



The Netherlands Institute
for Social Research

Summary

Further insights into parents

Worries, problems and resources of parents of underage children



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Conclusions and main takeaway

Earlier research (De Roos et al. 2021) revealed that parents regularly have questions, worries or problems about child-rearing or child development. However, much less is known about the extent to which they experience problems in other life domains as well. There are also gaps in our knowledge about the relationship between the parents' worries and problems on the one hand and their lack of resources, such as a low income, on the other. A lack of resources may make it difficult to address problems. Among other things, it may also lead to reduced participation, a lower sense of well-being and a loss of trust in politics (De Klerk et al. 2023; Vrooman et al. 2023). This publication provides further insights into the worries, problems and resources of parents of underage children. It adds context to *Insights into needs and support of people in a vulnerable situation* (De Klerk et al. 2023), which offers a broader perspective on people who experience problems in multiple areas.

Establish links with other domains

This study shows that more than one out of every 10 parents are facing multiple worries or problems in at least three areas, for example because they also worry about money and are socially isolated in addition to having concerns about child-rearing or child development. This underlines the importance of working across domains. Such an approach will yield further insights into why families have ended up in a particular situation, what the underlying problems might be and what kind of support is most suitable.

However, an integrated support offer for those who experience problems in multiple areas has been slow to get off the ground (Kromhout et al. 2020; Van Dam et al. 2022). To the extent that this is due to differences in legislation (such as the Social Support Act 2015, the Youth Act and the Participation Act), it is up to the central government to take action (see also Gebhardt and Feijten 2022). The government has already launched a proposal to make it easier to exchange data (see the draft legislation to tackle multiple problems in the social domain, or Wams Bill (TK 2022/2023a)). To ensure proper support for families with multiple worries or problems in several domains, it is essential to promote cooperation between organisations at the local level. One way to do this is to aim for shared responsibility and accountability (Plaisier and Den Draak 2021). Cooperation between support organisations can be stimulated by working towards common goals under a single umbrella, with all stakeholders dedicating the necessary time and resources.

Have realistic expectations of 'personal and collective self-reliance'

Policies tend to emphasise what is referred to in policymaking circles as the 'personal' and 'collective self-reliance' of parents (TK 2021/2022, 2022/2023b). This presupposes that parents who have worries or problems have access to sufficient resources, such as being autonomous and resilient (see also WRR 2017). This publication shows that this ideal is often at variance with reality. On the contrary, parents who have worries or problems tend to have relatively few resources at their disposal. In addition to facing multiple worries or problems, around one out of every 20 parents lack economic and personal resources and are therefore in a vulnerable situation (see also De Klerk et al. 2023). Moreover, many parents do not receive support from their social environment (see also De Roos et al. 2021).

It may be worthwhile to work towards improved resources for parents – not just economical ones like income, but also personal ones like resilience and autonomy (see also Van Baar et al. 2022; Geppert and Muns 2023). The fact that this is likely to yield benefits only in the long term should not be used as an argument for taking cost-saving measures in the short term, but rather as an opportunity to invest in the future. Both the government and civil-society organisations would do well to recognise that parents have different capabilities. They should focus on identifying which families have access to sufficient resources, which families are in need of improved resources, which parents receive support from the social environment and when it is necessary to organise suitable, professional support.

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