

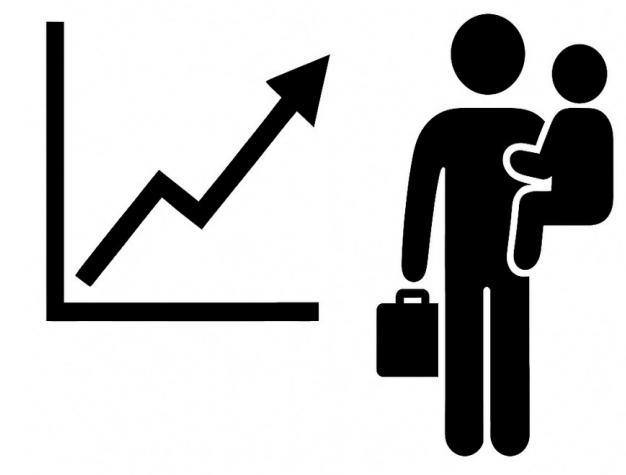
Conservative or Progressive? Justice Principles in Couples' Parental Leave Decisions in Germany

Isabel M. Habicht^{1,2}

¹Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, Harvard University; ²University of Wuppertal

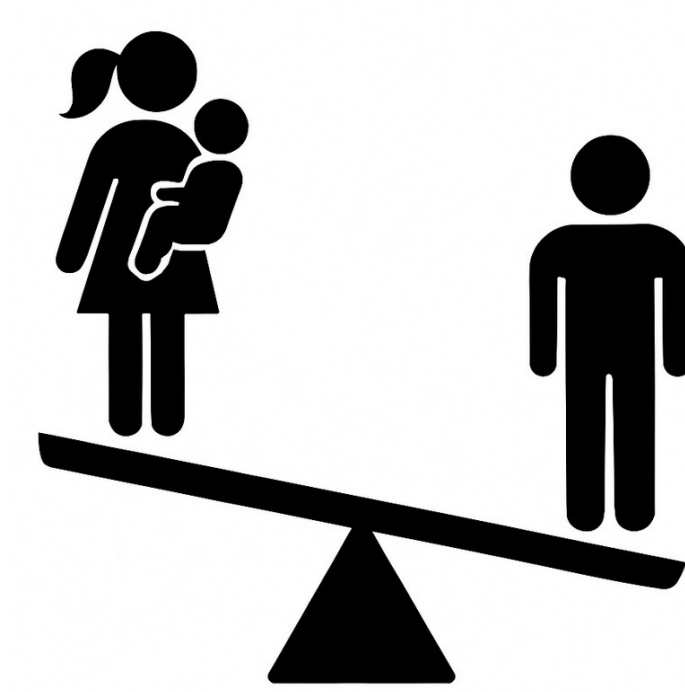
(1) Policy Background

2019: 30.6%
2009: 19.5%
2005: 5.0%



➤ Share of fathers taking parental leave is increasing

11.6 months (mothers) 2.8 months (fathers)



➤ 2022: Duration of parental leave is still unequal (gap: 76%)

(3) Vignette with Research Question

[Fixed Introduction]

The following describes various situations of couples who are expecting a baby for the first time and have decided to care for the child themselves for the first **12 months**. The couple is happily married. Both are in their early 30s, completed high school, hold permanent jobs, and work full-time.

[Manipulated Vignette]

The **wife** has a **managerial position**. She **earns more** than her husband and is **very satisfied** with her job. The husband has no managerial position and is dissatisfied with his job.

[Research Question]

In your opinion, what would be a fair allocation of parental leave for the **wife**? Keep in mind that her husband will take parental leave for the remaining months.

(4) Methods and Data

This study uses a **factorial survey** design to examine how gender, income, occupation, and job satisfaction influence justice perceptions regarding the allocation of parental leave among **dual-earner couples**, assuming a total of **12 months of leave**.

The data were collected via the SoSci Panel at LMU Munich in **Germany** (Nov 6–19, 2023).

A total of 1,004 respondents each evaluated three randomized vignettes, resulting in **3,012 vignette evaluations**.

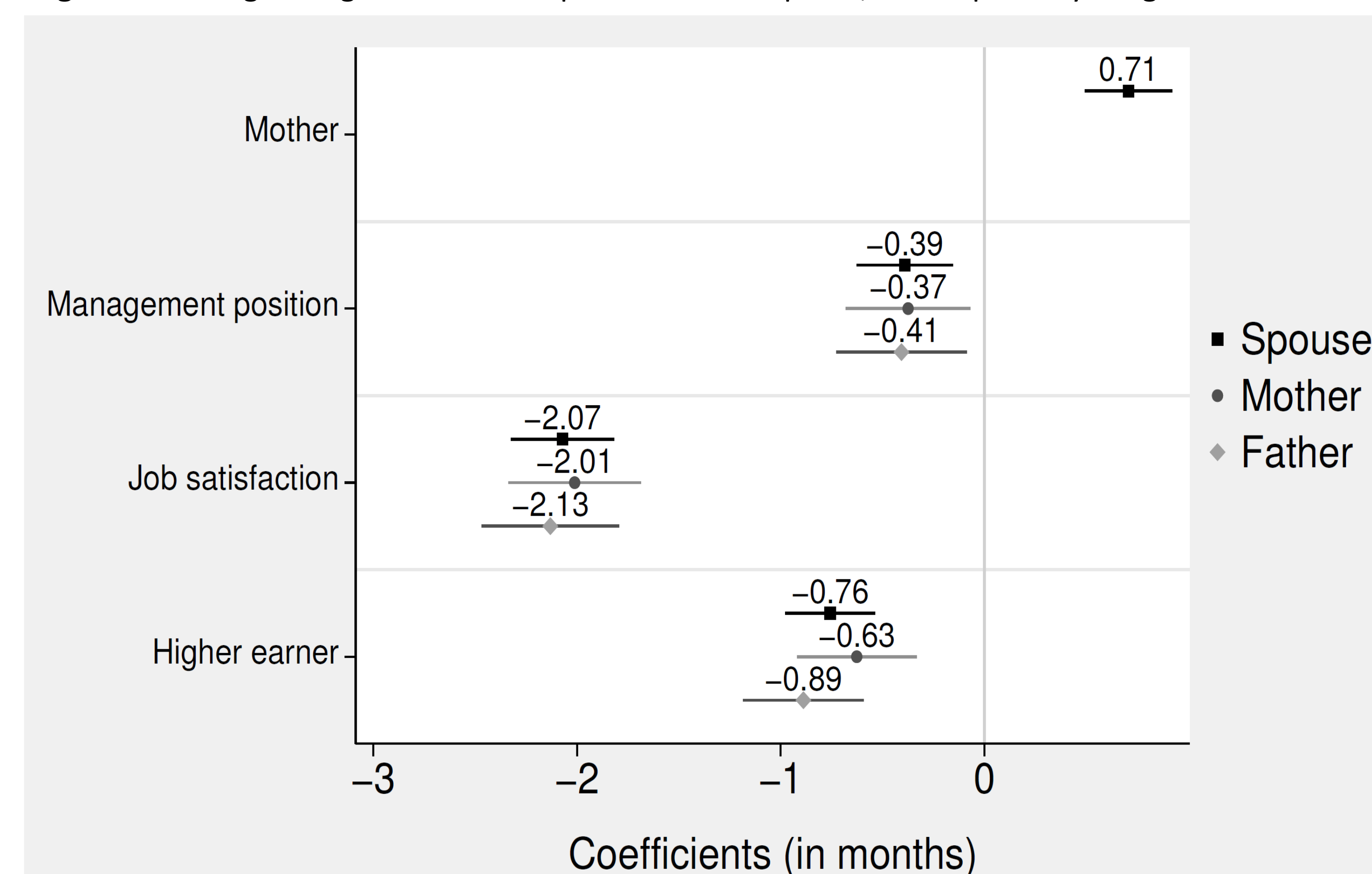
The design followed a D-efficient structure with 18 vignette decks. The data were analyzed using **OLS regression** models with cluster-robust standard errors.

