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## Untraditional caring arrangements among parents living apart. The case of Norway

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*Ragni Hege Kitterød and Jan Lyngstad*

## **Untraditional caring arrangements among parents living apart**

### **The case of Norway**

**Abstract:**

In spite of more symmetric parental roles in couples, shared residence is still practiced by a minority of parents following partnership dissolution in Norway, and the same is true for father sole custody. Utilising a survey of parents living apart in 2004, we find that shared residence is particularly likely when the father has a medium or high income, the mother is highly educated, the parents split up rather recently, the mother is currently married and the parents have no other children in their present households. Father sole custody is most likely when the mother has low income, the father has high income, the parents were formally married prior to the breakup, the child is a boy, the child is fairly old, the father is single and the mother has children in her current household. More equal parenting roles in couples in younger generations as well as policies urging parents to collaborate about their children's upbringing when they split up, may lead to an increase in shared residence in the years to come, and perhaps also to new groups of parents practicing such an arrangement.

**Keywords:** Father sole custody, gender equality, parents living apart, shared residence.

**JEL classification:** J12, J13

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## Sammenheng

Til tross for stor likedeling av arbeid ute og hjemme blant foreldre i par, blir de fleste barn boende med mor når foreldrene skiller lag i Norge. Det har imidlertid vært en svak økning i andelen med delt bosted. I dette paperet analyserer vi hva som kjennetegner foreldre som har delt bosted for barna, og foreldre der barn bor hos far etter et samlivsbrudd. Analysen er basert på en undersøkelse av foreldre som bor hver for seg, Samvær og bidrag 2004. Hovedformålet med undersøkelsen var å evaluere nye regler for beregning av barnebidrag som ble innført i 2003, men den kan også benyttes til andre formål. Utvalget omfattet foreldre som hadde felles barn under 18 år, men som ikke bodde sammen med hverandre. Analysen i dette paperet omfatter dem som tidligere hadde vært gift eller samboende. Begge foreldre deltok i undersøkelsen, dvs. at vi har opplysninger fra mor og far til samme barn. Opplysningene ble gitt for det yngste barnet i relasjonen.

I 81 prosent av parene bor barnet hovedsakelig hos mor, i 8 prosent av parene bor det hovedsakelig hos far, mens 11 prosent har delt bosted for barnet. Delt bosted og bosted hos far er en mindretallspraksis i alle grupper av foreldre, men andelen med slike ordninger varierer noe. En multinomisk logistisk regresjonsanalyse tyder på at valget om å ha delt bosted henger sammen med foreldrenes sosioøkonomiske ressurser, normer og samfunnsmessige diskusjoner da de skilte lag, og foreldrenes nåværende familiesituasjon. Sammenlignet med bosted hos mor, er delt bosted mer vanlig når far har middels eller høy inntekt, i stedet for lav inntekt, når mor har lang utdanning, når foreldrene har skilt lag forholdsvis nylig, når mor er gift med en ny partner og når foreldrene ikke har andre barn i sin nåværende husholdning. Betydningen av høy inntekt for far bunner trolig i at delt bosted er en forholdsvis dyr ordning ettersom begge foreldre må ha egne rom og annet utstyr til barna. Den klare sammenhengen med mors utdanningsnivå bunner trolig i at par der mor har høy utdanning, delte familie- og yrkesarbeidet likere enn andre mens de bodde sammen, og dessuten ofte har positive holdninger til likestilling og likedeling. Det kan videre ha betydning at mødre med lang utdanning ofte har krevende jobber og lang arbeidstid og derfor trenger noen å dele omsorgsoppgavene med.

Sammenlignet med bosted hos mor, er bosted hos far mer vanlig når mor har lav inntekt, når far har høy inntekt, når foreldrene har vært formelt gift med hverandre i stedet for samboende, når barnet er gutt, når barnet er forholdsvis stort, når far er enslig i stedet for gift eller samboer, og når mor har nye barn i sin nåværende husholdning. Vi forventet dessuten at bosted hos far henger sammen med nedsatt helse hos mor, men finner ingen slik sammenheng. Derimot viser analysen en negativ sammenheng med fars helse. Dette er uventet, men kan bunne i at det ikke er noe godt mål for foreldrenes helse i undersøkelsen. Vi har konstruert en variabel der de som enten oppgir uførhet eller førtidspensjon som sitt viktigste gjøremål, og/eller mottar uføretrygd eller rehabiliteringspenger, regnes for å ha dårlig helse. Når fedre med nedsatt helse ifølge denne definisjonen oftere enn andre har barnet boende fast hos seg, kan dette bunne i at disse fedrene har god tid fordi de jobber lite. Analysen gir ikke grunnlag for sikre konklusjoner om sammenhengen mellom foreldrenes helse og barnets bosted.

Ettersom nye generasjoner av foreldre har enda større likedeling av familie- og yrkesarbeid enn dem som inngår i analysene i dette paperet, er det rimelig å anta at delt bosted etter samlivsbrudd vil bli vanligere framover, og kanskje også vil bli praktisert av nye grupper av foreldre. Det er imidlertid økt oppmerksomhet om at delt bosted stiller store krav til foreldresamarbeid, fleksibilitet og lavt konfliktnivå mellom foreldrene for at dette skal være en god løsning for barna.

# 1. Introduction

More active fathering is high on the political agenda in many Western countries, and encouraging contact between fathers and children is an important priority. Attention has mainly been given to married and cohabiting fathers, but with rising divorce rates in recent decades there is also a great deal of focus on the childcare practices and economic contributions of non-resident fathers (for instance Seltzer and Bianchi, 1988; Stephens, 1996; Manning and Smock, 1999; Manning et al., 2003; Cashmore and Parkinson, 2008; Amato et al., 2009). While most children still remain in the physical custody of their mothers when parents break up, several countries have witnessed a slight increase in shared residence for children lately (Smyth and Moloney, 2008; Lundström, 2009; Fehlborg et al., 2011), which is often linked to more equal parenting roles when parents live together (Smyth et al., 2004). There is now a growing literature on the determinants and dynamics of shared residence, and also on father sole custody (for instance Cancian and Meyer, 1998, Juby et al., 2005).

The aim of the present paper is to add to this literature by discussing the characteristics of parents who choose shared residence or father sole custody in Norway, a country known for its high female labour force participation and extensive policies for symmetric parental roles as well as its high proportion of children born into consensual unions. In spite of more committed fathering in couples (Vaage, 2002) and increased paternal involvement in children after parental split-up in recent decades (Sætre, 2004), shared residence is still fairly rare in Norway, and the same is true for father sole custody. Shared residence has increased slightly in recent years, though (ibid), and more gender-equal roles in couples may give rise to a growing demand for shared residence following couples' breakup in the years to come. In the public debate, and also among politicians, it has even been suggested that divided residence for children should become the norm when parents live apart in order to secure gender equality and fairness between the partners (Haugen, 2010; St.meld No. 29, 2002-2003). However, researchers also point out that from the perspective of the child, a two-home solution can work both as a pleasure and a burden (ibid; Skjørten et al., 2007).

