

Eva Österbacka
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Child perspectives on income and time use in Finnish families in the 1990s

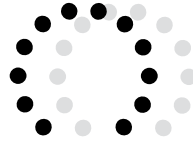


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Abstract

We analyse two important elements affecting the wellbeing of children in Finland: family income and the amount of time parents allocate to childcare. We find that material wellbeing in families became more unequal during the time period studied at the same time as income inequality increased, implying that the state has not managed to moderate the negative effects of the depression. We also find that the total time parents spent in childcare activities has increased. Families with children responded to the changes in society, economy and family life by increasing the amount of time spent in childcare activities.

1 Introduction

There have been many changes in the Finnish economy over the past 15 years. The severe depression in the beginning of the 1990s, and the increasing income inequality that followed it have altered household income structures and the economic situation of families. Furthermore, market work today involves higher demands than before and the pressure of work has increased. Consequently, there are tensions between family needs, including childcare needs, and the needs of the labour market (see for example Hulkko 2007). At the same time, the number of divorces has increased, cohabitation (where the separation rate is even higher) and single parenthood have become more common (Kartovaara 2007).

Esping-Andersen (1999) refines his classification of welfare regimes, where welfare regimes are classified partly on how social risks are managed within the (labour) market, the state and the family. He claims that the changes in a society are very much dependent on how it responds to failures (or changes) in the state, the market, or the family. Like the other Nordic countries, Finland belongs to the social democratic regime with a tradition of a relatively generous welfare state. The welfare state has a tradition of managing social risks. At the same time, the system is built upon high labour force participation. By and large, public sector investments in children are extensive in Finland; free public health care, subsidized public day care, and free education are some examples.

A recent UNICEF report (Child poverty in perspective 2007) offers the first multi-dimensional overview of children's and adolescents' wellbeing

for rich OECD countries. Finland performed well in the international comparison and ranked fourth out of 21 included countries. However, national evidence shows that the wellbeing of children in Finland has deteriorated in the past 10–20 years (see for example Karvonen et al. 2000; Sauli 2001; Forssén et al. 2002; Forssén 2003).

In the present paper we concentrate on two important elements that affect children: the family's economic resources and the time parents allocate to childcare and how these have changed after the depression of the 1990s. Previous studies on economic resources have focused on the whole population. Our contribution with this paper is to focus on families with children. Moreover, we interpret the changes in families' economic resources and parental time spent in childcare as effects of changes within the society.

In the next section, we will present a literature review on the concept of children's wellbeing and describe the Finnish situation. In section 3, we give a short description of the data sets used. In sections 4 and 5, we describe the analyses and results. Finally, we make some concluding remarks.

2 What is “children's wellbeing”?

In the investment model by Becker (1994), children's wellbeing is mainly measured in terms of their income as adults. Children's success is partly determined by their genes and their upbringing, and partly by the investments parents and the public sector have made in their human capital. Parents are assumed to invest in their children as long as the rate of return on their investment is higher than the costs. Haveman and Wolfe (1994) extend Becker's model and adopt an investment-in-children framework where the wellbeing of children is determined by three factors. First, society makes choices that affect the range of opportunities available to families. Different policies affect families differently. Second, parents make choices about the resources available to their children. Third, the choices that the child makes, given the choices made by society and parents, determine the (adult) child's wellbeing.

Both the investment model (Becker 1994) and the investment-in-children framework (Haveman and Wolfe 1994) use a forward looking perspective; i.e., they concentrate on children's well-becoming instead of their wellbeing. Ben-Arieh (2000) argues that well-becoming says nothing about children's

quality of life before adulthood. Child-centred indicators should be used when analysing children's wellbeing.

Children's wellbeing is, then, not merely a measure of their adult outcomes. There is, however, a link between wellbeing and well-becoming; being raised in favourable circumstances very likely implies high adult wellbeing. According to Brown (1997) the following are important indicators of children's wellbeing: their health, education, economic security, population, family and neighbourhood characteristics, social development, and problem behaviour. Moore (1997) stresses that it is important to indicate wellbeing across a broad array of outcomes. Indicators should have a common interpretation, be consistent over time, reflect social goals, and be adjusted for demographic trends.

The recent UNICEF report (Child poverty in perspective 2007) examines six different dimensions of wellbeing: material wellbeing, health and safety, educational wellbeing, family and peer relationships, behaviours and risks, and subjective wellbeing. Finland scored relatively well on all dimensions, but no more than satisfactorily on the dimension of family and peer relationships, and averagely on the dimension of subjective wellbeing.¹ The indicators used come from different sources, among them the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and WHO's Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Survey (HBSC). The indicators selected are mainly data driven. The ages of the children vary as does the years they were observed (Bradshaw et al. 2007). The multi-dimensional measure gives a broad picture of children's and adolescents' wellbeing. However, it does not allow for different welfare systems, cultural differences or changes over time.

National studies show that children's wellbeing in Finland has deteriorated over the past 10–20 years. Karvonen et al. (2000) summarize the wellbeing of children and young people in Finland in the 1990s. Within the research period, the most common long-term diseases, namely asthma, allergies and diabetes, have become more prevalent among children. Young people have increased their use of painkillers, and are more likely to suffer from back or neck pain. Teenagers have increased smoking,

drinking and drug use. The occurrence of mental health problems among children has also increased. Supportive measures by the government increased in the 1990s, such as financial support for children, therapy, support for school attendance and placement outside the home. Some of the few changes for the better are the decrease in teenage births and crime rates and the low and decreasing rates of infant and child mortality.

Karvonen et al. (2000) go on to report that the number of individuals receiving social assistance grew in the 1990s. Among those receiving social assistance, children and young people were the largest group among household members. Sauli (2001) notes that the relative income status of small children and young people has weakened. The average of the equivalent disposable income for individuals in households in the lowest decile was constant in the 1990s, and increasing for those in the highest decile. In 1990, the equivalent disposable income was on average 3.7 times higher for those in the highest decile compared to those in the lowest. In ten years, this figure has increased to 5.2 (Sauli 2001).

Forssén (2003) pays attention to the increasing number of low-income families with children in Finland in the 1990s and shows that the risk of poverty is greatest for single parents under 30 years of age. The number of family break-ups has increased since the change in the marriage act in 1988. Cohabitation has become more common, and cohabiting couples are more likely to break up than married couples (Karvonen et al. 2000).

This overview gives the impression that children's wellbeing has by no means improved in Finland during the 1990s. In this paper, we focus on two dimensions of child wellbeing only, but consider changes over time in order to get a deeper understanding of family incomes and parental time use in child care activities. There is an extensive literature on how parental income and time use affect children, and we present some examples below.

2.1 Wellbeing, income and time use

The family is an important factor for children's wellbeing. The family distributes economic resources to its members, parents support their children's development, and parents are important role models when children socialize into society. The impact of family income is different in different countries.

