INTERNATIONAL NETWORK ON LEAVE POLICIES AND RESEARCH

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1. Introduction

The **International Network on Leave Policies and Research** has been producing an annual review of leave policies and related research since 2005 (for earlier reviews, go to the network's website www.leavenetwork.org). The review covers Maternity, Paternity and Parental leaves; leave to care for sick children and other employment-related measures to support working parents; and early childhood education and care policy.

The International Review is based on country notes from each participating country, prepared by members of the network and edited by a team of network members. Each country note follows a standard format: details of different types of leave; the relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy; recent policy developments; information on take-up of leave.

The International Review also includes **definitions of the main types of leave policies**; and **cross-country comparisons**. These comparative overviews cover: each main type of leave; the relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements; and policy changes and developments since the previous review. We also include a technical appendix.

The 2026 International Review covers 52 countries. These are: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay and Vietnam. This year, Costa Rica appears in the review for the first time, enabling the review to cover all member states of the OECD (as well as of the European Union).

The content of the International Review is to the best of our knowledge correct at the time of going to press, but mistakes may occur. If you should have a query or find an error, we would be grateful if you would contact the country note authors as relevant and the editors. We recommend that readers consult the most recent version of the International Review where possible, as we are unable to retrospectively rectify errors.

The International Review is available online either as one complete document; or, for ease of downloading, divided into its constituent parts.

If citing the complete review, please do so as:

> Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A. Á., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (Eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/. doi: https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/2ujmw_v1

If citing an individual country note, please use the citation given as a footnote on the first page of that country note. The leave review website is administered by

the Austrian Institute for Family Studies at the University of Vienna, with a particular thanks to Eva-Maria Schmidt.
Finally, we note our thanks to Mirna Varga (University of Zagreb) for research and editorial assistance in the production of this year's review.

2. Defining Leave Policies

The International Review is about leave entitlements, mainly for workers with dependent children. As the review shows, working parents today in more affluent countries are often entitled to a range of different types of leave, the most common being:

a. Maternity leave

Leave generally available to mothers only (except in a few cases where part of the leave can be transferred to other carers under certain circumstances). It is usually understood to be a health and welfare measure, intended to protect the health of the mother and newborn child, and to be taken just before, during and immediately after childbirth.

Maternity leave can be found in Section 1a of country notes.

b. Paternity leave

Leave generally available to fathers only, usually to be taken soon after the birth of a child and intended to enable the father to spend time with his partner, new child and older children.

Paternity leave can be found in Section 1b of country notes.

c. Parental leave

Leave available *equally* to mothers and fathers, either as: (i) a non-transferable individual right (i.e. both parents have an entitlement to an equal amount of leave); or (ii) an individual right that can be transferred to the other parent; or (iii) a family right that parents can divide between themselves as they choose. In some countries, Parental leave consists only of non-transferable individual entitlements; in other countries, it is an entirely family right; while in other countries, part of Parental leave is an individual right, the remainder a family right.

It is generally understood to be a care measure, intended to give both parents an equal opportunity to spend time caring for a young child; it usually can only be taken after the end of Maternity leave. In some cases, parents can choose to take all or part of their Parental leave on a part-time basis.

In some countries, Parental leave may be available to both partners in LGBTQ partnerships.

In some countries, Parental leave is supplemented by a further period of leave intended also as a care measure, and given various names, such as 'childcare leave' or 'home care leave' or confusingly as in Iceland 'parental leave'. This leave is for parents following the end of Parental leave and may not in practice be very different to Parental leave (although the conditions attached to the two types of leave may vary, see for example Finland or Norway).

Although the individual country notes differentiate between Maternity, Paternity and Parental leave, the distinction between these types of leave is beginning to blur in some countries, leading to the emergence of a single, generic Parental leave entitlement. For example, Germany, Iceland, Norway and Sweden already have a single period of post-natal leave that does not distinguish between the three different kinds of leave; however, one part of this generic post-natal leave can only be taken by mothers and another part only by fathers ('mother's quota' and 'father's quota').

In a few other countries, although different types of leave, usually with distinct conditions remain, these leaves have been renamed, e.g. 'Primary Carer's leave', 'Partner's leave' and 'Extended leave' (New Zealand); 'Initial Parental leave', 'Father's only Parental leave' and 'Additional Parental leave' (Portugal).

A further variant that is blurring distinctions is the possibility that part of Maternity leave can be transferred to the father, which may make it seem like a variant of Parental leave (for example, currently in Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Poland, Serbia and the UK); in fact, this should be treated as transferable Maternity leave, since the father's use of leave derives from the mother's entitlement and her agreement to transfer part of that entitlement.

For a fuller analysis and discussion of some of the issues emerging from this process, see Meil, G. and Romero-Balsas, P. (eds.) (2025) *Towards a comprehensive terminology on paid parenting leave* (Towards a comprehensive terminology on paid parenting leave – Sustainability@Leave | COST Action CA21150); Engeman, C., Bártová, A., Burman, S., Köppe, S. and Maxhelak, A. (eds.) (2025) *Methodological Challenges in Paid Parental Leave Research & Policy: Post-workshop Report* (OSF | Methodological Challenges in Paid Parental Leave Research & Policy: Post-workshop Report)*;* and Dobrotić, I. and Arnalds, A.A. (eds) (2023), *Parenting leave policy data gaps: a comparative critical analysis*, COST Action Parental Leave Policies and Social Sustainability (Sustainability@Leave), doi:10.31235/osf.io/8g25k, https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/8g25k.

Parental and Childcare leaves can be found in Sections 1c and 1d of country notes; transferable Maternity leave in Section 1a.

d. Leave to care for children who are ill

This entitlement, when it exists, varies considerably between countries in terms of length, age of children included and payment. In some cases, it may be extended to include certain adult relatives.

In 2019, the European Union introduced (as part of its Work-Life Balance Directive, 2019/1158), an entitlement in all member states to at least 5 working days per year of leave for each worker providing personal care or support to a relative or person living in the same household, which it termed 'carer's leave'.

There is also a steady increase in countries introducing leave periods for particular circumstances of individual or family need, e.g., bereavement leave (Iceland), domestic violence leave (Ireland), menstruation or abortion leave (Spain).

All these types of leave, plus a range of other measures involving working hours to support workers with caring responsibilities, can be found in Section 1e of country notes.

3. Overview: Cross-Country Comparisons

Sources used

The main sources used for the tables in this review are the country notes prepared by the members of the *International Network on Leave Policies and Research*, following a common format. Country notes are reviewed and revised each year by authors and editors. For 2026, all country notes have been edited by at least one of the six members of the review's editorial team: Ásdís Aðalbjörg Arnalds, Ivana Dobrotić, Gayle Kaufman, Alison Koslowski, Peter Moss and Marie Valentova. Lead editorship rotates, and for 2026 Ivana Dobrotić was lead editor.

The expertise and work of the country note authors is gratefully acknowledged.

In addition, the 'Relationship between Leave and ECEC Entitlements' table and pages draw upon the OECD Family Database. Full details are given at the end of the table on each page.

General note: in the comparative tables which follow, a month is calculated to be 4.3 weeks; while 4 weeks is 0.9 months. For purposes of comparison, national currencies are also shown in euros in the country notes. Currency conversion was carried on for a single day (20 July 2026) using as possible: https://data.ecb.europa.eu/currency-converter.

For more details, please also refer to the technical appendix (Section 5).

Statutory Maternity leave: April 2026

Most countries **have a statutory and designated Maternity leave entitlement** (see Table 1). Leave is paid in most of these cases and mostly at a high earnings-related level (see 'Key' below for definition) for most or all of the duration of leave – though it should be noted that with this and other forms of leave, a ceiling may be set on earnings-related payments so that higher-paid workers receive proportionately less of their earnings. The main exceptions are Canada (excluding Québec), Ireland, and South Africa, where no period of leave is paid at a high earnings-related level; and the UK, where less than half the leave period is paid at a high earnings-related level. In addition, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is no state-level statutory entitlement to Maternity benefit, however, maternity benefits are regulated at the level of entities (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and Republic Srpska (RS)), including the cantonal level in FBiH, and the level of Brčko District (BD). Currently, the RS entity, BD and FBiH's cantons provide some maternity benefits, with amounts varying from flat-rate benefits to 100 per cent of previous earnings.

Of the countries that **do not have a statutory, designated, and paid Maternity leave entitlement**, one – the United States – makes no provision nationally for paid leave for women at the time of pregnancy and childbirth, though the possibility of unpaid '*family and medical leave*' exists for mothers working for employers with 50 or more employees. Thirteen states and the District of Columbia provide some benefit payments to parents missing work around the time of childbirth ('paid family leave'). Hawaii and Puerto Rico have policies that provide paid time off specifically to mothers for pregnancy and childbirth. Other countries without designated Maternity leave – Australia, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal and Sweden (except 2 unpaid weeks)[1] – provide paid leave that women may or must take at and around childbirth, but this leave has a generic designation, such as 'Parental leave' and can, in certain circumstances, be taken by fathers (see Table 3).

The **period of post-natal Maternity leave** varies widely from just a few weeks to 12 months. In Argentina and Greece, the period of post-natal Maternity leave differs for the public and private sectors; while in Canada, the province of Québec has a substantially different system to the rest of the country. Similarly, in China, most provinces have (differently) extended the duration of Maternity leave with the most common extension being up to 158 days (around 5 months).

There is not much **flexibility** in Maternity leave and taking all or part of the leave is obligatory in most countries. Flexibility in use mainly takes the form of some choice about when women can start to take leave and how much of the leave period they can take before (not included in the table below) and after birth. In some countries, women can take more leave for premature birth, multiple births, higher-order births, in the case of disability of the child or medical complications.

[1] In Sweden, it is obligatory for women to take two weeks' leave either before or after birth; but to receive benefit, they must draw on their Parental leave benefit entitlement (see Table 3).

Thirteen countries – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece (private sector), Israel, Kosovo, Poland, Serbia and the UK - have introduced another dimension of flexibility: mothers may **transfer part of the Maternity leave period to fathers** as a matter of course, i.e. without being in exceptional circumstances (such as serious illness). Maternity leave can also be transferred to fathers in some other countries, but only in specific and extreme circumstances (such as death or severe illness); Slovakia is the exception here, in that only the maternity benefit (and not the time right) can be transferred to fathers.

Two approaches to leave policy are emerging:

1. Most widespread is the traditional concept of a 'Maternity leave': intended only for women; linked to pregnancy, childbirth, and the first months of motherhood; and treated as a health and welfare measure. The obligatory nature of at least part of Maternity leave in many countries reflects this orientation. Other leave available to women, mainly Parental leave, is additional and available equally to women and men. Under this approach, women are entitled to more leave overall than men (cf. Table 3).
2. Emerging more recently is a move away from the idea of 'Maternity leave,' **either** towards a birth-related leave for women, which can be transferred (at least in part) to fathers under normal circumstances; **or** towards dropping 'Maternity leave' altogether in favour of a generic 'Parental leave,' usually with periods designated as being for 'mothers only' or pregnant persons and for 'fathers only' or co-parents. For instance, Iceland offers 12 months' Parental leave: six months each for the mother and father (they may each transfer up to six weeks to the other). With the Icelandic model, the only recognition of childbirth is the obligation for women to take two weeks' leave after birth, with the possibility of an extended leave if a woman has suffered complications at or after giving birth. Other examples include New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, and Sweden.

Table 1: Post-natal Maternity leave (statutory; post-natal, employment-based, average-earner, full-time, the first child entitlements): leave length, transferability and flexibility (April 2026)

Country	Post-natal leave length (months)			(Part of) leave is obligatory	(Part of) leave is transferable[2]	Additional leave time[3]	Leave flexibility[4]	
	Total	Paid	Well-paid[1]				Part-time	In blocks
Argentina (private)	8	2.7	2.7	+	–	+	–	–
Argentina (public)	8.3	2.3	2.3	+	–	+	–	–
Australia	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL
Austria	1.9	1.9	1.9	+	–	+	–	–
Belgium	3.3	3.3	3.3*	+	–	+	+	–
Bosnia and Herzegovina	11.2	..	..	+	+	–	–	–
Brazil	4	4	4	–	-	+	+	–
Bulgaria	12.1	12.1	12.1*	+	+	–	–	–
Canada	3.5	3.3	0*	–	–	–	–	–
Canada: Quebec	4.2	4.2	4.2*	–	–	–	–	+
Chile	5.6	5.6	5.6*	+	+	+	+	–
China	2.8	2.8	2.8	–	–	+	–	–
Colombia	4	4	4	+	+	+	+	–
Costa Rica	3	3	3	+	–	+	–	–
Croatia	6	6	6	+	+	+	+	–
Cyprus	4.7	4.7	4.7	+	–	+	–	–
Czech Republic	5.1	5.1	5.1*	+	+	+	–	–
Denmark	2.3	2.3	2.3*	+	+	–	–	+
Estonia	1	1	1	+	–	–	–	–
Finland	1	1	1*	+	–	–	–	–
France	3	3	3*	+	–	+	–	–
Germany	1.9	1.9	1.9	+	–	+	–	–
Greece (private)	11.1	11.1	2.1	+	+	–	–	–
Greece (public)	3	3	3	+	–	+	–	–
Hungary	5.6	5.6	5.6	+	–	–	–	–

Country	Post-natal leave length (months)			(Part of) leave is obligatory	(Part of) leave is transferable[2]	Additional leave time[3]	Leave flexibility[4]	
	Total	Paid	Well-paid[1]				Part-time	In blocks
Iceland	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL
Ireland	9.3	5.6	0[FR]	+	–	–	–	–
Israel	6	3.5	3.5*	+	+	+	–	–
Italy	5	5	5	+	–	+	–	–
Japan	1.9	1.9	1.9*	+	–	–	–	–
Korea	3	3	3*	+	–	+	–	–
Kosovo	11.2	8.2	5.2	–	+	–	–	–
Latvia	1.9	1.9	1.9	+	–	+	–	–
Lithuania	1.9	1.9	1.9	–	–	+	–	–
Luxembourg	2.8	2.8	2.8*	+	–	+	–	–
Malta	4.2	4.2	3.3	+	–	+	–	–
Mexico	2.3	2.3	2.3	+	–	+	–	–
Netherlands	2.8	2.8	2.8*	+	–	+	+	+
New Zealand	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL
Norway	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL
Poland	4.7	4.7	4.7	+	+	+	–	–
Portugal	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL
Romania	4.2	4.2	4.2*	+	–	–	–	–
Russian Federation	2.3	2.3	2.3*	–	–	+	–	–
Serbia	11.3	11.3	11.3*	+	+	+	–	–
Slovak Republic	6.5	6.5	6.5*	+	–	+	–	–
Slovenia	2.6	2.6	2.6	+	–	+	–	–
South Africa	4.0	..	..	+	–	–	–	–
Spain	4.4	4.4	4.4*	+	–	+	+	+
Sweden	0.5	see PL	see PL	+	–	–	–	–
Switzerland	3.3	3.3	3.3*	+	–	+	–	–
Türkiye	9	3	3	+	–	+	–	–
United Kingdom	12.1	9.1	1.4	+	+	–	–	+

Country	Post-natal leave length (months)			(Part of) leave is obligatory	(Part of) leave is transferable[2]	Additional leave time[3]	Leave flexibility[4]	
	Total	Paid	Well-paid[1]				Part-time	In blocks
United States	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Uruguay	3	3	3	+	–	+	–	–
Vietnam	6	6	6	+	–	+	–	–

Notes: Only **statutory** leave entitlements regulated at the national level are included, that is, regional or occupational (variations in) provisions toping up state-level defined statutory rights are excluded. For all the variations in leave entitlements see country notes which contain more detailed information. If the period of leave in a country is expressed as weeks, weeks are converted to months on the basis of 4.3 weeks=1 month, i.e. 12 weeks would be expressed as 2.8 months.

Key: see PL=countries provide paid leave that women may or must take at and around childbirth, but this leave has a generic designation, such as 'Parental leave'; **..**=no statutory leave or payment; ***=ceiling on payments (only for part of the leave in Greece (private), Korea, Malta); **FR**=flat-rate benefit; **1**=earnings-related payment at 66 per cent of previous earnings or above (based on legal replacement rate; but note that in some countries benefits are taxed or may count towards income base for social security contributions, meaning that actual amounts received by the individuals may differ); **2**=part of Maternity leave is transferable to the father/co-parent in ordinary conditions (this does not include cases where the transfer is only permitted in the case of, for example, maternal death or incapacity); **3**=additional time for premature birth, multiple births, higher order births, in the case of disability of the child or medical complications (this include only situations when additional days/weeks of Maternity leave are available, and it does not include situations in which, for example, unused prenatal days can be used after birth or additional benefits are provided); **4**=leave can be used part-time (the time is proportionally extended), or in several blocks.

Statutory Paternity leave: April 2026

Just as Maternity leave is gender-specific, so too is the usual definition of Paternity leave, being an entitlement only for fathers, enabling them to take a short period of leave immediately following the birth of a child, often associated with providing help and support to the mother. Increasingly, same-sex partners of birth mothers and other co-parents can be included in this entitlement.

However, as Parental leave in several countries includes a period that only fathers can take (sometimes referred to as a 'father's quota'), **the distinction between Paternity leave and father-only Parental leave can be unclear and confusing**. A comparison of Iceland and Norway provides an example of this complexity. Iceland offers 12 months' leave after birth: 6 months for mothers, 6 months for fathers, and each parent may transfer six weeks to the other parent; there is, therefore, no Paternity leave *per se*, but 6 months of leave are available for the use of fathers, to take as and when they choose (to add to the confusion, although the law covers all 12 months with the same name – 'birth leave' – the 6 months for fathers is commonly referred to as 'Paternity leave'). Norway, by contrast, has 2 weeks' Paternity leave (i.e., to be used at the time of birth), with payment dependent on collective agreements; plus a further 15 to 19 weeks' father's quota (about a third of the total Parental leave entitlement that only the father can use), which is well-paid from public sources; most of the Parental leave is a family entitlement.

In this review, Paternity leave is narrowly defined as a short period immediately after birth that is only available to fathers (with some countries including to same-sex partners and other co-parents) and is in addition to Parental leave. For example, in Sweden, there is a 10-day, temporary leave in connection with a child's birth or adoption, and this differs from the 90-day 'fathers' quota.' On this basis, **many countries have a statutory and designated Paternity leave** (plus the province of Québec in Canada; see Table 2). **Paternity leave is generally paid**, and in many cases at a high earnings-related level (see 'Key' below for definition) for the duration of leave – though it should be noted that with this and other forms of leave, a ceiling may be set on earnings-related payments so that higher-paid workers receive proportionately less of their earnings. Here it is important to point out that also in Norway, whilst Paternity leave is unpaid by the government, most employed fathers are covered by their individual employer or collective agreements. **The duration of paid Paternity leave** can vary from just a couple of days to 19 weeks (Spain). As with other entitlements, there may be regional differences in the provision. For example, in China, there is no statutory entitlement to Paternity leave nationally, but regional provisions exist in all provinces, providing between 7 and 30 days of Paternity leave. In some countries, leave is not referred to as Paternity leave, for example, in Luxembourg, but fathers can use ten days' well-paid leave due to 'extraordinary circumstances.

Across countries, there are different dimensions of **flexibility in the implementation of Paternity leave**. The most common forms of flexibility in Paternity leave policy are in relation to the period during which the leave can be taken and regarding entitlements to additional time for multiple births. In seven countries (Bulgaria, Chile, Denmark, France, Italy, Portugal, and Spain) it is obligatory for fathers to take some or all of their Paternity leave.

Table 2: Post-natal Paternity leave (statutory; post-natal, employment-based, average-earner, full-time, the first child entitlements): leave length, transferability and flexibility (April 2026)

Country	Post-natal leave (weeks)			(Part of) leave is obligatory	(Part of) leave is transferable[2]	Additional leave time[3]	Leave flexibility[4]		
	Total	Paid	Well-paid[1]				Part-time	In blocks	Can be used until the child turns (months):
Argentina (private)	0.4	0.4	0.4	–	–	–	–	–	–
Argentina (public)	1	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–
Australia	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL
Austria	4.3	4.3	–[FR]	–	–	–	–	–	3
Belgium	4	4	4*	–	–	–	–	+	4
Bosnia and Herzegovina	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Brazil	1	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–
Bulgaria	2.1	2.1	2.1*	+	–	–	–	–	–
Canada	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Canada: Quebec	5	5	5*	–	–	–	–	+	:
Chile	1	1	1	+	–	–	–	+	1
China	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Colombia	2.8	2.8	2.8	–	–	–	+	–	–
Costa Rica (private)	1.6	1.6	1.6	–	–	–	–	+	1
Costa Rica (public)	4.3	4.3	4.3	–	–	–	–	–	1
Croatia	4	4	4	–	–	+	–	–	6
Cyprus	2	2	2	–	–	+	–	–	4
Czech Republic	2	2	2*	–	–	–	–	–	1.4
Denmark	2	2	2*	+	–	–	–	+	2.3
Estonia	4.3	4.3	4.3*	–	–	–	–	+	36
Finland	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL
France	4	4	4*	+	–	+	–	+	6
Germany	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Greece (private)	2.9	2.9	2.9	–	–	–	–	+	1
Greece (public)	2.9	2.9	2.9	–	–	–	–	+	1
Hungary	2	2	1	–	–	–	–	+	2
Iceland	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL	see PL
Ireland	2	2	–[FR]	–	–	–	–	–	6

Country	Post-natal leave (weeks)			(Part of) leave is obligatory	(Part of) leave is transferable[2]	Additional leave time[3]	Leave flexibility[4]		
	Total	Paid	Well-paid[1]				Part-time	In blocks	Can be used until the child turns (months):
Israel	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Italy	2	2	2	+	–	+	–	+	5
Japan	4	4	4*	–	–	–	+	+	2
Korea	4	4	4*	–	–	–	–	+	4
Kosovo	2.4	0.4	0.4	–	–	–	–	–	–
Latvia	2	2	2	–	–	–	–	+	6
Lithuania	4.3	4.3	4.3*	–	–	–	–	–	3
Luxembourg	2	2	2*	–	–	–	–	+	2
Malta (private)	2	2	2	–	–	–	–	–	–
Malta (public)	2	2	2	–	–	–	–	–	0.5
Mexico	1	1	1	–	–	+	–	–	–
Netherlands	6	6	6*	–	–	–	+	+	6
New Zealand	2	..	..	–	–	–	–	–	1
Norway	2	..	..	–	+	–	+	+	–
Poland	2	2	2	–	–	–	–	+	12
Portugal	5	5	5	+	–	+	–	+	6
Romania	2	2	2	–	–	+	–	–	2
Russian Federation	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Serbia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Slovak Republic	28	2	2*	–	–	+	–	–	6
Slovenia	2.1	2.1	2.1*	–	+	+	+	–	3
South Africa	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Spain	19	19	19*	+	–	+	+	+	8 years [2 weeks after the child turns 1]
Sweden	2	2	2*	–	–	+	+	+	2
Switzerland	2	2	2*	–	–	–	+	+	6
Türkiye (private)	1	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–
Türkiye (public)	2	2	2	–	–	–	–	–	–
United Kingdom	2	2	0[FR]	–	–	–	–	+	12
United States	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

Country	Post-natal leave (weeks)			(Part of) leave is obligatory	(Part of) leave is transferable[2]	Additional leave time[3]	Leave flexibility[4]		
	Total	Paid	Well-paid[1]				Part-time	In blocks	Can be used until the child turns (months):
Uruguay (private)	2.9	2.9	2.9	–	–	+	–	–	–
Uruguay (public)	2	2	2	–	–	+	–	–	–
Vietnam	0.8	0.8	0.8	–	–	+	–	–	2

Notes: Only **statutory** leave entitlements regulated at the national level are included, that is, regional or occupational (variations in) provisions toping up state-level defined statutory rights are excluded. For all the variations in leave entitlements see country notes which contain more detailed information. If the period of leave in a country is expressed as days, days are converted to weeks based on the rule: 7 calendar days=1 week, and 5 working days=1 week, except if there are exceptions and the working week may be 6 days (e.g. Vietnam; 5 days of leave are 0.8 weeks).