The current paper utilises representative survey data from 2004 to investigate the prevalence and characteristics of untraditional caring arrangements among parents living apart in Norway, such as shared residence and father sole custody, by means of a multinomial logistic regression analysis. The sample comprises both the mother and the father of the same child, which provides a lot of information on both parents. The analysis is exploratory in character. We do not formulate a number of explicit hypothesis that are to be tested, but looking at the Norwegian policy context and previous research helps us decide which factors to include in the analysis. Shared residence is defined rather

narrowly in Norway, though. It presumes approximately equal division of time with children between the parents and also gives the parents an equal say over the children's daily life.

## **2. The Norwegian policy context**

Like in other social-democratic countries, the dual-earner/dual-carer family has been a central political ambition in Norway in recent decades. The combination of children and employment was initially framed as a challenge for women only, with high quality public childcare and generous parental leave rights as the most important policy measures. Fathers, too, are now increasingly expected to balance work and childcare. Leira (2002) argues that the concept of the "caring father" was politically institutionalised in the Scandinavian countries well before it was made a political topic elsewhere. Norway was the first country to implement a father's quota in the parental leave scheme, with the intention of promoting fathers' involvement with their children both during the leave and beyond. When the quota was introduced in 1993, four weeks out of the total leave of approximately one year were reserved for the father. The quota is now extended to twelve weeks, and fathers are encouraged to take even longer leaves. Due to the incentives for active fathering, some researchers argue that we have a father-friendly welfare state in Norway (Brandth and Kvande, 2003). Combined with a significant rise in women's employment, more involved fathering has brought about more equal parenting roles. Mothers' employment rate is now almost as high as that of fathers (Kitterød, 2010), although in a significant proportion of couples men still work more for pay than women, whereas women spend more time on unpaid family work (Kitterød and Lappegård, 2010).

Fathers are encouraged to continue their involvement with children when parents separate, and organisations of non-resident fathers have campaigned at the political level for more support for father-child contact. It is increasingly emphasized that parents are equally responsible for the practical care and economic provision for children even though they have separate homes. Since 2002, parents living apart have been obliged to share the children's travelling expenses between them in order for fathers' contact costs to be reduced. In 2003 a new formula for regulating child maintenance was introduced, allowing the cost of contact to be deducted from the child maintenance payment (St.meld. No 19, 2006-2007; Lyngstad, 2010). In both cases, it was an explicit objective to facilitate and stimulate father-child contact across households.

Policies concerning shared residence are more ambivalent, though. For sure, parents living apart are urged to collaborate about their children's upbringing, but it is also the case that shared residence may be economically disadvantageous, particularly for mothers (St.meld. No. 29, 2002-2003). There is a

quite extensive income package for lone parents in Norway, with the primary aim of securing the economic well-being of children who live with one of their parents only. The parent with whom the child lives permanently is entitled to social benefits such as a transitional benefit for a certain number of years and support for child care costs and for the parent's own education, as long as she/he does not live with a new partner. In addition, the resident parent is entitled to additional children's allowances and a certain tax deduction. When parents opt for shared residence, none of them qualify for transitional benefits, support for child care costs or for their own education. The additional children's allowances may be divided between the parents, though, and each of them may have a tax deduction every second year. In spite of a normative climate for shared residence following partnership dissolution, parents, and particularly mothers, may hesitate to agree on such an arrangement if they loose out economically compared to being a lone parent. Compared to being a non-resident parent, however, shared residence may be economically beneficial (ibid).

In Norway, The Children Act distinguishes between *Joint parental responsibility* and *Shared residence*. The parent with whom the child lives permanently must have parental responsibility, which is the right and obligation to make decisions for the child in personal matters, such as the child's upbringing, where the child is to live, which kind of school she/he should attend, and the like. It is now pretty common that parents living apart have joint parental responsibility in Norway. Parents who agree to have shared residence, must also have joint parental responsibility. In Norway, shared residence implies that the child lives with each parent for about half of the time, and also gives the parents an equal say concerning the child's daily life.<sup>1</sup> The parent with whom the child lives permanently, or half of the time, has greater power to decide on matters regarding the overall well-being of the child than what is warranted by parental responsibility alone, such as, for instance, whether the child is to attend a day care institution or be cared for by a professional child-minder.

Parents who split up are obliged to see a mediator in order to agree on the childcare arrangements. When children become able to form their own points of view, parents shall also listen to the children's opinion before deciding on their living arrangements. When the child reaches the age of seven, it shall

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<sup>1</sup> If the parents have more than one common child when they divorce they may decide to split the children between them. Both are then regarded as lone parents in the legal sense, even though they may actually practise shared residence for their children. This may be more economically advantageous for the parents than to register the children as having shared residence (St.meld. No. 29, 2002-2003). However, regarding the children for whom the parents do not have shared residence in the legal sense, the parent who is considered as a lone parent, may take certain decisions concerning the child's daily life without the other parent's consent.

be allowed to voice its view before any decisions are made about which of the parents she/he is to live with. When the child reaches the age of twelve, her/his opinion shall carry significant weight.

Until recently, the Norwegian court could not pass a judgement on shared residence if parents fail to agree on custody arrangement for their children, but from 2010, the court has the power to rule that the child shall live permanently with both parents when special reasons so indicate (The Children Act, section 36). However, this rule did not apply when the survey utilised in this paper was carried out.

Fathers have traditionally gained legal rights to their children through marriage in Norway, and even if cohabiting fathers have had the opportunity to apply to the authorities for joint parental responsibility, Jensen and Clausen (2003) argue that until recently, cohabiting fathers faced more obstacles than married fathers if they wanted shared residence or sole father custody for their children following partnership dissolution. However, fathers in consensual unions have acquired stronger legal ties to their children in later years (Noack, 2010), so that shared residence may have become a more likely option for cohabiting couples who split up. This is important in a country like Norway, where more than 40 percent of the children are now born by cohabiting parents. The application procedures for joint parental responsibility were simplified in 1998, and new rules applying to children born after 1. January 2006 state that parents who live together when paternity is established, shall have joint parental responsibility for common children. Since cohabiting fathers now automatically gain parental responsibility, they face few legal hindrances if they want shared residence for their children following the dissolution of a consensual union. Moreover, whereas for a long time only formally married parents were obliged to see a mediator in order to agree on childcare arrangements when they split up, from 2007, these rules also apply to cohabiting parents with common children. However, since the survey utilised in the present paper was carried out in 2004, the respondents are not affected by the rules implemented at a later stage.