¹ The multi-dimensional measure is created by calculating z scores for several indicators, and by averaging these scores an average score for a component is obtained, component scores are averaged again for dimension scores. The dimension scores are ranked and averaged to obtain the overall index of children's wellbeing.

Those who are most likely to suffer in all countries are children born into poor families. Children from poor families are more likely to suffer from adverse physical health among other things, they have lower cognitive ability, their school achievements are poorer, and they are more likely to have emotional and behavioural problems. These facts most likely increase their risk of poverty when growing up. Not all children born into poverty are predestined for poverty themselves, but their risk is higher than for those not born into poverty (see for example Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997); Duncan and Brooks-Gunn (2000)).

Mayer (1997a) is critical of the assumption that income is highly correlated with the goods and services available to children. She suggests that income measures should be complemented with other measures, such as consumption, housing, living conditions and medical care. Mayer (1997b) attempts to find the “true” effect of parental income on child outcomes. Her conclusion is that once children’s basic material needs are met, their parents’ characteristics become more important than money. However, there is no evidence for the magnitude of the level of the basic material needs that would be sufficient. Bojer (2003) claims that since children and parents live together, the children’s welfare is determined by their parents’ choices. As long as children cannot make their own choices, others will decide what is best for them. Family members share the same standard of living, and income in a family can, hence, be seen as an indicator of how well parents are able to provide wellbeing for their children. In the investment model, income is also seen as the tool for parental investments in food, housing, medical care, education, etc.

Forssén et al. (2002) claim that when it comes to children’s wellbeing, the family’s external resources (such as income) and internal resources (such as the parent-child relationship) play a central role. They argue that the family’s economic position is very important since poor economic resources are easily reflected as irregularity and incoherence of family-life. A shortage of economic resources, in turn, creates stress factors in these families.

Esping-Andersen (2004) underlines the fact that children are affected by how the family’s income and the “culture” in the family interact. The key is what happens in the family; the school systems, by and large, reproduce prevailing social inequalities, while families produce the inequalities. Hence, parental characteristics are important for children’s

development. Furthermore, parental characteristics are correlated with their income.²

The amount of time parents spend with their children is part of the “culture” in the family, and naturally greatly dependent on the life-cycle stage of the family concerned. All children need attention. In order to develop into well-behaved individuals, children also need guidance. The relationships and social support within the family are important resources for the children. Duncan and Brooks-Gunn (2000) stress the importance of the quality of a child’s home environment. Orthner et al. (2004) point out that good family communication helps to overcome the negative consequences of poverty. Family meals, as one example, seem to improve the dietary intake, reduce mental health problems, and alleviate the risk for substance abuse (Compañ et al. 2002; Neumark-Sztainer et al. 2003; Eisenberg et al. 2004; Spear 2006).

There is a conflict between parents’ labour force participation and their time for children. Even among feminists there has been a debate between those who support emancipation, equality and, hence, employment for women and those who support the view that women have responsibilities for care work (see e.g. Gornick and Meyers (2003)). There has also been a long debate regarding the effects of mothers’ employment on children in the international research community (see e.g. Smith et al. (1997); Gornick and Meyers (2003) for an overview). Research suggests that parental time at home in the first year is advantageous for children. Infant and early childhood mortality decreases, and children’s development might benefit. Negative developmental effects of maternal employment in early childhood seem to stem from poor quality of the substitute care. In fact, there seems to be a positive association between childcare quality and children’s development. However, the importance of the association is debated, and family background characteristics are more important for children’s outcomes than the quality of the substitute care. Maternal employment does not seem to have any effect on school-aged children, and may have positive effects for adolescents.

There has not been much research interest in the effects of paternal employment. Some research suggests that paternal employment has positive effects on children, while other studies show that children

2 Esping-Andersen (2004) stresses that the family is important for intergenerational persistence. Another view on this matter is that the educational system is a major vehicle for intergenerational persistence, see for example Erikson and Goldthorpe (2002).

are affected negatively if the father is unemployed or if he does not work full time (Smith et al. 1997).

Based on the evidence presented above, we can claim that family income and the amount of time parents allocate to childcare affect children's wellbeing. Furthermore, there is a positive relationship between family income and child wellbeing and between the time allocated to childcare and child wellbeing. However, our main concern regarding family income will be low family income.

2.2 *Who takes care of Finnish children?*

Female labour force participation in Finland has been comparatively high since the Second World War. It increased until the 1980s, at which point it stabilized at around 70%. However, in the 1990s, female labour force participation decreased, due to the economic depression and changes in family policies (Lahdenperä 1991; Santamäki-Vuori and Parviainen 1996; Haataja 2005).

The system of parental leaves has been extended over the years. Maternity leave was introduced forty years ago and paternity leave over twenty-five years ago. For the last twenty years, there have been separate maternity and paternity leaves and a period of parental leave that can be divided between the parents. The major part of the parental leave is used by mothers only.

When female labour force participation increased in the 1960s, there were not enough childcare facilities, so childcare became a societal problem. The need for day care was a subject of debate in the 1970s, and a committee was appointed to develop childcare. The committee pointed out that the public sector would have to take responsibility for providing day care because of the effects of industrialization and urbanization on families that could no longer rely on grandparents for care, as was common in the agrarian society. Many on the political left considered public day care to be a source of stimulation for children and, additionally, to promote equality. The right argued for home care on grounds that children would be better off at home with their mothers. In 1973, after a lively debate in the parliament, a public day care law came into force, and the public sector took more responsibility for child care (Hiilamo 2005). Public day care has been considered high-quality care. Day care pedagogics has become more child centred over the years, and the activities support children's development (Hujala 2001).

Home care has been supported by many in Finland, and in 1980, a home care allowance was introduced for families with at least three children under school age in home care. In 1985, the system was extended to the parents or other care givers of children younger than three years who were not in public day care (Hiilamo 2005). Following the extension, the home care allowance became a popular form of childcare. In the early 1990s around 70% of eligible children (aged 9 months–2 years) were cared for at home. After that, the coverage has decreased somewhat to around 60%. However, the home care allowance remains a popular form of childcare for the youngest children. Of the parents who ended a parental leave period in 2001, 85.6% had received home care allowance for at least some length of time. In most cases one of the parents stayed home with the child. In 83.2% of the families who ended their parental leave period in 2001, the child was being cared for by one of the parents when the home care allowance period started (Social Insurance Institution 1997 and 2004).

