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# Promoting Fathers to Care

Is there an easy solution to this dilemma?

# Outline

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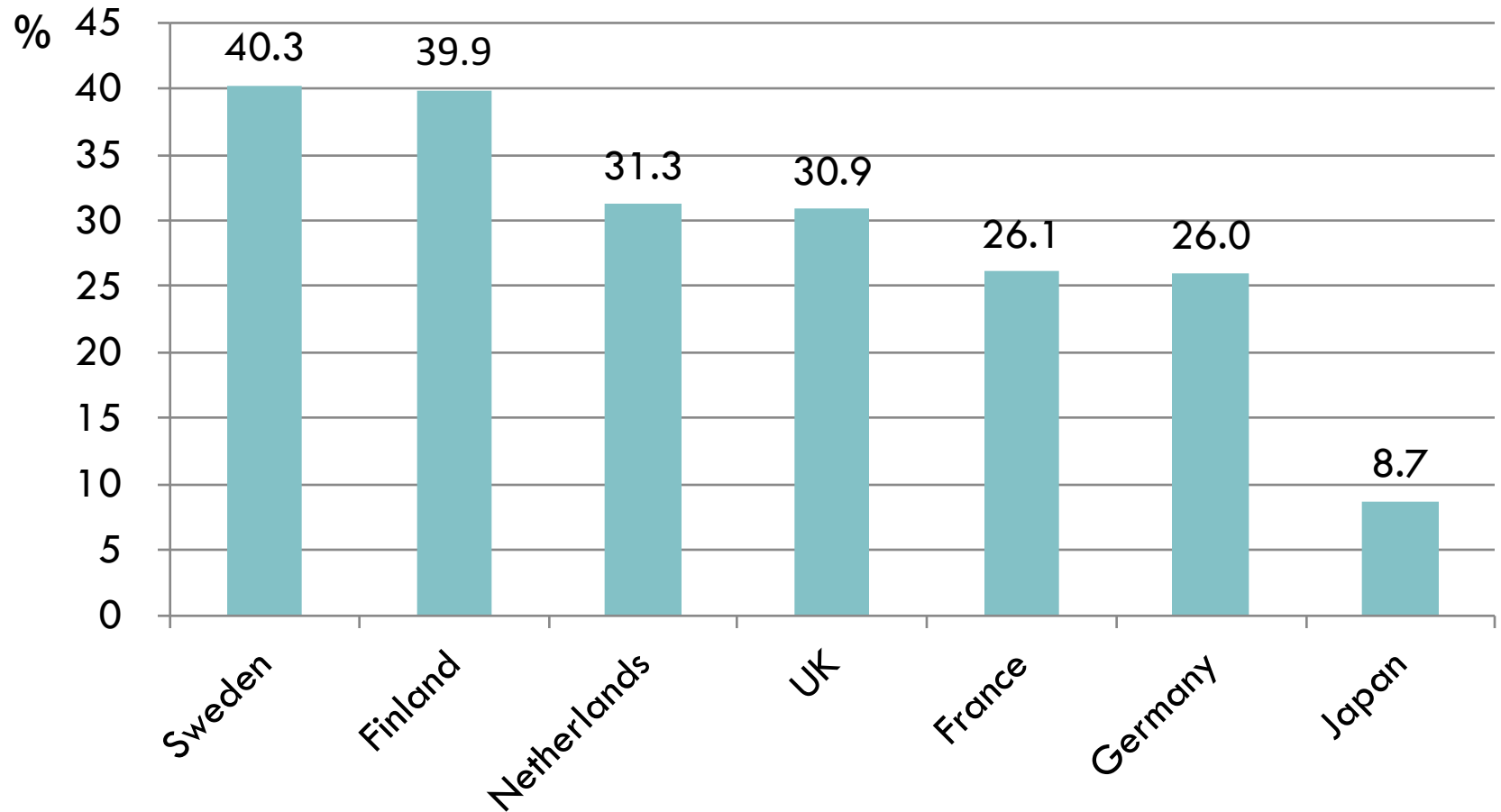
- Introduction
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# Introduction

# Fathers' share of weekly unpaid work

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Source: European Working Conditions Surveys (EWCS) 2010, Japan: 総務省統計局平成23年社会生活基本調査

\*Unpaid work: caring and educating children, housework, cooking

# ‘Caring fathers’ - policy agenda

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- Promoting fathers to care is one of the most urgent policy issues in Japan.
- Explicitly name fathers as driving forces and targeting groups could be a firm step towards it.