### **3. Previous research**

Even though shared residence has increased in many countries lately, such a solution still tends to be practiced by a fairly small and rather select group of parents (Smyth et al., 2004). Sole father custody appears to be even rarer and, contrary to shared residence, does not seem to be on the rise. In spite of a growing international literature on these issues, it is not easy to draw firm conclusions on the prevalence and determinants of such arrangements since samples, methodologies and terms vary across studies (Fehlberg et al., 2011), although some researchers do discuss variation between countries based on standardised cross-national data (Bjarnason and Arnarsson, 2011). The



phenomenon of shared residence is especially problematic. Researchers do not always distinguish clearly between *shared parental responsibility* (often called joint legal custody in the US) on the one hand and *shared residence* (often called joint physical custody in the US) on the other, and even when it is completely clear that it is shared residence that is being studied, this may be defined in different ways in terms of the proportion of nights the child is supposed to spend in each parent's residence. For instance, in the US and Australia, researchers generally define shared residence as an arrangement when children are with each parent at least 30% of the time (ibid), whereas in other surveys, for instance in Norway, shared residence means about 50/50 timeshare arrangements (Skjærten et al., 2009). The definition used obviously affects the prevalence of shared residence, with higher proportions found with a wide rather than a narrow definition (Masardo, 2009). Another reason why it is difficult to compare across studies on shared residence is that some look at the custody arrangement put in place at the time of separation, whereas others focus on the practices at a later stage. In addition, mothers' and fathers' reports on the children's living arrangement may disagree. In general, studies of non-resident fathers' involvement with their children find that the fathers tend to depict themselves as somewhat more involved carers than the resident mothers do (Seltzer and Brandreth, 1994).

Studies of shared residence and father sole custody also vary in terms of the determinants included in the analyses, depending on the theoretical interest of the researchers and the information available in their data. They suggest, however, that the factors promoting sole father custody differ from those promoting shared residence and also that father sole custody is practiced by a more heterogeneous group of parents.

For instance, using data on divorce cases coming to court in Wisconsin state between 1986 and 1992, Cancian and Meyer (1998) found that, compared to mother sole custody, the probability of *shared physical custody* rose with the family's total income and home ownership and was also more likely when all the children were boys and when only the father had a lawyer. It was less likely when only the father was employed, when the father had children from a previous marriage as well, and when only the mother had a lawyer. *Father sole custody* was more likely when the partners had been married for long, the mother had a prior marriage, all children were male and at least eleven years old, and only the father had a lawyer. It was less probable when the family income was low, when the mother received welfare, when children were below 11 years of age and when only the mother had a lawyer.

Juby et al. (2005), too, explored the physical custody arrangement put in place at separation, but they looked at the parents' actual practices rather than the custody decision included in a court order, and included formerly cohabiting as well as formally married couples in their analysis. Based on Canadian survey data from the mid 1990s they investigated the factors influencing the likelihood of *shared physical custody* and *father sole custody* rather than mother sole custody, with a particular focus on whether the way the parents divided their children at separation reflected the way they shared parental roles during their life together. Their category of shared physical custody included couples where parents remained closely involved in their children's physical care after separation, even if the sharing was not always equal. The information was provided by the household member most knowledgeable about the child in question, which was the mother in 90 percent of the families. The study disclosed that shared physical custody was particularly likely when the couple's income was high, when the mother was well educated, when she was in the labour force prior to the breakup, when the father was better educated than the mother, when the mother lived with a new partner shortly after the breakup and when she had depressive symptoms. It was less likely when only the father or both parents worked evenings and weekends, compared to when neither parent worked outside normal hours. The positive impact of maternal employment prior to the breakup supports the researchers' assumption that greater role equality while living together leaves the partners more open to shared parenting at separation. As for father sole custody, this was more likely in high-income couples, among those with older children, when the mother lived with a new partner shortly after the breakup and when the parents had been formally married. It was less likely when the father worked evenings and weekends.

Utilising survey data from 2001, Smyth et al. (2004) examined the characteristics of *shared care* in the general population of separated and divorced parents in Australia, a country with a strong policy and legislative push towards equal time parenting following partnership dissolution. If a child spent at least 30 percent of the nights per year with each parent, this was defined as shared care, or co-parenting, in their study. They found that well-educated parents who had both pursued a career when they lived together were the most likely to opt for shared care following the split-up, as were those with children of primary school age. Co-parenting mothers tended to have a higher personal income than other women. Co-parenting fathers were often single, had some work flexibility and were less likely than others to express dissatisfaction with their relationship with their ex partner. Geographical proximity between the parents was also an important factor.

In spite of a mounting literature on the determinants of non-resident fathers' contact with their children in Norway (for instance Jensen and Clausen, 1997; Kitterød, 2006; Skevik, 2006), there is

less systematic research on the correlates of shared residence and sole father custody. Some studies exist, though. Based on in-depth interviews with a handful of mothers and fathers who divorced in the early 1990s and had *shared residence* for their children, Lunde (2001) discovered that the mothers felt that in agreeing upon shared residence, they had given away some of “their time” with the children to their ex partner, whereas the fathers felt that they had gained extra childcare time. Shared residence was usually initiated by the father. Lunde argues that the fathers had greater bargaining power than the mothers in that they were older and had higher income and education. They had been highly involved in childcare while the parents lived together and were regarded as competent carers by the mothers.

Comparing a sample of parents with *shared residence* for their children with a general sample of parents living apart in Norway, Skjørten et al. (2007) found, in a bivariate analysis, that compared to couples with mother sole custody, parents with shared residence were more likely to be well educated and gainfully employed, to live in geographical proximity from each other, to have a modest conflict level and to have allocated childcare duties equally between them as long as they lived together. Mothers with shared residence had also re-partnered more often than the sole-custody mothers, whereas the opposite association was found for the fathers. Regarding the children’s age and sex, the researchers discovered no difference between the two groups of parents. Compared to mothers with sole custody, mothers with shared residence who had not re-partnered, often had a low income. The authors relate this to the fact that unlike parents with sole custody, parents with shared residence are not entitled to transitional benefits and support for childcare and their own education. In the shared residence couples, the father had kept the family home more often than the mother. Since there is no official register of parents with shared residence in Norway, Skjørten et al. (2007) drew their sample from a National Insurance Administration register of parents who share the children’s allowance between them. Given that this register does not cover all parents with shared residence, it may not be representative for all parents with such an arrangement.

Increased focus on *shared residence* at the political level as well as in the general population has led to much discussion on the preconditions for this solution to work in the best interest of the child. In line with international research, Norwegian scholars emphasize the importance of parental cooperation and flexibility, low levels of conflicts, that both parents live in the same community and that the child herself/himself really prefers this arrangement. It is also advantageous if the parents have some flexibility in their paid working hours (Skjørten et al., 2007; Haugen, 2010). Interviewing children with shared residence, Lidén (2007) found that they were usually very loyal to their parents’ decision on divided residence and tended to emphasize the fairness of this arrangement. Most children where

fairly satisfied with shared residence, but experienced a lot of tension if their parents had severe conflicts.

As for *sole father custody*, there has so far been scarce research in Norway. Previous studies suggest that fathers in this group tend to have plenty of resources in terms of education and employment and are usually older than non-resident fathers. They tend to have older children, and only one child, and the child usually sees her/his mother often (Jensen and Clausen, 1997). According to the Norwegian population registers, the percentage of children in non-intact families who lives with their father, and in some cases also a step-mother, has increased in recent years, reaching 16 percent in 2010 compared to 12 percent in the early 1990s (Statistics Norway's Children statistics). However, people can only be registered at one domestic address in Norway, and surveys with added register information reveal that a significant proportion of the children registered at their fathers' address, actually have shared residence (Jensen, 2005). Hence, the residential solution for children with parents living apart cannot be told from the official population registers. Such problems have been discussed in other countries as well (Toulemon and Pennec, 2010).