The study was **pre-registered** on the Open Science Framework (OSF).

Justice Principle	(2) Hypotheses	
(1) Equality	H1: Parents should take an equal number of parental leave.	✗
(2) Entitlement	H2: The mother should take more parental leave.	✓
	H3a: The parent who has a management position should take less parental leave.	✓
	H3b: Male managers should take less parental leave than female managers.	✗
	H4a: The parent who is more satisfied with their job should take less parental leave.	✓
	H4b: Fathers who are more satisfied with their jobs should take less parental leave than equally job-satisfied mothers.	✗
(3) Equity	H5: The parent who earns more should take less parental leave.	✓
(4) Norm-deviance	H6a: Higher-earning mothers should take more parental leave to compensate for the deviation from the female caregiver norm.	✗
	H6b: Higher-earning fathers should take more parental leave because they can afford to deviate from the male breadwinner norm.	✗

(5) Results

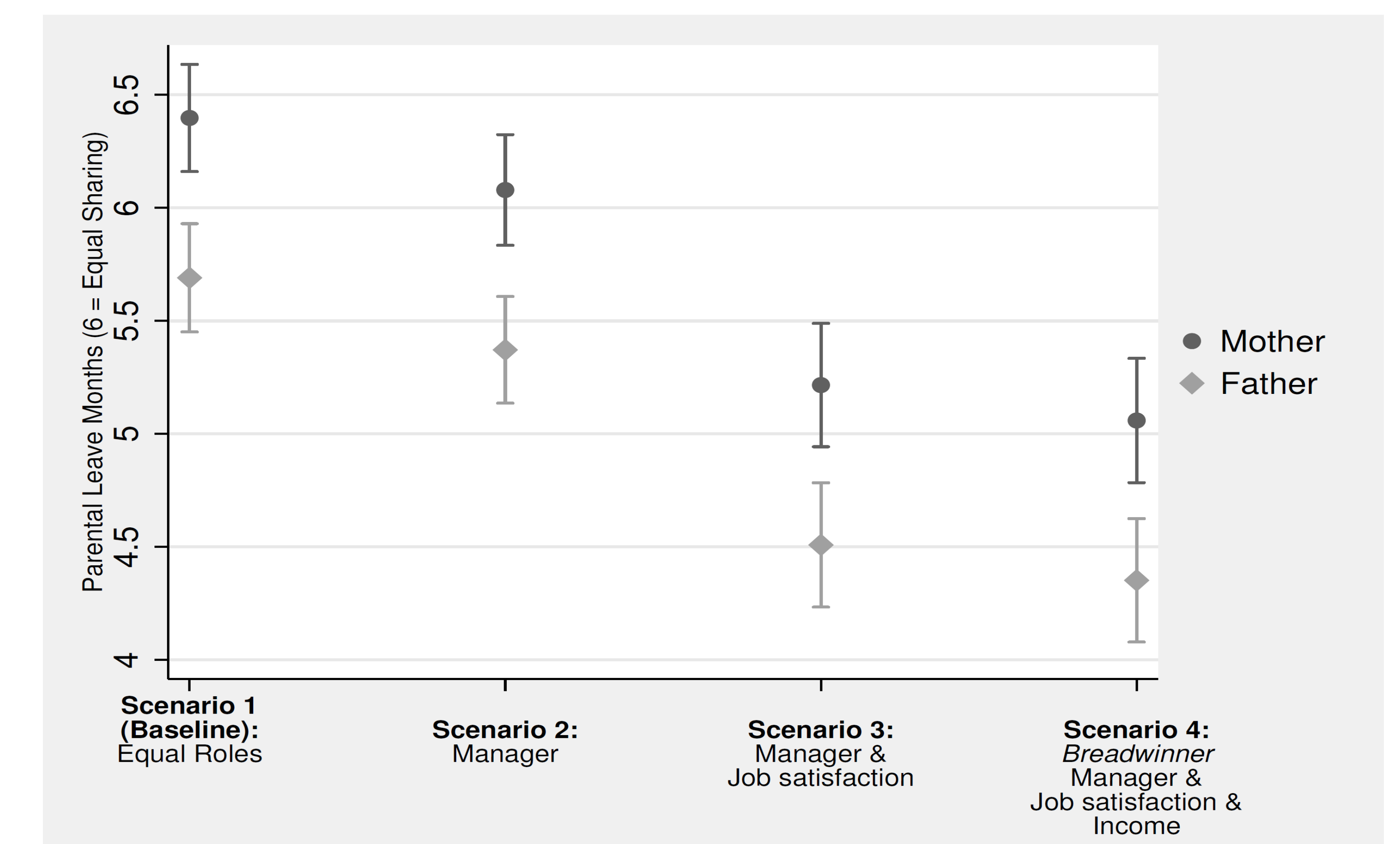
Figure 1. Average marginal effects on parental leave uptake, also separately for gender.



Key Findings (distributional disparities):

- Gender gap of 0.71 months (**11%**), is perceived as just
- No significant gender differences in justice perceptions among management positions, job satisfaction, or income differences
- Strongest predictor: Job satisfaction

Figure 2. Predictive margins of different couple scenarios.



Scenario 1: Both parents are managers, job-satisfied, and earn equally.

Scenario 2: Focal parent is a manager; both are job-satisfied and earn equally.

Scenario 3: Focal parent is a manager and job-satisfied; both earn equally.

Scenario 4 (breadwinner-caregiver model): Focal parent is a manager, job-satisfied, and earns more; partner is not a manager, not job-satisfied, and earns less.

(6) Conclusions

Perceptions of justice in parental leave are more egalitarian than actual behavior in Germany: 6.6 months for mothers vs. 5.9 months for fathers are perceived as just (**11% gap**), compared to 11.6 vs. 2.8 months in reality (**76% gap**) – Why?

- The experiment models a “**perfect world**” (no gendered income or occupational differences).
- In the **real-world** a persistent gender wage gap and occupational segregation still exists!