Key: see PL= countries provide paid leave that fathers/partners may or must take at and around childbirth, but this leave has a generic designation, such as 'Parental leave'; **..**=no statutory leave or payment; *****=ceiling on payments (only for part of the leave in Korea, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands); **:=**no data; **FR**=flat-rate benefit; **1**=earnings-related payment at 66 per cent of previous earnings or above (based on legal replacement rate; but note that in some countries benefits are taxed or may count towards income base for social security contributions, meaning that actual amounts received by the individuals may differ); **2**=part of Paternity leave is transferable to the co-parent in ordinary conditions (this does not include cases where the transfer is only permitted in the case of parent's death or incapacity); **3**=additional time for premature birth, multiple births, higher order births, in the case of disability of the child or medical complications (this include only situations when additional days/weeks of Paternity leave are available, and it does not include situations in which, for example, unused prenatal days can be used after birth or additional benefits are provided), in case of Romania also if the father attends the parenting class; **4**=leave can be used part-time (the time is proportionally extended), in several blocks or until the child reaches a certain age.

Statutory Parental leave (not including additional childcare leave): April 2026

All EU member states must provide at least four months' **Parental leave** per parent (2 months non-transferable, paid leave), under the terms of the Work-Life Balance Directive. The directive defines this leave as enabling parents 'to take care of (a) child until a given age,' so distinguishing this leave from Maternity leave, where the directive setting minimum standards was adopted as a health and welfare measure. The Directive also requires: 10 working days of Paternity leave, paid at no less than the level of sick pay; five days of annual carer's leave; and flexible working arrangements for parents and carers.

Around one-third of the non-EU countries in this review also provide Parental leave. The exceptions are Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Kosovo, Mexico, Serbia, Switzerland, Türkiye, Vietnam and the United States (which has a generic and unpaid 'family and medical leave' that is not applicable to private employers with fewer than 50 employees). Six countries (Australia, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, and Sweden) have Parental leave that subsumes either Maternity leave or Maternity and Paternity leave, although periods of Parental leave may be for mothers or fathers only.

Parental leave varies on 4 main dimensions: length; whether it is an individual or family entitlement; payment; and flexibility.

Broadly, countries divide into those where the **total length of Parental leave** is around 15 months or less; those providing an intermediate period of around 18-24 months; and those where leave extends to around 3 years or more. The first group includes Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, South Africa, the UK, and Uruguay. Ireland, at 16 months, lies just above this group, while the 'long leave' countries include the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Slovakia, and Spain. Sweden falls in between the shorter- and longer-leave groups: paid leave is expressed in days (to emphasise that it can be taken very flexibly), roughly equivalent to 18 months if taken continuously, while each parent is also entitled to take unpaid leave until a child is 18 months of age. So, too, is this the case in Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, and Romania, with leave potentially lasting until a child's second birthday, and in Korea, with leave potentially lasting until a child is 30 months. Greece is also exceptional, with four months per parent in the private sector and 60 months per parent in the public sector. Note, too, that some countries supplement Parental leave with childcare leave, so extending the period available (see Table 4).

Parental leave as a time right is a **family entitlement** in eight countries, to be divided between parents as they choose (Canada, Estonia, Hungary, Malta – public sector, New Zealand, Russia, South Africa, and Uruguay). Five countries **combine a family entitlement with an individual non-transferable entitlement** (Austria, Norway, Poland, Portugal, and Romania). Nineteen countries have **individual – fully non-transferable entitlement**, and an additional seven **individual – partially transferable entitlement** (see Table 3). In cases where (parts of) individual entitlements are non-transferable, if not used by a parent, these are foregone (following the 'use it or lose it' principle). In some countries, individual non-transferable leave rights entitlements can be used within the same time period (e.g. until the child turns 3 years), and are typically combined with one benefit right (e.g. see Czech

Republic in Table 3), meaning that parents are entitled to more time right than benefit right and that 'quota' months may not serve the same function. In Bulgaria, Parental leave is still defined as primarily the mother's right, which can be transferred to the father.

Nearly all countries in the review that provide a statutory Parental leave provide at least some element of **payment**; only Israel, Spain, and the UK make no payment. Payment policy varies considerably and can include **a ceiling on benefit payments**.

Flexibility takes many forms, including: (i) additional leave in the case of multiple births or, in a few cases, other circumstances; (ii) the possibility to take leave on a full-time or part-time basis (i.e. so parents can combine part-time employment with part-time leave); (iii) the possibility of taking leave in one continuous block or several shorter blocks; (iv) the possibility for both parents to take all or some leave at the same time; (v) the possibility to use all or part of leave when parents choose, until their child reaches a certain age (see Table 3). There are also some other forms of flexibility, such as the option to take longer periods of leave with lower benefits or shorter periods with higher benefits (e.g., Austria, Czech Republic, Norway) or the possibility to transfer leave entitlements to carers who are not parents. It should be noted that where leave can be taken part-time, the length of leave may be extended when this option is used; the length of leave shown below is based on full-time leave taking, so it does not take account of this part-time option, which is widely used in some countries (e.g., the Netherlands).

Various measures have been introduced to **encourage fathers to use Parental leave**. Mostly these are wholly or partly individualised entitlements, so that fathers not using their 'quota' lose it, as unused leave cannot be transferred to a partner. However, experience has shown that such 'father's quotas' need to be well-paid if they are to be widely used. 'Quotas' have been increasingly introduced in recent years, in particular in the EU countries, to align with the demands from the Work-Life Balance Directive asking for two non-transferable paid Parental leave months. Twenty-eight countries have paid quotas, within the Parental benefits system, ranging from two weeks (Australia) to 12 months (e.g. Korea and Japan; see Table 3). Another approach is to offer some form of bonus (e.g. additional leave) if both parents take some Parental leave. Seven countries offer such a bonus. For example, Japan extends paid leave by two months if fathers take at least two months of leave;[2] and Portugal offers a bonus to families where the father shares part of the initial Parental leave (formerly Maternity leave). Similarly, in 2019, Canada introduced five or eight extra weeks of paid leave reserved for fathers/second parents, if Parental leave is shared between couples. Other countries with incentives for fathers to take leave are Austria, Italy, Korea, and Slovakia.

Childcare leave (not presented in Table 3, but included in the total length of leave in Table 4) can usually be taken immediately after Parental leave, creating a continuous, longer period of leave, even if the conditions (such as the benefit paid) may not be the same. It is, however, much less common than Parental leave. In most cases, Childcare leave is unpaid or low-paid. Finland is exceptional in that its home care leave is both available to all parents and paid, albeit with a relatively low flat-rate allowance (so, effectively, blurring the

[2] An extra two months become shorter according to the length of the leave a father takes. Given that a mother takes full entitlement until a child becomes one year old, only a father can take leave after the child becomes one year old. If he takes 10 days of leave after the child's 1st birthday, the extra period for the family is only 10 days, not two months. The maximum of the extra after a child's 1st birthday is two months.

distinction with Parental leave). Greece is also an exception in that Childcare leave is available after Maternity leave, and as Parental leave is mostly unpaid or paid at a low rate, its use is very limited, while Childcare leave which is fully compensated is widely used. In addition to these countries, some other countries offer either a very limited period of leave for all families or an extended leave for certain types of family. For more information on Childcare leave, please consult the country notes.

In addition to Parental and Childcare leave, a third type of leave is an entitlement to a break from employment for any reason, including (but not confined to) childcare: a **career break.** A statutory entitlement of this kind is found in Belgium, with one year's full-time leave (or 24 months' part-time leave or 60 months' one-fifth-time leave) that can be extended up to five years by collective agreement, negotiated at sectoral or company level; this is in addition to Parental leave. This career break entitlement includes a flat-rate payment under certain conditions (e.g. care of a young child, providing palliative care, or attending a training course). Unpaid career breaks can also be found in Croatia and Serbia (until the child turns three).

Table 3: Post-natal Parental leave (statutory; post-natal per couple, employment-based, average-earner, full-time, the first child entitlements): leave length, type of entitlement, leave transferability and flexibility (April 2026)

Country	Post-natal leave (in months per couple)			Type of entitlement[2]		Additional leave time[3]		Leave flexibility[4]			
	Total	Paid	Well-paid[1]	Leave [nontransferable months]	Benefit [nontransferable months]	Fathers' use	Other reasons	Part-time	In blocks	Simult-aneous use	Until a child is (year):
Argentina	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Australia	24	5.6	0	Individual transferable	Individual partially transferable [3 weeks]	–	–	+	+	[+]	2
Austria	24	14.2–35.4	14.2*	Family & individual nontransferable [2 months]	Family & individual nontransferable [~2 months for income-dependent and ~2-7 months for flat-rate]	– [partnership bonus]	–	+	+	[+]	7
Belgium	8	8	0	Individual nontransferable [4 months]	Individual nontransferable [4 months]	–	+	+	+	+	12
Bosnia and Herzegovina	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Brazil	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Bulgaria	24↓	24↓	0	Primary mothers', transferable	Primary mothers', transferable	–	–	–	–	–	2
Canada	8.1-14.2	8.1-14.2	0	Family	Family	+	–	–	–	+	18

Country	Post-natal leave (in months per couple)			Type of entitlement[2]		Additional leave time[3]		Leave flexibility[4]			
	Total	Paid	Well-paid[1]	Leave [nontransferable months]	Benefit [nontransferable months]	Fathers' use	Other reasons	Part-time	In blocks	Simult-aneous use	Until a child is (year):
						[3 to 5 weeks]					
Canada Quebec	5.8-7.4	5.8-7.4	5.8*	Family	Family	+ [3 to 4 weeks]	+	+	+	+	1.5
Chile	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
China	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Colombia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Croatia	8	8	8*	Individual partially transferable [2 months]	Individual partially transferable [2 months]	–	+	+	+	+	8
Costa Rica	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Cyprus	8.4	1.9	1.9	Individual partially transferable [9 weeks]	Individual partially transferable [2 weeks]	–	+	–	+	+	15
Czech Republic	36	6.5-36	6.5*	Individual nontransferable [36 months]	Family	–	+	+	–	+	3
Denmark	6.5	6.5	6.5*	Individual partially transferable [9 weeks]	Individual partially transferable [9 weeks]	–	+	+	+	+	9
Estonia	36	15.8	15.8*	Family	Family	–	–	–	+	[+]	3
Finland	12.4	12.4	12.4*	Individual partially transferable [3.9 months]	Individual partially transferable [3.9 months]	–	+	+	+	[+]	2
France	36↓	12↓	0	Individual nontransferable [36 months]	Individual nontransferable [6 months]	–	+	+	–	+	3
Germany	72↓	14-28↓	0	Individual nontransferable [36 months]	Individual partially transferable [2 months]	+	+	+	+	[+]	8 [paid leave until 1.2-2.3]
Greece (private)	8	4	0	Individual nontransferable [4 months]	Individual nontransferable [2 months]	–	+	+	+	–	8
Greece (public)	60	4	0	Individual nontransferable [60 months]	Individual nontransferable [2 months]	–	+	+	+	–	8

Country	Post-natal leave (in months per couple)			Type of entitlement[2]		Additional leave time[3]		Leave flexibility[4]			
	Total	Paid	Well-paid[1]	Leave [nontransferable months]	Benefit [nontransferable months]	Fathers' use	Other reasons	Part-time	In blocks	Simult-aneous use	Until a child is (year):
Hungary	36⬇	36⬇	24⬇	Family	Family	–	+	+	–	–	3
Iceland	12	12	12*	Individual partially transferable [4.5 months]	Individual partially transferable [4.5 months]	–	+	+	+	+	2
Ireland	16	4.2	0	Individual nontransferable [33 weeks]	Individual nontransferable [7 weeks]	–	+	+	+	+	12 [paid leave until 2]
Israel	12	..	..	Individual nontransferable [12 months]	..	–	–	–	+	–	1
Italy	10	9	2	Individual nontransferable [3 months]	Family & individual nontransferable [3 months]	+ [1 bonus paid month]	+	+	+	+	14
Japan	12⬇	12⬇	12*	Individual nontransferable [12 months]	Individual nontransferable [12 months]	+ [2 bonus paid months]	–	+	+	+	1.2
Korea	24	24	24*	Individual nontransferable [12 months]	Individual nontransferable [12 months]	+ [6+6 months)	+	+	+	+	8
Kosovo	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Latvia	36	13-19	0	Individual nontransferable [18 months]	Individual partially transferable [2 months]	–	–	+	+	+	8
Lithuania	36	24	18*	Individual nontransferable [18 months]	Individual partially transferable [2 months]	–	–	+	+	–	3
Luxembourg	12	12	12*	Individual nontransferable [6 months]	Individual nontransferable [6 months]	–	–	+	+	+	6
Malta (private)	8	4	0	Individual partially transferable [2 months]	Individual partially transferable [2 months]	–	–	–	+	–	8
Malta (public)	12	4	0	Family	Individual partially transferable [2 months]	–	–	+	+	–	10

Country	Post-natal leave (in months per couple)			Type of entitlement[2]		Additional leave time[3]		Leave flexibility[4]			
	Total	Paid	Well-paid[1]	Leave [nontransferable months]	Benefit [nontransferable months]	Fathers' use	Other reasons	Part-time	In blocks	Simult-aneous use	Until a child is (year):
Mexico	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Netherlands	12.1	4.2	4.2*	Individual nontransferable [26 weeks]	Individual nontransferable [9 weeks]	–	+	+	+	+	8
New Zealand	12	6	0	Family	Primary mothers', transferable	..	+	+	+	+	1
Norway	13.5	13.5	13.5*	Family & individual nontransferable [19 weeks]	Family & individual nontransferable [19 weeks]	–	+	+	+	[+]	3
Poland	9.5	9.5	9.5	Family & individual nontransferable [9 weeks]	Family & individual nontransferable [9 weeks]	–	+	+	+	+	6
Portugal	12	12	5	Family & individual nontransferable [30 days + 3 months]	Family & individual nontransferable [30 days]	+ [1 bonus paid month; higher benefit]	+	+	+	[+]	6
Romania	24	24	24*	Family & individual nontransferable [2 months]	Family & individual nontransferable [2 months]	–	+	–	+	[+]	2
Russian Federation	36	18	0	Family	Family	..	–	+	+	–	3
Serbia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Slovak Republic	36↓	36↓	6.5	Individual nontransferable [36 months]	Family	+ [6.5 months of Maternity benefit]	+	+	+	+	3
Slovenia	10.7	10.7	10.7*	Individual partially transferable [2 months]	Individual partially transferable [2 months]	–	+	+	+	+	8
South Africa	0.3	0.3	0.3	Family	Family	..	..	+	..	..	..
Spain	39.7	..	..	Individual nontransferable [36 months + 8 weeks after a child turns 3]	..	–	–	+	+	+	8

Country	Post-natal leave (in months per couple)			Type of entitlement[2]		Additional leave time[3]		Leave flexibility[4]			
	Total	Paid	Well-paid[1]	Leave [nontransferable months]	Benefit [nontransferable months]	Fathers' use	Other reasons	Part-time	In blocks	Simult-aneous use	Until a child is (year):
Sweden	18	16	13*	Individual nontransferable [18 months]	Individual partially transferable [3 months]	–	+	+	+	[+]	12
Switzerland	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Türkiye	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
United Kingdom	8.4	..	..	Individual nontransferable [4.2 months]	..	..	+	–	+	+	18
United States	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Uruguay	6	3	2.7	Family	Family	–	–	+	+	–	0.5
Vietnam	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

Notes: Only **statutory** leave entitlements regulated at the national level are included, that is, regional or occupational (variations in) provisions toping up state-level defined statutory rights are excluded. For all the variations in leave entitlements see country notes which contain more detailed information.

Key: ..=no statutory leave or payment; *****=ceiling on payments; **⬇**=if the person had the right to paid Maternity leave, Parental leave duration is reduced by the duration of paid Maternity leave (see Table 1); **:=**no data; **1**=earnings-related payment at 66 per cent of previous earnings or above (based on legal replacement rate; but note that in some countries benefits are taxed or may count towards income base for social security contributions, meaning that actual amounts received by the individuals may differ); **2**=in brackets, the part of the leave or benefit time ('quota') that is NOT transferable to the other parent is indicated (if both parents have individual entitlement on, for example, 12 months, but they both have to use the leave time until the child turns one, this is marked as "simultaneous"; however, if they can use their entitlement until the child turns 8, this is counted as 24 months of entitlement per couple); **3**=additional leave in case of father's use of leave or additional leave time for premature birth, multiple births, higher order births, in the case of disability of the child or medical complications; **4**=leave can be used part-time, in several blocks, simultaneously by both parents (fully if **+**, or partially if [**+**]) or until the child reaches a certain age.

Relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements: April 2026

Most discussions of policy frameworks to support employed parents with young children highlight two key policies: Parental leave and early childhood education and care (ECEC). The table below looks at the relationship between these two policy areas, and, in particular, at whether they are coordinated in the sense that an entitlement to leave leads immediately into, or coincides with, an entitlement to ECEC.

Great variations exist between countries in both leave policies and ECEC. The table shows two dimensions of variation for ECEC: attendance rates at formal services and entitlement to ECEC. Attendance rates are taken from the OECD Family Database P3.2; for more information, see the note on source at the end of the table below. **Attendance rates for children under three years of age** vary from less than 10 per cent (Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Mexico, Slovak Republic and Türkiye), to over 50 per cent (Belgium, Denmark, France, Iceland, Israel, Korea, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, and Portugal). **Attendance rates for children over three years of age** are uniformly much higher, but vary from 75 per cent or under (Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Greece, Mexico, Switzerland, Türkiye, and the US) to 95 per cent and over (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and the UK). What these figures do not reveal is the opening hours of services and how far they are suited to the needs of working parents: indeed, in many cases, they will not be.

Thirty-six countries have an **entitlement to an ECEC service.** In 14 countries (Argentina, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Kosovo, Luxembourg, Mexico, and Serbia), the entitlement includes a period of *compulsory* attendance at an ECEC service, usually for children aged 4 years and over, but from 3 years in France and Hungary. In some countries, this is only a part-time entitlement, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Mexico, there is insufficient provision to implement this policy. In 21 countries, the entitlement is only from three years of age or later. A further 9 countries have a clear entitlement before 3 years of age: at between 2 and 3 years in Belgium and Ireland, and at 12 months or younger or at the end of Parental leave in 7 countries: Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Slovenia, and Sweden, with full-time places available in all cases except Luxembourg (whose part-time entitlement is part of a multilingual education programme). In another seven countries – Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Mexico, Romania, and Russia – there is a legal entitlement for the youngest age group, but it is reported that a shortage of places means that, to varying degrees, the entitlement is not fully operational until a later age; in the case an 8th country, Portugal, a recent reduction of the entitlement from 4 to 3 years cannot yet be fully met. It is only in 6 countries with an operational entitlement for the youngest age group that there is no gap between the end of well-paid leave and the start of an ECEC entitlement: Denmark, Finland, Malta, Norway, Slovenia, and Sweden. Elsewhere, there are substantial gaps, which if combined with countries that have no ECEC entitlement, emphasise the extensive lack of coordination between these two policy areas.

Table 4: Relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements (April 2026)

Country	Attendance rates at formal ECEC services (%) (2023)		Child's age (months) at:			Gap (in months) between:	
	0-2 years	3-5 years	(a) end of leave	end of well-paid leave (b)[1]	start of ECEC universal entitlement (c)[2]	(c)-(a)	(c)-(b)
Argentina	5.1[2018]	76.5[2017]	8–8.3	2–2.3	□ 4 years: OB	39.7–40	45.7–46
Australia	46.8	90.6	24	..	..	No ECEC entitlement	
Austria	22.1	91.2	24	14.2	□ 5 years: OB & PT	36	45.8
Belgium	56.5	98.3[2019]	51	4.2	□□ 2.5 years	No gap	25.8
Bosnia and Herzegovina	/	/	11	..	□ 5 years: OB & PT	49	..
Brazil	24.9	68.6[2021]	4–6.5	4–6.5	..	No ECEC entitlement	
Bulgaria	17.4	86.8	36	12.1	□ 4 years: OB	12	35.9
Canada	34	/	12.8-19.5	..	..	No ECEC entitlement	
Canada: Québec	/	/	12.8	11.2	..	No ECEC entitlement	
Chile	20	75.1	5.6	5.6	..	No ECEC entitlement	
China	/	/	2.8	2.8	□ 3 years	33.2	33.2
Colombia	9.4	73	4	4	□ 5 years: OB	56	56
Costa Rica	7.2[2018]	70.8	3	3	..	No ECEC entitlement	
Croatia	30.7	80.3	36	14	□ 6 years: OB & PT	36	58
Cyprus	39.4	86.2[2021]	13.5	6.5	□ 4,7 years: OB	42.5	49.5
Czech Republic	4.9	85.3	36	11.6	□ 3 years: OB at 5	No gap	24.4
Denmark	55.3	95.7	11.1	11.1	□□ 6 months	No gap	No gap
Estonia	27.7	90.6	36	17.8	□□18 months	No gap	*!No gap!*
Finland	39.8	89.1	36	12.4	□□ 9 months	No gap	No gap
France	57.7	100	36	3	□ 3 years: OB	No gap	33
Germany	41.9	95.3	84	1.9	□□1 year	No gap	10.1
Greece	31	68.8[2019]	22.7-72	6.4-12.7	□ 4 years: PT	25.3–no gap	35.3-41.6
Hungary	14[2022]	97.4	36	24	□□ birth: OB at 3	*!No gap!*	*!No gap!*
Iceland	50.6	96.1	20	12	..	No ECEC entitlement	
Ireland	36.7	95	26	..	□□ 32 months: PT	6	..
Israel	58.2	98.7	12	3.5	..	No ECEC entitlement	
Italy	41	93.5	16	5	..	No ECEC entitlement	
Japan	46.1[2023]	95.9	14	14	..	No ECEC entitlement	

Country	Attendance rates at formal ECEC services (%) (2023)		Child's age (months) at:			Gap (in months) between:	
	0-2 years	3-5 years	(a) end of leave	end of well-paid leave (b)[1]	start of ECEC universal entitlement (c)[2]	(c)-(a)	(c)-(b)
Korea	68.9[2023]	95.7	27	27	..	No ECEC entitlement	
Kosovo	/	/	11.2	5.2	□ 5 years: OB & PT	48.8	54.4
Latvia	36.1	94.9	37.9	1.9	□□☐19 months	No gap	17.1
Lithuania	36.8	95.5	36	18	..	No ECEC entitlement	
Luxembourg	60.9	96	14.8	14.8	□ 1 year: PT; OB at 4	No gap	No gap
Malta	/	95.1	12.2-76.2	4.2	□□ 3 years	No gap	No gap
Mexico	4.4	73.9	2.3	2.3	□□ birth: OB	*!No gap!*	*!No gap!*
Netherlands	72.7	93.2	16	8.1	□ 4 years: PT	32	39.9
New Zealand	43.9	86.9	12.5	..	..	No ECEC entitlement	
Norway	61.4	97.2	37.5	13.5	□□12 months	No gap	No gap
Poland	13.4	93.6	50.2	14.2	□ 3 years	No gap	21.8
Portugal	58.8	93.3	36	6	□ 3 years	No gap	30
Romania	11.4	75.7	24	24	□□ Birth	*!No gap!*	*!No gap!*
Russian Federation	20[2018]	83[2017]	36	2.3	□□ 2 months	*!No gap!*	*!No gap!*
Serbia	/	/	36	11.3	□ 6 years: OB & PT	36	60.7
Slovakia	1	80.8	36	13	□ 5 years	24	47
Slovenia	48.7	93.2	13.2	13.2	□□ end of Par. leave	No gap	No gap
South Africa	/	/	4	..	..	No ECEC entitlement	
Spain	45.9	97.7	39.7	7.4	□ 3 years	No gap	28.6
Sweden	48.9	95.3	18	13	□□ 12 months	No gap	No gap
Switzerland	40.9	50.5	3.7	3.7	..	No ECEC entitlement	
Türkiye	0.7	54.5	9.3	3.3	..	No ECEC entitlement	
United Kingdom	45.1[2018]	100	13.5	1.4	□ 3 years: PT	22.5	34.6
USA	/	66[2018]	..	..	..	No ECEC entitlement	
Uruguay	/	/	6.3–6.7	3.3–6.7	□ 4 years	41.3–41.7	41.3–44.7
Vietnam	/	/	6.2	6.2	..	No ECEC entitlement	
OECD average	38.5	89					

Notes: 1=where bonus months are given if leave is shared, 'end of well-paid leave' includes these months. Both (a) and (b) give the child's age if leave was taken in one continuous period and full-time. If the length of Maternity leave or the fact that both parents should use their individual entitlement to Parental leave in the same time period (e.g. both can use their 36 months entitlement until the child turns 3) affects the overall

duration of leave, this is also taken into account. *Well-paid leave* is earnings-related payment at 66 per cent of previous earnings or above (based on legal replacement rate; in some countries benefits are taxed or may count towards income base for social security contributions, meaning that actual amounts received by the individuals may differ); **2=**this column refers to if and when a universal entitlement to ECEC begins. In a few cases, e.g., England (in UK) and Malta, children are entitled to ECEC at an earlier age, but only if their parents are employed or studying.