# WLB policies in the UK

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- Policies introduced under New Labour (1997-2010)

1997	2003	2007	2009	2010	2014
<b>Parental leave</b>	Right to request <b>flexible working</b>  Adoption leave	Right to request <b>flexible working</b> (extended)	Right to request <b>flexible working</b> (extended)		Right to request flexible working (extended)
	<b>Maternity leave</b> (extended)	<b>Maternity leave</b> (extended)			
	<b>Paternity leave</b>			Additional <b>paternity leave</b>	Shared parental leave (2015)

# Parents' equal sharing of care

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**- not an explicit policy goal**

- UK's WLB policies – 'gender neutral'  
(Lewis and Campbell 2007)
- Fathers' roles were – 'initially vague'  
(Kilkey 2006)

# Research Questions

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- How were the caring roles of fathers discussed in the process of policy-making?
- What impeded it from becoming an explicit policy objective?



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# Method

# 11 Key Informant Interviews

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- London in July-August 2015
  - ❖ By picking up the names from official policy documents and sending emails directly + Snowball sampling
  
- Government officials : 2
- Lobby groups : 3
- Think-tanks : 2
- Academics : 2
- TUC (trade union): 1
- CBI (employers' organization): 1

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# Results

# Fathers were not discussed

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One of the things that got lost in the process was that nobody really talked about fathers, at all.

[WLB Lobby]

I think most people, certainly men, assumed it would be women asking for this (flexible work). I think even the women's thinking on the commission was that initially it would be largely a mothers' issue.

[Chair of Work and Parents Taskforce]

There was very much a focus around how to keep women connected to their jobs. [Civil servant]

# Split within the government

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We were loved by half of them and not at all liked by another half.

The split was: are men trustworthy or not? Half said yes, this is fantastic we can work with them who are saying the right things. And the other half said no, they are just a Trojan Horse for men pushing themselves. So that's what the Labour was like.

[Fathering Lobby]

# The powerful opponents

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She (a minister) just ignored it (fathers' roles). She thought it was silly. I had a meeting with her and through the whole meeting, she was looking at something over my shoulder, she didn't even look at me and she didn't listen to a word I said. Basically what she was saying is: 'You're a man and what on earth could you possibly have to say about this issue?'. I'll never forget that experience. It was horrible. [Fathering Lobby]

# Split within lobby groups

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It's a lobby. Very powerful. Very suspicious of men. They are trying to bolster women's power as their analysis is that men are a waste of time and that men will impede women's power so that you have to make women autonomous. It's not that they are bad people, they have an analysis that is different from mine. My analysis is while you make women totally responsible, you don't get gender equality. [Fathering Lobby]

# It's harder to advocate fathers

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Maternity leave and women's progression at work was because of feminism. It was a part of the wider feminism movement, whereas for men it's very piecemeal and kind of individualised. [WLB Lobby]

It's almost impossible to get money for fathers because fathers are not a disadvantaged group. Fathers are silent, there's not a big movement of fathers. My son-in-law said, 'we could never lobby for ourselves because women still have such a long way to go. How could we ever publicly ask for anything for ourselves?'. [Fathering Lobby]



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# Discussion

# Strong ‘veto players’

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## □ **Within the government**