#### **4. Factors in the current analysis**

The aim of the present paper is to gain a better understanding of the factors promoting and hindering shared residence and father sole custody in Norway. Using a sample of parents living apart in 2004, we explore the importance of a variety of factors that have been argued in the literature to be linked to parents' custody practices. Parents with shared residence and father sole custody may very well have other characteristics in Norway than in other countries, though, since we have a longer tradition of policies promoting gender equality in couples. The policies towards parents living apart also differ in certain ways from those in many other countries, which is also the case for the definition of shared residence.

We look at the association with the partners' socioeconomic resources and health status, characteristics of their common children and their life together as well as their present family situation. We would have preferred to have information on the partners' allocation of paid and unpaid duties prior to the split-up as well, but unfortunately, such information is not available in our data.

Given that shared residence requires both parents to offer sufficient housing conditions and equipment for the children, we expect that high-income parents more often than others practice such an arrangement. In particular, we assume that a high income for the father is important, since he is the

one who needs to provide additional rooms compared to a solution where the child(ren) lives mainly with the mother.

Since highly educated parents tend to have more egalitarian gender role attitudes than those with less education (Knudsen and Wærness, 1996), and probably also shared family work and employment more equally between them when they lived together, we presume that they are more likely to opt for a two-home solution at separation. Moreover, highly educated mothers have higher employment rates and longer working hours than the less educated (Kitterød, 2010) and may need more practical help with the children. As mentioned above, prior research suggests that shared residence is more likely when the parents, and particularly the fathers, have some flexibility in their work (Smyth et al., 2004; Skjørten et al., 2007). Our data provide no information on work flexibility, but since flexible hours are most common among the highly educated in Norway (Bø, 2004), shared residence may be a more liable option in these groups. Assuming that students have particularly flexible time schedules, we also include a variable telling whether the parents are students or not.

Examining the custody arrangement put in place at separation, some researchers argue that the partners' bargaining power is important, and that fathers with higher income and education than their ex-partners are particularly likely to obtain shared residence or sole father custody (Cancian and Meyer, 1998; Juby et al., 2005). Since we look at custody arrangements in a general sample of parents living apart and not at the agreement arrived at by separation, we do not explore the partners' bargaining power. Both partners' income may have changed since the breakup, and as far as their level of education is concerned, we presume that this reflects the partners' gender equality attitudes and practices rather than their bargaining power.

When it comes to the parents' health, we expect that reduced health for the mother promotes shared residence, while reduced health for the father makes shared residence less likely.

In accordance with the so-called "marriage involvement" perspective (Stephens, 1996), we expect that fathers who were heavily involved in their children prior to the partnership dissolution, are more likely to have shared residence than other fathers. Lacking information on the fathers' childcare activities preceding the breakup, we use the duration of the parents' life together, as well as whether they were formally married or not, as proxies for paternal involvement. Such proxies were also used by Stephens (1996) and Skevik (2006). We expect that a longer lasting relationship and a formal marriage promote shared residence. Although cohabiting parents have been culturally accepted for a long time in

Norway (Noack, 2010), and fathers in consensual unions have acquired stronger legal ties to their children, the decision to marry may still signal a greater commitment to family life than a consensual union (Wiik et al., 2009). Moreover, many fathers in our sample got their children before the strengthening of cohabiting fathers' rights. Prior studies give divergent results regarding the association between non-resident fathers' contact with absent children and the fathers' former marital status, though. Studies from the United States tend to show that non-resident fathers who were married to the child's mother spend more time with the children than those who were cohabiting (for instance Cooksey and Craig, 1998), but findings are less clear in the Norwegian context. Jensen and Clausen (1997, 1999) found that on average, previously cohabiting non-resident fathers spent less time with their children than those who had been formally married, while Skevik (2006) discovered no such association and concluded that cohabitation appears to bind men to their children as much as marriage does. However, the association with prior marital status may be different when it comes to shared residence.

We presume less shared residence for couples who separated a long time ago than for those who separated more recently. Since shared residence has become more common lately and is also being discussed more at the public level, this was a more liable option for couples who split up a short time ago. A sizable proportion of the parents in our sample broke up eight years ago or more (see Table 2), which means that they separated in the early or mid 1990s when shared residence was still uncommon and less discussed in media and by politicians.

We expect that parents with more common children are less likely than those with fewer children to have shared residence, since providing two family homes for many children is costly and requires a lot of organisation. We make no prediction regarding the relationship between the child's age and divided residence, but expect shared residence to be more common for boys than for girls. Studies at the international level suggest that fathers' investments are somewhat higher in families with sons when parents are married (Raley and Bianchi, 2006), and although results are less clear when it comes to the association between the child's gender and shared residence, some studies indicate that shared residence is more likely for boys than for girls (Cancian and Meyer, 1998).

The association between the parents' new family obligations and the fathers' involvement with biological children from a previous union has been much debated by researchers (for instance Furstenberg and Nord, 1985; Cooksey and Craig, 1998; Manning and Smock, 1999; Manning et al., 2003; Skevik, 2006), particularly whether so-called "serial parenting" is the rule for men, implying that fathers tend to invest in new families at the expense of children from former relationships

(Furstenberg and Nord, 1985; Manning and Smock, 1999). Using longitudinal data, Juby et al. (2007) found that a father's new union formation reduced his visitation with non-resident children, but only when it closely followed separation, that is, before the father had established a structured relationship with his non-resident children. The impact of the presence of a stepfather is also widely debated, and studies generally reveal that the mother's re-partnering is linked to less contact between non-resident fathers and children (Seltzer, 1991; Seltzer and Bianchi, 1998; Juby et al., 2007). Juby et al. (2005) disclosed that the existence of a new partner for the mother shortly after the separation increased the likelihood of shared residence when parents split up, while a new partner for the father was not important. The cross-sectional data used in the present paper does not convey information on the timing of the parents' re-partnering, but following Skjærten et al.'s (2007) finding that mothers with shared residence were re-partnered more often than sole-custody mothers, whereas the opposite was true for the fathers, we expect a new partner and new children for the mother to increase the likelihood of shared residence, while the father's present family commitments work in the reverse direction. We also expect shared residence to be less likely if the father has children with more than one ex-partner and more likely if the mother has children with more than one ex-partner.

When it comes to father sole custody, we expect some of the same associations as for shared residence, although Juby et al. (2005) found that father sole custody may be arrived at in a number of different ways and practiced by a heterogeneous group of couples. In particular, we presume father sole custody to be more liable than mother sole custody when the mother has health restrictions, when she has low income, when the focal child is a boy rather than a girl, and a teenager rather than a very young child, and when the parents have been formally married.

## 5. Data and measurements

Our empirical analysis is based on the survey *Contact arrangements and child maintenance 2004*, conducted by Statistics Norway on commission from the Ministry of Children and Gender Equality,<sup>2</sup> in order to assess the effects of a new formula for calculating child maintenance introduced in 2003.<sup>3</sup>

The population consisted of parents with children below 18 years of age at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2004, with both parents residing in Norway and only one parent registered living with the child. The gross sample

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<sup>2</sup> The ministry is now called Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion.