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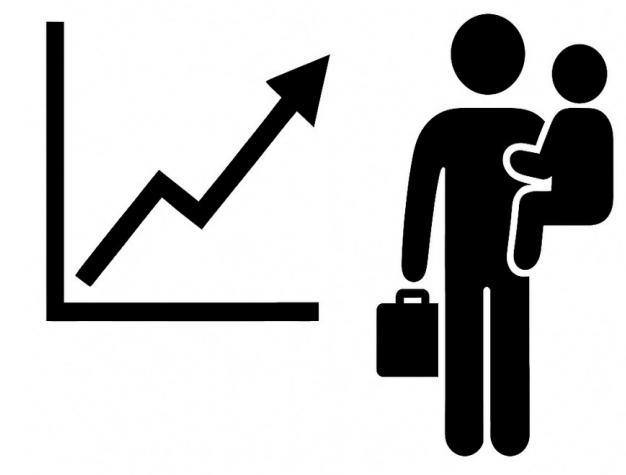
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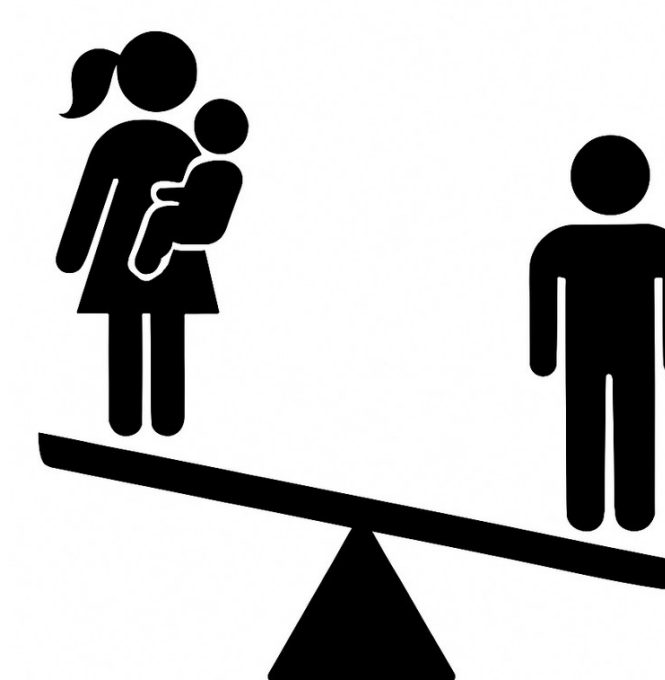
Policy Background

2019: 30.6%
2009: 19.5%
2005: 5.0%



➤ Share of fathers taking parental leave is increasing

11.6 months (mothers) 2.8 months (fathers)



➤ 2022: Duration of parental leave is still unequal (gap: 76%)

Research Question

In your opinion, what would be a just allocation of parental leave for the focal person (mother/father)? Keep in mind that the partner will take parental leave for the remaining months.



Methods and Data

This study uses a **factorial survey** design to examine how gender, income, occupation, and job satisfaction influence justice perceptions regarding the allocation of parental leave among **dual-earner couples**, assuming a total of **12 months of leave**.

The data were collected via the SoSci Panel at LMU Munich in **Germany** (Nov 6–19, 2023).

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Justice Principle	Hypotheses	
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(2) Entitlement	<i>H2: The mother should take more parental leave.</i>	✓
	<i>H3a: The parent who has a management position should take less parental leave.</i>	✓
	<i>H3b: Male managers should take less parental leave than female managers.</i>	✗
	<i>H4a: The parent who is more satisfied with their job should take less parental leave.</i>	✓
	<i>H4b: Fathers who are more satisfied with their jobs should take less parental leave than equally job-satisfied mothers.</i>	✗
(3) Equity	<i>H5: The parent who earns more should take less parental leave.</i>	✓
(4) Norm-deviance	<i>H6a: Higher-earning mothers should take more parental leave to compensate for the deviation from the female caregiver norm.</i>	✗
	<i>H6b: Higher-earning fathers should take more parental leave because they can afford to deviate from the male breadwinner norm.</i>	✗

Results

Figure 1. Average marginal effects on parental leave uptake, also separately for gender.