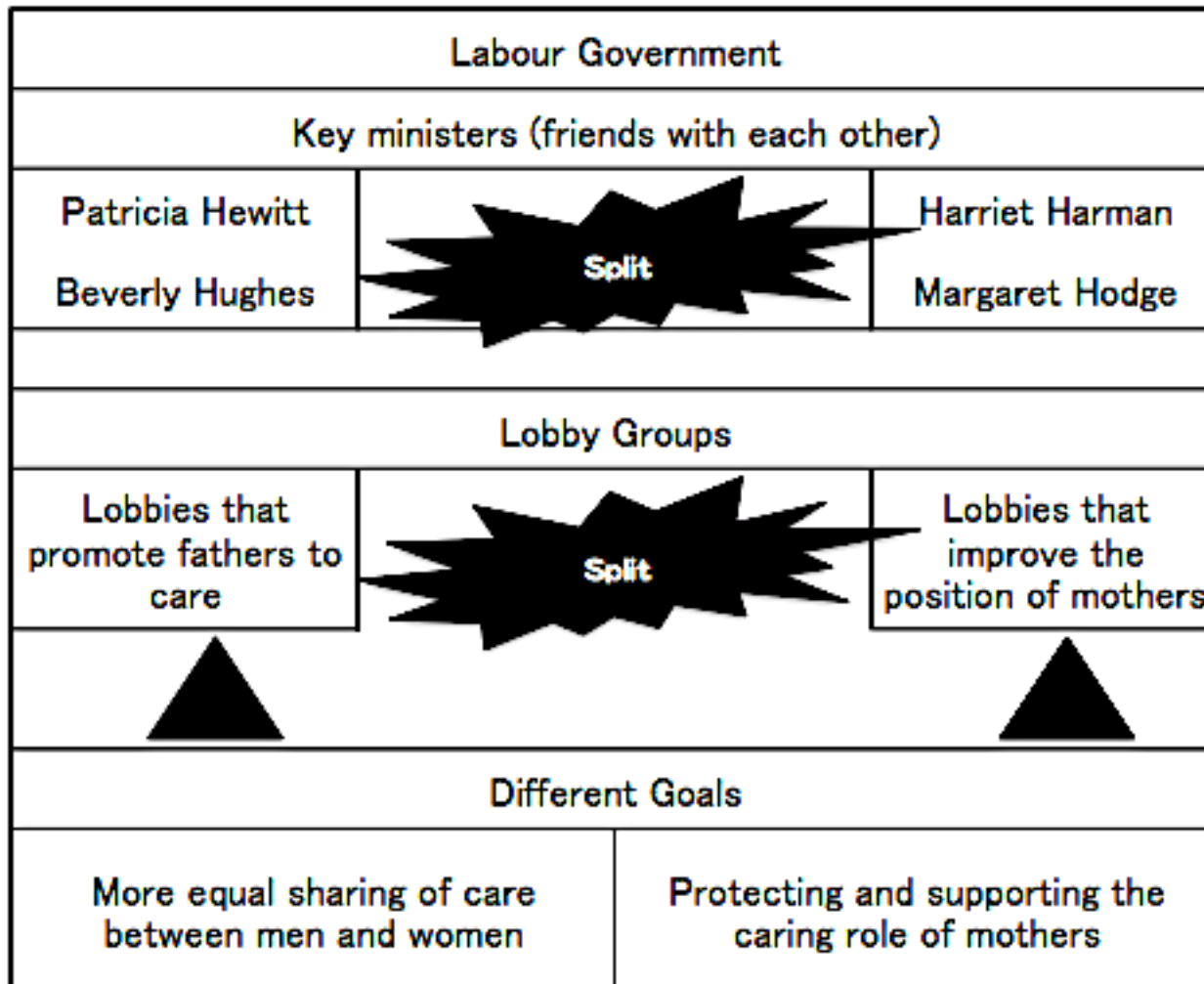
- Split between the two groups of female ministers
- ‘Happy to work with men and fathering lobby groups’ vs ‘Suspicious of men’

## □ **Within lobby groups**

- Split between lobby groups
- ‘Promoting fathers’ caring roles’ vs ‘Supporting women’s autonomy’

