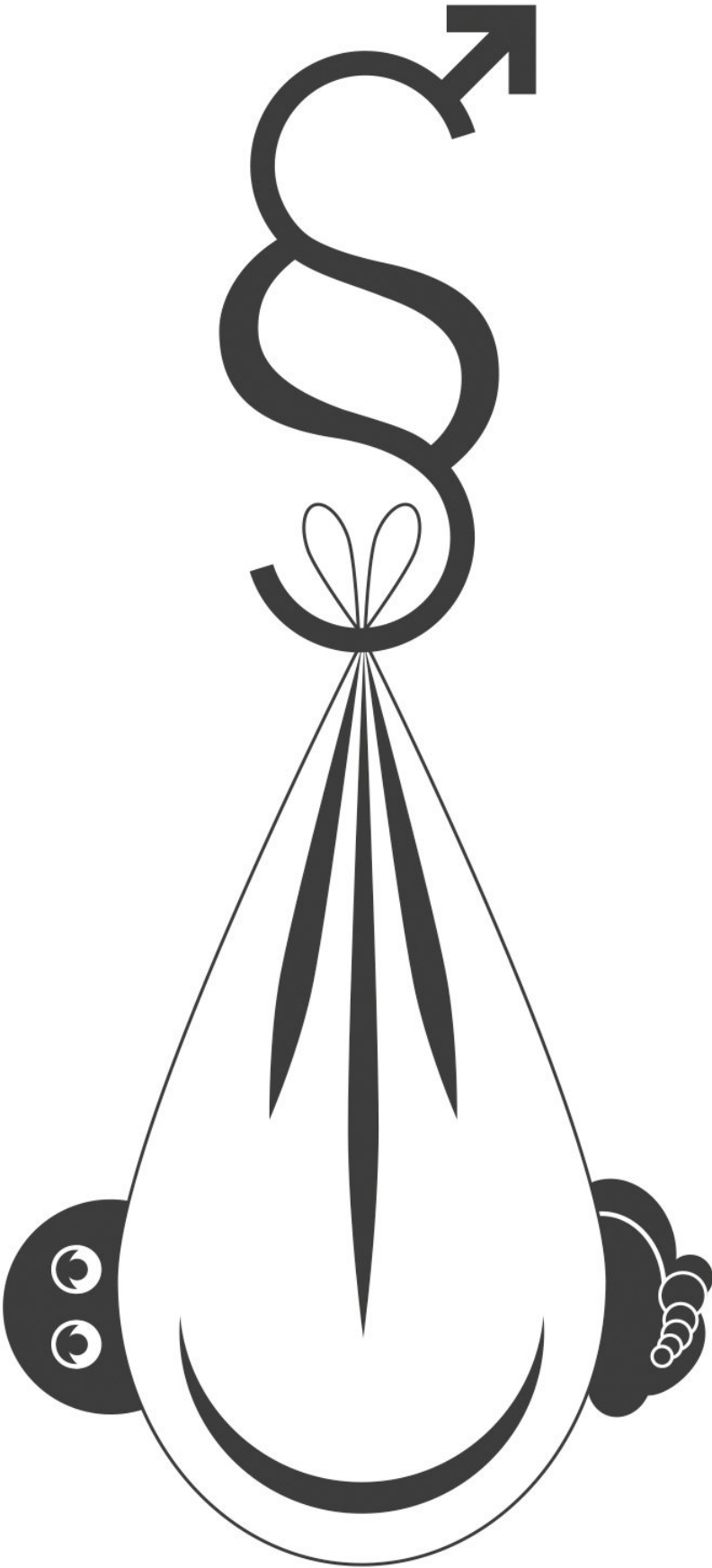


Law firms do not encourage men to take parental leaves

June 1 2018



Law firms do not encourage men to take parental leaves. Credit: UEF/Raija Törrönen

The professional ethos of law firms discourages men from taking parental leave, a new Finnish-Canadian study shows. Carried out by the University of Eastern Finland and TÉLUQ University in Quebec, the study found that the professional culture in law firms rests on traditional masculine ideology, with men regarded as the providers for their families. This view does not encourage men to combine their professional career and child care. The findings were reported in the *International Journal of the Legal Profession*.

The fact that few male lawyers take [parental leave](#) is an indication of gender inequality within the legal profession.

"In [law firms](#), family policies and flexible working arrangements are mainly targeted at women, and this has a negative impact on women's career development. If fathers took a more active role in child care, it would facilitate the emergence of a professional culture that is more family-friendly. In the process, it is also likely that this would reduce gender bias in the division of legal tasks and career paths within law firms," researcher Marta Choroszewicz from the University of Eastern Finland explains.

The study examined male lawyers' motives behind taking or not taking [paternity](#) and parental leaves in law firms based in Helsinki, Finland, and in Montreal, Canada. Canadian male lawyers were significantly less keen to take paternity leave than their Finnish colleagues. This is partly explained by Finland's longer paternity leave tradition. Instead of taking

paternity leave, Canadian male lawyers preferred taking annual holiday when their child was born.

The greater popularity of paternity leave in Finland is also explained by organisational differences between Finnish and Canadian law firms. In Finland, young lawyers typically work as members of a team, and they for example face lower expectations to attract new clients than their Canadian colleagues. In Canada, the work revolves more around the individual, and even young lawyers are expected to contribute to marketing, networking and new client recruitment.

Preliminary findings from Finland show that there, too, the attitudes to paternity leave vary from one generation to the next. Law firm partners representing the post-Second World War generation and Generation X often did not take paternity leave when their children were small, and they do not necessarily understand the need of today's young male lawyers to participate in early [child care](#). In many law [firms](#), paternity leaves are still regarded as optional, compared to, for example, maternity leaves.

"It is not enough that men's right to parental leave is guaranteed by legislation. We also need organisational solutions, collegial encouragement and examples set by male law firm partners," Choroszewicz points out.

In Finland, the right to paternity leave was enacted in legislation in 1978. In 2013, the length of paternity leave was extended to nine weeks. In Canada, taking paternity leave has been possible since 2006, but only in the province of Quebec, and the length is only half of what it is in Finland.

More information: Marta Choroszewicz et al, Parental-leave policy for male lawyers in Helsinki and Montreal: cultural and professional

barriers to male lawyers' use of paternity and parental leaves,
International Journal of the Legal Profession (2018). DOI:
[10.1080/09695958.2018.1456435](https://doi.org/10.1080/09695958.2018.1456435)

Provided by University of Eastern Finland

Citation: Law firms do not encourage men to take parental leaves (2018, June 1) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-06-law-firms-men-parental.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.