<sup>3</sup> According to the old set of rules, the maintenance payment constituted a fixed percentage of the non-resident parent's gross income. According to the rules implemented in 2003 the maintenance payment is calculated in the following way: The expenses for support of a child are set according to the age of the child and shared between the parents according to their income. The maintenance payment is reduced for the time spent with the child, so that more contact days entail less payment.

was drawn in two stages. First, the children were defined, and then the population of parents was defined as parents of these children. The sample consisted of two parts: (1) persons who were registered living with the child(ren), but not with the other parent, and (2) persons neither registered residing with their child(ren) nor with the other parent. Every non-resident parent had one or more children with a resident parent. The registered address of the child was used to distinguish between the two groups of parents. Data were collected by telephone interviews, but with a postal follow-up and register data added. The youngest child in the relationship was selected as the focal child. Non-resident parents reported on their own involvement with this child, and resident parents reported on the non-resident parents' involvement.

Out of a gross sample of 3 582 parents, 2 692 parents were interviewed. The overall response rate was 75 percent; 79 and 71 percent among the resident and the non-resident parents, respectively. In a significant number of cases only one of the parents participated in the interview. There were 1 020 complete couples of resident and non-resident parents in the net sample. A weight was calculated in order to correct for the over-representation of certain groups in the sample, and for the disproportionate non-response rates in certain groups. The survey is documented in Skaare and Fodnesbergene (2005).

The survey sample covered all parents living apart, but in the current paper we include only those who have lived together (882 couples), either as formally married or in a consensual union, since it is very unlikely that fathers who have never lived with the child's mother have shared residence or sole father custody. The 28 observations with missing data on one or more variables included in the analysis were omitted from the sample, which leaves us with an analysis sample comprising 854 couples of resident and non-resident parents.

***Dependent variable: the child's permanent dwelling***

Our dependent variable is *where the focal child lives, with the mother (mother sole custody), with both parents (shared residence), or with the father (father sole custody)*. We used the following interview question to construct this variable: "We would like to know who (name of child) lives permanently with now, that is, who has the day-to-day care for the child now. Is it you, the other parent, both or others?" The question was followed by an explanation of the juridical meaning of "Live permanently with" and "Day-to-day care of the child", which the interviewer was supposed to read for the respondent upon request. Both parents were asked this question, and based on their answers, we constructed the variable "Child's permanent dwelling", with three categories; (1) Mother sole custody (2) Shared residence (3) Father sole custody. In most couples there was agreement between the two



partners' answers, but this was not always the case (see appendix A). When the parents agreed, the dependent variable was based solely on interview information. This was the case for 753 of the 854 couples in the analysis. When the parents gave divergent answers, the parent where the child was *registered* living was given the decisive word. If the parents disagreed and the child was registered at the mother's residence, the mother's answer was relied upon. This was the case in 74 couples. If the parents disagreed and the child was registered at the father's residence, the father's answer was relied upon. This was the case in 27 couples.

In the vast majority of couples, 81 percent, the child lives mainly with the mother (mother sole custody). In 8 percent of the couples the child lives mainly with the father (sole father custody), while 11 percent of the couples have shared residence.<sup>4</sup>

In order to get an impression as to whether our dependent variable captures what we are after, we have cross-tabulated it with the geographical distance between their residences and the parents' child visitation (table 1). Since the mother and the father sometimes give divergent answers, we utilise information from both partners. We use the number of days the child saw the non-resident parent last month (the other parent in cases of shared residence) to capture visitation frequency and present the average of the parents' answers. As for travelling distance, we present both parents' answers.

Most parents with shared residence live pretty close to each other. 48 percent of the mothers report that there is walking distance between the parents' homes, and 47 percent that there is less than half an hour travelling time, but not walking distance. The corresponding figures for the fathers are 53 and 45 percent, respectively. Geographical proximity between the parents' homes is less common when the child lives permanently with either the mother or the father. Moreover, in couples with shared residence, both parents do spend much time with the child. 87 percent report that the non-resident parent saw the child at least 13 days last month, which is a significantly higher proportion than for parents with mother or father sole custody. However, considerable proportions of parents with mother or father sole custody also report extended visitation between non-resident parents' and children, which means that had we used a broader definition of shared residence, in accordance with the practices in some other countries, we would have found a higher proportion of shared-residence parents in Norway.

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<sup>4</sup> Since these figures apply to previously married and cohabiting parents, they diverge somewhat from the results for the total sample, published in Kitterød (2005), which also comprises parents who have never lived together.

**Table 1. Visitation with children and travelling time among couples with different living arrangements for their children. Percent**

	Mother sole custody	Shared residence	Father sole custody	All
Total (Number of observations in parenthesis)	100 (N=685)	100 (N=99)	100 (N=70)	100 (N=854)
<b>Travelling time between the parents (mother's answer)</b>				
Walking distance	21	48	24	24
Less than ½ hour, but not walking distance	42	49	43	43
More than ½ hour, but less than 2 ½ hours	20	2	13	17
2 ½ hours or more	16	-	20	15
Non-response	1	-	-	1
<b>Travelling time between the parents (father's answer)</b>				
Walking distance	20	53	22	24
Less than ½ hour, but not walking distance	43	45	42	43
More than ½ hour, but less than 2 ½ hours	21	2	19	18
2 ½ hours or more	17	0	17	15
Non-response	0	-	-	0
<b>Number of days with the child last month</b>				
0 days	13	-	11	12
1-4 days	15	-	19	14
5-8 days	34	1	22	30
9-12 days	26	9	22	24
13 days +	10	87	24	19
Non-response	2	3	2	2

### ***Independent variables***

We use a multinomial logistic regression in order to examine the characteristics of parents with *shared residence* and those with *father sole custody*, with mother sole custody (the child lives with the mother) as the reference. The independent variables are defined as follows:

- *Mother's/father's disposable (net) income*: Information on income is mainly taken from official registers. The income measure used includes wages and salaries, net income from self-employment, various pensions and social security benefits, including child related benefits, and net capital income. We categorise the mother's and the father's income in quintiles. The couples are ranked by the size of the mother's/father's income and divided into quintiles, where the first one comprises those with the lowest income. The third quintile is used as reference. The quintile limits differ for the mother's and the father's income since fathers usually have higher incomes (see table 2).
- *Mother's/father's educational attainment*: Information on the parents' education was linked to the survey data from official registers. Level of education is defined as the highest level completed at the time of the survey and measured as the accumulated standard number of years it takes to attain a certain level. We distinguish between (1) Primary school (2) High school (3) University 1-4 years and (4) University 5 years or more.
- *The mother/father is a student*: We include dummies telling whether the parents are students or not. Those who reported "student" as their main activity in the survey, and/or received a scholarship for students (according to the income register), where defined as students.

- *The mother's/father's health*: We include dummies telling whether the mother/father has bad health or not. There was no survey question tapping the parents' health, so as a second best solution, we combined information about the respondents' main activity and pension benefits. Those who reported "early retirement pensioner" or "disabled for employment" as their main activity, and/or received some type of pension from the National insurance schemes (mainly disability pensions and rehabilitation money), are defined as having bad health.