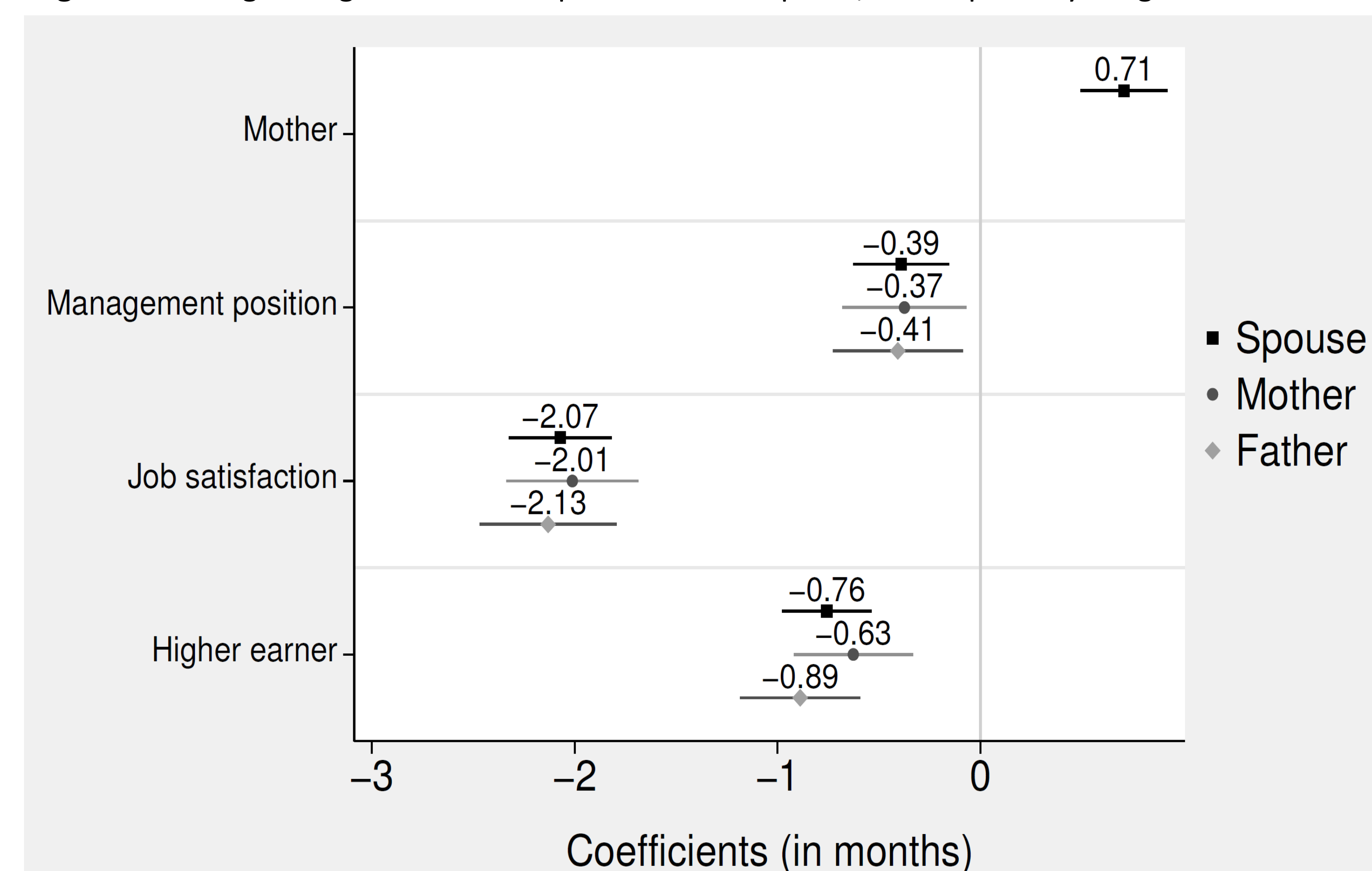
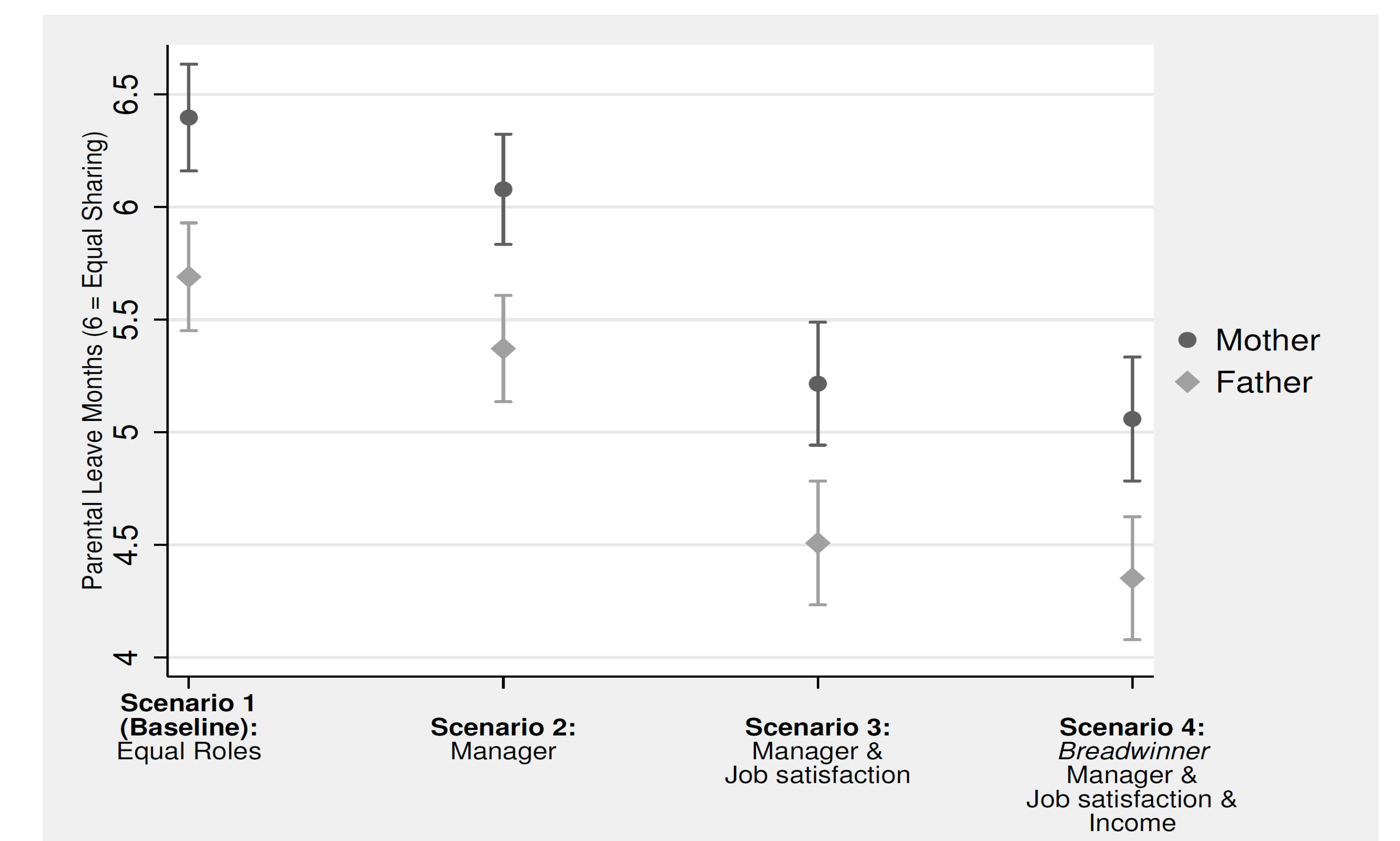


Figure 2. Predictive margins of different couple scenarios.



Key Findings (distributional disparities):

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- No significant gender differences in justice perceptions among management positions, job satisfaction, or income differences
- Strongest predictor: Job satisfaction

Scenario 1: Both parents are managers, job-satisfied, and earn equally.

Scenario 2: Focal parent is a manager; both are job-satisfied and earn equally.

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Conclusions

Perceptions of justice in parental leave are more egalitarian than actual behavior in Germany: 6.6 months for mothers vs. 5.9 months for fathers are perceived as just (**11% gap**), compared to 11.6 vs. 2.8 months in reality (**76% gap**) – Why?