Key: /=no data; **..=**no well-paid leave or no entitlement to ECEC; □ entitlement, but only from three years of age or older; □□ entitlement from below 3 years of age; **PT**=entitlement is for 20 hours per week or less; **OB**=attendance is obligatory. **'!' (*'!no gap!'*)**=indicates the existence of an entitlement that cannot be met due to a shortage of places (i.e. refers to the entitlement on paper, and not the actual availability of services).

Source: Enrolment rates in early childhood education and care services, 0 to 2 year-olds; and Enrolment rates in early childhood education and care services and primary education, 3 to 5 year-olds: OECD Family Database, available at: http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm.

OECD notes that data on the use of early childhood education and care services for very young children (0- to 2-year-olds) come from several sources. For most countries, the data on enrolment…come from OECD Education at a Glance 2020, which itself collects data from national authorities through the OECD INES Ad-hoc Survey on Early Childhood Education and Care…Data [for] Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Malta and Romania are OECD estimates based on information European Union's Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) survey… Data on the use of early childhood education and care and primary education for 3- to 5-year-olds come in all cases from the joint UNESCO-OECD-EUROSTAT (UOE) data collection programme, either via OECD Education at a Glance 2020 or the Eurostat database. (https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF3_2_Enrolment_childcare_preschool.pdf, pp.6,7).

Leave policy changes: April 2026

Table 6 gives a quick overview of **major policy changes in the included countries**. For more information about those changes, we point to the individual country notes.

Table 6 gives an overview of policy changes according to the different types of leave distinguished in our report, i.e., Maternity leave, Paternity leave, Parental leave, as well as Statutory other leave measures. We do not summarise changes in other policies at this point (e.g., early childhood education and care). Also, for more details, readers should refer to the country notes. For the four "groups" of changes, **we distinguish where a policy has newly been introduced** (marked by symbol: ✓) **or where a policy has been abolished** (**x**). Regarding the reforms of existing policies, we distinguish three types of change: if a change can be quantified, such as an increase in the replacement rate of a leave benefit or a reduction of leave duration, we classify it as either **expansion** (**-**) or **cutback** (↓). If a change cannot be easily quantified, such as a change in flexibility rules or a structure of leave rights, we classify it as **recalibration** (**o**).

Which **types of changes** have been reported in the 2026 Review of Leave Policies? Please note that these are only policy changes enacted in the year *up to April 2026* (whereas there are often significant policy changes that are expected to be enacted later in the year).[3] In this 2026 edition of the leave review, **53 countries** are included. Of those, **24 countries report *some* policy change** (while the rest report continuity across the different types of leave), which seems to indicate similar activity on leave reform when compared to the previous year. As in previous years, reforms continue to reflect both incremental adjustments to existing leave systems and more targeted reforms for specific groups of parents, alongside the continuing implementation and refinement of earlier reforms, including those linked to the EU Work-Life Balance Directive. Some of the enacted changes are small (e.g., adjustments in benefit levels), others target specific groups, and a few transform the main parameters of national leave systems.

For Maternity leave, 15 countries report changes; eight for Paternity leave; and 17 for Parental leave. Changes in 20 countries concern Statutory other leave measures. Compared to previous years (when there was a comparatively strong focus on reforming Paternity and Parental leave measures), reforms are spread across all four policy areas, with particularly frequent changes to statutory leave measures outside the three main leave categories.

When it comes to the nature of reforms, many changes concern increases in benefit levels, extensions of leave duration, or wider eligibility for existing rights. Other common reforms involve recalibrating entitlement rules, adapting benefit structures, or introducing greater flexibility in how leave may be taken. Newly introduced measures are less common but include, for example, France's additional paid parental leave ("additional birth leave"), Malta's pregnancy injury, neonatal care, parental bereavement and miscarriage leave,

[3] Later changes that are under way but not yet enacted will be included in forthcoming review(s). In many countries, there are also on-going discussions about policy reforms, which have not been decided upon yet; these discussions are portrayed in the policy changes sections of each country note.

and Korea’s new leave entitlement for fathers following miscarriage or stillbirth (effective from September 2026). Abolition of existing measures remains rare, with Bavaria's cash-for-care benefit being one example recorded in this review.

Regarding reforms to existing measures, expansions and recalibrations remain the dominant types of change, while outright cutbacks are comparatively uncommon. Where cutbacks occur, they typically involve tighter eligibility criteria, lower benefit ceilings, or restrictions on benefit receipt, as illustrated by recent reforms in Estonia, Germany and Romania. Additionally, it should be noted that the absence of policy reform may itself have important consequences if benefit levels or benefit ceilings are not regularly adjusted to compensate for inflation and changes in living costs.

Table 6: Overview of leave policy changes in 2025/26

	Maternity leave	**Paternity leave**	**Parental leave**	**Statutory other leave measures**
Argentina				o flexible working arrangements
Australia			↑ expanded parental leave pay duration o recalibration of the income ceiling at which parental leave payment cuts out	
Austria				
Belgium				
Bosnia and Herzegovina				
Brazil				
Bulgaria	o the maternity leave benefit is suspended if the parent receiving it works under a second employment contract	o the paternity leave benefit is suspended if the parent receiving it works under a second employment contract	o the parental leave benefit is suspended if the parent receiving it works under a second employment contract	↑ Period for requesting temporary flexible working arrangements
Canada				
Canada: Quebec				
China				

	Maternity leave	Paternity leave	Parental leave	Statutory other leave measures
Chile	↑ increase in the minimum daily subsidy floor (link to the minimum wage rise)			
Colombia				
Costa Rica				
Croatia	↑ additional pension insurance period			↑ sickness leave benefit
Cyprus	↑ increase in maternity leave benefit, which depends on the number of dependents in the family		↑ increase in the number of weeks of paid parental leave, depending on the number of children	✓ cash-for-care benefit
Czech Republic			↑ multiple births: parental benefit doubled, replacing the previous 1.5 multiplier	
Denmark			o hospitalised newborn extension (paid parental leave can be extended up to 12 months) ↑ benefit ceiling increase	↑ bereavement benefit eligibility o sick-child leave (CA) o DA Barsel ceiling
Estonia	↑ upper ceiling on maternity leave benefit introduced	↑ upper ceiling	↑ upper ceiling ↑ full parental benefit if a parent is working	
Finland				
France			✓ introduction of an additional paid parental leave of one to two months for each parent ("additional birth leave"; effective in June 2026)	

	Maternity leave	Paternity leave	Parental leave	Statutory other leave measures
Germany	↑ extension of maternity protection to miscarriages		↓ further reduction of the income limit (eligibility criterion) ↓ restriction of simultaneous receipt of benefits for full-time leave for both parents	x cash-for-care benefits in Bavaria
Greece	↑ expansion of post-natal portion for foster mothers		o benefit level due to minimum wage increase o tax-exempt and non-seizable	✓ leave for public sector employees who have the exclusive care of a child
Hungary	↑ personal income tax is not paid on leave benefit		↑ personal income tax is not paid on leave benefit	
Iceland			↑ extension of leave in case of multiple births	
Ireland				
Israel				↑ fathers can use sickness leave if a newborn is hospitalised
Italy		✓ mandatory leave for an intentional parent in a same-sex couple	✓ mandatory leave for an intentional parent in a same-sex couple O the extension in the age limit	O the extension in the age limit and in the number of days of unpaid leave for sick children
Japan				
Korea	↑ benefit height	↑ benefit height o prolongation of the taking-up period		✓ 5 days for miscarriage and stillbirth for fathers (from September 2026)
Kosovo	↑ benefit height			

	Maternity leave	Paternity leave	Parental leave	Statutory other leave measures
Latvia			↑ benefit payment period extended for parents with preterm children O additional eligibility criteria ↑ increase in childcare allowance	
Lithuania				
Luxembourg				
Malta				✓ pregnancy injury leave ✓ special parental bereavement leave ✓ neo-natal care leave ✓ miscarriage leave ↑ flexible working
Mexico				
Netherlands				
New Zealand				
Norway				
Poland				
Portugal				
Romania			↓ 10% health care contribution needs to be paid on parental benefits	
Russian Federation				
Serbia				
Slovakia	↑ benefit level	↑ benefit level	↑ benefit level	↑ benefit level (sickness leave – to take care of a sick

	Maternity leave	Paternity leave	Parental leave	Statutory other leave measures
				relative, long-term care benefit)
Slovenia			↑ 15 days of leave for foster parents of a child 8-15	
South Africa				
Spain	↑ leave length (3 weeks; 13 weeks for lone parents) ↑ flat rate benefit for all employed women who do not meet eligibility requirements extended in case of adoption and foster care	↑ leave length (3 weeks; 13 weeks for lone parents) ↑ flat rate benefit for all second parents who do not meet eligibility requirements extended in case of adoption and foster care		
Sweden				
Switzerland				
Türkiye				
United Kingdom		o 'day one' right for employees to leave (but not payment)	o 'day one' right for employees to leave (but not payment)	
United States			↑ availability at the state level	↑ made permanent an employer PFML tax credit and expanded the definition of qualified employee, allowing increased access
Uruguay		↑ lenght		
Vietnam	↑ leave length for the 2nd child (1 week) ✓ maternity allowance for voluntary social insurance contributors	↑ leave length for the 2nd child (1 week)		↑ benefit for stillbirths or fetal death after a 22-week pregnancy

Key: ✓ introduction, x abolishment, ↑ expansion, ↓ cutback, o recalibration

4. Country Notes: April 2026

Argentina[4]

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April 2026

N.B. Argentina Federation is a federal state comprising 23 provinces and an autonomous city, Buenos Aires.

The leave system is heterogeneous across the country. Different entitlements are offered depending on the sector (public or private) and province. Moreover, participation in the formal labour market determines access to different types of social protection benefits (including leave); consequently, a significant proportion of workers in the informal economy, in small companies or working as self-employed are excluded from these benefits. The information included in this report is based on the provisions regulated in the National Law 20.744 on Contract of Employment (1974),[5] which sets minimum standards. In some cases, these benefits are supplemented by collective bargaining agreements or private sector initiatives.

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*Licencia por maternidad*) (responsibility of the National Social Security Administration - ANSES)

i. Private sector

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 90 calendar days: It can be taken 45 days before and 45 days after the expected delivery date (according to a medical certificate), or 30 days before and 60 days after. However, if the delivery is premature, the 90-day period must be completed.

[4] Please cite as Debeljuh, P. and Ginestra, C. (2026) 'Argentina Country Note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A. A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

[5] *Ley de Contrato de Trabajo.* Available here.

- It is obligatory to take leave from 10 days before birth.[6]
- After Maternity leave, mothers can access an unpaid leave of absence (*período de excedencia*) that lasts 3 or 6 months.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings, with no upper limit.
- Due to the non-remunerative nature of the leave, the benefit is not subject to contributions, nor is it considered when calculating the Annual Supplementary Salary. It is also not subject to income tax.
- Funded by ANSES, the National Social Security Administration, which the federal government mainly finances.

Flexibility in use

- Women are allowed to work up to 30 days before the child is due.
- After Maternity leave, mothers can opt to return to employment or start an unpaid leave of absence (*período de excedencia*) of three or 6 months.
- In the event of a pre-term delivery, the entire period of leave that has not been used will be added to the post-natal leave period to complete the 90 days.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Registered employees and domestic workers with at least 3 months in employment when starting the leave.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- Paid Maternity leave is extended by 6 months for a child with Down's Syndrome.
- There is no additional entitlement for multiple births.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- There are variations in eligibility established by collective bargaining agreements in each sector. For example, the Agrarian Labour Law (2011)[7] mandates that temporary staff are covered under the same conditions as permanent staff.

[6] Ley 27742 (2024) Available here.
[7] *Régimen de Trabajo Agrario* (2011) Available here.

- Basic provisions can be enhanced by private employers' practices. Thanks to the work that the Family and Business Conciliation Center (CONFyE)[8] has been developing since 2009, many companies from the private sector have identified the need to adopt new work-life practices. Evidence from CONFyE shows promising initiatives for mothers, such as:
  - The gradual reduction of working hours leading up to delivery.[9]
  - The extension of Maternity leave, usually 2 or 3 extra months paid by the company.[10]
  - The provision of similar Maternity leave to adoptive mothers.[11]
  - The extension of Maternity leave in the case of multiple births or children with disability.[12]
  - Soft landing: mothers are allowed to gradually return to employment, with reduced working hours, while receiving full pay. The scheme varies across companies, but typically part-time work starts after the end of Maternity leave with four or five working hours per day. Companies also provide mothers with soft-landing policies for children with disabilities and adoption.[13]
  - Extra days for mothers when the child is in neonatology.[14][15]
  - Some companies offer a 30-day leave due to pregnancy termination[16] while others offer special leaves to support employees who, during the gestational period, have experienced the unintended loss of the pregnancy or have received news that the baby has critical comorbidities that put their life at risk or require intensive medical treatment[17].

[8] CONFyE has published five guides compiling the private sector good practices to support maternity, paternity and care of dependents with actions that go beyond the law provisions. Available here.
[9] Debeljuh, P. and Ordóñez, M.E. (2019) *Hacia la integración familia – trabajo: guía de buenas prácticas* [Towards family-work integration: guide to good practices], Buenos Aires: IAE Publishing, p.163.
[10] Idem, p.164.
[11] Debeljuh P. and Destéfano, A. (2013) *Hacia la responsabilidad familiar corporativa: guía de buenas prácticas* [Towards corporate family responsibility: good practice guide], Buenos Aires: IAE Publishing, p.148.
[12] Debeljuh P. and De la Serna M. (2023) *Hacia el cuidado de la ecología humana: familia, empresa y sociedad: guía de buenas prácticas* [Towards the care of human ecology: family, business and society: guide to good practices], Buenos Aires: IAE Publishing, p.139.
[13] Debeljuh P. and Destéfano, A. (2011) *Hacia una empresa familiarmente responsable: guía de buenas prácticas* [Towards a family-friendly company: guide to good practices], Buenos Aires: IAE Publishing, p.112.
[14] Debeljuh, P. and Ordóñez, M.E. (2019) *Hacia la integración familia – trabajo: guía de buenas prácticas* [Towards family-work integration: guide to good practices], Buenos Aires: IAE Publishing, p.163.
[15] Debeljuh P. and De la Serna M. (2023) *Hacia el cuidado de la ecología humana: familia, empresa y sociedad: guía de buenas prácticas* [Towards the care of human ecology: family, business and society: guide to good practices], Buenos Aires: IAE Publishing, pp.139.
[16] Ibid.
[17]Debeljuh, P. and de la Serna, M. (2025) *Hacia una transformación laboral con sentido familiar y social* [Towards a labour transformation with family and social meaning], Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: Baur, p.128.

ii. Public sector (under Collective Labour Agreement for Public Employment[18])

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 100 calendar days. 30 days of pre-natal leave and 70 days of post-natal leave.
- It is obligatory to take leave, though the 30 days prior to childbirth can be reduced with medical authorisation.
- After Maternity leave, mothers can access an unpaid leave of absence (*período de excedencia*) that lasts 3 to 6 months.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings, with no upper limit.
- Due to the non-remunerative nature of the leave, the benefit is not subject to contributions, nor is it considered when calculating the Annual Supplementary Salary. It is also not subject to income tax.
- Funded by ANSES, the National Social Security Administration, it is financed mainly by the federal government.

Flexibility in use

- None

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All public sector employees are eligible.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In the case of multiple births, mothers are entitled to an extra 10 days.
- From the 3rd child, women receive 10 more days per pregnancy.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- The collective agreements that regulate teacher conditions of employment offer benefits that, in most cases, enhance those recognised in the Collective Labour Agreement. Maternity leave for teachers varies according to the province, with a minimum of 84 days in Jujuy and a maximum of 210 days in Tierra del Fuego.
- The same occurs within provincial public employment. Provinces that grant 90 days of maternity leave include Entre Ríos, Jujuy, and San Luis. The City of Buenos Aires provides 105 days, with the option to add an additional 30 days of family leave. 120 days are granted in Catamarca, Mendoza, Neuquén, San Juan, and Santiago del Estero. Misiones, Santa Fe, and the Province of Buenos Aires (according to the 2024 agreement) offer 135 days. Formosa, La Pampa, and Salta provide 150 days. A total of 180

[18] *Convenio Colectivo de Trabajo General para la Administración Pública Nacional* [General Collective Labor Agreement for the National Public Administration] (2006). Available here.

days is granted in Chaco, Córdoba, Corrientes, Río Negro, Tierra del Fuego, and Tucumán. The most generous maternity leaves, lasting 210 days, are found in Chubut, La Rioja, and Santa Cruz [19] .

Additional note (e.g., leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave (*Licencia por paternidad*) (responsibility of the employer)

i. Private sector

Length of leave

- 2 calendar days.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings, with no upper limit on payment.
- Funded by employers.
- Due to the non-remunerative nature of the leave, the benefit is not subject to contributions, nor is it considered when calculating the Annual Supplementary Salary. It is also not subject to income tax.

Flexibility in use

- None. Leave must be taken immediately after birth.

Eligibility

- All registered employees are eligible.
- Informal and self-employed workers are not eligible.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

[19] CIPPEC. *Licencias por maternidad para empleadas públicas provinciales, 2018* [Maternity leave for provincial public employees, 2018]. Available here.

- Some sectors have improved the Paternity leave entitlements offered by Law 20.744 on Contract of Employment (1974).[20] For instance, the Agrarian Labour Law (2011)[21] recognises a paid Paternity leave of 30 consecutive days to be taken between 45 days before childbirth and 12 months after birth.
- Basic provisions can be enhanced by private employers' practices. Evidence from CONFyE[22] shows promising initiatives mainly related to extending Paternity leave. In some companies, fathers can take up to 40 days with full pay after childbirth.[23] Flexible working arrangements may also be offered, such as part-time work during the first month after birth without earnings reduction or one hour off during the first 30 days after returning to work, together with soft-landing policies for fathers of children with disabilities and adoptive fathers.[24]

ii. Public sector

Length of leave

- 5 working days, based on the Collective Labour Agreement for Public Employment,[25] which regulates employment in the National Public Administration.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings, with no upper limit.
- Funded by employers.
- Due to the non-remunerative nature of the leave, the benefit is not subject to contributions, nor is it considered when calculating the Annual Supplementary Salary. It is also not subject to income tax.

Flexibility in use

- None. Leave must be taken immediately after birth.

Eligibility

- All registered employees are eligible.

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[20] *Ley de Contrato de Trabajo.* Available here.
[21] *Régimen de Trabajo Agrario* (2011). Available here.
[22] CONFyE has published five guides compiling the private sector good practices to support maternity, paternity and care of dependents with actions that go beyond the law provisions. Publications available here.
[23] Debeljuh, P. and Ordóñez, M. E. (2017) *Hacia una responsabilidad compartida: guía de buenas prácticas* [Towards shared responsibility: good practice guide], Buenos Aires: IAE Publishing, p.159.
[24] Debeljuh, P. and Destéfano, A. (2015) *Hacia un nuevo pacto entre trabajo y familia: guía de buenas prácticas* [Towards a new pact between work and family: guide to good practices], Buenos Aires: IAE Publishing, p.175.
[25] *Convenio Colectivo de Trabajo General para la Administración Pública Nacional* (2006) [General Collective Labor Agreement for the National Public Administration]. Available here.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- Paternity leave in the public sector varies significantly across provinces. Santiago del Estero offers no Paternity leave at all. Provinces with just 2 days are Entre Ríos, Formosa, and Jujuy. Corrientes and San Juan grant 5 days, while Córdoba and Santa Fe give 8 days. Catamarca, La Pampa, and Neuquén offer 10 days. The provinces with 15 days include Chaco, Chubut, Mendoza, Misiones, Río Negro, Tierra del Fuego, Tucumán, and the Province of Buenos Aires (modified in 2024). San Luis offers 20 days, and Salta grants 25 days. La Rioja and Santa Cruz stand out with 30 days, and topping the list is the city of Buenos Aires, with 45 days of paternity leave. [26] [27]
- Paternity leave for teachers varies between 2 and 25 days, depending on the province.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave

No statutory entitlement.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- No statutory entitlement. In the public sector, adoption leave is provided for mothers (100 calendar days) and fathers (30 calendar days) in national public administration. Some collective bargaining agreements covering teachers and provincial public sector employees provide leave for both parents, with significant variations between provinces, e.g., 30 days in Tucumán and a maximum of 180 days in four provinces.

Time off for the care of dependents

- No statutory entitlement.

[26] *Licencias parentales en la Provincia de Buenos Aires* [Parental leaves in the Province of Buenos Aires] (2023). Available here.
[27] CIPPEC. *Licencias por maternidad, paternidad y familiares para empleados públicos provinciales (2019)* [Maternity, paternity and family leave for provincial public employees (2019)]. Available here.

- In the private sector, some companies provide leave, for example allowing parents to take ten paid days for **sick children**.[28] For children with disabilities, some companies offer eight paid hours per month to accompany children to medical appointments and support to address caregiving needs via monthly assistance reimbursement for employees' children aged 6 to 12.[29][30] Some companies provide assistance for family emergencies, such as caring for a child with a severe illness; this can be financial assistance, special paid leave, psychological assistance for the family group, or bereavement support.[31]
- In the public sector, 20 days paid leave per parent per year is available for the **care of a family member who is ill or injured**; 30 days paid leave is available for workers with young children in the event of the death of a child's mother, father or guardian.
- **Serious illness leave.** In some private companies, employees diagnosed with serious, life-threatening conditions can retain their jobs, salaries, and benefits while on leave, and can also arrange flexible work adapted to their individual needs, role, and location. Caregivers of close family members are also entitled to dedicated leave and flexible working arrangements to support their responsibilities. Additionally, employees, patients, caregivers, and their families have access to 24/7 psychological support worldwide through a global employee assistance program, addressing emotional, social, and financial well-being.

Specific provision for (breast) feeding

- In the private sector, every working mother has the right to take 2 breaks of 30 minutes each day for 1 year after birth. The time devoted to breastfeeding is considered part of the working day and, therefore, is paid. It is a widespread practice to have lactation rooms in workplaces.
- In the public sector, every working mother has the right to take 2 breaks of 1 hour a day, for 1 year after birth, with the option of reducing the working day by 2 hours. In provincial public employment, there are some variations, e.g., breaks or reductions in the working day may vary from three months after Maternity leave to five years. In the City of Buenos Aires, Law No. 2958 (2008) mandates the implementation of breastfeeding rooms in the public sector. These spaces should be private, comfortable, and exclusive for lactating mothers.[32]

[28] Debeljuh P. and Destéfano, A. (2011) *Hacia una empresa familiarmente responsable: guía de buenas prácticas* [Towards a family-friendly company: guide to good practices], Buenos Aires: IAE Publishing, p.122.
[29] Debeljuh P. and Destéfano, A. (2013) *Hacia la responsabilidad familiar corporativa: guía de buenas prácticas* [Towards corporate family responsibility: good practice guide], Buenos Aires: IAE Publishing, p.148.
[30] Debeljuh, P. and de la Serna, M. (2025) Hacia una transformación laboral con sentido familiar y social [Towards a labor transformation with family and social meaning], Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: Baur, p.134.
[31] Debeljuh, P. and Destéfano, A. (2015) *Hacia un nuevo pacto entre trabajo y familia: guía de buenas prácticas* [Towards a new pact between work and family: guide to good practices], Buenos Aires: IAE Publishing, pp.217-227.
[32] Law 2958, City of Buenos Aires.

