

Parental leave for fathers can reduce sexist attitudes and gender bias

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Parental leave for fathers can decrease sexist attitudes and gender bias, according to new research from Rice University, Washington University in St. Louis, the University of Oxford and ETH Zurich.

"Fathers' Leave Reduces Sexist Attitudes" will appear in an upcoming edition of the *American Political Science Review*. The researchers,

including Jonathan Homola, an assistant professor of political science at Rice, were interested in how [parental leave](#) for non-traditional caregivers impacts individuals' deeply ingrained attitudes about stereotypical gender roles and sexism—which can have [adverse consequences](#) when it comes to personal socioeconomic status and politics.

For the study, the researchers examined the attitudes of 1,362 new parents who were and were not directly affected by a policy reform in Estonia that tripled the amount of fathers' leave time for babies born on or after July 1, 2020.

They found that families with fathers who received more parental leave saw an increase in belief in gender equality among both men and women. They also found that direct exposure to such policies raised support among women for pro-female policies such as requiring [political parties](#) to field more [female candidates](#) at the expense of male candidates.

Indirect exposure to such policy reform didn't change attitudes, the researchers found.

"We hope this study will show governments and organizations how direct exposure to progressive social policies can weaken [sexist attitudes](#) and be a practical and effective tool to reduce harmful biases," he said.

The paper was co-authored by Margit Tavits of Washington University in St. Louis, Petra Schleiter of the University of Oxford and Dalston Ward of ETH Zurich and Stanford University.

More information: Margit Tavits et al, Fathers' Leave Reduces Sexist Attitudes, *American Political Science Review* (2023). [DOI: 10.1017/S0003055423000369](#)

Provided by Rice University

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