Three variables regarding the relationship between the former partners are incorporated:

- *Duration of relationship (measured in years)*
- *Civil status at breakup (cohabiting, married)*
- *Time since breakup (measured in years)*

These are based on survey information. If the parents' answers disagree, which was sometimes the case, we use the answer from the parent registered at the same address as the child. In the few cases where this parent had not answered the questions, the other parent's answer is used.

We include three variables regarding the partners' common children, mainly based on register information:

- *Number of common children*
- *Age of the focal child (the youngest common child of the parents)*
- *Sex of the focal child*

Concerning the parents' present households we use four variables, based on survey questions:

- *Mother's present family situation (single, cohabiting, married)*
- *Father's present family situation (single, cohabiting, married)*
- *Other child(ren) in mother's present household (own or new partner's)*
- *Other child(ren) in father's present household (own or new partner's)*

Finally, we incorporate dummies telling whether the parents have other broken relationships including children, in addition to the one captured in the survey. Information on this is taken from the registers.

- *Whether the mother has children with one or more former partners in addition to the focal child's father*
- *Whether the father has children with one or more formal partners in addition to the focal child's mother*

Descriptive statistics for the independent variables are reported in Table 2, the right column.

**Table 2. The child's living arrangement among various groups of parents living apart, and the percentage distribution for the independent variables. Number of observations in parenthesis**

	Mother sole custody	Shared residence	Father sole custody	Total/ number of observations	Percentage of couples in each group
All	81	11	8	100 (854)	100 (854)
<b>Mother's net income</b>					
1. quintile (less than 193 000 NOK)	77	8	15	100 (155)	20
2. quintile (193 000 – 232 999 NOK)	74	12	13	100 (156)	20
3. quintile (233 000 – 265 999 NOK)	83	12	5	100 (155)	19
4. quintile (266 000 – 298 999 NOK)	85	11	4	100 (176)	20
5. quintile (299 000 NOK +)	86	11	3	100 (212)	20
<b>Father's net income</b>					
1. quintile (less than 174 000 NOK)	96	3	1	100 (147)	19
2. quintile (174 000 – 227 999 NOK)	91	6	3	100 (172)	21
3. quintile (228 000 – 266 999 NOK)	76	14	9	100 (167)	20
4. quintile (267 000 – 333 999 NOK)	68	17	15	100 (175)	20
5. quintile (350 000 NOK +)	74	13	13	100 (193)	20
<b>Mother's education</b>					
Primary school	83	8	10	100 (72)	10
High school	82	9	9	100 (522)	65
University 1-4 years	81	14	5	100 (229)	22
University 5 years +	65	33	2	100 (31)	3
<b>Father's education</b>					
Primary school	78	10	12	100 (91)	11
High school	82	10	8	100 (563)	69
University 1-4 years	80	13	7	100 (142)	14
University 5 years +	80	15	5	100 (58)	6
<b>Mother is a student</b>					
No	81	11	8	100 (765)	90
Ja	83	10	7	100 (89)	10
<b>Father is a student</b>					
No	81	11	8	100 (832)	98
Yes	73	20	8	100 (22)	2
<b>Mother's health</b>					
Good	82	11	7	100 (704)	80
Bad	77	10	13	100 (150)	20
<b>Father's health</b>					
Good	81	11	8	100 (746)	86
Bad	79	10	11	100 (108)	14
<b>Duartion of reationship</b>					
0 – 5 years	90	6	5	100 (234)	36
6 – 10 years	81	11	8	100 (273)	30
11 – 15 years	73	13	13	100 (216)	20
16 years +	72	18	10	100 (131)	14
<b>Civil status at breakup</b>					
Cohabiting	87	8	5	100 (355)	51
Married	75	13	11	100 (499)	49
<b>Time since breakup</b>					
0 – 1 years	78	18	4	100 (132)	14
2 – 4 years	77	14	9	100 (223)	23
5 – 7 years	77	12	11	100 (203)	24
8 years +	87	6	7	100 (296)	40
<b>Number of children in relationship</b>					
1 child	83	9	8	100 (384)	64
2 children	78	14	8	100 (369)	31
3 children +	81	8	11	100 (101)	5
<b>Age of focal child</b>					
0 – 5 years	88	11	2	100 (127)	14
6 – 9 years	79	14	6	100 (226)	24
10 – 14 years	83	10	8	100 (349)	39
15 – 17 years	77	8	15	100 (152)	22

**Table 2. cont.**

	Mother sole custody	Shared residence	Father sole custody	Total/ number of observations	Percentage of couples in each group
<b>Sex of focal child</b>					
Girl	84	9	7	100 (420)	49
Boy	79	12	9	100 (434)	51
<b>Mother's present civil status</b>					
Single	81	11	8	100 (525)	60
Cohabiting	82	8	10	100 (178)	21
Married	82	12	6	100 (151)	19
<b>Father's present civil status</b>					
Single	77	13	10	100 (511)	57
Cohabiting	82	11	7	100 (191)	24
Married	92	4	4	100 (152)	19
<b>Mother has children in present household</b>					
No	79	13	8	100 (554)	61
Yes	84	7	9	100 (300)	39
<b>Father has children in present household</b>					
No	78	13	9	100 (555)	64
Yes	87	6	6	100 (299)	36
<b>Mother has children with more than one former partner</b>					
No	81	11	8	100 (781)	90
Yes	82	9	10	100 (73)	10
<b>Father has children with more than one former partner</b>					
No	80	11	9	100 (781)	90
Yes	89	7	5	100 (73)	10

## 6. Results

The bivariate associations between the child's residence and each of the independent variables are demonstrated in Table 2. Irrespective of the parents' socioeconomic resources, their former and present family situation and the number and ages of their common children, the majority of parents have opted for a solution where the child lives permanently with the mother. Nevertheless, there is some variation between groups. For instance, it seems that shared residence is most common when the father has a reasonably high income, when the mother is highly educated, when the father is a student, when the parents have two children in common, when they were married rather than cohabiting, and had lived together for a long time before the breakup. Father sole custody seems to be particularly common when the mother has low income, when the father has high income, when the parents have been formally married and had lived together for many years, and when the child is pretty old.

In order to gain a better understanding of the factors associated with untraditional residential arrangements for children, we run a multinomial logistic regression with all the independent variables included. We estimate the odds of shared residence rather than mother sole custody, as well as the odds of father sole custody rather than mother sole custody. All estimates are reported as odds ratios. This means that the reference group of a categorical variable is set to one, while coefficients above one indicate a positive association and coefficients below one indicate a negative association. Results are reported in table 3. Coefficients significant at the 0.05-level and 0.10-level are written in bold and italics respectively.