- Infrastructure facilities: Lactation rooms are also provided by companies offering the possibility of continuing breastfeeding while working.[33][34] Additionally, some companies provide exclusive parking spaces for pregnant or breastfeeding mothers (this is especially important in big cities such as Buenos Aires).[35]

Flexible working for carers

- Flexible working arrangements: working wholly or partly from home, combined if desired with time in the office.[36]

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- No statutory entitlement.

Other provisions (e.g. care allowances, reproductive leaves, bereavement leaves, domestic violence leaves, grandparents' leaves)

- **Gender-based violence leave**. There are action protocols against cases of intrahousehold violence or gender-based violence in the public and private sectors. Government employees at the national[37] and provincial[38] levels can access these leaves. For example, in the province of Buenos Aires, women may take up to 35 days per year, while in Jujuy the leave consists of 20 days.[39] Some companies also offer similar benefits. The protocols include a special 15-days paid leave (which can be renewed if necessary), a salary advance and an interest-free loan to be repaid in up to 42 instalments.[40]

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is eight months or just over eight months (depending on the sector), but most of this is unpaid, with well-paid leave only available for less than three months. In addition, kindergarten attendance is compulsory for four and 5-year-olds, so there is a gap of almost four years between

[33] Debeljuh P. and Destéfano, A. (2011) *Hacia una empresa familiarmente responsable: guía de buenas prácticas* [Towards a family-friendly company: guide to good practices], Buenos Aires: IAE Publishing, pp.146-150.
[34] Debeljuh P. and De la Serna M. (2023) *Hacia el cuidado de la ecología humana: familia, empresa y sociedad: guía de buenas prácticas* [Towards the care of human ecology: family, business and society: guide to good practices], Buenos Aires: IAE Publishing, pp.162.
[35] Debeljuh, P. and Destéfano, A. (2015) *Hacia un nuevo pacto entre trabajo y familia: guía de buenas prácticas* [Towards a new pact between work and family: guide to good practices], Buenos Aires: IAE Publishing, p.184.
[36] Debeljuh P. and Destéfano, A. (2011) *Hacia una empresa familiarmente responsable: guía de buenas prácticas* [Towards a family-friendly company: guide to good practices], Buenos Aires: IAE Publishing, p.122.
[37] Resolution 24/2019.
[38] Decree 121/2020, Buenos Aires.
[39] Decree 121/2020, Buenos Aires.
[40] Debeljuh, P. and Ordóñez, M.E. (2019) *Hacia la integración familia – trabajo: guía de buenas prácticas* [Towards family-work integration: guide to good practices]. Buenos Aires: IAE Publishing.

the end of well-paid leave and entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).

Article 179 of Law 20.744 on Contract of Employment (1974) requires providing care services in the workplace for companies with fifty or more employed women. This law was recently executed (March 2022) through Decree 144/2022 (see section 3 below).

ECEC for children under four years is offered in a variety of (mostly private) institutions, such as nurseries (*salas cunas, prejardines, jardines maternales*), kindergartens and child development centres (*centros de desarrollo infantil o centros de cuidado comunitario*). Expanding national child development centres (Law 26.233) has enabled some progress in providing children with care and education. These centres have been created to promote the healthy development of children from 45 days to 3 years of age; they can be public or privately owned, and the period of a child's attendance is agreed upon with parents. Argentina has also launched the National Early Childhood Plan to guarantee nutrition, early stimulation, and healthcare for the most vulnerable children (aged 0 to 4).

In March 2022, the government launched National Decree 144/2022, which regulates the establishment of childcare services in companies with 100 or more employees. The provision of childcare services for children aged 45 days to 3 years old in workplaces with 100 or more employees is now mandatory regardless of hiring modalities. In collective bargaining agreements, this obligation can be replaced by a documented reimbursement of childcare expenses. For remote workers, the obligation to provide childcare services can be fulfilled by paying a non-remunerative sum. The obligation to offer childcare services has been enforceable since March 2023. Failure to comply with the duty to provide these services will be considered a severe labour infraction under the terms of Law 25,212, which ratifies the Federal Labour Pact. Severe infractions will be sanctioned with a fine of 50 to 2,000 per cent of the monthly value of the Minimum Salary in force when verifying the infraction for each affected worker.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

In March 2026, the Labour Modernization Law was approved. Among its provisions, the law repealed Law 27.555[41] (2021), which allowed teleworkers who provide care for children under the age of 13 years or for disabled or older adults requiring specific care to have work schedules compatible with their caregiving responsibilities, as well as breaks during their working day. That law also established the right to digital disconnection, enabling teleworkers to rest, recover, and separate work from personal life. The new law does not include replacement provisions replicating the relevant aspects of the repealed law.

[41] Boletín Oficial Argentina (August 2020).

Additionally, the new law maintains the leave system established since 1974 unchanged, despite profound social, family, and economic transformations over the past 50 years.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

No information available.

b. Paternity leave

No information available.

c. Parental leave

No statutory entitlement.

Australia[42]

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April 2026

In Australia, minimum employment conditions for most employees are set by national (Federal) legislation (including unpaid Parental leave, Parental Leave Pay). Additional terms and conditions of employment are also set through 'awards'' which are industrial instruments covering specific industries or occupations determined by industrial tribunals. Conditions may also be extended in collective agreements (called Enterprise Agreements) and in employer or company policies.

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

In Australian national legislation, 'Parental leave' is an overarching, gender-neutral term for leave entitlements in association with the birth or adoption of a child, and there are no specific and separate entitlements to Maternity and/or Paternity leave. The terms 'primary carer', 'secondary carer', 'tertiary carer', or 'universal carer' are also used in legislation and in some employer schemes. Primary carer usually refers to the birth parent (mother), secondary carer to the other parent (usually the father or same sex partner) and tertiary carer to a grandparent or other person who has taken on the care of the infant. Universal carer refers to all parents.

a. Maternity leave

- In the Australian national system, the term 'Maternity leave' is not used and there is no separate statutory entitlement to 'Maternity leave'.

b. Paternity leave

- As with Maternity leave, there is no separate 'Paternity leave' entitlement in Australian national legislation.

[42] Please cite as: Baird, M., Hamilton, M., and Heron, A. (2026) 'Australia country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A. A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

c. Parental leave

- Parental leave (for both mothers and fathers/same-sex partners and for single parents) is comprised of two separate components: 'unpaid Parental leave' provided through Australia's National Employment Standards; and a separate payment of 'Parental Leave Pay' that is provided through the social security system.

Length of leave

- A National Employment Standard in the Fair Work Act 2009 provides each working parent who meets the eligibility requirements with an entitlement to 12 months' *unpaid* job protected Parental leave. This is an individual entitlement that (apart from the exception noted below) cannot be taken by both parents simultaneously. If both parents are entitled to this leave, they could each take 12 months sequentially, with a maximum of 24 months available for a working couple per birth. If one parent takes less than their entitlement, the other parent can request to extend their leave by an equivalent amount (up to 12 months extra, if their partner takes no leave). Such an extension is only possible if the employer agrees. An employer has the right to refuse if the additional leave does not fit with the operational requirements of the business. Any agreement for an additional period of leave beyond the first 12 months will reduce the other parent or partner's entitlement by an equivalent amount. All leave must be taken within 24 months of the child's birth. For the mother, the leave can start from the date of the birth or adoption of the child, or from up to 6 weeks before the expected date of birth of the child, or earlier if the employer agrees.[43]
- When both members of a couple are entitled to unpaid Parental leave under the National Employment Standard, they can take 8 weeks of this leave at the same time.
- Employers are able to provide their own paid parental leave schemes in addition to the government scheme or to top it up, usually referring to the payment level. The duration of these employer schemes varies considerably between organisations. Where employers have their own schemes they usually pay at replacement wage levels, but may also top up the difference between the government payment and the employee usual pay.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 120 days or 24 weeks (based on a 5-day work week) of Parental Leave Pay is available under the Paid Parental Leave Act 2010. This is legislated to rise to 26 weeks (130 days) on 1 July 2026.

[43] The Fair Work Act 2009, at section 80, also provides for 'unpaid special maternity leave', which is available to an employee with a pregnancy-related illness or whose pregnancy ends after 12 weeks of gestation otherwise than in the birth of a living child, although not with a 'stillbirth' as defined in the Act (other provisions apply in cases of stillbirth). For further details, see 1c, Variation in leave due to child or family reasons.

- Parental Leave Pay is paid to eligible parents at a rate based on the national minimum wage AUD$189.62 [€116.28][44] a day or AUD$948.10 [€581.41] per 5 day week per hour as of April 2026).[45]
- Recipients of Parental Leave Pay receive an additional 12 per cent of the National Minimum Wage paid into the superannuation (individual retirement) account for the duration of their receipt of the payment.
- Parental Leave Pay is taxed at the recipient's regular income tax rate.
- Parental Leave Pay can be received during unpaid leave or while on paid leave, such as employer-paid Parental leave or paid annual leave. The majority of mothers (or designated primary carers) receive the government Parental Leave Pay via their employer,[46] while others receive it directly from the government.
- Employers can opt to top up an employee's statutory Parental Leave Pay to their full wage (as noted above).
- Parental Leave Pay is funded from general revenue raised through taxation.

Flexibility in use

- ***Unpaid*** Parental leave under the National Employment Standards in the Fair Work Act can be taken in one continuous period or flexibly, in periods of one day or more.
- The period of unpaid parental leave may start up to 6 weeks before the expected date of birth of the child, or earlier, if the employer and employee agree.
- If the child was born or adopted after 1 July 2024 the parent can take up to 120 days flexibly (this aligns with the Parental Leave Pay component).
- Where both parents are eligible for the 12 months unpaid Parental leave entitlement, they cannot access leave at the same time except for a period of up to 8 weeks, when the parent who is not the primary carer can take leave concurrently with the primary carer. These 8 weeks may be taken in separate periods any time during the first 12 months.
- For Parental Leave ***Pay***, within couples, 15 days or 3 weeks (based on a 5-day work week) is reserved for each parent on a 'use it or lose it' basis.
- Each parent can only take up to 10 days of the Parental Leave Pay concurrently, that is, at the same time as the other parent. In exceptional circumstances (e.g. medical care, illness, multiple birth, stillbirth) application can be made to take more days concurrently.
- Partners can only access a share of Parental Leave Pay if they themselves are eligible.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- For ***unpaid*** Parental leave:
  - Employees in permanent positions and on fixed-term contracts (full- or part-time) are eligible for the unpaid statutory leave provisions under the

[44] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://data.ecb.europa.eu/currency-converter.
[45] How much Parental Leave Pay you can get - Parental Leave Pay - Services Australia
[46] Employers are required to deliver the payment when it is for Australia-based employees who have worked with them for 12 months before the expected date of birth or adoption, who will be with them for their Parental Leave Pay period and who are expected to receive at least eight weeks of Parental Leave Pay.

Fair Work Act 2009 and to return to that same job, provided they have 12 months' continuous service with the same employer immediately before the date or expected date of birth, or the date of placement in the case of adoption. However, workers on fixed-term contracts are not entitled to return to the same job if their contract ends while they are on leave – that is, the employer is not required to extend the contract period by the amount of leave taken.
    - Casual (hourly paid and not permanent) employees are also eligible for the above entitlements if they have been employed on a regular and systematic basis for at least 12 months and have a reasonable expectation of continuing regular employment.
    - Self-employed workers (not classified as employees) and the unemployed are not covered by the provisions of the Fair Work Act 2009 and therefore do not receive unpaid Parental leave under the Act.
    - Spousal, de-facto relationships (both heterosexual and same sex)[47] are recognised for unpaid Parental leave entitlements under the Fair Work Act 2009.

- For Parental Leave ***Pay***:
    - Parental Leave Pay eligibility is decided by an income test, a work test and a residency test.
    - Solo parents are eligible for the whole amount of Parental Leave Pay, subject to the same tests as couples.
    - The income test is calculated on either a single income of the primary carer (usually the mother) or, if that is too high, the family/couple income can be used. (See below for income thresholds).
    - The parent with primary care of the child (usually the mother) must be an Australian resident and meet the requirements of a work test. The work test requires engagement in work continuously, with no more than a 12-week gap between any two consecutive working days, for at least ten of the 13 months prior to the expected birth or adoption of the child, with at least 330 hours of paid work undertaken in the ten-month period. This work can be in permanent, fixed-term or casual positions. If the other parent wants to claim Parental Leave Pay, they must also meet the work test.
    - Self-employed workers who meet the same criteria as employed parents have access to Parental Leave Pay under the national scheme.
    - For the income test, to be eligible, the primary carer must earn AUD$180,007 [€110,386.34] adjusted taxable income or less in the 2024-25 financial year (1 July – 30 June). If ineligible under the single income test, the couple or family income test applies. The family income limit is AUD$373,094 [€228,793.77] or less in the 2024-25 financial year adjusted taxable income.
    - The government-funded Parental Leave Pay can be taken in addition to other forms of paid leave to which the employee may be eligible (annual/vacation leave, long service leave, or employer-funded Parental leave).

[47] Co-residency is not specified as a requirement in the legislation. However, as leave cannot be taken simultaneously and must be taken in a continuous block (apart from the exceptions noted earlier) it would be difficult for a non-co-resident couple to share the leave.

- Parents who are not in work, or in work but do not meet the work test, are not eligible for Parental Leave Pay but may be eligible for the Newborn Upfront Payment which is a lump sum payment of AUD$683 [€418.84] per child and is not taxable. A Newborn supplement paid for up to 13 weeks is also available (dependent on family income and number of children, with a current maximum payment of AUD $2,052.05 [€1,258.39] for a first child and AUD$685.23 [€420.21] for subsequent children over 13 weeks for a first child). Neither of these payments are taxable.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- Employees who would have been eligible in the case of a live birth retain the entitlement to 12 months' unpaid Parental leave in the case of a stillbirth. The definition of a stillborn child in the Act includes a period of gestation of at least 20 weeks. To align with these unpaid Parental leave provisions, from 7 November 2025, the Fair Work Amendment (Baby Priya's) Act prevented employers from cancelling (employer-funded) paid Parental leave in the event of a stillbirth or in circumstances where an employee's child dies and the parent would otherwise have been entitled to paid leave.
- Special unpaid Parental leave may be taken in cases of pregnancy-related illness or if the pregnancy ends after a period of gestation of at least 12 weeks other than by the birth of a live child, but is not stillborn (as defined in the Act). Mothers who use special Parental leave (for example, due to a pregnancy-related illness) are still entitled to the full 12 months' unpaid Parental leave under the Fair Work Act.
- In exceptional circumstances where one or both parents are unable to care for the infant and the infant is in the primary care of another family member for a period of 26 weeks or more, some or all of the Parental Leave Pay may be transferred with the parents' authority to the third party (tertiary carer).

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- Not applicable.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- ***Employer-paid*** Parental leave, sometimes called 'Universal Carer Leave' or differentiated as paid Maternity, Paternity or Primary and Secondary Carer Leave, is available in some collectively negotiated enterprise agreement and company policies. This is generally paid at wage replacement rates.
- The Australian Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) records provision of 'Universal Carer', 'Primary Carer' and 'Secondary Carer' paid Parental leave by private sector organisations with 100 or more employees. It reported that in 2024-25 67 per cent of these organisations provided paid Parental leave.[48]
- There are no current or trend data available for organisations with fewer than 100 employees.

[48] National Data Explorer | WGEA Gender Equality data Accessed 8 March 2026

- Flexibility is sometimes available with employer-paid Parental leave: while this is usually paid at the employee's normal pay rate, in some cases there are provisions to double the duration of their leave by taking the leave at half pay.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

- No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- The same statutory rights to unpaid Parental leave and Parental Leave Pay apply when a child under 16 years old is adopted, however Parental Leave Pay may not be available in cases where a child has been living with the adoptive parents prior to the adoption (for example, with the formal adoption of a step-child).

Time off for the care of dependants

- Under the National Employment Standards of the Fair Work Act 2009 all employees (except casuals) have access to up to ten days of paid **personal/carer's leave** per year of service, reduced for employees with fractional appointments on a pro rata basis. It is paid at normal salary or wage level not including bonuses, overtime or similar payments. It accrues with service and accumulates annually with the same employer. Paid personal/carer's leave includes both 'sick' and 'carer' leave and may be taken because of a personal illness, or to provide care or support to a member of the employee's immediate family or household who is ill or injured, or in the case of an unexpected emergency.
- In addition, all employees (including casuals) can access up to two working days of **unpaid carer's leave** for each 'permissible occasion,' to provide care or support for an immediate family or household member due to illness, injury, or an emergency, provided paid personal leave (where available) has been exhausted.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Neither national nor state/territory laws provide an explicit right to all workers for paid breaks for breastfeeding nor to express milk at work.[49] However, the right not to be discriminated against on the basis of sex exists in all Australian jurisdictions, explicitly or implicitly covering breastfeeding.[50]
- The Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (s7AA) expressly prohibits employers from treating women less favourably because of their

[49] In the state of New South Wales, public servants who work 4 hours or more per day have a right to two 30-minute breaks and those working less than 4 hours per day have a right to one 30-minute break.

[50] Australian Human Rights Commission (2014) 'Supporting Working: Pregnancy and Return to Work', *National Review - Report*: 116. Available at: https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/SWP_Report_2014.pdf

breastfeeding or expressing of milk, and from imposing a condition or practice likely to have the effect of disadvantaging such women.
- The Fair Work Act (2009) includes breastfeeding, gender identity, intersex status and facing family and domestic violence as protected attributes of an employee, making it unlawful for employers to treat these employees differently. Complaints can be heard by the Fair Work Commission.
- A survey of private organisations with 100 or more employees indicated that 68.8 per cent reported providing breastfeeding facilities in 2021 but did not provide details on the nature of the facilities.[51] The proportion increased significantly from 2013-14, when only 45 per cent of organisations reported such arrangements.[52]

Flexible work arrangements for carers

- One of the National Employment Standards contained in the Fair Work Act 2009 provides a statutory right for employees (including regular ongoing casuals) to request flexible working arrangements from an employer, in relation to hours of work, location of work (e.g. a closer business location or working from home) and pattern of work (e.g., job sharing, shift arrangements, etc), on certain specified grounds.
- The range of employees entitled to request such arrangements includes employees who are pregnant, have a disability, those with caring responsibilities (that is parents or guardians of children who are school age or younger), as well as employees caring for a family member with a disability, medical condition, mental illness or who is frail and aged, employees aged 55 years or over, and employees experiencing family violence or supporting or caring for a family or household member who is experiencing family violence.
- The employee and employer must follow a statutory process. This includes that if an employer refuses a request (on reasonable business grounds after genuinely seeking agreement to meet the employee's needs), the Fair Work Commission (the national industrial relations tribunal) will mediate, conciliate, or arbitrate if a solution cannot be found.[53]
- Awards and collective agreements are required to include provisions for employers to consult with employees over any proposed changes to rosters and ordinary working hours, and to consult genuinely with employees about the impact of changes including on their family and caring responsibilities.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- None.
- All pregnant employees, regardless of period of service, have the entitlement to be transferred to a safe job. If no safe job is available, an entitlement to 'paid no safe job leave' is available for those eligible for unpaid Parental leave, while those not eligible for unpaid Parental leave are entitled to 'unpaid no safe job leave'.

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[51]WGEA, Data Explorer: http://data.wgea.gov.au/industries/1#carers_content
[52] WGEA (2022) *Australia's gender equality scorecard, 29*.
[53] Australian Fair Work Ombudsman (2026) *Flexible Working Arrangements*. Available at: https://www.fairwork.gov.au/employment-conditions/flexibility-in-the-workplace/flexible-working-arrangements#who-can-request

- Under Dangerous Jobs provision for women working in areas such as mining or heavy manufacturing, the date they stop work is not calculated as the expected date of birth, but as the date at which work stopped due to safety reasons. Parental Leave Pay recipients still have to meet the work requirements prior to the date of stopping work.

Other provisions of leave

- **Domestic and Family Violence Leave***.* One of the National Employment Standards of the Fair Work Act is paid domestic and family violence leave. All employees (full-time, part time and casual) are entitled to 10 days paid domestic and family violence leave per year. To be eligible they must be experiencing family or domestic violence. As with annual leave, or paid sick leave, it is paid by the employer at the employee's normal salary or wage level. The leave can be taken as a continuous 10 day period, in periods of one day, or less by agreement between the employee and the employer. It is available in full from the start of each 12 months of employment but does not accumulate annually.
- **Compassionate leave** is available for a death or life-threatening illness or injury of an immediate family or household member and for a stillbirth where a child would have been an immediate family or household member, or if the employee or their partner has a miscarriage. Up to 2 days for each 'permissible occasion' of this sort is available. It is paid by the employer at the employee's normal salary or wage level as for carer's leave, except for casual employees, for whom unpaid compassionate leave is available for the same reasons and periods.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

There is no formal or legislated relationship between leave policy and ECEC policy in Australia. Parental leaves are legislated by governments and implemented by employers independently of ECEC policy.

There is no universal entitlement for children to an ECEC place. ECEC providers operate in the private, community and government sectors, with approved providers delivering childcare that can be subsidised through the (national) Child Care Subsidy, described below.

Different supports and funding concern preschool (nursery) education in the one or two years before full-time school, with arrangements varying by jurisdiction. An agreement between all Australian states and territories (the Preschool Reform Agreement 2022-2025, previously the Universal Access National Partnership agreements) focuses on improving access to 15 hours of quality preschool education for children in the year before compulsory schooling (i.e., from around age 5 years).

For those using an approved ECEC service, eligibility for the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) depends on family income, the type of service used and the number of children aged 5 years or younger. The standard subsidy rate is highest (90 per cent) for lower income families (family income up to AUD$82,280 [€50,456.86] per year), decreasing by 1 per cent for every AUD$5,000 [€3,066.17] over that

amount, to a subsidy rate of zero for the highest income families (family income of AUD$533,280 [€327,025.20] or more per year). Families with multiple children aged 5 or under and earning less than AUD$365,611 [€224,204.94] may receive a higher rate of CCS for their second and younger children. If families have more than one child aged 5 or under using an ECEC service, higher subsidy rates apply.

Families earning under AUD$530,000 [€325,013.80] receive a 'three-day childcare guarantee', which provides them with access to at least 72 hours of subsidised ECEC per fortnight regardless of participation in work and other activities. Higher income parents pay a co-payment.

Parents can receive up to 100 hours of subsidised ECEC each fortnight for each child if they:

- are caring for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child
- have more than 48 hours each fortnight of recognised participation (i.e. work, training, voluntary work and other specified activities)
- have an exemption or experience exceptional circumstances[54]

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

After the change of government in May 2022, the new Labor Government announced a strong policy focus on improving gender equality and increasing women's workforce participation. As a consequence, the Paid Parental Leave scheme has undergone a significant reconfiguration, as discussed above, and further change is legislated to occur each year until July 2026.[55]

In relation to Parental Leave Pay, changes in legislation came into effect from 1 July 2023 and the amount of Parental Leave Pay increased by two weeks (10 work days) each 1 July until 2026. From 1 July 2026, the Parental Leave Pay duration will increase to 130 days (26 weeks). Twenty days will be reserved for each parent, and up to 20 days can be taken concurrently.