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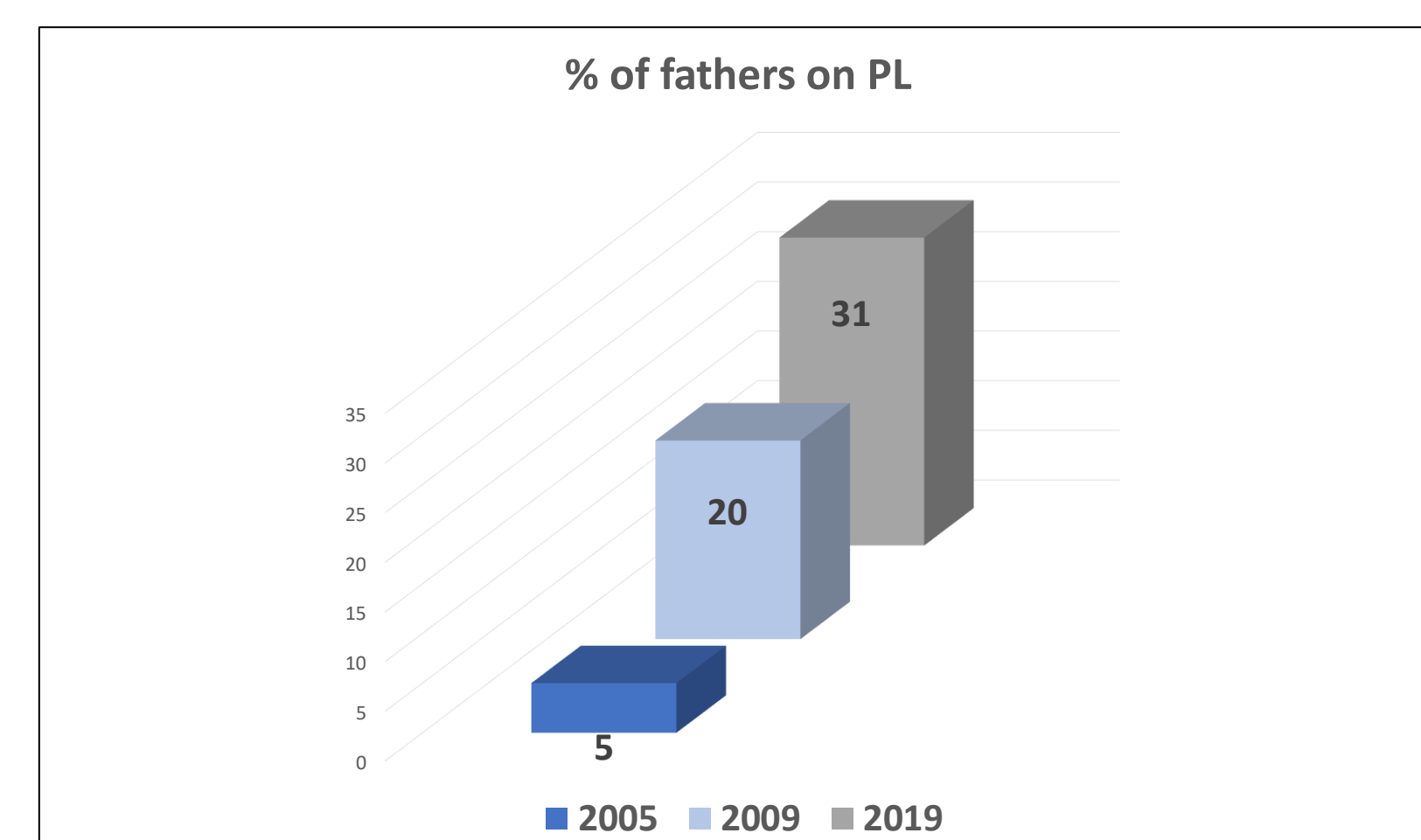
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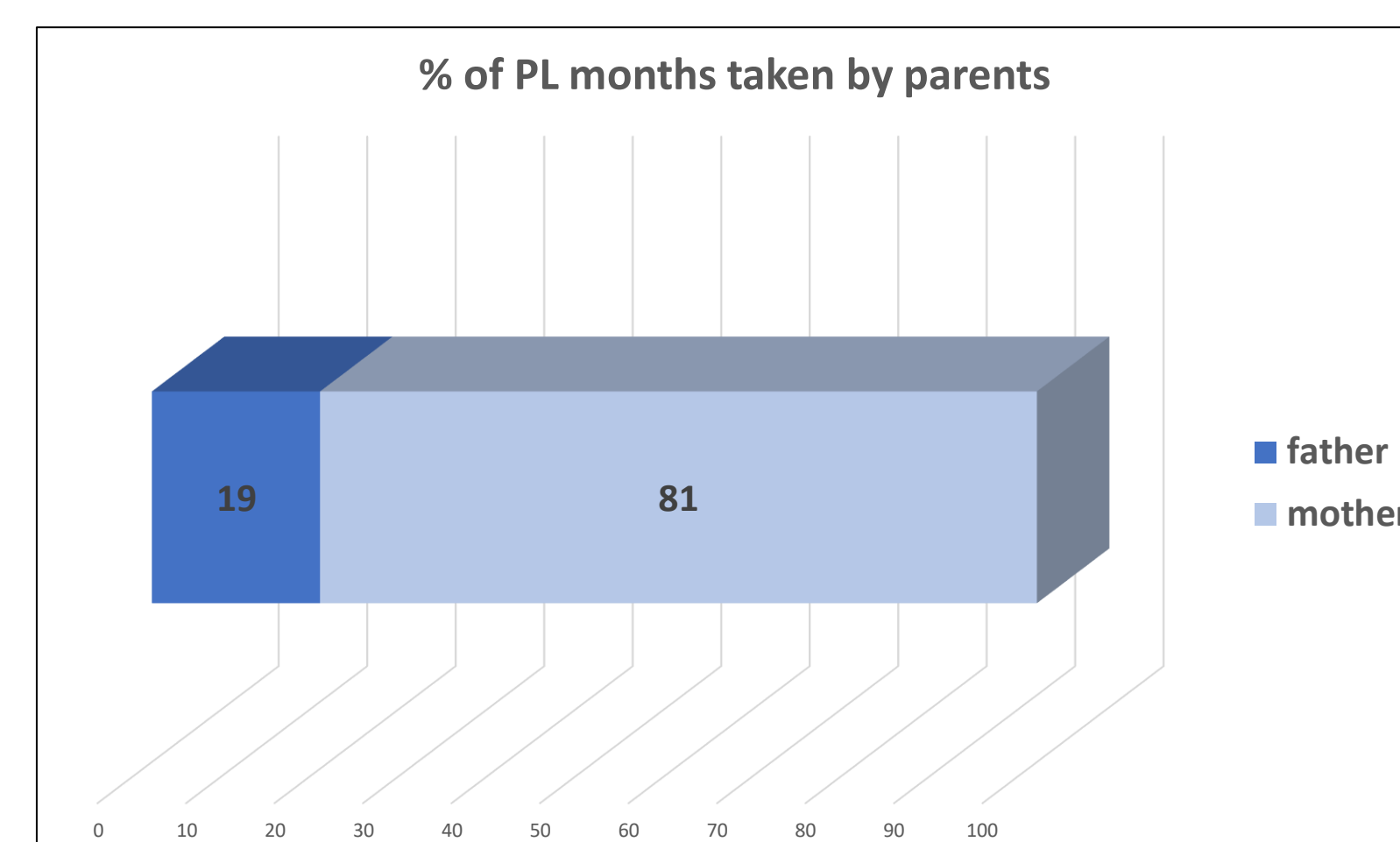
Policy Background

In **2007** in Germany, a **paternity quota** was introduced to encourage equal sharing of parental leave (PL):



> Proportion of fathers on PL is increasing

Status Quo in Germany in **2022**:



> Unequal distribution of PL (gap: 76%)

Research Question



Methods and Data

- **Factorial survey** that examines how gender, income, occupation, and job satisfaction shape perceptions of parental leave allocation among **dual-earner couples** (12 months of leave)
- SoSci Panel (LMU Munich) in **Germany** (Nov 6–19, 2023)
- 1,004 respondents evaluated three randomized vignettes (**n = 3,012**; D-efficient design, 18 decks)
- **OLS regression** with cluster-robust standard errors
- **Pre-registered** on OSF: <https://osf.io/87qup>