In 1990, a new law came into force, guaranteeing children under three years old access to public day care. In 1995, the subjective right to day care was extended to apply to all children under school age (Hiilamo 2005). The proportion of children between 1 and 6 years of age attending public day care has also increased between 1987 and 2001. In 1987 49% of children between ages 1 and 6 were in public day care. In 2001 the corresponding figure was 56%. The percentage has varied over the years between a peak of 58% in 1999 and a low of 45% in 1993. A moderate decrease was seen again after 2001. The share of children in private day care has ranged between 5% and 7%, which means that around 40% of children are cared for by their parents (Sauli and Säkkinen 2007).

Debate over the effects of maternal employment on children has more or less faded away in Finland. There are several explanations for this. First of all, full-time employment among women is common, and has long been so. Secondly, because of the parental leave system, almost all children are cared for at home until they are one year old. Thirdly, due to family policies, the parents, mainly the mother, can stay home with their children (while receiving a small home care allowance) until the youngest child turns three. Fourthly, the quality of the provided day care is good.

However, researchers have begun to ask children how they are affected by their parents' labour force

participation. Research shows that children and adolescents are affected negatively by tired and stressed parents. Especially single parents are time constrained. The debate has hence turned to whether families should adapt to the prevailing system, or whether the labour market and public sector should offer better opportunities for parents to combine work and family responsibilities. Most parents work full time, but irregular hours are becoming more common and day care is usually offered on weekdays between 7am and 5pm only (Rönkä et al. 2005; Kröger 2005). Furthermore, school days are comparatively short in Finland (Education at a glance 2005). After school care has been developed only recently and mainly for children in the first or second grades. Many school-aged children are home alone, or hang around with friends, until their parents come home from work.

3 The Data Sets

Before going on to the analyses, we will first describe the data. Statistics Finland has collected three waves of time use surveys; in 1979, 1988–1989 and 1999–2000. We use the two latest waves in this paper for the analyses on changes in the time allocated to childcare in families. The time use surveys are based on relatively small samples, and the number of families is relatively small. Furthermore, there is only limited background information on the families. Hence, we have chosen another, more extensive data set for the analyses of changes in material wellbeing and of changes in family structure. The Income Data set makes it possible, among other things, to observe incomes from several years, which reduces the transitory variance and the number of families is considerably larger. Our subsamples from the two data sets are made as comparable as possible in order to increase our knowledge of the changes in the families.

3.1 Income Data

For the analyses on material wellbeing, a longitudinal data set originating from the censuses carried out in Finland between 1970 and 2000, with observations every fifth year, is used. Labour market statistics from 1987 to 2001 are linked to this data set. The data have been collected by Statistics Finland.

The original data set is constructed as follows: In 1970, a simple random sample of 58,207 individuals was drawn from the census. All individuals

who lived in the same household as those initial sample members were also included in the sample. Those individuals are followed, and new household members are included in the sample every fifth year. New sample members are either born into a family or move in with a sample member. The total sample size was 889,241 individuals in 2000. Until 1985, some of the information was taken from the census forms but most came from various registers. We use register information only. In this paper, we use two subsamples of families for the analyses. The parents are in mid-career, and their labour market characteristics should therefore be quite representative of the population (see e.g. Österbacka (2004) for a further analysis of the representativity of the data set).

Both subsamples consist of families with children, where the youngest child is younger than 18 years of age. The first sample is drawn in 1988, and the second in 2000. In order to describe the families, we use information on the number of adults in the family (married and cohabiting parents or single parents) and the number of children in the family, parent's age and the age of the youngest child. In order to describe the material wellbeing of children, we use register information on the parents' labour force participation (employed or not), level of education (compulsory, secondary or tertiary level) and income (family income subject to taxation). The income data originates from tax records. In 1988, there are 207,710 individuals from 54,238 families in the data set, with 1.89 adults and 1.94 children on average in the families. In 2000, the data set consists of 244,888 individuals from 63,016 families. There are 1.79 adults and 2.09 children on average in the families.

Yearly income subject to taxation is used to study the material wellbeing of families for comparative reasons. Disposable income is available in this data set for the year 2000 only. Yearly income subject to taxation consists of earned income, income from farming and private companies, and other taxable income such as retirement benefits, unemployment benefits, maternity leave benefits, and income from assets and property. Some income sources are not taxable income, the most important ones being child allowances and social assistance. These income sources are likely to be important for those in the lower end of the income distribution. At the same time, neither tax deductions nor taxes paid are taken into consideration in this income measure. The weakness of the income measure is unfortunately most pronounced in the lower end of

the income distribution. However, it is a comparable measure over the years, and the best income measure available for these purposes in this otherwise excellent data set.

In order to reduce yearly fluctuations in the income measure, we look at the mean of yearly family income subject to taxation from three separate years. In the first cross section, the income measure is the equivalent mean of the family's yearly income subject to taxation in 1987, 1988 and 1989. The corresponding measure for the second cross section is from the years 1999–2001. All income measures have been adjusted to year 2000 euros, by using the cost of living index.

In order to receive an equivalent income measure, *EI*, equivalence scales are used. Empirical results are affected by the choice of equivalence scales, see e.g. Buhmann et al. (1988); Citro and Michael (1995) for a discussion. A much used equivalence scale is the OECD scale which is of the form $(1 + 0.7(A - 1) + 0.5C)$, where *A* stands for number of adults and *C* stands for number of children. Citro and Michael (1995) introduce the equivalence scales of the form $(1 + 0.7(A - 1) + 0.5C)^\varepsilon$ where ε lies between 0.65 and 0.75. In this paper, we use a simpler equivalence scale in calculating the equivalent income, *EI*:

$$EI = \frac{\sum_i y_i}{(A + C)^{0.5}}$$

where the income, *y*, is totalled among all of the family members, $i = 1, 2, \dots, n$, (mainly $i = 1$ or 2) and divided by the square root of the number of individuals in the family.

In contrast to the above mentioned equivalence scales, the equivalence scale used here assumes the largest economies of scale. This implies that it gives the smallest difference in equivalent income between two- and single-parent families where the number of children and household income are equal. Furthermore, the increase in the number of children gives the smallest relative reduction in the equivalent income.³

3.2 Time Use Data

For the time analyses we use the Time Use Data surveys, collected by Statistics Finland in 1987–1988

and 1999–2000. The surveys are representative sample surveys covering persons aged 10 years or over and not living in institutions. The size of the original random sample in 1987–1988 was 9,900 individuals. The data was gathered between April 1987 and March 1988. The 1999–2000 Time Use Data survey was carried out between March 1999 and March 2000. The data included 5,300 individuals from 2,600 households. In both surveys, the participants were asked to fill in a time use diary for two days. In the 1987–1988 Time Use Data survey the two consecutive days were distributed equally over the week, while in the 1999–2000 Time Use Data survey the respondents filled in both a weekday and a weekend day. The respondents were asked to record, at ten-minute intervals, their primary activity and what else they were doing at the same time. The respondents were also interviewed regarding their background characteristics. Some register information regarding e.g. their income was added to the surveys (Väisänen 2002; Niemi and Pääkkönen 1989).