**Table 3. Multinomial logistic regression of shared residence and father sole custody, rather than mother sole custody. Odds ratios. N=854<sup>1</sup>**

	Shared residence	Father sole custody
<b>Mother's net income (ref=3. quintile, 233 000–265 999 NOK )</b>		
1. quintile (less than 193 000 NOK)	0.74	<b>6.16</b>
2. quintile (193 000 – 232 999 NOK)	0.83	<b>3.08</b>
4. quintile (266 000 – 298 999 NOK)	0.61	0.82
5. quintile (299 000 NOK +)	0.50	0.53
<b>Father's net income (ref=3. quintile, 228 000–266 999 NOK)</b>		
1. quintile (less than 174 000 NOK)	<b>0.13</b>	<b>0.02</b>
2. quantile (174 000 – 227 999 NOK)	<b>0.31</b>	<b>0.27</b>
4. quintile (267 000 – 333 999 NOK)	1.26	1.83
5. quintile (334 000 NOK +)	1.02	2.09
<b>Mother's education (ref=primary school)</b>		
High school	0.92	1.29
University 1-4 years	1.21	0.97
University 5 years +	<b>4.86</b>	1.34
<b>Father's education (ref=primary school)</b>		
High school	0.81	0.83
University 1-4 years	0.77	0.95
University 5 years +	0.68	0.45
<b>Mother is a student (ref=no)</b>		
Yes	1.09	0.68
<b>Father is a student (ref=nei)</b>		
Yes	1.35	0.34
<b>Mother's health (ref=good)</b>		
Bad	0.98	1.69
<b>Father's health (ref=good)</b>		
Bad	1.43	<b>4.83</b>
<b>Duration of relationship (ref=less than 6 years)</b>		
6 – 10 years	1.12	1.05
11 – 15 years	1.05	1.24
16 years +	1.77	0.28
<b>Civil status at breakup (ref=cohabiting)</b>		
Married	1.50	1.98
<b>Time since breakup (ref=less than 2 years)</b>		
2 – 4 years	0.59	2.41
5 – 7 years	0.51	1.31
8 + years	0.39	0.58
<b>Number of children in relationship (ref=one child)</b>		
Two children	1.05	1.24
Three children +	0.51	1.04
<b>Age of focal child (ref=0-5 years)</b>		
6 – 9 years	1.49	2.78
10 – 14 years	1.24	<b>5.23</b>
15 – 17 years	1.03	<b>23.59</b>
<b>Sex of focal child (ref=girl)</b>		
Boy	1.24	<b>1.86</b>
<b>Mother's present civil status (ref=single)</b>		
Cohabiting	1.03	0.81
Married	<b>2.14</b>	0.43
<b>Father's present civil status (ref=single)</b>		
Cohabiting	1.06	<b>0.40</b>
Married	0.72	<b>0.14</b>
<b>Mother has children in present household (ref=no)</b>		
Yes	<b>0.51</b>	<b>2.05</b>
<b>Father has children in present household (ref=no)</b>		
Yes	<b>0.34</b>	0.93
<b>Mother has children with more than one former partner (ref=no)</b>		
Yes	1.49	1.05
<b>Father has children with more than one former partner (ref=no)</b>		
Yes	0.79	0.34

<sup>1</sup> Coefficients significant at the 0.05-level are written in bold and those significant at the 0.10-level are written in italics.

In line with expectations, *shared residence* is less likely among fathers in the two lowest incomes quintiles, than among those in the middle and upper quintiles. It is less common among mothers in the highest than in the middle income quartile, though. In agreement with our presumption, the most highly educated mothers more often than others have shared residence. However, only 3 percent of the mothers in the sample have a long university education (Table 2, right column). The father's educational level does not matter. Contrary to our assumption, whether the parents are students or not is not important, and the same is true for the parents' health status. Moreover, and also at odds with anticipations, there is no association between the couple's former civil status and the duration of their relationship on the one hand, and shared residence on the other. The bivariate association between the relationship duration and shared residence observed in Table 2 disappears when other factors are controlled for. Time since breakup is important, however, in that those who split up several years ago are less prone to have shared residence than those who split up more recently.

As for the characteristics of the couple's common children, there is no significant association between the number of children in the relationship and having shared residence. The estimated odds ratio of 0.51 indicates that having at least three children may lessen the likelihood of shared residence. The association comes close to significance, but the small number of couples with at least three children in our sample makes it hard to reach statistical significance at conventional levels. There is no association between the focal child's age and sex on the one hand and shared residence on the other.

As expected, shared residence is more likely when the mother is presently married rather than single, but it does not matter whether she is cohabiting or not. The father's current civil status is not important. New children in the parents' households (either biological or stepchildren) reduce the odds of shared residence. For the fathers, this result is in line with assumptions, while for the mothers it is not. We expected divided residence to be more likely when the mother lives with new children. At odds with assumptions, there is no association between the parents having children with more than one previous partner, and shared residence for the child studied in the survey.

As for *father sole custody*, the analysis presented in Table 3 suggests that the factors related to this arrangement differ from those related to shared residence. As expected, father sole custody is particularly likely when the mother has a fairly low income and when the father has a fairly high income, and is less likely among fathers in the lowest income quintiles. The parents' educational attainment is not important, nor does it matter whether they are students or not.

Surprisingly, the mother's health is not important. The father's health turns out to be significant, but the association is the opposite of what we expected. The odds of father sole custody are higher when the father's health is bad, rather than good, which is surprising, but may have to do with the way our health variable is defined. Since those who are mainly disabled or early retired and/or receive disability or rehabilitation benefits are said to have bad health, our health variable may also capture the respondent's time schedule, in that a certain proportion of those with bad health are likely to spend little time in employment and thereby have more time available for childcare. It may be the father's available time, and not his reduced health, that increases the likelihood of sole father custody, but it may also be that some children feel responsible for their father if he has health problems and choose to live with him. More adequate information on the parents' health is needed in order to adjudicate between these interpretations and might alter the conclusions regarding the importance of the mother's health as well.

The involved fatherhood perspective receives some support in that father sole custody is more common among previously married than previously cohabiting fathers and mothers. It further seems that couples who had stayed together for a very long time are less likely to have father sole custody than those who stayed together for fewer years, which is at odds with our anticipation. Time since breakup has no significant importance.

Examining the characteristics of the parents' common children, we find that the odds of father sole custody increase with the focal child's age, and is highest when he/she is at least 15 years old. Father sole custody is more likely when the child is a boy rather than a girl, but the number of children makes no difference.

Regarding the parents' present family situation, father sole custody is less likely when the father is cohabiting or married, compared to when he is single, and is also less likely when the mother is currently married, compared to when she is single. Moreover, father sole custody is more likely when the mother has children in her current household, compared to her having no children at present. The coefficient for the father having children in his present household is not significant, however, and there is no association between father sole custody and whether the parents have children in more than one previous relationship or not.



## 7. Summary and discussion

In spite of more equal parental roles in Norwegian couples in recent decades, most children still live mainly with their mother when parents split up. Visiting arrangements with non-resident fathers have become more extensive, however, and there has also been a slight increase in shared residence following partnership dissolution. Nevertheless, shared residence is rather uncommon, and the same is true for father sole custody. In this paper, we examine the prevalence and characteristics of parents with such untraditional caring arrangements following partnership dissolution, based on a survey from 2004 of parents living apart.

Several legal and policy initiatives have been taken in order to motivate the involvement of fathers in their children's lives following parental breakup in Norway, and parents are urged to collaborate about their children's upbringing. There is some disagreement as to whether shared residence for children should become the norm when parents separate, though. Some argue that this should be the recommended solution in most cases and that it is important to abolish policies implying that parents, and particularly mothers, may loose out economically if they have shared residence for their children, compared to being a lone parent. Others, however, warn that shared residence may not always be in the best interest of the child.

