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Abstract The birth of a child induces parents to substitute family work for paid work. As responses to child care time demands remain remarkably gendered, division of child care in relation to parents' work is key to understanding reproduction of gender inequality in both the family and the labor market. This study conceptualizes a 'care strategy' as a trajectory of time allocations by mothers and fathers to primary child care, i.e., care that requires absence from work, over the child's early years. It makes use of detailed data on claims for parental leave and sequence analysis to identify care strategies. Results show that half of all Swedish couples realize dual-caring strategies in which each parent serves as primary caregiver for substantial periods of the child's early life. Despite a uniquely flexible parental leave system that allows egalitarian couples to share care on a daily basis, the dominant dual-caring strategy consists of 'taking turns' in serving as primary caregiver where the mother takes leave to care for an initial period, followed by a period of solo-father care. One fourth of dual-caring couples, about 10 percent of all couples, use a 'halving it all' strategy in which primary care is shared in every point in time.

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