In the present study the data are not weighted by weekdays to get weekly aggregate figures. The analyses are instead made separately for weekdays and weekends, and for fathers and mothers. We include families with children where the youngest child is younger than 18 years of age and where the mother is present. As the number of single fathers was small in these samples, such families are excluded (14 single fathers in 1987–1988 and 12 in 1999–2000). In 1987–1988, we have 3,297 weekdays and 1,314 weekend days. In 1999–2000, there are 1,504 observations divided equally between weekdays and weekend days.

The following background characteristics are used: the household's yearly income subject to taxation, age of parent and youngest child, educational level (primary, secondary or tertiary level), employment status (the 'non-employed' group comprises the unemployed, students and those on sick leave or retired; the other two groups are 'employed' and 'homemakers'), family type (married or cohabiting in one group and single in another group), number of children under 18 years of age, and a subjective measure of lack of time. In both cross sections, the respondent was asked "Are there activities you would like to do during a regular weekday that you have to give up due to lack of time". A positive answer to this question is taken as a sign of lack of time.

³ We have used all of the above mentioned equivalence scales, and the main results did not depend on the equivalence scale used.

The income measure in the Time Use Data is the same as in the Income Data; namely, the household's yearly income subject to taxation. However, in the Time Use survey, we observe the income measure for one year only. We calculate income quintiles in both of the time use samples used based on the concurrent income measure, in the same manner as in the Income Data. The household's yearly income subject to taxation is equivalenced according to the previously mentioned equation on page 8, after which the quintiles are calculated.

The variable of interest in the analyses is parental time use related to childcare. Activities included in this variable are: care and supervision activities, teaching and advising a child, play and reading, having a conversation with a child, helping with homework, spending time outdoors with a child, children's health services, children's leisure activities, taking a child to daycare and other travel related to childcare, and other childcare activities.⁴ Both primary and secondary activities are included. It is important to include secondary activities in a study which aims to explain children's wellbeing, since a big part of childcare is carried out as a secondary activity.

Quality time can be seen as an essential element in childcare, but the presently available data contains no information about it. In these time use surveys, we do not know how many children are present at the same time, as, for example, when reading to a child. Also, it is difficult to separate the time spent with a child alone or in conjunction with another parent (joint time use of spouses). Moreover, none of the time use studies provides information on the time people other than those living in the same dwelling with the family concerned allocate for children in order to educate and look after them. With these shortcomings, parental time use related to childcare is the best category available.

4 Income and material wellbeing

When analysing the material wellbeing of Finnish children, we look at the income of the families they live in – the yearly income subject to taxation. One simple measure of the income distribution among families is captured by the Gini coefficient. In the first cross section, the Gini coefficient is 24.6, while

it is 32.6 in the second. Family income is more unequally distributed at the turn of the century than in the late 1980s. Increasing income inequality has been noted by many others as well, (see for example Riihelä et al. 2001, 2002 and 2007). The Gini coefficients are similar to previous research, using gross income measures. With the use of disposable income measures, a lower value is obtained for the Gini coefficient (around 5 percentage points lower in the 1990s) (Riihelä et al. 2007).

If we divide these families into five groups according to their three-year mean equivalent family income subject to taxation, we find that the increase in income is unequally distributed among the income quintile groups (see Table 1, pp. 10–11). The mean equivalent income increased quite dramatically, by 22%, between the two cross sections. However, income in the lowest quintile group decreased during this time period by around 10%. Income increased by 6% in the second quintile, and a progressively greater increase is seen in each succeeding quintile group, with the fifth quintile group showing an increase of 43%. The mean equivalent income in the highest quintile group was 3.7 times higher than in the lowest quintile group of the first cohort. In the second cohort this increased to 5.9.

There are fewer parents on average in families in the lower quintile groups but more children compared to the higher quintile groups. Consequently, there are fewer adults that bring in money to the children in those families. The share of single fathers and mothers has increased in all quintile groups. The rate of single parenthood decreases with increasing income and single parents are still rare in the highest quintile group in both cross sections. Among the families in the lowest quintile group, 35% in 1988 and 58% in 2000 were headed by a single mother. Single fathers headed 2% of the families in the lowest quintile group in 1988, and 5% in the year 2000.

The number of children has increased in all quintile groups from 1988 to 2000. Both parents and children are somewhat older on average in 2000 than in 1988. The fertility rate increased in the late 1980s and levelled out in Finland in the mid-1990s. At the same time, the mean age of both first birth and childbearing among Finnish women increased (Statistics Finland 2004). The number of children in families started to increase in the beginning of the 1980s after a long period of decline, and the increase has been somewhat slower in the 1990s (Kartovaara 2007).

⁴ In 1999–2000 only the activities identified in the 1987–1988 data as childcare are counted in order to preserve comparability between the two data sets.

Table 1. Indicators of material wellbeing of families in two cohorts (1988 and 2000) and in five income quintile groups.

Indicator	Year	All	Quintile groups				
			1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Gini coefficient [#]	1988	24.6					
	2000	32.6					
Ln difference		0.28					
Mean equiv. fam. taxable income [#]	1988	18,826	8,740	14,201	17,864	21,747	32,345
	2000	23,104	7,822	15,011	20,261	25,780	46,505
Ln difference		0.20	-0.11	0.06	0.13	0.17	0.36
N families	1988	54,238	10,848	10,848	10,847	10,849	10,846
	2000	63,016	12,604	12,603	12,603	12,603	12,603
Number of adults	1988	1.89	1.63	1.89	1.97	1.98	1.99
	2000	1.79	1.38	1.74	1.92	1.96	1.97
Ln difference		-0.05	-0.16	-0.08	-0.03	-0.01	-0.01
Single fathers	1988	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01
	2000	0.03	0.05	0.04	0.02	0.02	0.01
Ln difference		1.10	0.92	0.69	0.69	0.69	0.0
Single mothers	1988	0.10	0.35	0.09	0.02	0.01	0.01
	2000	0.18	0.58	0.22	0.06	0.03	0.02
Ln difference		0.59	0.51	0.89	1.10	1.10	0.69
Number of children	1988	1.94	2.22	2.08	1.92	1.75	1.71
	2000	2.09	2.29	2.25	2.14	1.93	1.85
Ln difference		0.07	0.03	0.08	0.11	0.10	0.08
Mean age of fathers	1988	36.1	36.0	34.8	35.3	36.2	38.2
	2000	41.2	40.5	39.9	40.6	41.5	43.0
Ln difference		0.13	0.12	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.12
Mean age of mothers	1988	33.9	33.3	32.7	33.1	34.2	36.4
	2000	38.8	36.8	38.0	38.5	39.5	41.1
Ln difference		0.14	0.10	0.15	0.15	0.14	0.12
Mean age of youngest child	1988	5.6	5.5	4.8	5.0	5.8	6.5
	2000	7.7	6.9	7.3	7.4	8.2	8.7
Ln difference		0.32	0.23	0.42	0.39	0.34	0.29
Father's employment rate %	1988	93.5	79.2	91.3	96.2	97.5	98.2
	2000	90.0	60.2	84.7	92.4	96.7	98.0
Ln difference		-0.04	-0.27	-0.08	-0.04	-0.01	-0.00
Mother's employment rate %	1988	78.8	60.0	69.1	83.0	89.2	92.4
	2000	77.4	48.8	71.5	82.4	90.0	93.2
Ln difference		-0.02	-0.21	-0.03	-0.01	0.09	0.01

