

If her father is doing homework with her, playing ball with her or reading a good-night story for her, then Mary is receiving primary child care. The object of the activities is namely to do something with or for Mary.

If her mother is in the kitchen cooking and helping Mary with her homework at the same time, then Mary is receiving secondary child care. The primary activity is about something else, namely cooking.

The division into primary and secondary activities has been made by the parents themselves in connection with the registration of activities on selected days.
Danish fathers in European elite

Like Swedish and Norwegian men Danish men devote far more time to their role as a father than do fathers from other European countries.

When the youngest child is under seven years of age, Danish fathers spend a little over nine hours a week on their children. This is half an hour more than a Polish father, two and a half hours more than a German father, three hours more than a Belgian father and almost four hours more than a French father.

Only in the other Scandinavian countries – Norway and Sweden – do men spend more time on their under-sevens than in Denmark. In Sweden fathers spend half an hour more per week, while Norwegian fathers spend just over one and a half hours extra on their children each week.

Danish men are also in the European super league in relation to the 7-17-year-olds. Like Swedish fathers Danish men spend more than three hours a week on the older children. That is considerably more than fathers in a number of other countries – Finland, Belgium, France, Poland and Spain – where fathers average less than two hours a week. In France fathers spend even less time: 1 hour and 17 minutes on care for their older children. For all the countries the figures apply to fathers in two-parent families.

Danish mothers

Also Danish mothers spend a lot of time together with their children in comparison with mothers in other European countries. For Danish mothers, however, the picture is somewhat different from what it is for the fathers, namely that – like other Nordic mothers – Danish mothers do not spend much more time on the youngest children than other European mothers. Danish children under the age of 7 are together with their mothers a little over 18.5 hours per week. This is less than the time Spanish, Italian Polish, English and Finnish mothers spend on their children.

The case is different for the slightly older children. 7-17-year-old Danish children spend a lot of time together with their mothers in comparison with children in other European countries.

Time spent by fathers in other countries on their 7-17-year-old children in relation to Danish fathers

Source: The Rockwool Foundation Research Unit.

Danish fathers are second only to Swedish fathers in respect of time spent on their 7-17-year-old children. Both Danish and Swedish men spend more than twice as much time with their children as French men.
Gender equality

The Nordic countries are thus different from the others at several levels. One explanation that suggests itself is that the idea of gender equality has taken deeper root in Scandinavia that it has in Southern Europe. That is what the figures would seem to indicate.

Table 8 can be regarded as an equal rights barometer. It shows by country how close mothers and fathers are to one another in relation to how much time they spend on their 7-17-year-olds. The smaller the figure, the smaller the difference between the fathers’ and mothers’ consumption of time. For instance, a Danish mother spends 80 percent more time on the children than a Danish father does – every time the father spends an hour, the mother spends approximately one and three-quarter hours.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Extra time spent by mothers on their children between the ages of 7 to 17 in comparison with fathers (in %)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Rockwool Foundation Research Unit.
Note: The figures refer to one of the years 1998-2003/04.

Measured in this way, one can conclude that the Nordic countries have got furthest towards gender equality. At the opposite end of the scale, countries with least gender equality, we find France. Every time a French father has spent an hour on the children, the mother has spent two and a half hours.

Institutions and rules

Another explanation for the difference between north and south in Europe is that there is wide variation among institutions and rules in the various countries.

In Sweden and Norway a period of paternity leave is earmarked for fathers, which increases the time they spend together with the youngest children. On the other hand, day care institutions for children under school age are widely used in the Nordic countries, a factor that reduces – especially women’s – time together with their children.

There is little doubt that in respect of the older children the all-day schools to be found in many countries outside Scandinavia mean less time spent together by children and parents.

Time other mothers spend on their children in comparison with Danish mothers

![Time other mothers spend on their children in comparison with Danish mothers](source: The Rockwool Foundation Research Unit)

Swedish mothers spend 60 percent more time together with their children than Swedish fathers. There is thus considerably more gender equality in Sweden than in France, where mothers spend 240 percent more time on their children than fathers.
Many Danish parents will undoubtedly agree that it is expensive to have children. But if they compare themselves with families in the USA, the picture looks quite different. In relation to what American parents have to pay, it is not particularly expensive to have children in Denmark. In fact Danish children cost only half as much as American children.