In 2004, 11 percent of previously married or cohabiting parents with children 0-17 years had shared residence, and 8 percent had father sole custody. Compared to the definitions used by researchers in many other countries, this paper uses a rather narrow definition of shared residence, and a wider definition would obviously produce other results. A multinomial logistic regression of the characteristics of parents with these untraditional caring arrangements revealed both expected and unexpected association.

*As for shared residence*, the partners' socioeconomic resources as well as their present family situation and societal norms seem to be important. Shared residence is less likely when the father has a fairly low income, compared to a modest or high income, which is consistent with the presupposition that it is expensive to run two separate homes for children. There is, however, a negative association between shared residence and the mother's income. This may be related to the fact that shared-residence mothers are entitled to less social benefits than lone mothers in Norway, but further analysis are needed in order to disentangle the link between mothers' income and choice of childcare arrangement among parents living apart. Shared residence is particularly likely when the mother is highly educated, indicating that these mothers shared family work and employment more equally with their partners

during their life together and perhaps also tend to have demanding jobs with long working hours and therefore want to share the childcare with their former partner when they live apart. The fact that shared residence is more likely when parents split up fairly recently, rather than many years ago, suggests that the political discourse and normative climate at the time of separation may play a role for the residential arrangement agreed upon. The negative relationship between shared residence and the father having other children in his present household suggests that new children require extensive time investments and leave less time for children from a previous union. Shared residence is also negatively related to the mother having children in her present household, but positively related to her being married to a new partner, rather than being single. This indicates that mothers more easily than fathers manage to combine care for children from different relationships, but nevertheless, prioritize time with their present partner. Unexpectedly, shared residence is unrelated to the parents' former civil status, the duration of their relationship and the number of common children.

As for *father sole custody*, it is linked to other factors than shared residence. It is particularly likely when the mother's income is fairly low and the father's income is fairly high, when the child is rather old, when the father is presently single, and when the child is a boy rather than a girl. The latter association is consistent with international studies indicating that fathers in couples spend more time with boys than with girls, and that untraditional caring arrangements following breakup is most likely for boys. Our analysis also suggests that father sole custody is more likely when the mother has other children in her current household. The mother may be more willing to let the child live with the father because her present family demands her time and energy, or the child her-/himself may prefer to live with the father. Opposed to shared residence, father sole custody is more likely when the parents have been formally married rather than cohabiting, which supports the supposition that marriage entails a more serious family commitment than a consensual union. Unexpectedly, there is no association between the mother's health limitations and father sole custody, indicating that although mothers of children who live permanently with their father may have modest economic resources, they are not unable to take care of their children because of health problems. However, more adequate information on the respondents' health is needed in order to draw firm conclusions on this matter, and also in order to interpret the unexpected positive association between the father's health problems and father sole custody.

Lacking more recent data, we do not know whether shared residence and sole father custody have increased in Norway since 2004, when our survey was carried out. The extensive media focus and political and public discourse on shared residence may suggest that such practices have risen in later

years and will rise even further in the years to come. Probably it will also be practiced by additional groups of parents. New generations of parents allocate paid and unpaid work even more equally than the parents in our survey, which may make shared residence a more liable option if they split up. The long father's quota in the parental leave scheme probably entails even more involved fathers in younger generations, and today's cohabiting fathers have stronger legal ties to their children and face fewer hindrances if they want shared residence after breakup. Studies indicate that many non-resident fathers would prefer to have more contact with their children (Skevik and Hyggen, 2002; Oftung, 2010), and new cohorts of mothers may trust the fathers even more as competent carers. Moreover, rising educational investments in younger generations may imply that mothers need additional help with the children in order to pursue their careers and therefore increasingly opt for shared residence following partnership dissolution. In her study of parents who divorced in the early 1990s, Lunde (2001) found that shared residence was usually initiated by the fathers, while the mothers were more hesitant and felt that they gave away some of "their" childcare time, but such attitudes may be less prevalent today.

However, it is also emphasized that shared residence may not always be the best solution from the child's perspective, and requires extensive collaboration and flexibility and little conflicts between the parents. Frequent father-child contact may not benefit the child if parents have severe disagreements. Finding a modest negative association between close geographical proximity between non-resident fathers and children and the children's long-run educational attainments in Norway, Kalil et al. (2011) argue that the father's relocation to a more distant place may sometimes shelter the child from parental conflicts and the demanding task of moving between different households. The strong focus on preconditions for shared residence to be a successful arrangement for children may make parents more sensitive to their children's wishes and less insistent on fairness and gender equality for their own sake when they split up. Moreover, some mothers may still oppose shared residence because it is less economically beneficial than mother sole custody.

New surveys are needed in order to assess the trends in various childcare arrangements following partnership dissolution in Norway, and to gain a better understanding of the mechanisms promoting and hindering untraditional practices such as shared residence and father sole custody. If such arrangements become more widespread, they may be practiced by new groups of parents, which may alter the associations with the independent variables discussed in the present paper. Future analyses would benefit from more adequate information on the way the partners allocated paid and unpaid tasks while they lived together and also on the partners' preferences and negotiations regarding the child's

living arrangement. More adequate data on the parents' physical and mental health would allow a more thorough assessment of the role of health restrictions in deciding where the child is to live, and data on the parents' work flexibility would provide more insight into the preconditions for various custody practices. It would also be advantageous with longitudinal information on flexibility and changes in various practices, since custody arrangements often change over time (Smyth and Moloney, 2008).

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## Appendix A: Defining “The child’s permanent dwelling”

Of the 854 couples in our analysis sample, the focal child is registered at the mother’s address in 740 cases and at the father’s address in 114 cases. Since a person may only be registered in the population register at one address in Norway, children with parents living apart are registered either at the mother’s or the father’s address, even though they actually live permanently with both parents, i.e. have shared residence. Besides, children may have moved from one parent to the other, without any change of registered address.

In the survey, both parents were asked where the child lives. Their answers are not always in accordance. For example, of the 695 cases where the mother claims that the child lives with her (682 of which the child is registered living with the mother, 13 with the father), the father disagrees in 65 cases, claiming either that the child lives with both (41 + 5), with him (10 + 7) or with others (2) (cf. table A1). Moreover, the survey data are not always in accordance with the register data.

We constructed our dependent variable, i.e. “where the child lives permanently”, by using a combination of the mothers’ answers, the fathers’ answers and register data. When the parents agreed on where the child lived, the dependent variable was based solely on the interview information. When the parents disagreed, the parent where the child was *registered* living (usually the mother) was given the decisive word. When the parents’ disagreed and the child was registered living with the father, he was given the decisive word. According to this definition, 99 couples had shared residence for their children (**bolds** in the table), 70 couples had father sole custody (*italics* in the table) and 685 couples had sole mother custody.

**Table A1.**

	Registered at mother's address					Registered at father's address				
	Father's answer									
Mother's answer	The child lives with					The child lives with				
The child lives with	mother	both	father	other	All	mother	both	Father	other	All
mother	629	41	10	2	682	1	5	7	0	13
both	18	37	2	0	57	1	33	9	0	43
father	0	1	0	0	1	1	4	53	0	58
other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
All	647	79	12	2	740	3	42	69	0	114