Indicator	Year	All	Quintile groups				
			1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Father's unemployment rate %	1988	2.6	8.0	3.6	1.7	1.1	0.5
	2000	5.4	22.6	8.6	4.1	1.6	0.7
Ln difference		0.73	1.04	0.87	0.88	0.47	0.34
Mother's unemployment rate %	1988	4.0	8.0	5.7	3.5	2.2	0.9
	2000	9.4	22.7	11.2	7.3	4.4	1.9
Ln difference		0.85	1.04	0.68	0.74	0.69	0.75
Father's education Compulsory %	1988	30.7	44.5	36.4	33.0	28.8	16.0
	2000	20.4	36.4	26.4	22.3	17.1	10.1
Ln difference		-0.41	-0.20	-0.32	-0.39	-0.52	-0.46
Secondary %	1988	42.2	46.7	50.7	48.7	42.5	25.0
	2000	45.8	51.6	57.0	53.8	46.8	25.7
Ln difference		0.08	0.10	0.12	0.10	0.10	0.03
Tertiary %	1988	27.0	8.8	12.9	18.2	28.7	59.0
	2000	33.8	12.0	16.6	24.0	36.1	64.2
Ln difference		0.22	0.31	0.25	0.28	0.23	0.08
Mother's education Compulsory %	1988	28.3	39.4	31.4	27.7	26.2	17.2
	2000	15.8	29.2	17.4	13.7	11.4	7.6
Ln difference		-0.58	-0.30	-0.59	-0.70	-0.83	-0.82
Secondary %	1988	45.7	51.4	53.1	51.9	44.0	28.2
	2000	44.6	53.5	53.2	49.4	42.3	25.6
Ln difference		-0.02	0.04	0.00	-0.05	-0.04	-0.10
Tertiary %	1988	26.0	9.2	15.6	20.4	29.8	54.6
	2000	39.6	17.3	29.4	36.9	46.3	66.8
Ln difference		0.42	0.63	0.63	0.59	0.44	0.20

Note: # analyses are weighted by number of individuals in the family.
Source: Authors' calculation from the Income Data.

During the depression of the early 1990s, unemployment increased dramatically, and has decreased slowly.⁵ The unemployment rate was higher in 2000 than in 1988 in all quintile groups, but unemployment is concentrated in the lowest quintile group. The educational level of parents has increased between the two cohorts. Women, especially in the low income quintile groups, show a trend of increasing

educational level. However, as a whole, parents in the low quintile groups are considerably less educated than parents in the high quintile groups. In the year 2000, more than 60% of the parents in the highest quintile group have completed tertiary education. In the lowest quintile group, the corresponding share is 12% among fathers and 17% among mothers.

5 In the 1980s the unemployment was around 5% in Finland, clearly below the unemployment rate in most other EU countries at that time. The unemployment rate was highest for men in 1993 and 1994, 18.1%, and for women in 1994, 15.1%. At the turn of the century, the unemployment was around 10% for both men and women (Statistics Finland 1987, 1992 and 2004).

Let us contrast these findings with the mean equivalent taxable income in the different family types (see Table 2). Single-mother families have by far the lowest equivalent mean taxable income, with the lowest standard deviation. They are followed by single-

father families, a more heterogeneous group with a higher standard deviation. Cohabiting families have the second highest mean equivalent income, and married families have the highest. Married families comprise the most heterogeneous group of families, with the highest standard deviation. The highest increase in mean equivalent taxable income was seen in married families (30%), followed by cohabiting families (25%). Single-father families experienced an income increase around 19%, while the income increase in families headed by single mothers was around 8% on average.

Also striking is the increasing income inequality between the two years. The standard deviations in the different subgroups increase remarkably between

the two years. Those with higher incomes – especially those in the highest quintile – experience a higher income increase over the years. Families in the two lowest quintiles headed by single mothers and families headed by single fathers in the lowest quintile experience a considerable reduction in income over the years. Families headed by single mothers are clearly left behind in terms of economic development. A somewhat lower inequality measure is obtained when using disposable income in income inequality analyses of Finland during the 1990s, than when using taxable income (see e.g. Riihelä et al. (2007)). Hence, while our results are probably overstatements, the direction of the changes is true.

Table 2. Mean equivalent taxable income in different family types in two cohorts (1988 and 2000).

Family type	Years	Mean eqv. income	Std.	N families	Quintile groups				
					1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Married	1987–1989	19,682	17,664	44,183	10,273	15,518	18,861	22,636	33,538
	1999–2001	25,625	35,583	42,796	11,682	18,400	22,868	28,213	51,548
Ln difference		0.26			0.13	0.17	0.19	0.22	0.43
Cohabiting	1987–1989	17,479	13,648	4,109	9,270	14,150	17,164	20,316	28,263
	1999–2001	21,864	25,537	7,252	10,352	16,437	20,607	24,933	40,051
Ln difference		0.22			0.11	0.15	0.18	0.20	0.35
Single mothers	1987–1989	9,612	8,154	5,205	4,026	7,446	9,636	11,742	17,306
	1999–2001	10,216	13,062	11,304	3,191	6,225	9,656	12,952	21,661
Ln difference		0.06			–0.23	–0.18	0.00	0.10	0.22
Single fathers	1987–1989	14,255	12,153	741	6,010	10,841	13,524	16,711	26,212
	1999–2001	16,952	22,566	1,664	5,133	11,001	14,986	19,593	36,380
Ln difference		0.17			–0.16	0.01	0.10	0.16	0.33

Note: All analyses are weighted by number of individuals in the family.
Source: Authors' calculation from the Income Data.

5 Parental time in childcare

We now proceed to analyse the amount of time parents allocate to childcare activities and how this time use changes our conception of children's well-being in 1987–1988 and in 1999–2000. Statistics for the years 1987–1988 (see Tables 3 and 4, pp. 14–15) indicate that fathers spend 32 minutes/day on average in childcare activities on weekdays while the corresponding figure for mothers is 92 minutes/day on average. On weekends the time spent in childcare is 42 minutes/day for fathers and 74 minutes/day for mothers.