Justice Principle	Hypotheses	
(1) Equality	H1: Parents should take an equal number of parental leave.	✗
(2) Entitlement	H2: The mother should take more parental leave.	✓
	H3a: The parent who has a management position should take less parental leave.	✓
	H3b: Male managers should take less parental leave than female managers.	✗
	H4a: The parent who is more satisfied with their job should take less parental leave.	✓
	H4b: Fathers who are more satisfied with their jobs should take less parental leave than equally job-satisfied mothers.	✗
(3) Equity	H5: The parent who earns more should take less parental leave.	✓
(4) Norm-deviance	H6a: Higher-earning mothers should take more parental leave to compensate for the deviation from the female caregiver norm.	✗
	H6b: Higher-earning fathers should take more parental leave because they can afford to deviate from the male breadwinner norm.	✗

Results

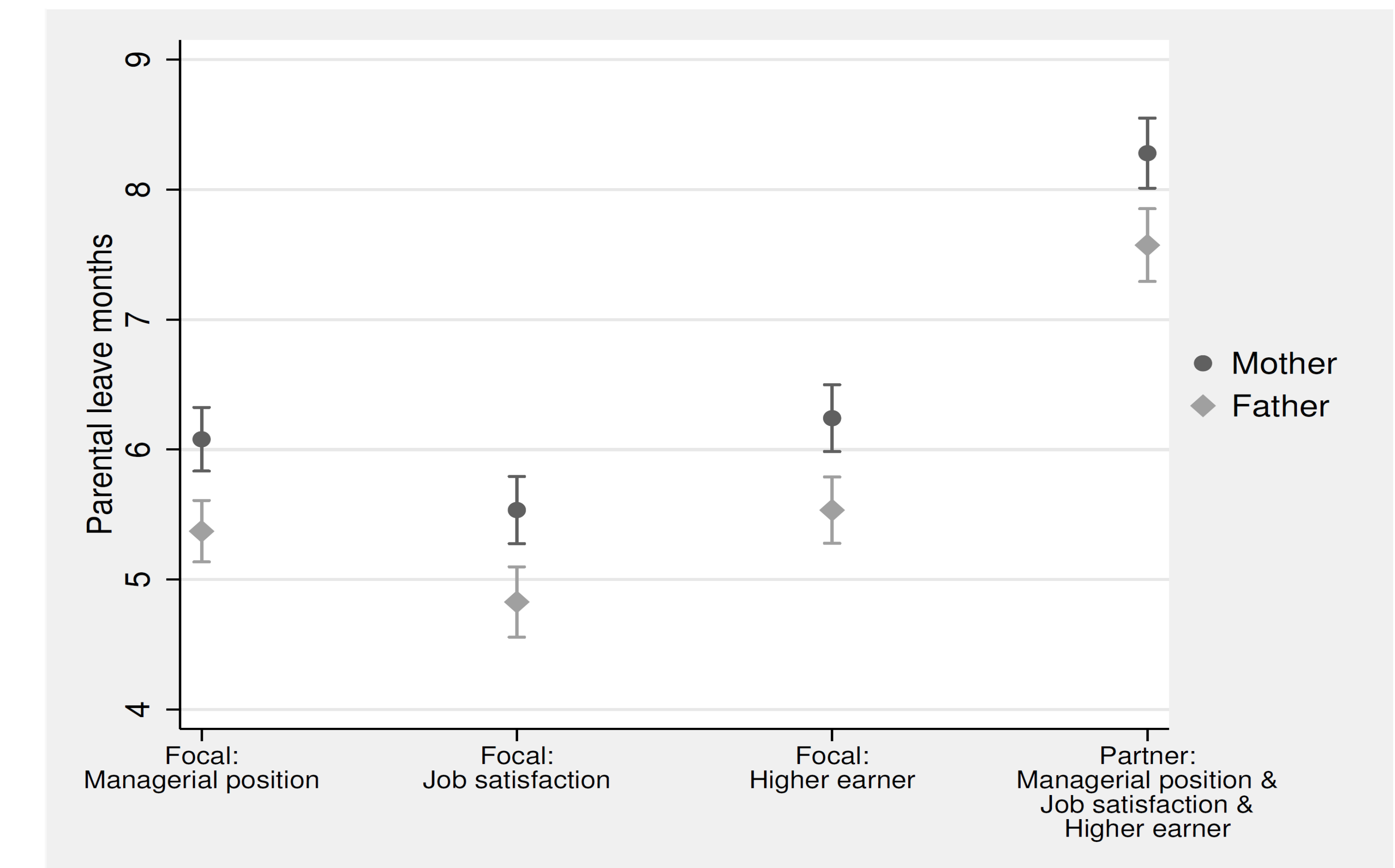
Figure 1. Average marginal effects on parental leave uptake, also separately for gender.



Key Findings (distributional disparities):

- Gender gap of 0.71 months, or 11%, is perceived as just
- No significant gender differences in justice perceptions among management positions, job satisfaction, or income differences
- Strongest predictor: Job satisfaction

Figure 2. Predictive margins of different couple scenarios.



Key Findings (number of months):

- **Breadwinner/caregiver scenario:** only one parent has managerial position, is very job-satisfied, and earns more
 - Female caregiver: 8.3 months & male breadwinner: 3.7 months
 - Male caregiver: 7.6 months & female breadwinner: 4.4 months

Conclusions

Perceptions of justice in parental leave are more egalitarian than actual behavior in Germany: 6.6 months for mothers vs. 5.9 months for fathers are perceived as just (11% gap), compared to 11.6 vs. 2.8 months in reality (76% gap) – **Why?**