In Denmark the annual expense in a medium-income family of having two children averages DKK 40,000 a year. In the USA the figure for a corresponding family is twice as high – namely about DKK 80,000 kroner per year. The two amounts describe the number of kroner a family has to disburse each year to cover the direct expenses connected with having children.

**Financed via taxes**

The difference is particularly large in relation to one expense, namely the cost of health care. In Denmark the annual expense is DKK 550. In the USA the cost is more than 20 times higher – almost DKK 13,000 per year.

That the cost of keeping an American child in good health is 20 times greater than for a Danish child is not an expression of the fact that American children are 20 times as ill as Danish children. The chief explanation is that the health system is mainly financed via taxes in Denmark, while there is a high degree of user payment in the USA. Like all other Danes, Danish parents pay via their taxes. It is therefore not necessary for them to pay themselves, so to speak, because they have children who fall ill now and then.

There is also a marked difference in expenses for food and leisure activities. American families spend almost twice as much money on food as Danish families. This may be connected with the fact that in the USA there is more of a tradition for going out to eat and for buying take-away food.

American families also spend more than twice as much money on leisure activities for their children as Danish families. Part of the explanation is probably that many leisure activities in Denmark are publicly subsidised. The costs are thus paid via taxes, so that parents do not have any here-and-now expenses when their children go to leisure activities.

**Child care costs the same**

Even though there are large differences in some areas, there are also areas where expenses are at more or less the same level. This applies for example, to clothes and shoes, which cost about DKK 8,000 annually in both Denmark and the USA.

There are also only limited differences in the average expenditure on child care, school attendance and other services. In Denmark the average is just under DKK 12,000, while in the USA it is just above DKK 15,000, when we look at families with the youngest child between the ages of 6 and 11.
Only children: girls get time – boys get things

Parents of only children behave differently depending on whether the child is a girl or a boy. Girls are given more care – more time – than boys. On the other hand boys are given more things.

As appears from Table 9, girls have more time with their parents than boys. In a week girls are given about three hours more care than boys – namely just under 14 hours, while boys get just under 11 hours.

It is not the father who – with respect to time – makes the big difference between whether the child is a boy or girl. In all circumstances he spends between three and three and a half hours on the child. On the other hand, it is apparently not immaterial for the mother whether she is to spend her time in a boy’s or a girl’s universe. If the only child is a girl, she occupies almost three hours extra of the mother’s time in comparison with if it had been a boy.

If there are two children of the same gender in the family, there is no longer any difference whether they are boys or girls – they receive equally much care from both the father and the mother. For the mother the time spent on the two children is about 11.5 hours and for the father about 5 hours a week.

Boys are given more things

While boys who are only children must make do with less care from their mother than girls, they can console themselves with the fact that money is less tight for boys.

They receive more toys and leisure equipment than girls. Boys are given DKK 5,700 worth of toys and leisure equipment per year, while the corresponding figure for girls is DKK 3,300. The difference is so large that it is statistically significant. In respect of clothes, transport and service, e.g. hairdresser, the expenses are virtually the same. The differences are so small that they are not statistically valid.

### TABLE 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours:minutes per week</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>3:18</td>
<td>3:33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>7:34</td>
<td>10:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10:52</td>
<td>13:53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Couples with one child.

Mothers spend more time on their only child than fathers irrespective of whether the child is a boy or girl. But in the case of a boy, however, the mother spends less time than if the child had been a girl.

### TABLE 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents’ annual expenditure on boys and girls, 1999-2004</th>
<th>DKK.</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothes</td>
<td>6,900</td>
<td>7,600</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toys, leisure equipment, etc.</td>
<td>5,700</td>
<td>3,300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, health Other services</td>
<td>4,800</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17,400</td>
<td>15,400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Couple with one child, 2002 prices. Services are excl. day care institutions.
Source: The Rockwool Foundation Research Unit.