When we look at the corresponding figures for the year 1999–2000 (see Tables 3 and 4) we can see that the time spent in childcare activities has increased compared to the results in 1987–1988 for both fathers and mothers. The average figure for fathers is now 44 minutes/day on weekdays and 59 minutes/day on weekends. Mothers spend on average 109 minutes/day on weekdays and 92 minutes/day on weekends in childcare. In both cohorts, the means vary considerably depending on parental and family characteristics.

For instance, the age of both parents and children affect parental time in childcare. The older the parents and the older the children, the less time is spent in childcare. There are also differences in the means of parental time in childcare between married or cohabiting and single mothers. In both cross sections somewhat less than 60% of the fathers and somewhat more than 60% of the mothers have a subjective feeling of lack of time. However, those who experience lack of time spend more time in childcare than those who feel that they have enough time.

The father/mother ratio increases in almost all population groups over the years. The father/mother ratio also increases when we move from weekdays to weekends. This means that gender difference balances out over time and especially during weekends. The father/mother ratio is 0.57 for weekends compared to 0.35 for weekdays in 1987–1988. The corresponding numbers for 1999–2000 are 0.64 for weekends and 0.40 for weekdays (see Tables 3 and 4).

As an econometric estimation we use the Tobit model to find out the determinants of parental time use in childcare. We have the amount of time parents spend in childcare (minutes/day) as a dependent variable. The Tobit model is used here because the data include observations where childcare activities for one reason or another is zero. This means

that ordinary regression would give biased results. In the model, the exogenous variables include dummies for income quintile groups, age of the parent, age of the youngest child, education level of the parents, employment status, number of children in the family, family type, and a subjective measure of lack of time.

In this estimation technique, the coefficients for all parental and family characteristics included in the model are indicative of the effects on time allocated to childcare. These results differ from the means and give a more complete picture of the determinants. A single coefficient should be interpreted as the change in time spent in childcare when all other characteristics are unchanged. To get an idea of what these coefficients imply for time spent in childcare, the Tobit marginal effects are presented in Table 5 (p. 16). Because all included dependent variables are dummies, the marginal effects are calculated as the discrete change in the expected value of childcare, conditional on being uncensored, as the dummy variables change from 0 to 1. As an example, the predicted time use on a weekday in 1987–1988 for mothers belonging to the first income quintile group, being 18–34 years old, having one child under 7 years of age, having completed primary-level education, being non-employed, single, and having enough time, is 117 minutes/day spent in childcare activities. This figure decreases by 17 minutes if she becomes employed and increases by 14 minutes if she has completed secondary-level education. The results also show that fathers with the same background spend 60 minutes/day in childcare activities.

We notice that income does not generally explain the time allocated to childcare; other factors are at play as well. The age of the parent and of the youngest child alter the time use quite dramatically. These differences seem to increase over time. Children under school age need more time from their parents than older children. Children in their teens need even less care. However, the dummies for the age of the youngest child pick up only a part of this phenomenon if there are several children in the family. Older parents have older children. Hence, the older the parents are, the less time they allocate to childcare.

Differences between time allocated to childcare are quite small between families with one, two or three children. When the number of children increases to four or more, there are some notable differences.

Table 3. Average time in minutes/day spent in childcare in various population groups in 1987–1988 and 1999–2000, and ln difference between years, WEEKDAYS. (Observations less than 10 are omitted.)

		Father					Mother					Father/Mother ratio	
		1987–1988		1999–2000		Ln	1987–1988		1999–2000		Ln	1987–1988	1999–2000
		Time	Std. error	Time	Std. error	Diff.	Time	Std. error	Time	Std. error	Diff.	1988	2000
Population average		32	1.4	44	2.6	0.32	92	2.9	109	4.8	0.17	0.35	0.40
Income groups	1.	36	3.5	53	7.4	0.39	104	5.3	129	10.8	0.22	0.35	0.41
	2.	33	2.7	51	6.1	0.44	115	7.8	141	12.0	0.20	0.29	0.36
	3.	43	3.6	45	5.7	0.05	111	7.9	105	10.5	-0.06	0.39	0.43
	4.	28	3.0	34	5.1	0.19	72	5.4	92	10.9	0.25	0.39	0.37
	5.	19	2.2	36	4.7	0.64	55	5.5	62	7.3	0.12	0.35	0.58
Age of parent	18–34	49	2.7	77	6.7	0.45	151	5.1	202	9.9	0.29	0.32	0.38
	35–44	29	1.9	43	4.1	0.39	65	3.6	92	6.8	0.35	0.45	0.47
	45–43	15	2.4	18	2.3	0.18	21	3.0	24	3.1	0.13	0.71	0.75
	54+	12	3.9	29	11.6	0.88	6	2.5	13	8.5	0.77	2.00	2.23
Age of a youngest child	<7	51	2.3	70	4.5	0.32	165	4.5	195	8.0	0.17	0.31	0.36
	7–12	15	1.4	19	2.5	0.24	33	2.2	42	3.7	0.24	0.45	0.45
	12+	5	0.8	9	2.0	0.59	8	0.9	13	1.9	0.49	0.62	0.69
Education	Primary	30	1.4	40	3.1	0.29	92	3.1	109	6.2	0.17	0.33	0.37
	Secondary	42	6.8	54	5.5	0.25	96	9.9	96	7.6	0.00	0.44	0.56
	Tertiary	35	5.1	42	8.5	0.18	81	13.4	160	22.5	0.68	0.43	0.26
Employment status	Non-employed	34	6.0	59	10.3	0.55	113	10.3	91	10.1	-0.22	0.30	0.65
	Employed	32	1.4	42	2.7	0.27	79	3.0	77	4.5	-0.03	0.41	0.55
	Home-maker	.	.	53	21.3	.	185	9.5	275	15.2	0.40	.	0.19
Number of children under 18	1	28	1.9	34	3.8	0.19	69	4.1	80	6.4	0.15	0.41	0.42
	2–3	35	2.0	50	3.6	0.36	109	4.1	127	6.7	0.15	0.32	0.39
	4+	40	11.3	50	10.8	0.22	158	17.3	211	38.4	0.29	0.25	0.24
Family type	Married/cohabit	32	1.4	44	2.6	0.32	96	3.1	115	5.2	0.18	0.33	0.38
	Single mother	.	.	.	.	.	58	6.1	74	11.7	0.24	.	.
Subjective measure	Enough time	28	1.9	38	3.7	0.31	75	4.0	97	7.4	0.26	0.37	0.39
	Lack of time	35	2.0	48	3.6	0.32	101	3.9	116	6.3	0.14	0.35	0.41
N		1533		667			1764		837				

Source: Authors' calculation from the Time Use Data.