In relation to ECEC, until 6 January 2025, eligibility for Childcare Subsidy was based on the activity level of both parents. With some exceptions, both parents (or a single parent) were required to meet an activity threshold of at least eight hours per fortnight of 'approved activities' (i.e. paid work, being self-employed, looking for work, volunteering, or studying[56]) in order to receive CCS. The number of hours of activity beyond this threshold determined how many hours are subsidised. Introduced on 1 January 2026, and applicable from April 2026 a 'three-day childcare guarantee' replaced the former activity test with access to three days of childcare regardless of activity/participation of parents, so that the activity test would only apply to hours in excess of the 72 hours.

[54] Child Care Subsidy changes - Child Care Subsidy - Services Australia
[55] https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/parental-leave-pay-for-child-born-or-adopted-from-1-july-2023

4. Take-up of leave

a. Maternity leave

As explained above (1a), the term 'Maternity leave' is not used in Australia for the national statutory entitlements to unpaid Parental leave or Parental leave payments. It is still used in rare instances in employer-paid schemes and the terms Primary and Secondary carer leave or Universal leave, rather than Maternity and Paternity leave, are more common. However, there is no information available on take-up of these leaves.

b. Paternity leave

No information available.

c. Parental leave

Available data on take-up rates for Parental Leave Pay are limited. The Department of Social Services Annual Report 2024 to 2025 says that '[E]ach year around 180,000 families access Paid Parental Leave'. For 2024-2025, 96.8 per cent of eligible families have accessed the scheme and 252,340 individuals received the payment (this includes mothers and fathers).[57]

[57] Department of Social Services Annual Report 2024-25 p 2, p 31 and p 52.

Austria[58]

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April 2026

N.B. Austria is a federal state.

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*Mutterschutz*) (responsibility of Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 16 weeks: eight weeks before the birth and eight weeks after the birth. It is obligatory to take leave; employed expectant mothers are prohibited from being employed during this time.

Payment, funding and taxation

- Maternity benefit (*Wochengeld*): 100 per cent of average net income for the last three months of employment before taking leave for employees, with no upper limit. Freelance workers receive an income-based maternity benefit: self-employed women who work in a trade or agriculture are eligible for 'operational support' (i.e. financial or other support to maintain their business) as a form of maternity benefit. If no operational support is granted, they can claim a flat-rate payment of €72.18 per day. Marginally employed, self-insured women receive a flat-rate payment of €12.19 per day. Eligible, unemployed women are entitled to 180 per cent of previous unemployment benefit (with the latter corresponding to 55 per cent of previous net income). Expectant mothers receiving the childcare benefit are entitled to 100 per cent of the childcare benefit if their Maternity leave starts before the childcare benefit ends.

[58] Please cite as: Schmidt, E.-M., Mauerer, G. & Rappold, E. (2026) 'Austria country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, Á. A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *22th International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

- Payments are not taxed.
- If the protection period comes into effect during a period of Parental leave and childcare allowance is no longer being received, women have no entitlement to maternity benefit but to a 'Special maternity benefit' ('*Sonderwochengeld'*). The benefit is payable at the rate of the increased sickness benefit, which guarantees financial security even in the event of prolonged sick leave.
- Both benefits are funded by multiple sources: 70 per cent by the 'Family Burden Equalisation Fund' (FLAF – *Familienlastenausgleichsfonds*) which is financed by contributions from employers (3.9 per cent of each employee's salary bill), by general taxes, and by federal states; and 30 per cent by public health insurance. In 2024, total expenditure on Maternity leave (i.e. maternity pay and the payment for operational support) was €662 million.

Flexibility in use

- None.

Eligibility (e.g. related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employed women are entitled to Maternity leave and the maternity benefit, except for short-term employed women and self-employed workers who are eligible for Maternity leave only if they have a voluntary affiliation with the statutory social health insurance (SHI). Unemployed women are only eligible for maternity benefit if they have completed 3 months' continuous employment or have been affiliated to the statutory SHI for 12 months within the last 3 years.
- Expectant mothers receiving the childcare benefit are entitled to 100 per cent of the childcare benefit if their Maternity leave starts before the childcare benefit ends. If the income-related childcare benefit has already ended and expectant mothers have not started to work again or are still on Parental leave (see 1c for details), they are not entitled to maternity benefit.
- If a child is stillborn or dies during birth and if, and only if, it weighs 500 grams or more, this constitutes a stillbirth, and the mother is prohibited to be employed for eight weeks after the birth. The special protection against dismissal and termination ends four months after the stillbirth. There is no entitlement to Maternity leave after a miscarriage (birth weight of less than 500 grams). However, there is a four-week period of special protection against dismissal after a miscarriage, a possibility of sick leave and midwife assistance is granted if a miscarriage occurs after the 18th week of pregnancy.
- From the beginning of pregnancy until four months after the birth, female employees are protected against dismissal and redundancy.
- In the event of a miscarriage, this protection against dismissal and redundancy ends four weeks after the miscarriage; in the event of a stillbirth, it ends after four months.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent) or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In case of danger to the health of the mother or unborn child, women are eligible to take leave earlier than 8 weeks before delivery; in the case of premature births, multiple births, or births by Caesarean section, women remain eligible for 12 weeks after birth (in exceptional cases, 16 weeks).

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusion, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave (responsibility of Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- Employed parents who live in the same household with the child and the second parent who is on Maternity or Parental leave have a legal claim to a Paternity leave called 'family time' ('*Familienzeit*') if they were employed for at least 182 calendar days before this. These parents have to interrupt their employment for a full-time leave period between 28 and 31 days within the first 91 calendar days after the birth of the child. For 4 months before, during and 4 weeks after the 'family-time' these parents are protected against dismissal.
- Parents are entitled to take 'family-time', regardless of their parental status (i.e. as biological, adoptive, or foster parents), partnership status, or sexual orientation. Only legal residence in Austria (not citizenship) and a shared household of both parents and the child is required in order to obtain this form of Paternity leave.
- Other collective agreements may provide a few days of special leave for fathers immediately after the birth of a child, during which time fathers receive full earnings replacement.

Payment, funding and taxation

- Parents on 'family time' are entitled to a monetary benefit called 'family-time bonus' ('*Familienzeitbonus*') which amounts to €54.87 per calendar day, thus amounts up to €1,700 in total.
- Payments are not taxed, and the family-time bonus is automatically compensated for inflation in January every year.
- Funded by the FLAF; see 1a for more details. In 2024, total expenditure on family-time bonus was €27 million.

Flexibility in use

- Entitled parents can choose a full-time leave period of interrupted employment between 28 and 31 days flexibly within the first 91 calendar days after the birth of the child.

Eligibility (e.g. related to employment or family circumstances)

- Only employed parents who live in the same household with the child and the second parent who is on Maternity or Parental leave are eligible.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent) or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- If the child or the other parent is hospitalized for medical reasons, a joint household is exceptionally assumed under the following conditions:
    - If the child is hospitalized: The father must take over the personal care and supervision of the child together with the other parent for an average of at least 2 hours a day.
    - If the other parent is in hospital: the father must, in the presence of the child, provide personal care and supervision of the other parent for an average of at least 2 hours a day.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusion, or rights to postpone)

- Federal employees are entitled to the 'family-time bonus' during so-called early parental leave ('*Frühkarenzurlaub*').

c. Parental leave (*Elternkarenz*) (responsibility of Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection and Federal Chancellery/Women, Family, Integration, and Media)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- Parental leave is an entitlement per family. It lasts until the child reaches two years of age if both parents take leave for at least 2 months each or for single parents.
- If only one parent takes parental leave (except single parents), the leave lasts until the end of 22nd month of the child's life at the latest.
- If both parents take one month of parental leave at the same time, the parental leave can last until the end of the child's 23rd month of life at the latest.

Payment, funding and taxation

- A childcare benefit ('*Kinderbetreuungsgeld'*) is available to all families who meet the eligibility conditions, whether or not parents take Parental leave.
- For their youngest child, parents can choose between the flexible flat-rate childcare benefit account and the income-related childcare benefit. The flexible flat-rate benefit (*childcare benefit account, 'Kinderbetreuungsgeldkonto'*) enables parents to distribute an overall sum of about €15,020 (if only one parent receives the benefit) or €18,762 (if both parents receive the benefit) over a chosen time span, calculated in days. If only one parent applies for the childcare benefit, he or she might spend the overall sum across a period from 365 days (at an amount of €41.14 per calendar day), up to a maximum of 851 days (at an amount of €17.65 per calendar day). If both parents receive and share the childcare benefit

(respecting a minimum of 20 per cent non-transferable days of all childcare benefit days requested), the money can be used within a time span between 456 days (at a daily amount of €41.14) and 1,063 days (at a daily amount of €17.65).

- The income-related childcare benefit (‘*Einkommensabhängiges Kinderbetreuungsgeld’*) refunds 80 per cent of net income in the previous six months, for 365 days (if only one parent receives the childcare benefit) and up to 426 days after the birth (if both parents share the childcare benefit, with 61 non-transferable days (which are around 14 per cent of all childcare benefit days requested). The amount of the income-related option ranges up to a maximum of €80.12 per calendar day (€2,400 per month).
- Although calculated in calendar days, the childcare benefit is paid out monthly.
- For the flat-rate childcare benefit account, a parent may additionally earn 60 per cent of the income he or she earned in the calendar year prior to the child’s birth, or at least €18,000 per year. For the income-related option, additional earnings may not exceed €8,100 a year.
- In case of employed parents, the length of the childcare benefit does not have to correspond to that of Parental leave. However, health insurance corresponds to receiving the childcare benefit and ends even if the parent might still be on Parental leave.
- If parents share their childcare benefit at a minimum ratio of 40:60 and if each parent has received the benefit for at least 124 days, then each parent is entitled to a ‘partnership bonus’ (‘*Partnerschafts-Bonus*’) payment of €500. Thus, together they receive a total of €1,000.
- Payments are not taxed, and the childcare benefit is automatically compensated for inflation in January every year.
- Childcare benefit is funded from the FLAF; see 1a for more details. Total expenditure on this benefit in 2024 was €1.28 billion, including total expenditure on ‘partnership bonus’.

Flexibility in use

- Parental leave may be taken by one parent only (mother or father) or by both parents on an alternating basis (the whole period can be divided into a maximum of three parts alternating between parents, with each part spanning at least two months).
- One parent may take Parental leave alone until the child’s 2nd birthday if they do not live with the second parent in the same household or if the second parent is deceased or does not acknowledge parenthood. Furthermore, if the parent who initially cares for the child is not entitled to parental leave, the other parent can take parental leave at the earliest two months after the Maternity leave. In this case, the Parental leave entitlement is extended until the end of the 24th month of the child’s life.
- The parents cannot change their chosen childcare benefit option. Within the flat-rate childcare benefit account, they can change the duration once (which may lead to back payment or repayment demands). If parents choose the income-related option and one parent does not fulfil the employment or income requirements (i.e. was not employed or earnings were not high enough), he or she receives a childcare benefit of €41.14 per calendar day, which corresponds to the daily amount paid in the shortest duration of the childcare benefit account.

Eligibility (e.g. related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employed parents are entitled to take Parental leave, regardless of their parental status (i.e. as biological, adoptive, or foster parents), partnership status, or sexual orientation. The employer cannot refuse parental leave.
- A permanent (at least 91 days) joint household with the child and identical main legal residence at this address in Austria is required (not citizenship) in order to obtain Parental leave.
- There is no entitlement to take Parental leave for self-employed parents; however, they can claim both the childcare benefit options under the same conditions as applied to employees.
- All parents with a legal residence in Austria (incl. asylum-entitled applicants and their asylum-entitled children), regardless of their employment status and their citizenship, are entitled to receive the flat-rate childcare benefit account.
- Parents are eligible for the income-related childcare benefit if they were employed for at least 182 calendar days before this.
- Individuals granted subsidiary protection status under the Asylum Act 2005 are entitled to childcare allowance for their subsidiary protection-entitled children, provided they are employed (either as employees or self-employed).
- Individuals displaced from Ukraine who have been granted temporary residence rights under Section 62(1) of the Asylum Act 2005 (Displaced Persons Regulation) are entitled to childcare allowance from 1 November 2025 until 30 June 2026 at the latest, provided all general eligibility requirements are met and the additional requirement (employment or registration with the Public Employment Service) is fulfilled.
- In the case of parents living separately, but sharing custody of the child, both parents are eligible to receive and share the childcare benefit, in the same way as parents living together. There are no specific provisions for single parents.
- All parents are only entitled to the full amount of childcare benefit when they carry out mandatory health check-ups with their child by the time their child reaches the 15th month of age. Otherwise, the amount of childcare benefit will be reduced by €1,300 per parent for both models.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent; or delegation of leave to person other than parent)

- In the case of multiple births, the respective daily amount of the childcare benefit account (not the income-related childcare benefit) is increased by 50 per cent for each additional child.
- In the case of one of the two parents being prevented from using the childcare benefit due to death, a prison sentence, or other extreme circumstances, the available parent may receive the full amount of the flat-rate childcare benefit account (not the income-related childcare benefit) for further 91 days.[59]

[59] Single parents who do not yet receive alimony may receive the flat-rate childcare benefit account (N.B. not the income-related childcare benefit) extended by a further 91 days. After divorce/separation, custodial parents should receive alimony from their former spouses – if they do not, or the ex-partner does not pay, childcare benefit is extended.

- Single parents who are entitled to childcare benefit account and earn no more than €8,100 per calendar year can apply for a subsidy of €6.06 per day. Receivers of income-related childcare benefit are not eligible.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g. employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- Each parent has the possibility of postponing three months of Parental leave, up until the child's seventh birthday (or school entry).

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

- Employees have the possibility of taking between two and 12 months off for private reasons (e.g. further education or family reasons). It is based on labour legislation, a mutual agreement between employer and employee, and is, therefore, not a statutory entitlement. This leave period is unpaid.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- For adoptive and foster parents, the same regulations for Parental leave and the childcare benefit apply as for other parents.

Time off for the care of dependents

- Employees have a legal claim to take **days or hours off to care for either all sick persons who live in the same household, or for sick close relatives** who are not living in the same household ('*Pflegefreistellung*') and who are relatives in the ascending or descending line, i.e. biological, adopted or foster children, grandchildren, parents, and grandparents. Employees can take the hours of 1 (average working) week off per year to care for other household or family members; for sick children under the age of 12 years, employees are eligible for the hours of 2 (average working) weeks, with full earnings replacement.
- It is possible to accompany a child under the age of 10 years during an **inpatient stay at the hospital** ('*Begleitungsfreistellung*'). Employees are further entitled to accompany a child up to the age of 14 years during an inpatient rehabilitation stay for up to a total of 4 weeks per year ('*Freistellung für Kinderrehabilitation*'), provided that this accompaniment has been approved by social insurance. During this time, there is a legal entitlement to care leave allowance ('*Pflegekarenzgeld'*) described below.
- If the **child's main carer falls sick or becomes unavailable** (e.g. grandmother), parents are also entitled to stay at home with their child (based on the respective law *Urlaubsgesetz §16*). A shared household is not required.
- Employees who have worked in companies with more than 5 employees for 3 preceding months are entitled to take **long-term care leave ('*Pflegekarenz'*) or part-time care leave ('*Pflegeteilzeit*')**. This leave allows caregivers to provide (informal) care or organise (formal) care for sick

or frail dependants, close relatives, or family members for a duration of one month to three months (initially) per dependant. Long-term or part-time care leave for up to 6 months can be agreed with the company on a voluntary basis. Slightly different regulations apply for public sector employees, but self-employed persons are not eligible for these care leave models. A shared household is not required.

Although employees should seek an agreement with their employer, they have the right to take a (long-term or part-time) care leave unilaterally and initially for 2 weeks, with possibility for extension of another 2 weeks. If employers refuse or postpone long-term or part-time care leave, they must give factual reasons in writing. In principle, a person can only apply once for long-term or part-time care leave for a person in need of care. However, several people can take long-term or part-time leave for the same person in succession: For example, two siblings can apply for care leave for the same parent in different periods.

- Employees have a statutory right to take a maximum of six months' **family hospice leave (*'Familienhospizkarenz'*)** for the purpose of nursing terminally ill family members. If the leave is taken for severely ill children, it can be extended to 9 months. The leave for care of severely ill children may be renewed twice (i.e. in total up to a maximum of 27 months). Again, a shared household is not required.
- Family caregivers who have been primary carer for at least 1 year and are unable to provide care due to illness, vacation or other important reasons can be granted financial support for people who temporarily undertake substitute care (*'Ersatzpflege'*). Financial support is available for substitute care from the very 1st day of the caregiver's absence, but there is a maximum daily limit of substitute care (based on the level of care allowance). The group of substitute carers includes close relatives but also partners of daughters or sons, or the mother or father of the person in need of care, foster parents, aunts and uncles.
- During long-term or part-time care leave or family hospice leave to care for sick children, dependants or family members, employees are entitled to care leave allowance (*'Pflegekarenzgeld'*). Eligible family members are relatives within the direct ascending or descending line, including siblings, adoptive parents, step-parents, step-children, partners or registered partners of a parent, and in-laws. The basic amount of the care leave allowance is income-dependent and is payable at the same level as unemployment benefit (55 per cent of the daily net income), but at least at the level of the monthly marginal earnings threshold (2025: €551.10). Child supplements are payable for dependent children who care for close relatives.

  The maximum duration for the payment is 3 months per employee, or 6 months per dependent person, if the leave is shared and several relatives take care leave for the same person in succession. If the need for care increases by at least one level of care allowance (*'Pflegegeldstufe'*), care leave allowance can also be drawn again for the same relative after a new agreement on care leave. However, the total duration of the care leave allowance may not exceed 12 months for the same person requiring care.

  Caregivers must submit the application for care leave allowance within 2 months of the start of care leave, but in any case before the end of care leave. Receivers of care leave allowance are protected against dismissal for

cause. Low-income families may apply for a hardship allowance during periods of family hospice leave, if the leave causes financial distress (funded from FLAF, see 1a). In 2025, there were 150 hardship allowance grants under the family hospice leave scheme, of which 54 per cent of recipients were male and 45 per cent were female.

- Family carers who have given up or reduced their employment due to their care for a close relative at home (and at allowance level 4 or higher) can apply for a relatives' bonus ('*Angehörigenbonus'*); some receive this bonus without additional requirements. A shared household with the person receiving care is not necessary. The bonus amounts to €134,30 per month.[60]
- Care by relatives is accounted for under inheritance law in Austria. People who have personally provided unpaid, intensive care for a close relative for at least six months in the three years before the relative's death may receive a financial compensation after the relative's death.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Mothers are entitled to 'nursing' leave of 45 minutes per day out of 4.5 to 8 working hours. If a mother works 8 hours or more, she is entitled to a daily nursing leave of two times 45 minutes (or one break of 90 minutes).

Flexible working for carers

- Parents have the legal right to work 'Parental part-time' ('*Elternteilzeit'*) until the child's seventh birthday (or school entry) if they live in the same household with this child, if they are working in companies with more than 20 employees, and if they have been continuously employed with their present employer for at least 3 years. The reduction in working time must amount to at least 20 per cent of their previous working time. It is not possible to work part-time for fewer than 12 hours per week or more than 32 hours per week. Parents working in companies with fewer than 20 employees may enter into an '*agreed Parental part-time*' with their employer, up until the child's fourth birthday.
- The regulations also include the right to change working hours within the day (e.g. from morning to afternoon) without reducing the number of working hours, as well as the right to return to full-time employment.
- Parents are protected against dismissal until their child's 4th birthday, starting 4 months before they start and during the period they work '*Parental part-time*' under the entitlement outlined above. During the remaining period of part-time work (i.e. until the child's seventh birthday or school entry) they are protected against dismissal without cause.
- An employee is not allowed to claim '*Parental part-time*' when their partner is on Parental leave.

[60] Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz (BMASGPK) (2025). Österreichischer Pflegevorsorgebericht 2024, p. 18f. Online available: https://www.sozialministerium.gv.at/dam/jcr:b10ba457-7a8a-4f0f-b74f-67335657f8ce/Pflegevorsorgebericht%202024.pdf

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- None.

Other provisions of leave

- None reported.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal Parental leave available in Austria is 24 months. There is an entitlement to ECEC from five years of age, for part-time attendance of kindergarten (20 hours per week). Attendance is obligatory. So, there is a gap of three years between the leave ending and ECEC entitlement beginning, and a gap of 46 months between the end of the income replacement benefit (if that option is chosen) and any ECEC entitlement.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' on cross-country comparisons page.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

No changes reported.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

It is obligatory for employees to take Maternity leave and almost all mothers are eligible (see 1a); the take-up of leave, therefore, corresponds to the number of births.

b. Paternity leave

Statistics on take-up of 'family time' show an increase in numbers of fathers that claim 'family-time bonus'. From its introduction in 2017 through 2024, the number of children for whom the 'family-time bonus' was claimed increased markedly—from 4,144 births in 2017 to 19,799 in 2024[61]—corresponding to 15.3 per cent of all births in 2023.

c. Parental leave

Data show that almost all eligible (i.e. formerly employed) mothers – between 93 and 96 per cent – took up Parental leave in the final years of the previous scheme.

[61] Kaindl, M. and Schipfer, R.K. (2025) *Familien in Zahlen 2025. Statistische Informationen zu Familien in Österreich* [Families in Figures 2025. Statistical information on families in Austria], Wien: Österreichisches Institut für Familienforschung an der Universität Wien. Aavailable at: https://doi.org/10.25365/phaidra.755

Since replacing the Parental leave benefit with the new childcare benefit in 2002, there has only been information on parents' uptake of the childcare benefit, which is decoupled from Parental leave (see 1c). As there are no official statistics on the uptake of Parental leave, it is difficult to know how many fathers currently take it. Some studies address this issue, but the percentages vary significantly depending on the population under study.

Regarding the number of women and men receiving the childcare benefit, it is crucial to keep in mind the difference to Parental leave, i.e. both parents who are on leave and parents who are not on leave alike are able to receive a childcare benefit. Further, parents are able to decouple the duration of leave from the duration of receiving the childcare benefit. Thus, they might be on leave up to 24 months but might receive the childcare benefit for a shorter period of time (e.g. 12 months income-related benefit) or a longer period of time (e.g. if receiving the flat-rate childcare benefit account) (see 1c).