- The experiment models a **“perfect world”** (no gendered income or occupational differences)
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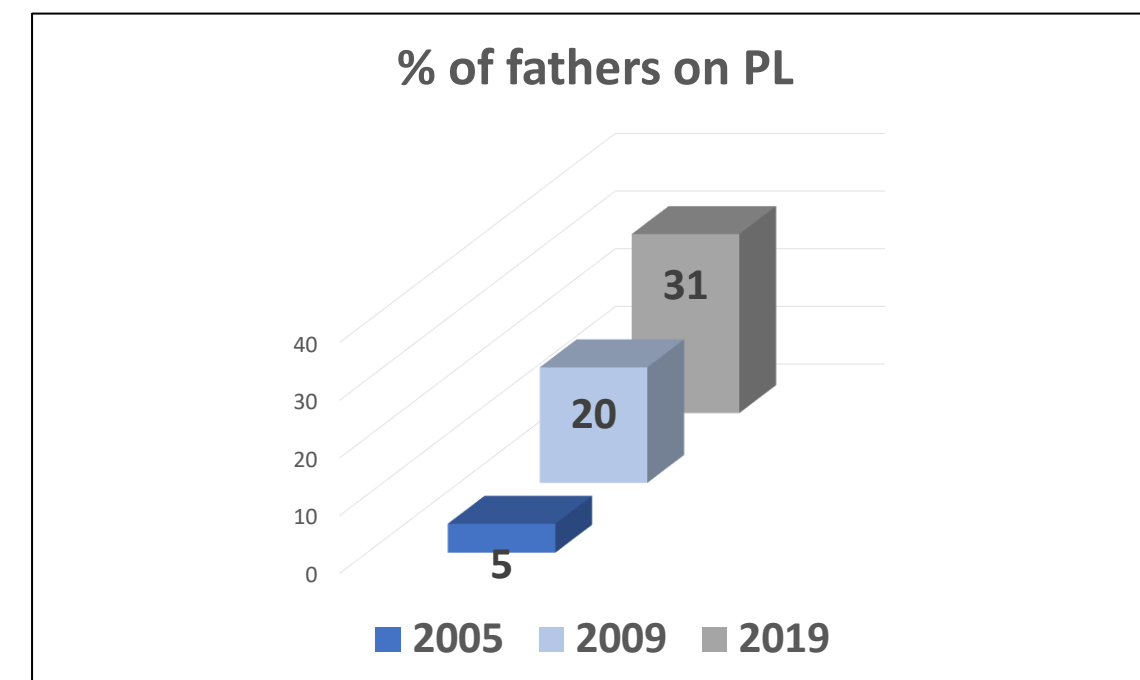
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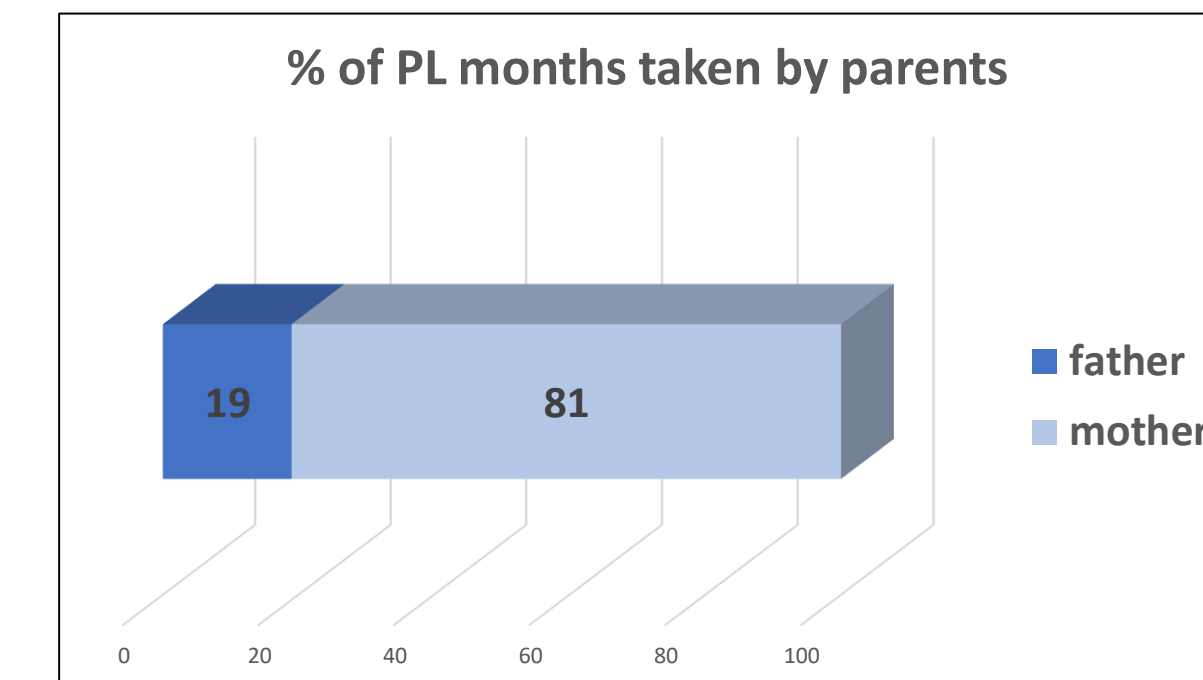
(Policy) Background

In 2007 in Germany, a paternity quota was introduced to encourage equal sharing of parental leave (PL):



> Proportion of fathers on PL is increasing

Status Quo in Germany
(Basiselterngeld: 12-14 months):



> Unequal distribution of PL (gap: 76%)

Justice Principle	Hypotheses
(1) Equality	H1: Parental leave months are equally allocated between couples.
(2) Entitlement	H2: Mothers are allocated more parental leave months than fathers.
	H3a: Managers are allocated fewer parental leave months as compared to partners working not in managerial positions.
	H3b: Male managers are allocated fewer parental leave months as compared to female managers.
	H4a: Job-satisfied partners are allocated fewer parental leave months than their job-dissatisfied partners.
(3) Equity	H4b: Job-satisfied fathers are allocated fewer parental leave months than job-satisfied mothers.
	H5: Lower-earning partners are allocated more parental leave months than higher-earning partners.
	H6a: Higher-earning mothers are allocated more parental leave months than their lower-earning partners to compensate for the role mismatch of a female caregiver model.
(4) Norm-deviance	H6b: Higher-earning fathers are allocated more parental leave months than their lower-earning partners because they can afford to deviate from the male breadwinner model.