Table 4. Average time in minutes/day spent in childcare in various population groups in 1987–1988 and 1999–2000, and Ln difference between years, WEEKEND. (Observations less than 10 are omitted.)

		Father			Mother			Father/Mother ratio					
		1987–1988	1999–2000	Ln	1987–1988	1999–2000	Ln	1987–1988	1999–2000	Ln	1988	1999–2000	
		Time	Std. error	Time	Std. error	Diff.	Time	Std. error	Time	Std. error	Diff.	1988	2000
Population average		42	2.9	59	3.6	0.34	74	4.0	92	4.3	0.22	0.57	0.64
Income groups	1.	51	8.3	70	10.3	0.32	85	7.8	112	10.2	0.28	0.60	0.62
	2.	48	6.8	73	8.0	0.42	93	9.6	116	9.9	0.22	0.52	0.63
	3.	46	5.9	66	8.6	0.36	72	9.8	85	9.2	0.17	0.64	0.78
	4.	29	6.5	43	6.3	0.39	52	8.6	76	9.3	0.38	0.56	0.57
	5.	34	5.2	46	7.4	0.30	64	9.6	55	7.0	-0.15	0.53	0.84
Age of parent	18–34	75	7.0	108	8.9	0.36	125	7.3	173	8.9	0.32	0.60	0.62
	35–44	36	3.8	65	6.0	0.59	51	5.0	78	6.1	0.42	0.71	0.83
	45–43	17	4.0	14	2.5	-0.19	8	2.2	15	2.0	0.63	2.12	0.93
	54+	2	1.0	31	13.9	2.74	16	5.2	21	9.0	0.27	0.12	1.48
Age of youngest child	7+	67	4.6	98	6.1	0.38	147	6.6	172	7.1	0.16	0.46	0.57
	7–12	12	2.9	20	3.2	0.51	14	1.8	25	2.6	0.58	0.86	0.80
	12+	8	2.6	13	3.7	0.49	6	1.5	11	1.4	0.61	1.33	1.18
Education	Primary	36	3.0	53	4.5	0.39	69	4.1	95	5.7	0.32	0.52	0.56
	Secondary	68	11.4	71	6.6	0.04	89	17.9	86	7.0	-0.03	0.76	0.83
	Tertiary	65	11.8	69	13.0	0.06	138	23.2	95	15.3	-0.37	0.47	0.73
Employment status	Non-employed	46	16.1	58	12.0	0.23	56	12.0	83	10.2	0.39	0.82	0.70
	Employed	42	3.0	59	3.8	0.34	63	4.2	65	3.9	0.03	0.67	0.91
	Home-maker	.	.	127	70.5	.	183	13.7	232	14.1	0.24	.	0.55
Number of children under 18	1	33	3.8	56	6.1	0.53	43	4.8	80	6.2	0.62	0.77	0.70
	2–3	46	4.2	59	4.6	0.25	91	5.9	97	5.8	0.06	0.51	0.61
	4+	60	20.7	99	19.9	0.50	176	27.3	168	27.1	-0.05	0.34	0.59
Family type	Married/cohabit	42	2.9	59	3.6	0.34	80	4.5	96	4.6	0.18	0.52	0.61
	Single mother	.	.	.	.	.	28	5.6	66	11.1	0.86	.	.
Subjective measure	Enough time	32	3.6	50	5.1	0.45	56	6.1	84	6.9	0.41	0.57	0.60
	Lack of time	50	4.4	67	5.1	0.29	84	5.3	96	5.4	0.13	0.60	0.70
N		604			665			710			838		

Source: Authors' calculation from the Time Use Data.

Table 5. Tobit marginal effects for 1987–1988 and 1999–2000, parental time in childcare is the dependent variable.

	1987–1988				1999–2000			
	Weekdays		Weekend		Weekdays		Weekend	
	Father	Mother	Father	Mother	Father	Mother	Father	Mother
Mean time use in childcare if > 0	60.02	117.39	76.76	94.09	74.36	132.19	98.82	115.70
Income quintile groups, 1. omitted	2.47	7.48	-0.30	5.40	-2.52	9.42	-7.85	7.06
2.	9.74***	10.82**	2.06	3.24	1.68	15.34*	0.20	5.34
3.	1.74	1.33	3.60	-4.71	-0.42	13.44	-9.03	6.30
4.	-2.29	-0.37	3.73	4.51	0.96	-3.37	-2.30	0.84
5.	-2.89	-8.73**	-10.09**	-10.53**	-9.03**	25.19***	-13.22***	-14.07**
Age variable, 18–34 omitted	-4.01	-18.80***	-13.74***	-19.57***	-11.47**	-31.98***	-39.37***	-27.87***
35–43	-2.99	-38.34***	-19.31**	8.56	-5.28	-51.18***	-21.19**	-26.30
44–53	-19.20***	-58.47***	-31.77***	-55.96***	-26.70***	-56.72***	-33.14***	-62.09***
54+	-30.85***	-81.05***	-38.66***	-66.21***	-36.12***	-72.99***	-44.12***	-71.67***
Age of the youngest child, <7 omitted	11.22***	14.48***	21.36***	23.74**	9.31**	10.47*	14.47***	7.14
7–12	5.85	0.77	13.38	39.25***	2.18	50.62***	24.12***	20.19**
12+	-6.79*	-16.72***	-19.30*	2.49	-14.65**	-9.24	2.36	0.95
Education, Primary omitted	.	25.89***	.	46.34***	-7.34	73.40***	28.31	55.28***
Secondary	-1.96	-3.37	2.74	7.25*	4.71	14.04**	-5.67	-5.15
Tertiary	-9.77**	-1.50	7.04	35.73**	6.49	65.73***	18.60	16.78
Employed	.	6.76	.	-3.52	.	13.02	.	12.36*
Non-employed omitted	1.90	6.96	4.36	6.27	1.85	0.85	6.05	0.96
Number of children, 1 omitted	1.90	6.96	4.36	6.27	1.85	0.85	6.05	0.96
2–3	1.90	6.96	4.36	6.27	1.85	0.85	6.05	0.96
4+	1.90	6.96	4.36	6.27	1.85	0.85	6.05	0.96
Family type, Single mother omitted	1.90	6.96	4.36	6.27	1.85	0.85	6.05	0.96
Married/ cohabit	1.90	6.96	4.36	6.27	1.85	0.85	6.05	0.96
Lack of time omitted	1.90	6.96	4.36	6.27	1.85	0.85	6.05	0.96
Subjective measure, Enough time omitted	1.90	6.96	4.36	6.27	1.85	0.85	6.05	0.96
N	1533	1764	604	710	667	837	665	838

Note: *** significant at 1% level, ** significant at 5% level, * significant at 10% level.
Source: Authors' calculation from the Time Use Data.