Recent statistics[62] show that the share of parents who chose the flat-rate childcare benefit has fallen from nearly two thirds of *all* parents to 55 per cent. Among these parents, 34 per cent applied for 12 months and 27 per cent chose about 28 or more months. Despite access to equal sharing, 93 per cent of the principal recipients of the flat-rate childcare benefit were mothers only, in 7 per cent of the cases fathers also received a share of the flat-rate benefit. At the same time, 45 per cent of *all* parents applied for the income-based model paid for 12 to 14 months. The share of fathers in this model is significantly higher in the income-based model, in which fathers also applied for childcare benefit in 26 per cent of all cases. On average, fathers claimed for childcare benefit in nearly 15 per cent of all cases. Over the past years, the share of fathers claiming childcare benefit thus has decreased, while at the same time the proportion of parents who share childcare benefit at a ratio of 50:50 to 60:40 and, therefore, receive the 'Partnership Bonus' rose from 5.8 per cent for births in 2018 to 8.3 per cent for births in 2021[63]. On average, however, mothers take 416 days of KBG funded parental leave following the birth of their first child, while fathers take just nine days.[64]

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[62] Austrian Federal Chancellery (2026) *Auswertung Väterbeteiligung beim Kinderbetreuungsgeld für Geburten in 2022* [Statistics for Father Involvement in Childcare Benefit for births in 2022]. Available at: https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/dam/jcr:6ed46427-5a3b-46f3-8053-1d8264bcc0bc/vaeterbeteiligung_nach_bundeslaender_und_geburtsjahr_2022.pdf
Rille-Pfeiffer C. and Kapella O. (2022): *Evaluierung des neuen Kinderbetreuungsgeldkontos und der Familienzeit. Meta-Analyse* [Evaluation of the new childcare allowance account and family leave. Meta-analysis]. Available at: https://www.oif.ac.at/fileadmin/user_upload/p_oif/Forschungsberichte/FB_37_-_KBG_2021_Metaanalyse.pdf

[63] Riesenfelder, Andreas; Danzer, Lisa (2024) *Wiedereinstiegsmonitoring 2024. Kontinuitäten, Trendbrüche und Nachwirkungen der Covid-Krise* [Return-to-Work Monitoring 2024: Continuities, breaks in trends and the after-effects of the Covid crisis], Wien: Arbeiterkammer Wien, L&R Sozialforschung. Available at: https://www.arbeiterkammer.at/interessenvertretung/arbeitundsoziales/familie/Wiedereinstiegsmonitoring_2024.pdf

[64] Reiter, C. and Spitzer, S. (2026) When Gender Trumps Skills: Employment Trajectories of Austrian Parents After Their First Birth, *Comparative Population Studies* 51, Available at: https://doi.org/10.12765/CPoS-2026-01

d. Other employment-related measures

The number of beneficiaries of care leave allowance for people on care leave (‘*Pflegekarenzgeld*’) has been steadily increasing since 2014 when it was introduced. In 2025, 5,540 people used this paid leave model compared to 2,323 in 2014 when the model was introduced. In 2025, 74 per cent of beneficiaries were female. Among the receivers, in 2025, 2,362 people used the long-term care leave model (‘*Pflegekarenz*’); while 195 used the same model in part-time (‘*Pflegeteilzeit*’); and 830 used the family hospice leave model. In addition, 1,888 people were on care leave to provide support for seriously ill children (incl. part-time); and 485 people accompanied children during rehabilitation stays. (Double counts are possible, as one person may use both a long-term care leave and a family hospice leave.) With regard to substitute care (‘*Ersatzpflege*’) in 2025, a total of 10,663 people received an allowance for substitute care. Of these, 47 per cent were women and around 53 per cent were men.[65]

The most recent study on long-term care leave (‘*Pflegekarenz*’) has revealed that two thirds of long-term care leavers are women. Caregivers who take a leave have a relatively low income and live in municipalities with a smaller population size.[66] Calculations based on estimates regarding the eligible number of employees show an uptake rate of 2.5 per cent[67], while others[68] report a take-up rate of 5 per cent among main caregivers. The average duration of long-term and part-time care leaves amounted to 87 days and 81 days respectively in 2021, i.e. slightly below the three months that this model allows for initially.[69] About 70 per cent of employees taking leave from work to care for frail or sick dependants/family members (i.e. long-term care leave or family hospice leave) are women. Reconciliation works only to a limited extent, according to a qualitative study carried out in 2015/2016.[70]

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[65] Information on 2025 provided by the BMASGPK (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz).

[66] Klotz, J. and Scharf, R. (2020) *Studie zur Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Pflege bei NutzerInnen von Pflegekarenz/-teilzeit: Integrierte Evaluierung durch Registerforschung und Befragung von NutzerInnen* [Study on balancing work and caregiving among users of caregiving leave/part-time: Integrated evaluation through registry research and user surveys]. *Sozialpolitische Studienreihe, Band 27*, Vienna: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection.

[67] Schmidt, A.E., Fuchs, M. and Rodrigues, R. (2016) *Policy brief: juggling family and work – leave from work to care informally for frail or sick family members – an international perspective*. Vienna: European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research

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[69] Data for 2022 from ‘Parliamentary inquiry 10234/J on long-term and part-time care leave’, (‘*Anfragebeantwortung der Anfrage Nr. 10234/J der Abgeordneten Rosa Ecker, MBA und weiterer Abgeordneter betreffend die Inanspruchnahme von Pflegekarenz bzw. Pflegeteilzeit*), available under https://www.parlament.gv.at/dokument/XXVII/AB/9978/imfname_1447272.pdf

[70] Sardadvar, K. and Mairhuber, I. (2018) ‘Employed family carers in Austria: the interplay of paid and upaid work – beyond ‘reconciliation’, *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 43, 61-72.

Belgium[71]

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April 2026

Belgium is a federal state.
For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*Moederschapsverlof/Congé de maternité*) (responsibility of the Federal Department of Employment)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- Employees: 15 weeks: can start from 6 weeks before her baby is due.
- It is obligatory for employees to take leave from 1 week before the due date to nine weeks after delivery.
- Self-employed: 12 weeks.
- It is obligatory for self-employed workers to take leave from 1 week before the due date to two weeks after delivery.
- Unemployed: same rights as employees.

Payment, funding and taxation

- Employees in the private sector: the first month at 82 per cent of earnings, plus 75 per cent for the remaining weeks with an upper limit of €186.80 per day. Statutory civil servants receive their full salary, and contractual civil servants are paid as per the private sector.
- Self-employed mothers receive €908.11 per week (full time) (or €454.05 per week when taken half time) during the first 4 weeks and from week 5 onwards (€830.59 per week full time and €415.30 per week half time).
- Unemployed mothers: in the first month they receive unemployment benefits + 19.5 per cent of the gross salary limited to the salary ceiling taken into consideration by the unemployment sector, after which they receive unemployment benefits + 15 per cent of previous earnings with an upper limit (as for the first month).

[71] Please cite as: Thil, L. and Fusulier, B. (2026). 'Belgium country note', Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A. A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/

- A first payment is made no later than the thirtieth calendar day, counting from the first day of Maternity leave. Then there are monthly payments. These payments are funded through Federal Health Insurance, which is financed by employer and employee contributions and general taxation.
- Maternity leave allowance is taxable income and a withholding tax of 11.11 per cent is deducted from the basic amount. It must be indicated on the annual tax return.

Flexibility in use

- The start of Maternity leave can be delayed until 1 week before the birth.
- Up to 2 weeks of post-natal leave can be taken as 'free days,' thereby spreading Maternity leave over a longer period and facilitating a more gradual re-entry into paid employment.
- Self-employed mothers are entitled to 9 weeks of optional leave to be taken in blocks of 7 days during the 36 weeks following birth. Each week of optional leave can be converted into 2 weeks of part-time leave, where women want or need to go back to work on a part-time basis (for up to 18 weeks).

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All female employees or women on unemployment benefits are entitled to leave with an earnings-related benefit payment.
- Self-employed workers can take Maternity leave but have a separate system, which is less advantageous than the system for employees. They have 12 weeks (instead of 15) and only 3 of those are compulsory. The allowance is also limited to a fixed amount.
- No differences apply to same-sex couples. Only their labour market position determines their benefit access, not the gender composition of their couple, nor its institutional bond (married or unmarried).
- For non-citizens/immigrant workers, their labour market status determines their benefit eligibility. An individual must have been working as an employee for a minimum of 120 days, plus paying social security contributions. For temporary workers, the minimum is 400 hours of work across 6 months.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- Mothers who need the full six weeks of pre-natal leave for health reasons can take an extra week of post-natal leave, i.e., their Maternity leave is extended to 16 weeks. However, the remainder of their pre-natal leave is not added onto their post-natal leave if they fall sick.
- In the case of multiple births, the length of leave increases by two weeks. Maternity leave can also be extended if the baby is hospitalised following birth.
- 'Social' Parental leave is provided in the case of the death of the mother, or if the mother remains in hospital (for longer than a week after delivery) and if the baby is at home. Then the father or co-parent is granted the remaining weeks of the Maternity leave, and paid 60 per cent of his earnings in addition to the payment of the mother's Maternity leave benefit.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusion, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Birth leave (*Geboorteverlof / Congé de naissance*[72]) (responsibility of the Federal Department of Employment)

Length of leave

- 20 working days.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings for the first 3 days paid by the employer, then 82 per cent of earnings for the remaining period with an upper limit of €153.17 per day in April 2026.
- Funded as for Maternity leave.
- Birth leave allowance is taxable income and a withholding tax of 11.11 per cent is deducted from the basic amount. It must be indicated on the annual tax return.

Flexibility in use

- Can be taken during the first 4 months after the birth of the child.
- Can be taken in one term or spread over several periods.
- Self-employed workers may take leave in whole days or half days.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All male employees and self-employed workers are eligible, but unemployed men are not.
- Men in same-sex relationships are eligible.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent) or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

[72] This leave was previously called 'paternity leave'. The official term now changed to 'birth leave' and explicitly mentions fathers and co-parents as target groups of this type of leave.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusion, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave (*Ouderschapsverlof/Congé parental*) (responsibility of the Federal Department of Employment and Social Affairs)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 4 months per parent.
- Leave is an individual, non-transferable entitlement.

Payment, funding and taxation

- €1,058.86 per month (€1,803.91 per month for single parents) in the case of full-time leave in April 2026.
- Payments are taxed. Parental leave allowance is subject to withholding tax. The withholding tax deducted from allowance is 10.13 per cent if a full break and 17.15 per cent if a part-time break. Funded as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- Leave may be taken full-time, part-time (50 per cent) over eight months, one day per week (20 per cent) over 20 months, or a half day a week (10 per cent) over 40 months.
- For part-time leave, the total duration of 8 months can be split into blocks of time (with a minimum of 2 months). For 1/5th of the leave, the total duration of 20 months can also be split into blocks (with a minimum of 5 months).
- Leave can also be combined as follows: 1 month at full-time + 2 months at part-time + 5 months at 1/5th.
- Leave may be taken up until the child's 12th birthday.
- Both parents can take leave at the same time.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employees who have completed one year's employment with their present employer (during the last 15 months) and who have, or expect to have, parental responsibility for a child (in practice, this can refer to: the child's biological mother and/or biological father; the person with whom the child has paternal filiation; the wife or partner of the biological mother of the child; the adoptive parents). Otherwise, the employer can grant this benefit by agreement with the employee. All employees in the public sector are eligible, regardless of the length of their service.
- Non-eligibility: Self-employed workers, platform workers and unemployed persons are not eligible. Eligibility is tied to employee status (as described above).
- No differences exist for same-sex couples or adoption parents. Their labour market position determines their eligibility, not the gender composition of the couple, or their marital status.

In practice, as regards female couples undergoing medically assisted reproduction (MAR), the co-parent ('non-gestational mother') may indeed be legally recognised as the child's parent, but a number of factors must be taken into account If the couple are married, the co-parent is automatically recognised as the child's legal mother, since the joint parental project of the two married women is sufficient to establish a dual parentage link (see the Act of 5 May 2014 establishing the co-parent's legal parentage, and Article 325/2 of the Civil Code on the presumption of motherhood). If the couple are not married, the co-parent must formally recognise the child, but she will be recognised only if the biological mother consents, it is established that she was indeed party to the MAR agreement, and the child is indeed the result of that MAR procedure (see Article 325/4 of the Civil Code on authorisation for such recognition, and Article 7 of the Act of 6 July 2007 on medically assisted reproduction). As regards male couples entering into a surrogacy arrangement, the situation is more complex because there is no statutory regulation in Belgium (meaning that surrogacy is neither expressly permitted nor prohibited). Case law does, however, accept that the ordinary rules on parentage and adoption may be applied in order to establish a legal relationship between the child and the so-called intended parents, whether they are a heterosexual couple, a female couple or a male couple. It is possible to draw up a 'moral agreement' between the gestational carrier ('surrogate mother') and the intended parents, but it is not possible to seek its enforced performance through the courts (meaning that if the surrogate ultimately decides to keep the child, nothing can prevent her from doing so).

As for the parentage male couples, a number of factors must also be taken into account. If the surrogate is not married, one of the two fathers could recognise the child (subject to the conditions set out in Article 329bis of the Civil Code), and the other father could then adopt the child once his spouse and the surrogate have consented to this (which means that she would waive her status as the child's legal mother, since under Belgian law a child cannot have more than two legal parents). If the surrogate is married, her spouse is automatically designated as the child's legal father or mother. One of the two fathers would then have to bring a combined action to challenge paternity/maternity in order to nullify the spouse's paternity/maternity and establish his own paternity by proving that he did in fact provide his sperm and is the child's biological father (see Article 318, §5 of the Civil Code regarding this 'double proof'). Once he has been legally recognised, the other father could then, as in the first case, adopt the child once his spouse and the surrogate have consented (same principle). If it is not possible to proceed under the parentage rules set out above, it is then conceivable for the two fathers to adopt the child jointly 2 months after the child's birth.

- For non-citizens/immigrant workers, their labour market status is what determines their eligibility; they need to be working as a Belgian employee. For recognised refugees in Belgium (i.e., people granted refugee status), access to parental leave is the same as for Belgian nationals, because recognised refugees have full access to the labour market. Any obstacles are therefore mostly de facto (employment stability, employer tenure, administrative steps), not a formal legal exclusion based on refugee status. Asylum seekers are also not explicitly excluded from parental leave because of their asylum status, but in practice they often face structural barriers to access because (a) they can only start working after a waiting period and

(b) Parental leave is tied to employee status, social security contributions and employer tenure.
- Taking the 10 per cent Parental leave is only possible with the agreement of the employer.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- As the leave is allocated per child, the length of leave is increased for multiple births (e.g., each parent of twins gets eight months of leave).
- Parents of disabled children can take leave until their child's 21st birthday.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- The Flemish community (i.e., the government in Flanders) pays an additional benefit bonus (encouragement benefit / *aanmoedigingspremie*) for a maximum of one year for Flemish care leave or Time Credit (see 1d). The amount of this additional payment depends on the sector of employment (e.g., private, social profit or public) and the reduction of employment while taking leave. This additional benefit payment is highest for employees in the social profit sector, namely an additional €639.55 net per month for employees taking a full-time break in April 2026 (for Flemish care leave or, in the case of Time Credit, for care reasons); while for employees in the private sector it is €227.88 net per month (for Parental leave or, in the case of Time Credit, for the reason the leave was taken). The encouragement benefit is not foreseen in case of a 10 per cent Parental leave.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- Employers may postpone granting leave for up to 6 months 'where business cannot cope'. In addition, the request for leave must be addressed to the employer a minimum of 2 months and a maximum of 3 months in advance.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

- There is a Time Credit system (*Tijdskrediet met motief/Crédit-temps avec motif*), which applies to employees in the private sector; and a rather similar scheme – 'career breaks' *(Loopbaanonderbreking/Interruption de carrière)* – applies in the public sector. All eligible workers have a basic right to 1 paid year of this type of leave over their working lives, taken full-time, or 24 months taken part-time or 60 months taken at one-fifth time.
- Leave taken under the Time Credit with motive/career break system can only be taken in order to care for a child younger than eight years (or for a disabled child up to the age of 21 years), to provide palliative care, and/or to care for a severely ill relative. Payment varies according to age, civil status, and years of employment (e.g., it is higher for those employed for five years or more). The maximum for a full-time break is €647.37 per month before taxation in April 2026. The bonus for residents of the Flemish community taking Parental leave also applies to this type of leave.

- Employees need 2 years of previous employment with the same employer in order to be granted payment. There is a guarantee in principle to return to the workplace following a career break or Time Credit with motive period.
- For each company, there is a 5 per cent threshold of employees who can use the Time Credit with motive system at any one time: priorities are settled within the company according to certain rules (e.g., priority in the case of care for a severely ill family member). There is a relative increase of this threshold, corresponding to the number of employees (one more unit per ten employees in a business with more than 50 employees).
- Payments to Time Credit with motive users are funded by the federal social security system, which is financed by contributions from employers and employees, and by the federal government.
- Collective agreements negotiated at sectoral or company level are permitted to extend the Time Credit with motive period up to 51 months for care purposes. This maximum length of leave is applicable regardless of whether the leave is being taken full- or part-time.
- All employees can trace their personal account of Time Credit/career break in an online e-government tool: Break@Work (www.breakatwork.be).

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- The same regulations apply as those for parents having biological children, except that the Parental leave may be taken up until a child's 12th birthday.

Time off for the care of dependants

- Employees may take up to ten days per year of **leave for 'urgent reasons'** (*overmacht/force majeure*) in order to deal with unexpected or sudden circumstances. The legislation defines 'urgent' as making it 'obligatory and necessary' to be present at home instead of being at work (e.g., such as an illness, accident or the hospitalisation of a member of the household). There is no entitlement to payment.
- For a **severely ill family member** (thematic leave: medical care leave), an employee can take full-time leave ranging from 1 to 12 months (and up to 24 months in the case of part-time leave). It must, however, be taken in blocks of one to three months. Benefits paid are the same as for Parental leave.
- Employees may also take up to 2 months of leave, full-time or part-time, for **palliative care** (to be taken in blocks of one month) (thematic leave: palliative leave). Benefits paid are the same as for Parental leave.
- Employees in the private sector and non-statutory workers in the public sector are allowed to take an **informal caregiver leave** to provide help or support to a person who, because of their old age, state of health or disability, is vulnerable and dependent (thematic leave: informal care leave). This does not have to be a family or household member. The entitlement to a full break is a maximum of 6 months over the entire career or a maximum of 12 months in the case of a half-time break or a 1/5th break. The leave is granted only once in a career. The informal caregiver leave can also be taken by statutory civil servants.

- **Foster parents** may take 6 days of leave to allow them to fulfil administrative and legal requirements, and this is also paid as per Parental leave.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- None.

Flexible working for carers

- Full-time employees can negotiate with their employer to work 4 days a week instead of 5. They will still work full-time hours, but these will be compressed into fewer days. This means that an employee can now work more than 8 hours a day at the workplace, but never more than 10 hours. The request must come from the employee and must be in writing; the employer can refuse, but must justify their reasons in writing to the employee. If the employer accepts, a written amendment to the employment contract between the employee and the company must be drawn up, setting out the practical arrangements for the new working hours.
- In Flanders, some employers experiment with flexible contracts adapted to the living conditions of parents with joint custody. These parents have 1 week with more working hours and 1 week with fewer working hours, depending on whether the children reside with them or not. The system is not used in all economic sectors and receiving such a contract depends on the goodwill of the employer.
- Flanders also has a system of flexi-jobs where retired people and some types of employees can earn some additional wages for a predefined period of time or a predefined job.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- No statutory entitlement.

Other provisions of leave

- **Career savings account**. Each employee can voluntary save 'time rights' for use later in their career (time for time principle). 'Time rights' that can be saved are (i) voluntary overtime (up to 100 hours) and (ii) conventional days off (not official days off). Time saved in the system can be taken later in the career. The system is dependent of the sector in which the employee works; to be activated and implemented, this measure must be translated into sectoral collective agreements by the social partners.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of paid post-natal leave available in Belgium is 51 months (including full use of the basic entitlement to Time Credit), but most of this is low paid; leave paid at a high rate ends after Maternity and Birth leave at around four months after birth. There is an entitlement to ECEC from 2.5 years of age: from this age, children are legally entitled to 23 to 33 hours per week of pre-primary education or a place in kindergarten, depending on local authorities. So, there is

technically no gap between the end of Parental leave/Time Credit and an ECEC entitlement, but a substantial gap of more than two years between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

Family credit will be one of the flagship social measures of the next legislative term. Its stated aim is to simplify, harmonise, and better distribute leave related to the birth and upbringing of children, regardless of parents' employment status. In practical terms, family credit would work like a kind of 'backpack' of leave entitlements attached not to the parent, but to the child. It would bring together several existing schemes, including Maternity leave, Parental leave, and career break arrangements for caring for a child. This pool of leave could then be divided freely between the parents, depending on their preferences. There would no longer be any distinction between employees, self-employed workers, or civil servants. Single parents would be able to make full use of the entire entitlement. Another notable innovation is that certain periods of leave could also be taken by grandparents, better reflecting the diversity of family structures. Although the final shape of the reform still needs to be defined, the ambitions are substantial: up to 24 months of leave per child, usable until the child turns 18 years.

As a first step, the government has opted for a gradual approach. From 2026, birth leave will be extended by 1 additional week, which may be taken either as maternity rest or as birth leave by either parent, regardless of employment status. The following stages are expected to begin from 2028, once the budget allocated to the reform will be increased. In the longer term, CD&V (Flemish Christian-democratic political party) has even mentioned the possibility of 24 weeks of leave to be shared between both parents.

4. Uptake of leave

Viewing the ongoing increasing flexibility of numerous types of leave, with all the variation in renumeration and duration across different sectors (private, public, education, etc.), it becomes increasingly difficult to provide accurate data on leave uptake rates in Belgium. Available statistics are mostly administrative and developed to fit the monthly payments of the users. The main source of information is the federal agency in charge (RVA/ONEM[73]), but for a more detailed account, see 'Documentation/Statistics'. The actual number of users according to the type of leave is especially blurred by the variations in the duration of leave. An increasing number of employees opt for one day per week leave, especially among those older workers taking a Time Credit/career break to facilitate the final years of their formal career. This also holds, to a lesser extent, for the uptake of Parental leave, especially among fathers who continue to work but who 'soften' their involvement via this one day per week leave. Such fathers are registered as leave-takers for 20 months (instead of four). The drawback of this flexibility is that it

[73] Available at: www.rva.be / www.onem.be

keeps users much longer in the annual statistics. We therefore invite readers to be very careful in their interpretation of the statistics we provide in this country note.

a. Maternity leave

A period of Maternity leave is obligatory for employees. There is no systematic information on what proportion of women do *not* take the full amount of Maternity leave, an issue which is especially relevant among the self-employed. In 2024, 62,711 employees or unemployed women took Maternity leave (completed in the reference year), with an average of 14.55 weeks of paid leave for the birth of their child. 7,165 self-employed women took Maternity leave, with an average of 11.62 weeks of paid leave.

b. Birth (Paternity) leave

In 2024, 53,102 (compared to 53,993 in 2023) fathers or co-parents (as employees) used the Birth leave for 4 or more days (there is no information about fathers using 3 – or fewer – days of paid leave paid by the employer).[74] On average in 2024, they took 16.33 days of paid leave for the birth of their child, out of a maximum of 20 days available in 2024.

c. Parental leave

There is no information on what proportion of employees are *not* eligible for Parental leave. In 2025, on a monthly average, 106,026 employees used Parental leave, an increase compared to 2024 (101,026). Obviously, most people taking Parental leave are women. In 2010, 38,053 women used Parental leave and in 2025, that number rose to 65,070. The number of men taking Parental leave increased from 13,891 in 2010 to 40,955 in 2025. So, the proportion of fathers among all leave-takers has grown during this period 2010-2025 from 27 to 39 per cent.

Part-time leave options are the most popular, especially among men (only 10 per cent of them used a full-time Parental leave versus 17 per cent for women). 51 per cent of male leave-takers use the 1/5th time option and 45 per cent of female leave-takers, suggesting that it is predominantly used as a flexible measure. In 2025, the 1/10 Parental leave option was taken by 12, 775 men (31 per cent) and 12,729 women (20 per cent).[75]

d. Other types of leave and flexible working

In 2025, 94,724 (in 2024, 86,692) employees in the private sector made use of the Time Credit system, mostly via the part-time formula; in comparison, only 2, 176 individuals (2 per cent) took a full-time break (143 men versus 2,033 women). Part-time use of Time Credit is predominantly used as an end-of-career measure (62 per cent). Men predominantly take Time Credit as end-of-career leave (79 per cent or 37,215 individuals), while women are more equally divided between end-of-career leave (N = 21,213) and part-time general leave (N = 20,755). Overall,

[74] RIZIV/INAMI data..

[75] See: https://interactivestats.services.rvaonem.fgov.be/interactivestats/population/thematicHolidays.jsf?dswid=3121&nocid=true&faces-redirect=true

with the new legislation reducing the appeal of the Time Credit scheme, the number of users has decreased dramatically since 2015 (when N = 149,268).

The use of 'Corona time credit', introduced in the COVID-19 crisis to help companies formally recognised as being in difficulty and/or restructuring, is anecdotal as only 2 people were using it in 2025, mainly the end-of-career Corona time credit.