Among only children boys are given more toys and leisure equipment than girls. The level of expenditure is almost the same in respect of clothes, transport and services. All in all expenses are higher for boys.
The **time spent on children is the largest cost**

The largest cost of having children is time, time that as an adult one spends together with one's children, and which – if one did not have children – one could have spent on working and earning money.

This is shown by calculations of the overall cost of having children. The calculations are based on the opportunity cost method. In this method one looks at what the adults could otherwise have been doing in the free time lost – namely work – and calculates the earnings the adults have missed by taking care of their children.

Calculated in this way the lost earnings can be seen to amount to just over half of the overall cost of having children, namely between DKK 6,400 and 7,400 kr. per month, depending on how old the children are.

There are other costs in addition to the loss of time. There are the direct expenses – for day care institutions, cycles, trainers, food and everything else. Money spent on these things is money that the adults – if they did not have children – would have been able to spend on themselves. The money which thus goes directly out of the adults’ pockets is just under a quarter of their total expenditure. Depending on the children’s age this is a matter of between DKK 2,600 and 3,400 a month.

The third and last cost of having children is the housekeeping. Cooking, doing the laundry and cleaning can be regarded as production. The cost is that the adults perform the work, and the children benefit from the result. Adults in families with children produce more housework than others – quite simply, more laundry is done, more food is cooked – but part of the value is given to the children. The housework constitutes a quarter of the total costs, namely between just under DKK 2,800 and 3,700 a month.

The costs of DKK 12-14,000 per month are considerable. By way of comparison the possibilities for consumption for a couple who do not have children are about DKK 32,000 kr per month.

### Table II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youngest child's age</th>
<th>0-2 years old</th>
<th>3-5 years old</th>
<th>6-11 years old</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time consumed that could otherwise have been spent on work</td>
<td>7.200</td>
<td>7.400</td>
<td>6.400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower consumption</td>
<td>2.800</td>
<td>3.400</td>
<td>2.600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housework performed from which one has no personal benefit</td>
<td>3.700</td>
<td>3.400</td>
<td>2.800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In total</td>
<td>13.700</td>
<td>14.200</td>
<td>11.800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Two-parent families, 2001 costs inflated to 2008 prices.*

*Source: The Rockwool Foundation Research Unit.*
Busy parents spend less time with their children, but more money

It can scarcely come as a surprise for many people. Parents with long working hours spend less time on their children than parents with a short working day, and the same holds true of persons with a high income. The higher the income, the less the time spent on the children.

The surprising thing is that the differences in time and money spent by parents on their children are as great as they are.

Thus, it turns out that the busiest one-fourth of families with children spend under 10 hours per week on them, while the one-fourth of the families that work least spend almost 16 hours.

Correspondingly the richest one-fourth spends less than nine hours, while the poorest one-fourth spends almost 16 hours. This corresponds to the poorest families spending over 60% more time on care than is the case for the busiest families, and to the one-fourth of the families that work least spending over 60% more time on care than the busiest families.

It also appears that the poorest one-fourth of families with children spend less than DKK 17,000 a year on food and other expenses for their children. The richest one-fourth spends almost DKK 35,000 a year — that is, more than twice as much. Correspondingly the study shows that the one-fourth of families that work least spend just under DKK 21,000 a year, while the one-fourth that work most spend almost DKK 28,000 a year.

The reason why income and hours worked have the same effect in this way is — in part — to be found in the fact that long working hours and high income are linked. People who work a lot have high incomes. This explains why income and hours worked also have the same effect on how much time parents spend on their children. The higher the income and the longer the time worked, the less the time the parents spend on their children.

The busiest one-fourth of the families with children spend less than 10 hours per week, while the one-fourth that work least spend almost 16 hours. Correspondingly the wealthiest one-fourth spend less than 9 hours while the poorest one-fourth spend almost 16 hours.

The poorest one-fourth of the families with children spend under DKK 17,000 a year on food and other expenses. The wealthiest one-fourth spend almost DKK 35,000 a year — more than twice as much. In the same way it appears that the one-fourth that work least spend almost DKK 21,000 a year, while the one-fourth that work most spend almost DKK 28,000 a year.
### Literature from the project *Parents investment in their children*