The parent's educational level has an impact on time allocated to childcare. Parents with a secondary-level degree generally spend more time in childcare than parents with a tertiary-level degree in the 1988–1989 data while the opposite generally holds for 1999–2000. The difference between employed and non-employed is not as large, with employed mothers and fathers generally spending somewhat less time in childcare activities during weekdays than non-employed parents. Mothers who take care of the household spend significantly more time in childcare. This group is a selected group. Women who take care of the household have typically chosen not to participate in the labour market because they specifically want to care for their children.

The only significant differences between time allocated to childcare in different family types is that married or cohabiting mothers spend 12 minutes more in childcare on weekends than single mothers in the 1999–2000 data, and this variable is significant on the 10% level. Even though single mothers spend less time on average in childcare activities, it is not the single parenthood in itself that matters. Their personal and family characteristics differ. Single mothers are on average older, have fewer and older children, and have a lower level of education than married or cohabiting mothers.

Other things being equal, parents who have a subjective feeling of lack of time spend time in childcare in a similar manner as those who feel they have enough time. The coefficients are positive, however none of them are significant. Parents who experience lack of time have younger children, are younger themselves, have a higher level of education, are working, and have a somewhat larger number of children than those who feel that they have enough time.

6 Concluding remarks

Looking at the differences between the income quintile groups in Table 1, we find that the lowest quintile group is disadvantaged in many ways compared to the highest quintile group. The income level in the lowest quintile group has decreased over time while the other groups have seen their income increase, the highest quintile group considerably. Income inequality among families with children increased dramatically during the period studied. Single-mother families are left behind in terms of economic development.

In the year 2000, there is a greater number of families headed by a single parent than in 1988. In the highest quintile group, the two-parent family is the norm, where both parents are well educated and have a job. In the lowest quintile group, almost two thirds of the families are headed by a single parent (mainly by a single mother). Furthermore, parents in low quintile groups (especially in the lowest quintile group) have a low educational level and a high risk of unemployment. In these two Income Data cohorts, single parents have a doubled risk of unemployment compared to families where both parents are present. Single parenthood and unemployment are stressful experiences, both for parents and for children, and a sign of unstable family conditions.

All these results suggest that the material wellbeing of children is divided unequally between families and the trend from the late 1980s to the turn of the century shows that this inequality has increased. It is obvious that the material wellbeing of children in the lowest quintile group has decreased over time relative to other quintile groups.

The most advantaged in terms of wellbeing are the children in families in the highest income quintile group. In the highest income quintile group, the parents are well educated, and higher educated parents spend more time in childcare than parents with no education above the compulsory level. High-income families are formed of two employed adults, most of whom are married. Having a job not only implies a stable income but also creates a certain stability in life.

Finnish children have a high risk of facing a society divided in material terms between those who have it all and those who are without. In the Nordic welfare states, including Finland, the state did not manage to moderate the negative effects of the economic depression, i.e., the market failure of the 1990s. On the contrary, as Riihelä et al. (2002) conclude, the state has even aggravated income inequality because of the political decisions made. This sits ill with the goals of equality that once prevailed in Finland. The state has failed to respond to the changes in society.

From the Time Use Data we can conclude that the total time parents spend in childcare has increased from 1987–1988 to 1999–2000. In 1987–1988 the average time spent in childcare for all parents was 64 minutes/day on weekdays and 58 minutes/day on weekends. In 1999–2000 the corresponding figures are 81 minutes/day on weekdays and 78 minutes/day on weekends. The increase is greater for fathers than

for mothers both on weekdays and on weekends. In percentage terms the increase on weekdays for fathers is 38% and for mothers 19%; on weekends the increase is 40% for fathers and 25% for mothers. This is also shown in Tables 3 and 4, where we can see that the father/mother ratio has increased in almost every population group. This means that the gender difference balances out not only during weekends but also over time. In total, mothers still spend considerably more time in childcare activities compared to fathers.

Parental time allocated to childcare has increased over the time period studied, which means that the wellbeing of children has increased. However, parental and family characteristics affect the amount of time allocated to childcare. At the same time, the importance of income is more or less nonexistent, which is a comforting finding given that income inequality has increased. The age of the parent and child are important factors, and their impact has increased slightly.

On average, both employed and non-employed fathers have increased the amount of time spent in childcare. While employed mothers show no changes in time spent in childcare, non-employed mothers have increased the amount of time allocated to childcare on weekends but reduced it on weekdays. The Tobit estimates show that when everything else is equal, employment status does not have that large an impact. Furthermore, the difference between employed and non-employed parents has decreased over time.

In the Time Use Data used, the share of homemakers has increased from 10.5% in 1987–1988 to 14.6% in 1999–2000. Homemakers have increased their time in childcare quite dramatically. The Tobit estimates show that all else being equal, homemaker mothers spend 26 minutes more on weekdays and 46 minutes more on weekends in childcare than other mothers in 1987–1988. These numbers increase to 73 minutes on weekdays and 55 minutes on weekends in 1999–2000. The number of homemakers is small, and these changes do not account for all of the overall increase in time allocated in childcare.

The average parents have increased the amount of time spent in childcare. There are differences in parental time spent in childcare due to parental and family characteristics, but the results do not indicate noticeable shifts in different subgroups. Hence, there has not been any increase in inequality of time in childcare between different types of

families. The results show that the families have increased the amount of time spent in childcare at the same time as there have been changes in the state (government policies), in the labour market, and in the family. Hence, families with children responded to the changes in society by increasing time spent in childcare.

The increase in the time spent in childcare also implies that parents have reduced the time spent in other activities. During the time period studied, both men and women have reduced their labour force participation because of the depression and the family policies. For mothers with young children, the reduction is significant (Haataja 2005). In some contradiction to this, the proportion of children between 1 and 6 years of age attending public day care has increased as well.⁶ Perhaps as a consequence, parents on average seemed to feel no more stressed at the turn of the century than they did in the late 1980s. Based on the parents' own assessment, feelings of insufficient time did not increase from 1987–1988 to 1999–2000. Around three out of five parents reported having experienced lack of time in both cross sections. Parents feeling hurried are employed and have younger children. The home care allowance system makes it possible for parents to take care of their children until the youngest child is 3 years old. During this time the parent, mainly the mother, is away from the labour market. However, when returning to the labour market after a period on home care allowance, there are few possibilities for parents to reduce working hours due to family responsibilities. Hakovirta and Salin (2006) show that fewer than half of the mothers in Finland worked as many hours as they would have preferred in 2002. Most mothers who prefer to work full time do so, while only about a quarter of those who prefer to work part time are able to do so. Hence, the labour market and the public sector have not been able to offer better opportunities for parents to combine work and family responsibilities.

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6 This change is probably due to the introduction of a subjective right to day care in the 1990s.

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