In 2025, 31,924 civil servants (32,213 in 2024) used the career break system (21,644 of them being women). If men are using the career break system, they generally use more of the end-of-career measure (72 per cent, compared to 57 per cent for women). Compared to 2015 (when N = 72,221), the number of users has decreased significantly. The most significant reason for this decrease is the tightening of the rules around the reasons permitting an individual to take leave. Probably there was also an effect of the measures taken to combat the pandemic, including the widespread use of teleworking. Another reason is that Flemish civil servants and teachers can only use the Flemish care credit system (and no longer have access to the federal career break system). The decrease on the federal level is compensated at the Flemish level, so that there is no decrease in total in the public sector, aside from the decrease caused by the more stringent regulations around an individual's eligibility for taking leave.[76]

[76] See: https://www.tijd.be/politiek-economie/belgie/algemeen/belg-neemt-fors-minder-tijdskrediet/10098519.html

Bosnia and Herzegovina[77]

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April 2026

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is a decentralised state made of two asymmetrically organised entities and the Brčko District of BiH (a self-governing administrative unit in north-eastern BiH). The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) entity is decentralised and made of ten cantons, encompassing the local authorities. Republic Srpska (RS) entity is centralised with only two levels of government – the entity and local authorities. Brčko District (BD) is a local authority independent from entities, where the state legislation applies directly.

The state-level government does not have any direct competencies with regard to social protection and social inclusion policies. These are within the competence of the RS entity, Brčko District and in the FBiH entity under the shared competence of the entity and cantonal governments. Hence, each entity and BD have an independent system of social protection. Leave policies in the country are regulated by entities and BD general labour legislation. Child and family benefits in the FBiH are regulated by the Law on Financial Support to Families with Children at the entity level, and cantonal laws on social assistance. In the FBiH, maternity benefits are financed from cantonal budgets, while the child benefit is financed from the entity budget. In RS, child and family benefits are financed through the RS Fund for Child Protection, which is part of the social insurance system. In BD, child and family benefits are financed from the budget.

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

[77] Please cite as Obradović, N. (2025) 'Bosnia and Herzegovina country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A.A., Kaufmann, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2024*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*porodiljsko odsustvo*) (responsibility of the FBiH Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, RS Ministry of Labour and War Veteran Protection and BD Department for Health and Other Services)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 1 calendar year without interruptions in both entities and BD: leave starts 28 days before the expected delivery date in FBiH and RS, or at the latest ten days before the expected delivery date in BD.
- It is obligatory to take 42 calendar days of Maternity leave in the FBiH and BD and 60 calendar days of Maternity leave in RS, without interruption and counting from the delivery date.

Payment, funding and taxation

- Maternity benefits are regulated at the level of the RS entity, the cantonal level in FBiH, and the level of BD. Table 1 gives an overview of Maternity benefits in the RS, BD and FBiH cantons.

Table 1

Entity / Canton	**Replacement rate**	**Upper limit**
Republic Srpska entity	100 per cent of the beneficiary's average registered gross wage in the last 18 months	None
Brčko District	100 per cent of the beneficiary's average registered net wage in the last 12 months	None
Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) cantons		
Una-Sana Canton	50 per cent of the beneficiary's average net earnings (or average net earnings in the canton) in the six months before the leave starts. It cannot be lower than 50 per cent of the net average wage in the canton for the previous year	None
Posavina Canton	80 per cent of the beneficiary's average net earnings in the 6 months before the leave starts. It cannot be lower than the minimum net wage. All social insurance contributions must be paid at least for the last 6 months before using the benefit	80 per cent of the average net salary in the FBiH in the previous year
Tuzla Canton	90 per cent of the beneficiary's average earnings in the 6 months before the leave starts, or 55 per	Average net salary in the FBiH entity in 2021, which is KM996 [€509.24][78]

[78] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using https://www.xe.com/.

	cent of the average net salary in the canton	
Zenica-Doboj Canton	KM1,000 [€511.29] monthly. In the event that the canton does not have sufficient funds, it is 80 per cent of the beneficiary's average net earnings in the 6 months before the leave starts	Average net salary in the canton
Bosnia-Podrinje Canton	80 per cent of the beneficiary's average net earnings in the six months before the leave starts. For those that were in employment for less than six months, it is 60 per cent of the average net salary in the canton	2½ times average salaries paid in the Canton in previous year
Central Bosnia Canton	50 per cent of the beneficiary's net average earnings in the six months before the leave starts. It cannot be lower than 55 per cent of the minimum net salary in the FBiH in the previous year	It cannot be higher than the average net salary in the FBiH in the previous year
Herzegovina – Neretva Canton	40 per cent of the beneficiary's net average earnings in the six months before the leave starts	Average net salary in the FBiH
Western Herzegovina Canton	The first half of Maternity leave is paid at the level of 70 per cent of the beneficiary's net average earnings in the nine months before the leave starts	None
Sarajevo Canton	For beneficiaries with at least 12 or 6 months of insurance, it is respectively 60 per cent or 30 per cent of the the minimum wage in the FBiH, which in 2026 is KM 1,027 [€525.09]	None (for the employer)
Canton 10	100 per cent of the beneficiary's net salary in the month before the leave starts (it cannot be lower than the minimum salary), under the condition that the mother has at least one month of insurance before commencing the Maternity leave	Average net salary in the FBiH

- Unemployed mothers have the right to a Maternity allowance. Table 2 summarises the benefit amounts and main eligibility criteria in the FBiH, RS and BD.

Table 2		
Entity / Canton	**Eligibility criteria**	**Duration and amount of Maternity allowance**
FBiH entity (the benefit is paid by cantons)	Mother has to be registered as unemployed or in full-time education, and have residency status in the canton	55 per cent of the minimum salary in the FBiH per month for 12 months. The current amount of benefit is KM565 [€288.87], monthly
Overview of additional maternity allowances in the FBiH cantons		

Una-Sana Canton	The canton implements the FBiH law directly	No additional benefit
Posavina	At least three years of residence before appling for the benefit	No additional benefit
Tuzla	Residence in the canton of at least 6 months	The additional benefit amounts as a difference between the average wage in the FBiH from 2021 (in the amount of KM996 [€509.24]) and the amount of FBiH maternity allowance (KM565 [€288.87]). Hence, the additional benefit for 2025 is KM431 [€220.36] monthly
Zenica-Doboj	Residence of at least 6 months in the canton	KM1,000 [€511.29] monthly for 12 months
Bosnia-Podrinje	No additional conditionality	The benefit amounts to the average net wage paid in the FBiH in the preceeding year
Central Bosnia	The canton imple-ments the FBiH law directly. No additional conditionality	No additional benefit
Herzegovina-Neretva	No additional con-ditionality	No additional benefit
Western-Herzegovina	The canton implements the FBiH law. No additional conditionality.	No additional benefit
Canton Sarajevo	Residence in the canton of at least 1 yea	The FBiH benefit is topped up to the amount of average salary in the FBiH entity. Paid for 12 months (counting from the day of birth)
Canton 10	Residence in the canton of at least 3 years	No additional benefit
Republic Srpska entity	The mother or the father must have residence status in the RS of at least 1 year. The mother has to be registered as unemployed at the time of childbirth	KM406 [€207.58] per month for 12 months. For multiple births, third and any subsequent child, the benefit is paid for 18 months
Brčko District	The mother has to be registered as unemployed at least 6 months before childbirth. The beneficiary must have at least two years of registered residence in the Brčko District	50 per cent of the average net salary in BD for 12 months. For twins, the benefit is paid for 18 months

- During Maternity leave, women in registered employment maintain their pension insurance. Employers are expected to continue paying payroll contributions, including the payments for pensions and disability insurance for women on Maternity leave. In the RS, employers are refunded full gross salary (including expenses for social insurance contributions) by the RS Fund for Child Protection. Only in some cantons in the FBiH, the employers receive a refund of paid social insurance contributions. The self-employed are expected to pay social contributions and taxes (in the RS, they are refunded); otherwise, they will not maintain their pension insurance. In the RS, women may retire one year earlier for each child born. General conditions for an old age pension are 15 years of insurance and 65 years of

age. This means that women that gave birth to one child may retire aged 64 and with 14 years of insurance.
- In the FBiH, Maternity benefits are funded by cantons from general taxes. In RS, the benefits are funded by the RS Fund for Child Protection, financed from payroll contributions. In BD, the benefits are funded from general taxes.

Flexibility in use

- None.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Maternity benefits are provided for all categories of socially insured employees and self-employed, for whom the employment contract and employment status envisage the payment of the full social contributions. However, Maternity benefits are provided only to those who can prove the payment of contributions for a period of at least one year before commencing the Maternity leave (Canton 10 is an exception, where the requirement is only one month of employment). In addition, in the RS, an employer must not have any outstanding obligations towards the Tax Authority.
- For Maternity allowances aimed at unemployed women, eligibility criteria are listed in the table above.
- The right to Maternity leave of same-sex couples is not regulated. The right can be used by one female partner if she is in employment and paying full payroll social insurance contributions (she would be treated as a single mother).

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to a person other than the mother

- In the FBiH, RS, and BD, if a mother gives birth to a stillborn child or if a child dies before the end of Maternity leave, the mother has the right to prolonged leave; the length is prescribed by a medical doctor and cannot be less than 45 days, counting from the day of birth or death. During this period, the mother receives financial compensation as for Maternity leave.
- If the parent taking leave dies or cannot exercise the right for any other justified reason, leave can be transferred to the other parent.
- In RS and BD, Maternity leave is extended to 18 months in the case of the birth of twins, third or any subsequent child. In addition, in BD, extended Maternity leave of 18 months is also stipulated for women with disabilities; if both parents work, this extended Maternity leave can be used by fathers with disabilities.
- If both parents work and if the mother approves (i.e., transfer her right), the father can use Maternity leave upon expiry of the first 42 days of leave after childbirth in the FBiH and BD, and of the first 60 days of leave in RS. The father may also exercise the right to Maternity leave from the start if the mother leaves the child, dies or is prevented from using that right for other justified reasons (e.g., serving a prison sentence, serious illness).

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- For regional difference see Tables 1 and 2 above.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave

No statutory entitlement.

c. Parental leave

No statutory entitlement.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

- One of the parents (including adoptive or foster parents and legal guardians) has the right not to work until the child turns 3 years of age. During that time, the parent's rights and obligations regarding their employment are suspended, and the right to compulsory health insurance is maintained. This leave period is unpaid, so contributions for pension insurance are not paid during that period, but the employer should pay healthcare contributions for the employee.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- In the FBiH entity, employed/self-employed foster and adoptive parents have the same Maternity leave rights as biological parents, except for the right to a paid break for breastfeeding during working hours. The law in the FBiH does not give the right to fathers to use Maternity leave in case of adoption or foster care.

Time off for the care of dependants

- The FBiH Labour Law stipulates up to 7 days of leave in 1 calendar year paid by the employer in case of **marriage, spouse giving birth, sickness or death of the immediate family or household member, and voluntary blood donations**. In the RS and BD, this type of leave cannot be longer than 5 working days, except in the RS where it can be longer in the event of the death of a close family member (it is not stipulated how long). This type of leave has to be approved by the employer.
- In BD, the parent (including adoptive parent or foster care parent) of a child with a malignant disease or severe other disease has the right to be absent from work during the **health care treatments**. The right is granted based on medical documentation. During this period, the parent receives a full salary (Article 83a).
- Laws on health insurance stipulate the right to sickness benefits for the care of the family member.
    - In the RS, 15 days of leave per year can be approved for the **care of a child aged below 15 years**. For a child older than 15 years, a spouse and a parent, the leave can be a maximum of seven days in one calendar

year. If a family member below the age of 18 years has a difficult health condition (such as cerebral difficulties, malignant disease or similar), the leave can be longer but cannot exceed four months in one calendar year. Leave of 15 or 7 working days is funded by the employer, while for leave of four months the employer is refunded three months of salaries by the RS Health Insurance Fund.

- In BD, insured persons have the right to leave and corresponding salary compensation (paid in the amount of 80 per cent of previous earnings) for the **care of child or spouse**:
  - 15 days in one calendar year for the care of child aged below 15, and four months maximum for all diseases;
  - seven days in one calendar year for the care of a family member aged 15 and above (i.e., child and spouse), and two months maximum for all diseases.
- In the FBiH, the employer pays the salary compensation, which is fully refunded by the cantonal health insurance fund (procedure and rules regarding this benefit in the FBiH are defined by bylaw legislation adopted by cantonal health insurance funds and vary across cantons).

Specific provision for (breast) feeding

- An employed mother who returns to work before the child turns 1 year has the right to two daily breaks for breastfeeding. The FBiH law does not specify the lenght of time for breastfeeding; but in RS, the specified time for breastfeeding is 60 minutes in addition to the standard break time, while the BD law stipulates two periods of 60 minutes per day. The time used for daily breaks for breastfeeding is counted in the regular working hours and is paid at 100 per cent of earnings.

Flexible working for carers

- In the FBiH, after ending Maternity leave and until the child turns 1 year, the mother has the right to work part-time. In the case of twins, 3rd and any subsequent child, the mother has the right to work part-time until the child reaches 2 years of age (if the cantonal legislation does not stipulate longer leave). The father can also use this right if the mother works full-time. Parent working part-time is paid only for the actual hours worked (i.e., there is no compensation for non-worked hours).
- At the end of Maternity leave, one of the parents (in BD and RS this could also be an adoptive parent) of a child in need of special care due to a severe degree of developmental difficulties has the right to work part-time (half of the full working hours) until the child reaches 3 years of age. In the FBiH and BD, this right can be used only by a single parent or when both parents are employed and under the condition that the child is not placed in institutional care. In addition, the FBiH Law stipulates that parents have the right to financial compensation for the hours they are not working, in accordance with special legislation (however, this provision is ineffective because the right remains unregulated and parents working part-time are paid only by their employer for the actual hours working). In RS and BD, the parent receives compensation for the loss of salary, which covers the difference between the earned part-time salary (paid by the employer) and the parent's full salary (i.e., the salary they would have if working full-time). In BD, this

compensation is financed from the BD budget, while in RS by the RS Fund for Child Protection.
- In BD, the parent (including adoptive parent and foster care parent) of a child with mental developmental difficulties and in the RS with general psychophysical difficulties, who are not placed in institutional care, has the right to work part-time. This provision can be used based on a recommendation given by the medical doctor. In addition, the parent has the right to salary compensation (up to the amount they would have if working full time), paid from the BD budget. In the RS, the compensation is paid by the RS Fond for Child Protection.

Antenatal appointments and care

- A pregnant worker has a right to paid leave – equivalent to 1 working day – to attend pre-natal examinations and other health examinations related to pregnancy. Pregnant workers are obliged to announce the intention to use this right to the employer in a timely manner.

Other provisions of leave

- **Death of a member of the immediate family or household.** This matter is regulated under umbrella provisons of paid leave for personal reasons under Article 53 of the Law on Labour of the FBiH, Article 89 of the Law on Labour of the RS, and Article 68 of the Labour Law of BD. These provisions stipulate that an employee is entitled to paid leavefor up to 7 working days in the FBiH and up to 5 working days in RS and BD within 1 calendar year. Such leave may also be granted in the event of marriage, the birth of a child, serious illness, or in other similar circumstances, in accordance with the applicable collective agreement, internal regulations, and employment contract. In all cases, the use of such leave is subject to approval by the employer.
- The legislation in RS further provides that the duration of leave may be extended only in the case of the death of a member of the immediate family.
- For the purposes of these provisions, members of the immediate family include: a spouse or cohabiting partner; a child (born in or out of wedlock, adopted, a stepchild, or a child without parental care taken into custody); father, mother, stepfather, stepmother, and adoptive parent; as well as grandparents (on both the paternal and maternal side) and siblings, provided that siblings live in the same household.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave available in Bosnia and Herzegovina is just under 12 months, paid at a full rate in some areas. The leave policy and early childhood education and care (ECEC) policy are not coordinated. Neither entity nor canton in the FBiH guarantes universal access to ECEC services. Also, these services are not free of charge for parents.

ECEC facilities in the country are organised in accordance with children's age: nurseries for children under the age of three, and kindergartens for children aged three to six years. However, access to and affordability of ECEC in the country is a

severe challenge due to the lack of available facilities and the cost of services[79]. A significant number of children cannot enter ECEC due to a lack of places, primarily in public institutions in larger urban centres. In the school year 2025/2026, there were 9,964 children waiting for placement in a preschool institution, and this number increased by 14.4% compared to the previous school year.[80]

The latest national statistics for the year 2025/2026 report altogether 48,246 children from birth to 6 years attending some form of ECEC institution, which is an increase of 5.4 per cent compared to the previous pedagogical year.[81] This is 23.5 per cent of all children of this age (13 per cent of all children under 3 years and 31 per cent of all 3 to 6 year olds).

According to the Framework Law on Early Childhood Education and Care BiH,[82] it is obligatory for children aged 5 years to attend a preparatory preschool programme (PPP); however, the implementation of the law is devolved to lower levels of the government, i.e., cantons in the FBiH, RS and BD, resulting in an unequal provision of these services and different degrees of coverage. It is important to note that the PPP programme inclused only 150 (in some places up to 300) teaching hours, organised for two or three teaching hours per day, few days a week. Therefore the PPP cannot be considered as a care solution for children of working parents.

No information for ECEC attendance levels in 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

No changes reported.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

There is no publicly available recent information regarding uptake of leave in the entities.

The latest data on annual uptake of leave in the RS is from 2025. In 2025, the RS Fund for Child Protection[83] approved a total of 5,255 new beneficiaries of financial compensations during Maternity leave, out of which 59 were fathers. In 2025, the

[79] For more details, see Nikolina Obradović (2021). Bosnia and Herzegovina's Family Policy Challenges in Meeting the European Union's Standards and Recommendations in *Croatian Journal of Social Policy*, (3) 2021.
[80] Agency for Statistics of BiH, First Release, Demograpy and Social Statistics (2026) *Pre-School Educaiton Upbringing and Education in the School Year 2025/2026 (preliminary data*). Available at: https://bhas.gov.ba/data/Publikacije/Saopstenja/2026/EDU_07_2025_Y2_0_BS.pdf
[81] Ibid.
[82] Official Gazette of BiH, no. 88/07.
[83] Information is on file with the author. It was received on 27 March 2026.

average montly number of the Maternity allowance for unemployed mothers beneficiaries in the RS was 3,708 of which 3 were fathers.

According to information for the year 2020 provided by the FBiH Ministry of Labour and Social Policy,[84] which collects information from responsible cantonal ministries, financial compensation during Maternity leave was used by 8,091 beneficiaries, while 4,708 beneficiaries used the Maternity allowance. There is no information about the number of fathers using maternity benefits.

b. Paternity leave

No statutory entitlement.

c. Parental leave

No statutory entitlement.

[84] Information is on file with the author. It was received on 21 March 2022.

Brazil[85]

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April 2026

Brazil is a federal state.

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

Note on coverage of leave entitlements: Leave entitlements in Brazil are primarily governed by the Labour Law (*Consolidação das Leis do Trabalho – CLT*) which applies to the whole country, but only to employees with regular work contracts or those that contribute to the Social Security Institute (INSS). Only half of the Brazilian labour force works in formal jobs and are thus entitled to such benefits. The conventions and collective agreements negotiated by trade unions may eventually extend such rights.

a. Maternity leave (*licença-maternidade*) (responsibility of the National Institute of Social Security/INSS, Ministry of Social Security)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- Private sector: 4 months (counted in calendar days), which can be extended to 6 or 8 months if the employer voluntarily adheres to the Company-Citizen Programme (*Programa Empresa Cidadã*). It may be taken from the 8th month of pregnancy.
- Public sector: 6 months in the federal public sector (counted in calendar days); at state and municipal levels, entitlement to the additional months depends on the approval of the authorities (most state authorities approve this extended leave, but only a minority of municipalities do so). It may be taken from the 8th month of pregnancy.

[85] Please cite as: Fraga, A. and Sorj, B. (2026) 'Brazil country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A. A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings, with no upper limit on payment. In the case of a variable salary (i.e., because of commission, gratuity, overtime, or bonus pay), the payment is equivalent to the average of the last 6 months of work.
- If leave in the private sector is extended to 6 months, the benefit during the extra 60 days is paid by the employer with the costs covered by fiscal deductions.
- In case of miscarriage or legal abortion (on the grounds of rape, risk to the mother's life, or a foetus with anencephaly), the Maternity benefit is paid for 2 weeks.
- Payments are taxed at 7.5, 9, 12 or 14 per cent, depending on earnings. This deduction for the social security system is paid by the beneficiary. These payments do not affect pensions; pension contributions are paid by the state.
- Funded for employees by contributions into a social security fund paid by employers and employees. Employers pay 20 per cent of their salary bill (domestic employers pay eight per cent of the domestic employee's salary as contribution). Employers cannot claim the payment back and it is not recoverable. Employees pay on a sliding scale according to their salary: 7.5 per cent if under BRL1,621.00 [€277.94][86]; 9 per cent between BRL1,621.01 [€277.94] and BRL2,902.84 [€497.73]; 12 per cent between BRL2,902.85 [€497.73] and BRL4,354.27 [€746.59]; and 14 per cent between BRL4,354.28 [€746.59] and BRL8,475.55 [€1,453.23], which is the upper limit for social security payments. For self-employed workers and business owners, leave is funded entirely by their own contributions.

Flexibility in use

- Women may continue with paid work until the birth of their child if they explicitly declare that it is their personal decision to do so.
- In the private sector Company-Citizen Programme, there are two possibilities; in both, the company maintains the full salary. In the first possibility, the employee has 6 months of Maternity leave at home taking care of her child. In the second, the employee has 8 months of Maternity leave, organized as follows: 4 months at home taking care of the child and another 4 months at the company with working hours reduced by 50 per cent.
- In the private sector, if leave is extended to 6 months, the 2 extra months can be shared between the employee and her partner, provided that both work in companies participating in the Company-Citizen Programme.
- In the event of the death of the mother, the partner is entitled to Maternity leave. The payment duration of the benefit is then calculated according to the period to which the woman would have still been entitled. The leave is not otherwise transferable to the father.

[86] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://data.ecb.europa.eu/currency-converter.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All women who work and contribute to social security are eligible, whether through employment with a signed work card, as a temporary employee, or self-employed.
- If the mother has contributed to social security, the unemployed mother then has the right to Maternity leave for up to one year (after the termination of the last employment contract), or up to two years (if she received unemployment insurance), or up to three years (if she received unemployment insurance and contributed for 120 months or more). For self-employed and individual micro-entrepreneurs, they are eligible for up to one year after their last contribution or up to 2 years (if she contributed for 120 months or more). Individual/facultative taxpayers (who do not work) are eligible up to 6 months after their last contribution.
- Housewives or students who do not earn a salary, but who pay monthly optional social security contributions to retain coverage, can enjoy the same benefit as salaried workers after contributing for at least ten months. In this case, the amount of maternity benefit she will be paid is that of the reference salary contribution (e.g., if she contributes based on one minimum salary, she receives a minimum salary per month while on leave).
- Single adoptive fathers are entitled to Maternity leave.
- In gay and lesbian couples, only one partner (man or woman) is entitled to Maternity leave.
- Foreigners working in Brazil can enrol in social security, make monthly contribution and have the right to Maternity leave, without the requirement of citizenship or permanent residency.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- The mother has the right to a further 15 days' leave in some specific situations, such as when her life or the baby's life is at risk.
- If the mother dies during childbirth or during Maternity leave, the father can apply for the benefit and complete the remaining period of the leave.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- The conventions and collective agreements negotiated by trade unions may eventually extend leave rights.
- The employer cannot postpone the use of leave.

b. Paternity leave *(licença-paternidade)* (responsibility of the National Institute of Social Security/INSS, Ministry of Social Security)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- Private sector: 5 consecutive calendar days. Leave can be extended to 20 days if the employer voluntarily adheres to the Company-Citizen Programme (*Programa Empresa Cidadã*).
- Public sector: 20 calendar days in the federal sector; at state and municipal levels, entitlement to the additional period depends on the approval of the local authorities.

Payment, funding and taxation

- One hundred per cent of earnings.
- Paternity leave is taxed at 7.5, 9, 12 or 14 per cent, depending on earnings. This deduction for the social security system is paid by the beneficiary and does not affect pensions.
- Paid by employers. They cannot claim the payment back and it is not recoverable.

