

## **Expenses, norms or practical considerations? The effect of income and education on non-residents fathers' contact with their children. The case of Norway**

**Conference theme: Family and households**

### **Provisional abstract**

In Norway about 25 per cent of children below 18 years of age live with only one of their parents. Still, we have only just started to study the factors affecting the contact patterns between non-resident parents and their children. It is well established that parents living close to their children see their children more often on a monthly basis than others, that parents with young children see their children more often than those with other children, and that those who have been married to the other parent have more contact with their children than those who have never lived with the other parent. However, so far, we know fairly little about the effects of socio-economic factors such as education and income in Norway. Since the economic costs of contact with children may hinder fathers from having as much contact as they would like to, particularly if they do not live close to their children, it is important to assess whether low income has a negative effect on fathers' contact with their children. In previous studies in the field the contact pattern is usually measured on a monthly basis, whereas contact during vacations is omitted. Preliminary analyses of these issues indicate that crucial background variables affect monthly contact and vacation contact differently. The current paper examines what factors affect non-residents fathers' contact with their children both on a monthly basis and in vacations, with special focus on the potential effects of education and income. Previous analyses suggest that highly educated non-resident fathers have more monthly contact with their children than those with less education, - a pattern that is consistent with the fact that well-educated fathers are more likely to hold a modern view of parenthood than other fathers. However, as information on the father's income has only recently been linked to the data, we do not know whether the observed effect of the father's education is due to differences in norms, income or other factors. By undertaking identical multivariate analyses for contact patterns on a monthly basis and in vacations, we want to assess the effects of fathers' income and education on these types of contact with their children. The analyses include a number of controls such as for instance the child's age, time since the divorce, the father's current family situation, whether the father has been formally married to the child's mother or not and the distance between the father's and the child's dwellings. The analyses are based on the survey *Contact arrangements and child maintenance 2002*, conducted by Statistics Norway in the autumn 2002 on request from the Ministry for Children and Family Affairs in Norway. Data were collected by telephone interviewing.

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