Progress towards gender equality involves changes in the traditional parental division - female caring and male breadwinning. One aspect is increased parental leave for fathers, which may benefit the health of mothers, children, and fathers themselves. We examined how social and health characteristics (2002) were associated with paternity leave in excess of the 'father quota' of 60 days (2003-2006) in the Stockholm Public Health Cohort. Generally, fathers with stable social position, fit lifestyles, and good health had increased chances of paternity leave uptake. Our findings may contribute to identifying target groups for parental leave strategies among fathers; they indicate also that research on gender equality and public health must carefully address the problems of confounding and health-related selection.
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