# Strong 'veto players'

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# Implications

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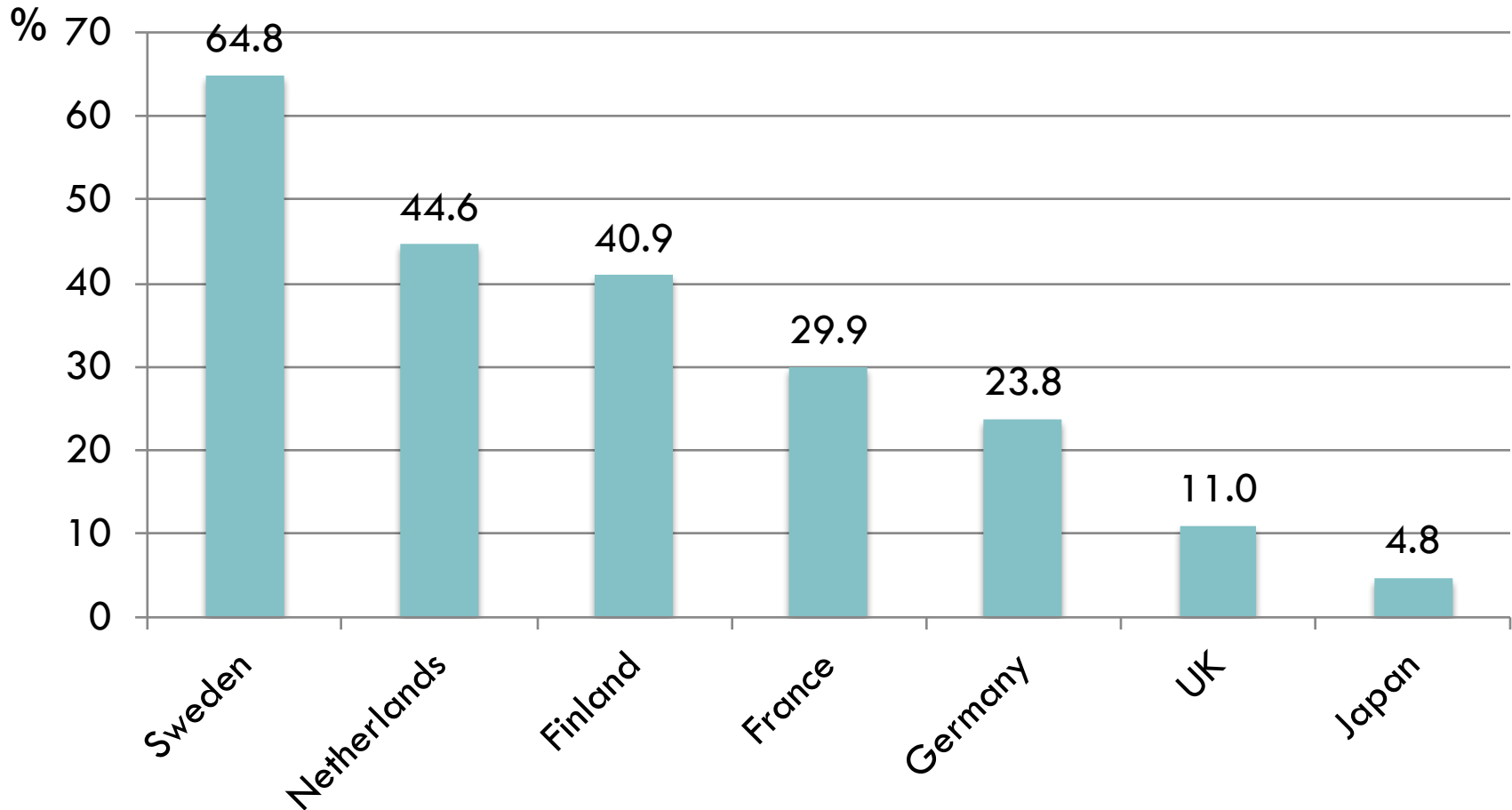
- Sharing the vision of ‘caring fathers’ among different actors – necessary to promote it as being an explicit policy goal.
- A variety of values in feminism and routes towards gender equality – controversial.
- ‘Fathers are not only breadwinners, but also caregivers’ – can it gain hegemony?

*Thank you!*

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# Preference of equal sharing

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Source: International Social Survey Programme: Family and Changing Gender Roles IV – ISSP 2012

\*Equal sharing: both parents work full-time + both parents work part-time.