

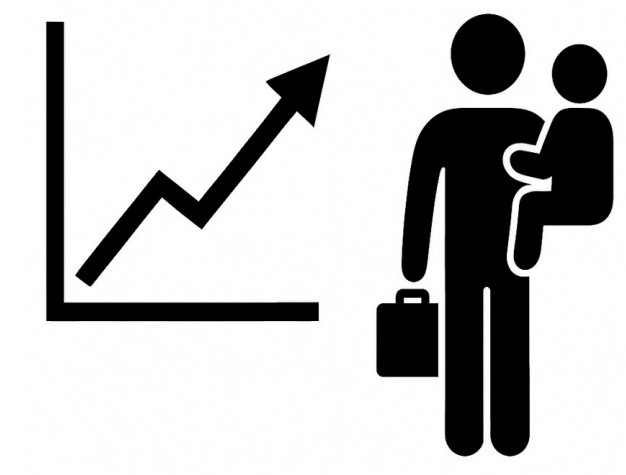
# Conservative or Progressive? Justice Principles in Couples' Parental Leave Decisions in Germany

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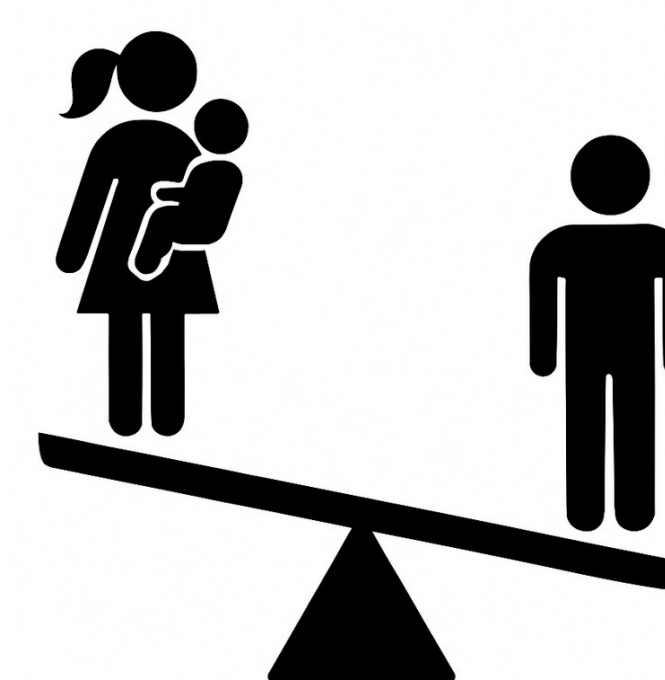
## (1) Policy Background

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**.

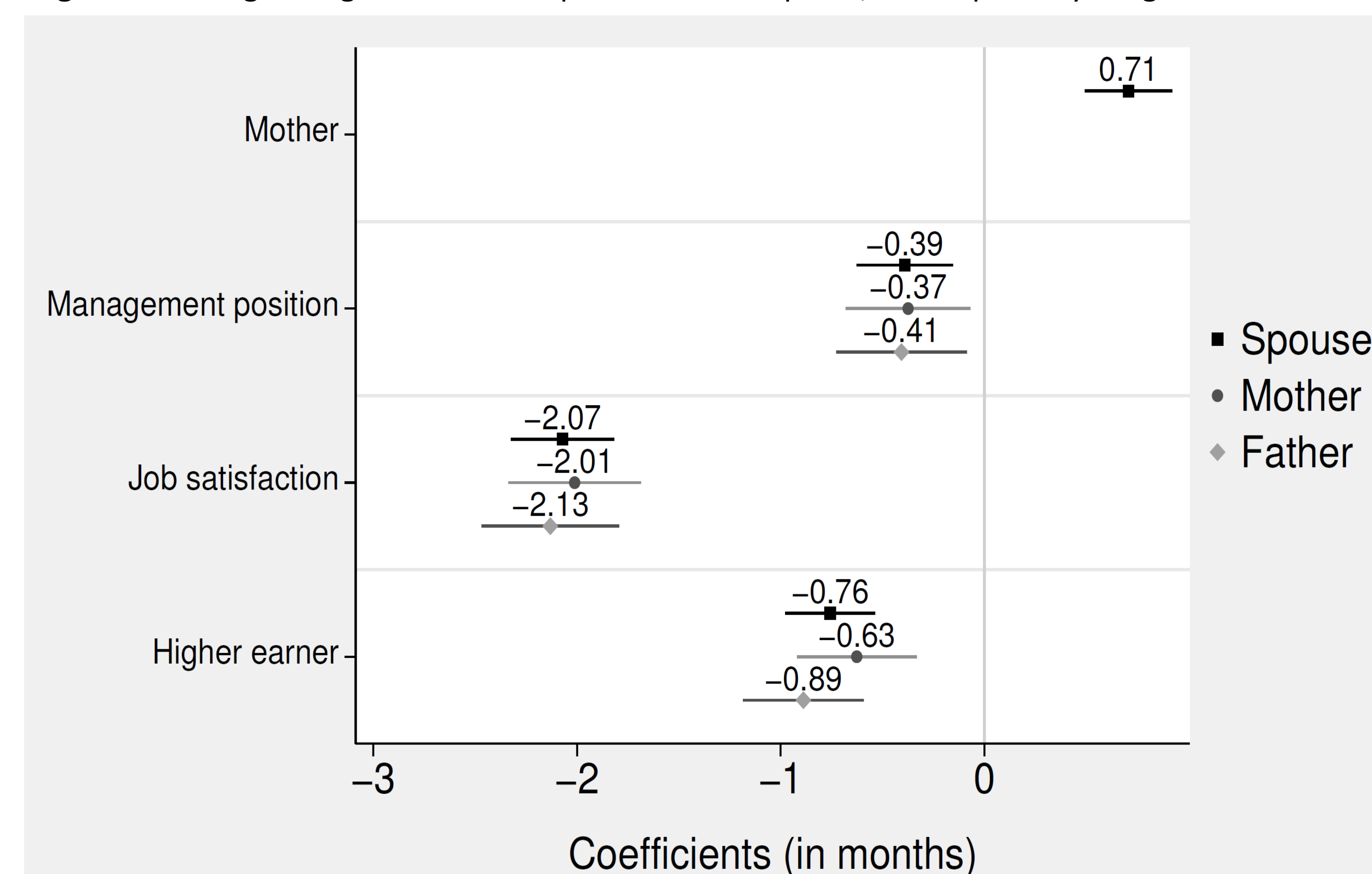
The design followed a D-efficient structure with 18 vignette decks. The data were analyzed using **OLS regression** models with cluster-robust standard errors.