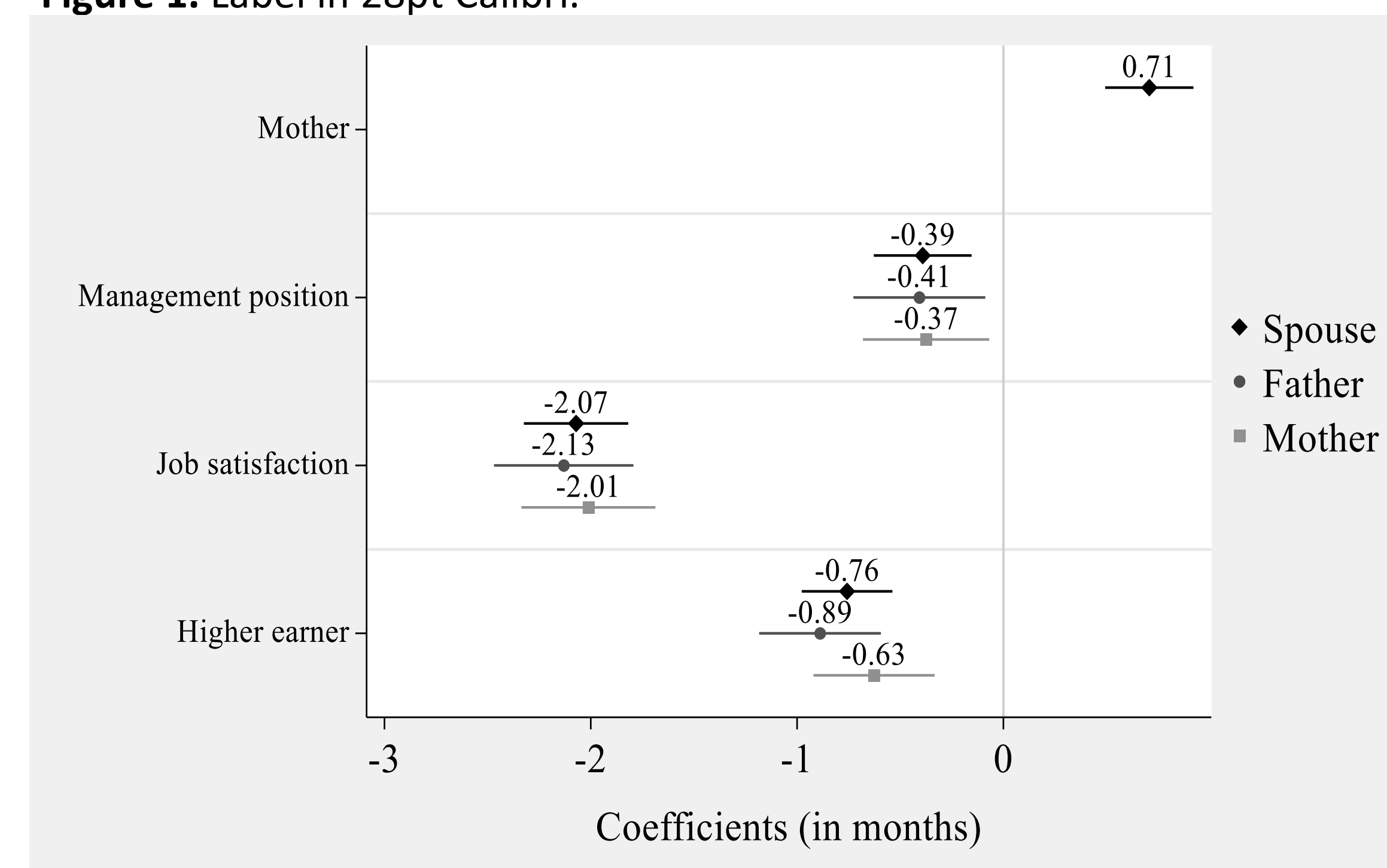
Methods and Data

This factorial survey examines how gender, income, occupation, and job satisfaction shape perceptions of parental leave allocation among dual-earner couples. Conducted via SoSci Panel (LMU München) in Germany (Nov 6–19, 2023), 1,004 respondents evaluated three randomized vignettes (n = 3,012; D-efficient design, 18 decks). Analysis uses OLS regression with cluster-robust standard errors. Pre-registered on OSF: <https://osf.io/87gup>.



Results

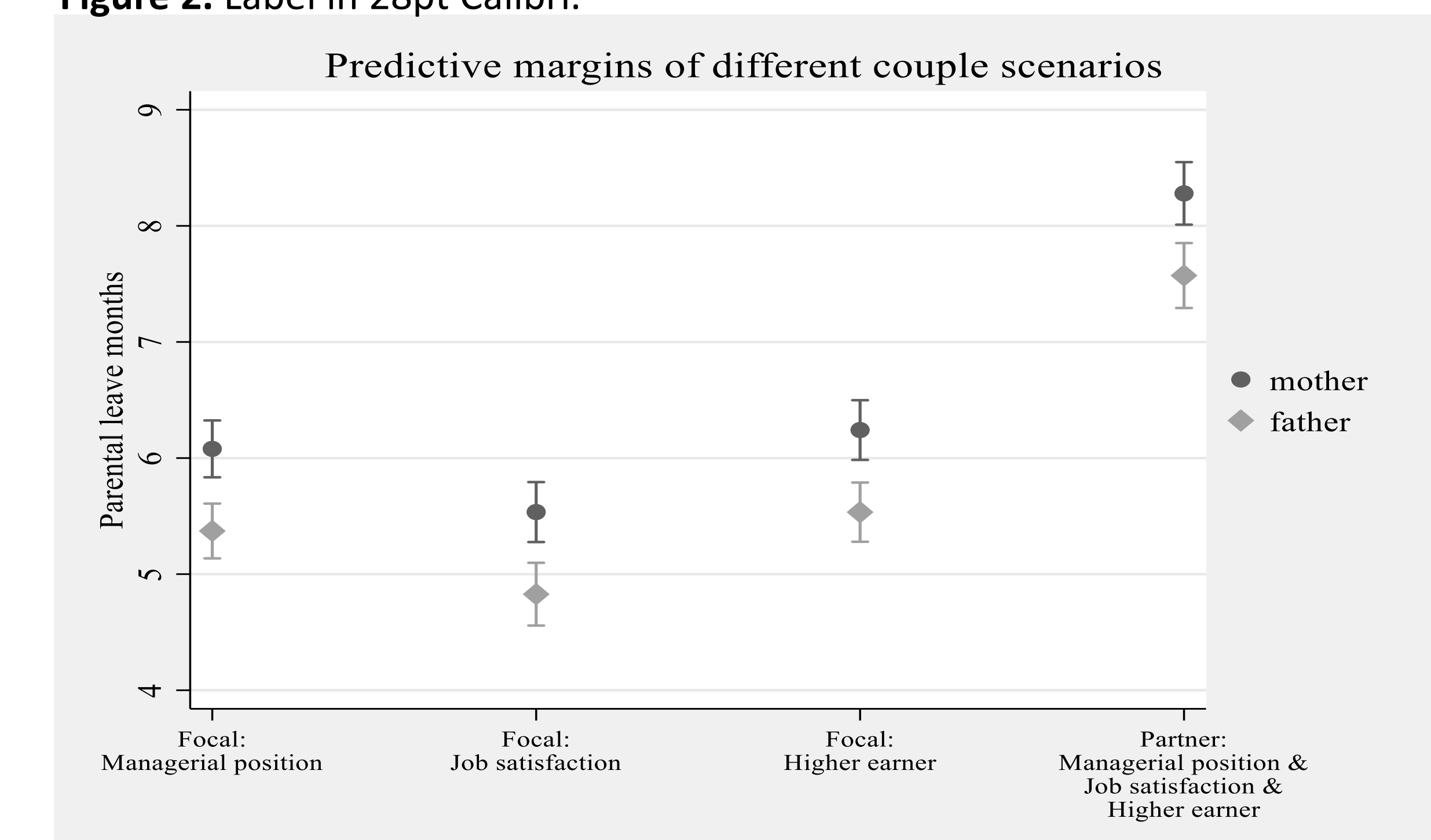
Figure 1. Label in 28pt Calibri.



Key Finding:

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Figure 2. Label in 28pt Calibri.



Key Finding:

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Conclusions

- 1)Equality principle:** Regardless of socio-economic factors, an *equal sharing* of parental leave between mothers and fathers is perceived as fair.
- 2)Entitlement principle due to work-family roles:** Parental leave is allocated on the basis of attributed role expectations (female caregiver and male breadwinner; managerial positions; job satisfaction).
- 3)Equity principle of unitary households:** Irrespective of gender, household resources are allocated within the couple to maximize the total utility of the couple: Low-income earners take more parental leave than their higher-income partners.
- 4)Norm-deviance principle („gender deviance neutralization“):** Role models are broken down to compensate for the discrepancy in role expectations.

Take Home Message

- Respondents accept an **inequality of 11%p to the detriment of mothers** in the distribution of parental leave within couples in order to perceive it as just.
- No support for gender-specific hypotheses: no significant interaction effects/gender-specific differences with regard to income differences, management position, job satisfaction
- Job satisfaction is the strongest predictor of a fair distribution of parental leave within couples (more precisely: job *dissatisfaction*)

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Data and Methods		
<div>Daten: ALLBUS Jahr 2016/2018...</div>		<div>Methode: OLS Regression Logistische Regression</div>

Results		
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