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

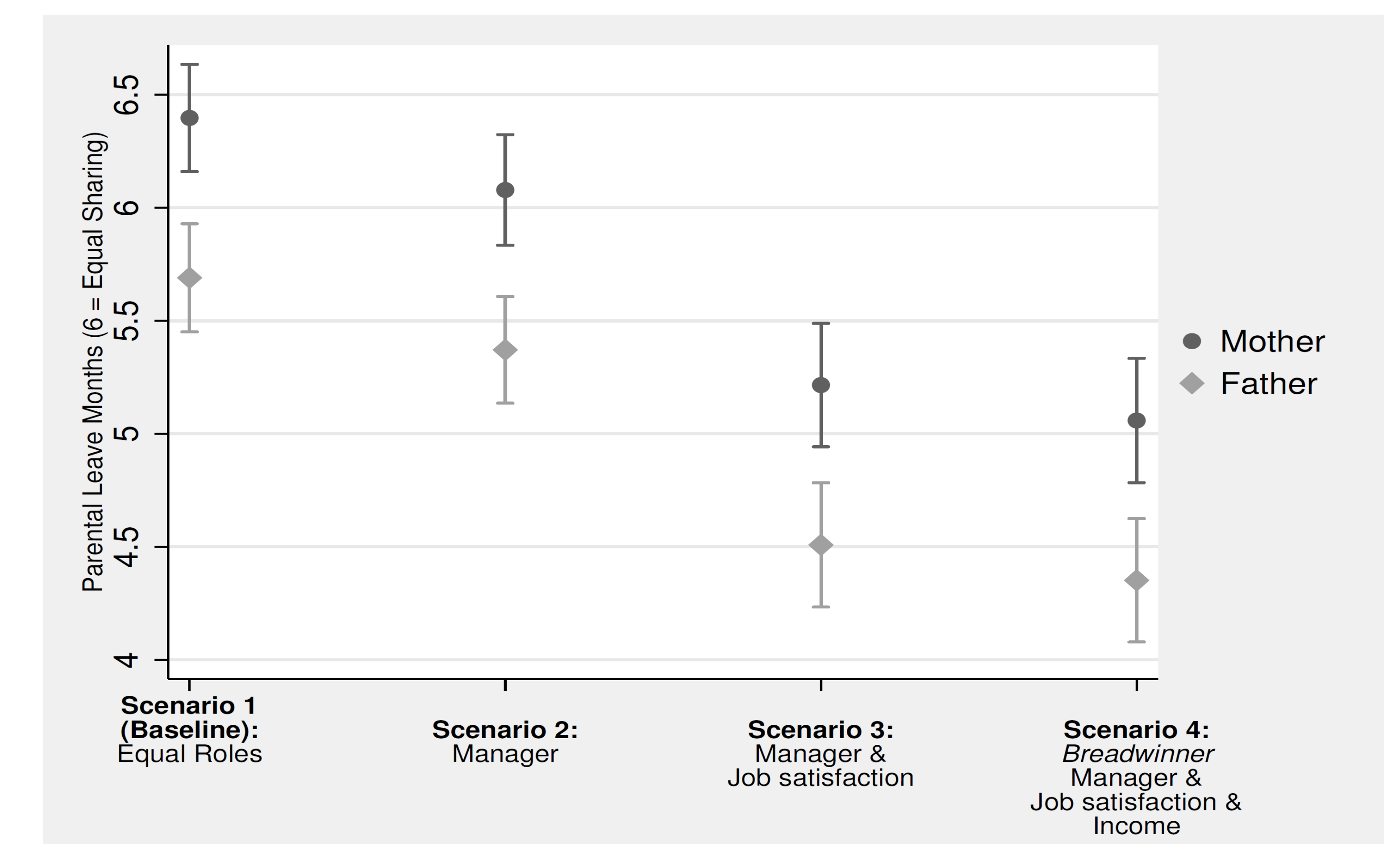
Figure 1. Average marginal effects on parental leave uptake, also separately for gender.



### 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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