Flexibility in use

- None.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Fathers who work with a signed work card and those in the federal public sector have the right to Paternity leave. Those making other types of contribution do not yet have this right (i.e., facultative, special insured, and individual micro-entrepreneur). Unemployed fathers have no right to Paternity leave.
- Foreigners working in Brazil can register for social security, make monthly contributions, and have the right to Paternity leave, without the requirement of citizenship or permanent residency.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave

No statutory entitlement.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- In the private sector, mothers who adopt a child are entitled to Maternity leave of 120 consecutive days paid at the rate of their full salary (the same as biological mothers). In the public sector, mothers who adopt children are entitled to 180 consecutive days of leave paid at their full salary (also the same as biological mothers).
- If the adoptive mother dies, the spouse can use the leave for the remaining time. This is also the case for gay and lesbian couples.
- When the adoptive mother does not pay social security contributions, all the benefits of Maternity leave go to the adoptive father (on the condition that he pays social security contributions).

Time off for the care of dependants

- In the public sector, leave is granted to **care for a sick spouse or companion, parent, child, stepfather/stepmother, stepchild or dependent**, subject to approval by an official medical board which must decide that the employee's direct assistance to the sick person is essential and must be during working hours. Leave may be granted for up to 60 days at 100 per cent of earnings, after which a further 90 days of leave is possible, but with no payment. For the private sector, leave to care for a sick dependent can be part of a collective agreement, but not a labour law or regulation.
- Public servants who **accompany their relatives with disabilities in health-related activities** are entitled to special working time, without having to compensate the hours spent in caring: they receive their full salary during this period.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

b. The Labour Law allows for two 30 minute breaks during the working day for breastfeeding, up until the child reaches the age of 6 months. This right is not transferable to another family member.

Flexible working for carers

- No statutory entitlement.

Antenatal appointments and care

- No statutory entitlement.

Other provisions of leave

- **Death of close relative**. Paid leave for up to 2 consecutive days is granted in the case of the death of a spouse, ascendant or descendant in family line, sibling or a person declared on the employee's work card (and for the purposes of social security) as financially dependent.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is six and a half months, paid at full earnings replacement. There is no entitlement to ECEC.

Labour Law (CLT) states that every company with a workplace employing at least 30 women over the age of 16 must maintain a suitable place, in which female employees can leave their babies under supervision and with adequate care, up to the sixth month of the breastfeeding phase. As a substitute for this requirement, the company can adopt a childcare assistance system: instead of maintaining a nursery in the workplace, the company pays a monthly amount to female employees who have children. The idea is that with this money they can look for a nursery or nanny outside the company. In this case, the benefits must be granted to every employee with a young child, regardless of the number of female employees in the establishment, and they must be the object of collective negotiation.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

No changes reported.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

No information available, but close to 100 per cent uptake is likely as leave is a legal entitlement, plus payment is made from the social security fund, not by the employer.

b. Paternity leave

No information available, but we can suppose that the uptake is very high.

c. Parental leave

No statutory entitlement.

Bulgaria[87]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*otpusk poradi bremennost i ragdane*[88]) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy; National Social Security Institute)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 410 calendar days, from which 45 calendar days must be taken before the expected date of birth. Employers are obliged to accept women's requests for Maternity leave.
- It is obligatory to take the first 135 days, and these are divided into three periods:
  - The first period includes 45 calendar days before the expected date of birth (pre-natal leave/pregnancy leave). If a woman gives birth before the 45th day, the remaining days are added to the rest of the leave. If the delivery is delayed after the 45th day, the period is extended with a new medical statement until delivery. The total length of the pre-natal leave/pregnancy leave cannot exceed 93 days.
  - The second period includes 42 calendar days after childbirth (post-natal leave). Women are also entitled to these 42 days in case of stillbirth, death of child soon after birth, or if the child is to be adopted. In these cases, the post-natal leave can be extended if a medical examination proves that the woman's health and labour capacity are not fully recovered.
  - The third period includes the remaining 48 calendar days until the 135th day. The post-natal leave is thus a total of 90 calendar days after childbirth.

[87] Please cite as: Dimitrova, E., Kotzeva, T. and Ilieva, K. (2026) 'Bulgaria country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A. A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

[88] Since 2018, adoption leave has been treated under a separate article of the Labour Code.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 90 per cent of the mean gross salary or the mean insurance income, which the woman has received in the last 24 months preceding the leave. The financial compensation cannot be lower than the minimum salary BGN1,077 [€550.67] [89] from the period 01.01.2025 - 31.12.2025; and there is an upper limit at a monthly maximum insurance income of BGN3,750 [€1,917.37] for the period 1 January 2025-31 March 2025 and BGN4,130 [€2,111.67] for the period 1 April 2025-31 December 2025. The same regulation applies for self-employed women.
- In the case of a woman giving birth while still on Maternity/Parental leave, i.e. when two periods of Maternity leave overlap, during the new period of Maternity leave the Maternity pay remains at the level received for the previous child, if that was higher.[90]
- Payments are not taxed.
- Funded by the National Social Security Institute through employer and employee contributions.

Flexibility in use

- None.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Women taking Maternity leave have the right to receive financial compensation if they have been insured at the National Insurance Institute against the risk of general illness and pregnancy for at least 12 months (i.e., they were employed and paid contributions to cover the risk of maternity). The same regulation applies for self-employed women.
- With the agreement of the mother, once the child reaches 6 months (and until the 410th calendar day), leave can be transferred to the father if he has been paying insurance at the National Insurance Institute for at least 12 months or to one of the grandparents if s/he is employed.
- If a woman has not worked or has not paid social insurance against the risk of general illness and pregnancy, she can receive a monthly benefit until the child's first birthday to the value of BGN200 [€102.26]. This is dependent on means-testing, with the income per family member being less than BGN810 [€414.15] for the period 1 January 2025 – 31 March 2025 and BGN860 [€439.72] for the period 1 April 2025-31 December 2025. The conditions and procedure for receiving these benefits are stipulated in the Family Allowance Law for Children. Payments are not taxed.
- If the mother (adopter) is a student studying in full-time education, she is entitled to receive a one-time allowance of BGN2,880 [€1,472.54] in 2025. She has the right to receive the financial allowance through two instalments: at birth of the child and enrolment and after enrolment for the next

[89] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://data.ecb.europa.eu/currency-converter.

[90] Since the income reference period will span over months on Maternity leave / Parental leave with the previous child, either of which is lower paid than the income from employment, this option protects those mothers who did not return to work in order to take care of their children.

semester. The allowance can be received until the child becomes one year old.
- The payment of maternity benefits is suspended if the parent receiving them works under a second employment contract that includes coverage for general illness and maternity. The full payment of benefits will not be discontinued if a civil or temporary contract is concluded during the leave, provided that it is not considered an employment relationship.
- Women living in Bulgaria with Bulgarian citizenship or those with foreign citizenship who have paid social insurance to account for the risk of general illness and pregnancy in the last 12 months (regardless of the country where social insurance has been paid).

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- The leave allocated for pregnancy, childbirth, and child adoption (plus the financial compensations related to it) ends in the case of stillbirth, death of the child, if the child is given for adoption, or the child is enrolled in a public childcare institution. The exact end of leave depends also on a medical statement certifying that the mother is in good health and can return to work.
- The first 135 calendar days of leave are available only to the mother since they aim to ensure mothers are the ones who care for children in the first months of life; the leave also serves for recovery of mothers' health and labour capacity. But with the agreement of the mother, once the child reaches 6 months (and until the 410th calendar day), leave can be transferred to the father if he has been paying insurance to the National Insurance Institute for at least 12 months. The financial compensation for this period is 90 per cent of average gross monthly earnings or the average insurance income that the father received in the last 24 months preceding the birth of the child. The financial compensation cannot be lower than the minimum salary, BGN107 [€54.71] from the period 01.01.2025 - 31.12.2025, and there is an upper limit at a monthly maximum insurance income of BGN3,750 [€1,917.37] for the period 1 January 2025 – 31 March 2025 and BGN4,130 [€2,111.67] for the period 1 April 2025-31 December 2025. The same regulation applies for self-employed men.
- The Maternity leave can be transferred not only to the father but also to one of the grandparents. The condition is that the grandparent is employed. The grandmother or grandfather to whom the leave has been transferred is entitled to monetary compensation from the National Social Security Institute until the child reaches 1 year. Its amount is 90 per cent of the mean insurance income from the last 24 months.
- When the mother of a child up to 2 years or the adoptive mother of a child up to 5 years is deprived of parental rights or the exercise of parental rights over the child is granted to the father (adoptive parent), the relevant part of the leaves for childbirth (Maternity leave), adoption and raising a child (Parental leave) may be used by the father (adoptive parent) without requiring the mother's consent.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave (*otpusk po bashtinstvo*) and Paternity leave for raising a child up to 8 years of age (*Otpusk za otglejdane na dete do 8-godishna vazrast ot bashtsta)* (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy; National Social Security Institute)

Length of leave

- 15 calendar days.
- A further 2 months of leave for fathers is available under certain conditions – 'Paternity leave for raising a child up to 8 years of age' (*Otpusk za otglejdane na dete do 8-godishna vazrast ot bashtsta).*

Payment, funding and taxation

- The financial compensation for the period of 15 calendar days Paternity leave is 90 per cent of average gross monthly earnings, or the average insurance income in the last 24 months preceding birth of the child. The regulation also applies for self-employed men. The financial compensation cannot be lower than the minimum salary, BGN1,077 [€550.67] for the period 1 January 2025-31 December 2025. There is an upper limit on payment of a monthly maximum insurance income of BGN3,750 [€1,917.37] for the period 1 January 2025 – 31 March 2025 and BGN4,130 [€2,111.67] for the period 1 April 2025-31 December 2025.
- Payments are not taxed.
- Paternity leave is counted as work experience and cannot be transferred to the mother.
- Paternity leave is funded in the same way as Maternity leave.
- Paternity leave for raising a child up to 8 years of age is paid at BGN780 [€398.81] per month.

Flexibility in use

- None for the 15 calendar days Paternity leave.
- Paternity leave for raising a child up to 8 years of age can be used in one or several periods of time until the child reaches 8 years old.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- The father has the right to use Paternity leave if the mother and the father are married or live in a shared household. The father can use it from the day when the new-born child is discharged from the hospital (there is no indication as to whether or not it can be postponed to a later date).
- The father can use 15 calendar days of Paternity leave if he has paid social insurance for at least 6 months. The same regulation applies for self-employed men.

- The leave ends in case of the death of the child; divorce; if the child is given up for adoption or the child is enrolled in a public childcare institution.
- Men living in Bulgaria, with either Bulgarian or foreign citizenship, are eligible if they have paid social insurance against the risk of general illness and pregnancy over the last 6 months (regardless of the country where social insurance has been paid).
- If the father has used two or more months of Maternity, Parental or Adoptive leave, he is not eligible for "Paternity leave for raising a child up to 8 years of age" (*Otpusk za otglejdane na dete do 8-godishna vazrast ot bashtsta/osinovitelia)*; if he has previously used less than two months of these leave, he may take as many days of "Paternity leave for raising a child up to 8 years of age" (*Otpusk za otglejdane na dete do 8-godishna vazrast ot bashtsta)* as will complete the two months designated to the father. The condition to use the leave is that the father is employed and has at least 12 months of paid social insurance regardless of the time of the payment. The monthly benefit is BGN780 [€398.81] in 2025. The leave can be used at one time or in separate periods of time. The leave is counted as work experience.
- The payment of Paternity leave benefits is suspended if the father receiving them works under a second employment contract that includes coverage for general illness and maternity. The full payment of benefits will not be discontinued if a civil or temporary contract is concluded during the leave, provided that it is not considered an employment relationship.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave (*otpusk za otglegdane na dete do 2 godishna vazrast*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy; National Social Security Institute)

Length of leave

- Until the child reaches 2 years of age.
- Leave is claimed by the mother, but can be fully transferred to the father or a grandparent if they are in employment.

Payment, funding and taxation

- A monthly benefit of BGN780 [€398.81], universal to all beneficiaries and independent of their income. The payment is determined annually by the State budget. Payments are not taxed.
- Parental leave is counted as work experience.
- Funded in the same way as Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- If the mother (whether adoptive or biological) decides not to use the paid Parental leave fully or in part after the 135th day, she is entitled to receive partial financial compensation for the remaining period of the leave. This compensation is set at 50 per cent of the monthly benefit for parents taking leave, i.e., BGN390 [€199.41] for the period 1 January 2025-31 December 2025. The same rule applies if the paid Parental leave is taken by another person who wants to return to work.
- The same condition applies for self-employed mothers should they decide to start working and renew their social security payments before the end of the paid Parental leave.

Eligibility

- Parental leave is firstly the mother's right. If the mother (adoptive or biological) of a child below the age of 2 years dies or gets seriously ill and cannot take care of the child, the leave can be taken by the father. With the father's agreement, the leave can be transferred to one of the grandparents if they are employed and have paid social security against the risk of pregnancy and general illness for at least 12 months.
- The parents or other leave-takers have paid social insurance for at least 12 months.
- Parental leave cannot be used at the same time by the mother and the father or one of the grandparents.
- Parental leave ends if the child is enrolled in a public childcare institution: the rationale for this is that the leave is given to the mother in order to ensure that she will provide permanent care for the child. The leave also ends if the child is given for adoption.
- There is no special regulation for same sex-couples. Same-sex couples are illegal in Bulgaria.
- The payment of Parental leave benefits is suspended if the parent receiving them works under a second employment contract that includes coverage for general illness and maternity. The full payment of benefits will not be discontinued if a civil or temporary contract is concluded during the leave, provided that it is not considered an employment relationship.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- With the agreement of the mother, paid Parental leave can be taken by one of the grandparents if they are employed, on the condition that the grandparent has paid social insurance for at least 12 months, regardless of when this payment was made.

- If both parents of a child below the age of 2 years die and the child is not enrolled in a childcare institution, the paid Parental leave can be used by the guardian, and – with their agreement – by one of the biological grandparents of the child.
- When the mother of a child up to 2 years of age or the adoptive mother of a child up to 5 years of age is deprived of parental rights or the exercise of parental rights over the child is granted to the father (adoptive parent), the relevant part of the leaves for childbirth (Maternity leave), adoption and raising a child (Parental leave) may be used by the father (adoptive parent) without requiring the mother's consent. Previously, the law limited this transfer of leaves to the father only in the case of the mother dying or becoming seriously ill and unable to care of the child.
- The father or adoptive parent to use parental leave after 6 months of the child – these are the cases when the mother is deprived of parental rights or the exercise of parental rights is granted to the father by law. In other words, this is not a question of voluntary transfer (with the permission of the mother), but the right of the father to use parental leave is legally regulated. Until the change, fathers can only use this leave in cases where the mother has died or is seriously ill and with the mother's voluntary consent to transfer the leave to the father.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks (*neplaten otpusk za otglegdane na dete do 8 godishna vazrast*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy)

- Unpaid childcare leave to look after a child up to the age of 8 years can be taken by each parent (adoptive or biological) for up to 6 months, after the period of the Parental or Adoption leave has expired. It can be taken by both parents (though not simultaneously) if they are in employment and if the child is not placed in a publicly-funded childcare institution. Up to 5 months of this leave can be transferred to the other parent.
- The entitlement period is extended to 1 year in the case of a single parent (adoptive or biological) or a guardian of a child both of whose parents are deceased. The guardian can transfer any unused remaining portion (or the whole period of the leave) to any of the child's grandparents if they are in employment.
- The employer should be notified 10 days in advance to the leave commencing. The leave can also be broken down and used as separate blocks of time, but no fewer than five days at a time. Like Maternity, Paternity, and Parental leaves, this counts as work experience.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay (otpusk pri osinovyavane na dete do 5-godishna vazrast)

- Adoption leave and pay (for adopting a child under the age of five years) is available for 365 days and can be taken from the day of the child's arrival at home, but no later than the child's 5th birthday. Adoptive parents of a child up to 5 years can transfer the leave to one of the grandparents if s/he is employed. The grandparent to whom the leave has been transferred is entitled to monetary compensation from the National Social Security Institute until the child reaches 1 year. Its amount is 90 per cent of the mean insurance income from the last 24 months.
- An allowance is paid by the National Social Security Institute to the adoptive parent or the user of the leave (e.g., spouse, grandparent in the case when the right has been transferred) for the period of the leave of at 90 per cent of average gross monthly earnings (taken over a period of 24 consecutive months, preceding the month in which payment of the allowance starts), provided that social security payments to cover general illness and maternity have been made for 12 months, and the child is not placed in a full-day childcare institution. If the adoptive parent or the user of the leave returns to full-time employment before the end of the leave period, they are entitled to receive 50 per cent financial compensation for the period of the leave.
- Adoptive fathers in married couples may use the adoption leave and pay in place of the adoptive mother with her consent, beginning no earlier than 6 months after the child's arrival at home and no later than the child's 5th birthday. With the same condition, the leave can be transferred to one of the parents of the adoptive mother or father and to one of the parents of a single adoptive parent. In all cases when the leave and pay are transferred, the person who steps in for the adopter should be in employment and have paid social security contributions for general illness and maternity for 12 months. The monetary compensation is 90 per cent of the mean insurance income from the last 24 months. Single adoptive fathers/mothers are entitled to the same adoption leave and pay as adoptive parents in couples.
- Adoptive parents of children under the age of 2 years are entitled to Parental leave for any remaining period between the end of the adoption leave (365 days) and the child's 2nd birthday under the same conditions as biological parents. If the user of this leave returns to work before the ending of the leave, the adoptive parent can receive 50 per cent of the allowance associated with it for the remaining period.
- If adoptive parents are married when adopting a child under the age of 5 years, the adoptive father is entitled to 15 days of leave beginning from the day of the child's arrival in the household. It is paid at 90 per cent of average gross monthly earnings, provided that social security payments to cover maternity and general sickness have been made in the previous 6 months.
- Adoption leaves are counted as employment experience.
- Foster mothers are entitled to Maternity leave and pay under the same conditions as biological mothers, but the period of leave is reduced by the difference between the full length of the Maternity leave (410 days) and the child's age when placed in foster care. The right to transfer Maternity leave and benefit from the mother to the father when the child reaches the age of 6 months is also available to foster families.

- From 2024, Adoption leave and Parental leave for adopting a child under 5 years of age may be granted directly to the father, without the mother's consent, in cases where the mother has been deprived of parental rights or where the exercise of parental rights has been awarded to the adoptive father in accordance with a court decision.

Time off for the care of dependants

- **Leave to care for a sick family member** including a child (*otpusk pri vremenna nerabotosposobnost*) can be taken for up to 60 calendar days per year per family. Apart from this period, a caregiver caring for a child (including a foster carer) aisre entitled to additional days of leave in the following circumstances: to accompany a hospitalized child under the age of 3 years; to care for a quarantined child under 18 years; and to attend to a healthy child under 12 years who has to stay at home due to a quarantine in school or a childcare institution. The length of the leave in all three cases is unspecified and depends on the evaluation of the respective medical authorities. In fact, this is a special case within general sick leave and requires medical papers issued by a GP to be presented to the employer. The leave is available to all insured members of a family but cannot be taken simultaneously to care for the same child/relative. It is paid at 80 per cent of average gross monthly earnings. Self-employed persons can take this leave if they are insured (i.e., have made contributions to cover general sickness and maternity for a period of 18 months, preceding the month in which they claim use of the leave). Sick leave to care for a child interrupts paid annual leave. If a parent is on unpaid leave (e.g., for raising a child under 8 years old), sick leave for caring for another sick child is not compensated by the National Social Security Institute, as there is no active insurance coverage to interrupt.
- **Leave to care for two or more children under the age of 18 years** (*platen otpusk za dve I poveche givi detsa*) is available to employed mothers, subject to collective work agreement. Mothers with 2 children are entitled to 2 days of leave for every calendar year, and mothers with 3 or more children to 4 days per calendar year. The leave is available until and including the year one or more of the children reach 18 years of age. Paid annual leave compensation is at 100 per cent. If not used, this leave cannot be compensated in cash, except upon termination of the employment relationship. It can be postponed for use during the next calendar year, but no later than mid-year. Reasons for postponement are as follows: by the employer – for important production reasons; or by the employee, when using another type of leave or at their request with the employer's consent. If the postponed leave has not been permitted by the employer until 30 June in the following year, the employee has the right to determine the timing of its use, provided they notify the employer in writing at least 14 days in advance.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Absence from work for (breast)feeding a child (*otpusk za karmene I hranene na malko dete*) is permitted for 2 hours per day (taken as one block or two separate blocks of 1 hour each) when a child is under the age of 8 months and the mother is working full-time (eight hours per day); or for 1 hour per day when a mother is working fewer than 7 hours. In the case of multiple

or pre-term births, absence of 3 hours per day is permitted to a full-time employed mother and 2 hours per day to a mother employed for fewer than 7 hours. Here again presumed are two breastfeeding breaks during the workday, which may be combined in one block of time with the worker's consent.
- When the child reaches 8 months of age, paid absence for breastfeeding is reduced to 1 hour per day (two hours for multiple or pre-term births) and requires a supporting recommendation about how long the child should be breastfed, to be issued by a doctor and presented to the employer.
- The same legal right is guaranteed to adoptive mothers and mothers of stepchildren. In all cases it is non-transferable.
- Mothers can receive full remuneration for the time they spend (breast)feeding during the working day.

Flexible working for carers

- On returning to work after taking leave, the employed person may request a temporary change in the duration or the distribution of their working hours to facilitate reconciliation between work and family duties. The law obliges the employer to consider such a request and agree to it, providing it is possible for the company to accommodate this request.
- In order to better reconcile work and family responsibilities, an employee can request to work remotely, to change working hours or their distribution, as well as other changes in the employment relationship for a certain period of time, not fixed by the law, subject to bilateral agreement between the employer and the employee. This option is given to employees who are parents (biological or adoptive) of children up to 12 years of age and employees who take care of a parent, a spouse or other relative in a direct line for serious medical reasons. The employee has the right to pre-term return to their previous work arrangements. However, the option of requesting a change in the place of work (e.g., remote or home-based work) or in the working hours does not oblige the employer to grant it. If the employer disagrees with the request, their only obligation is to give a reasoned written response regarding their refusal within 14 days.
- Outside the case of family care, the Labour Code provides for the right of an initiative from both, the employer and the employee, to: switch from full to partial working time and vice versa, from fixed to flexible timetable (but with a fixed amount of present-in-the-office hours, set by the employer), and from remote to in-office work.
- Employed mothers of children under 6 years of age have a legal right to work from home with the same (or another) employer, upon request.[91] When the child turns 6 years, the mother who has been working from home should be restored to the same position she previously held or, if that position is no longer available, to an appropriate alternative, with her consent. Mothers of children under 6 years of age may work from home for another employer, in which case they should be granted unpaid leave from their former employer and the right to return to the same or an appropriate

[91] In reality, this statutory right for flexible or remote work for mothers with children under 6 years of age is actually non-applicable. According to data from the national representative survey of the labour force (available here: https://bit.ly/2FvAcIb), only 1.5 per cent of employed women who take care of children and elderly relatives work on flexible time and just 0.8 per cent of them self-manage their own working time.

alternative position after the entitlement to work from home expires. The right may be used by the father if the mother is not able to use it.

Antenatal appointments and care

- Pregnant women or those undergoing in-vitro treatment at an advanced stage are entitled to take time off during working hours to attend medical appointments. (see 'Leave for conducting citizen's, community or other duties' below)

Other provisions of leave

- **Leave for conducting citizen's, community or other duties** (*otpusk za izpulnenie na grazhdanski, obshtestveni i drugi zadulzheniya*). Within this type of leave are included family-related situations such as: getting married; death of relatives in the direct line or spouse's relatives in the direct line (i.e.,parents, children, spouses, siblings); medical examinations related to pregnancy or in-vitro treatment. The leave entitlement is 2 days in the cases of marriage or for the bereavement of a deceased relative. In the case of absence for reproductive medical examinations, there is no fixed duration within the workday. The time of absence is fully paid, unless otherwise specified in a collective agreement or in an individual agreement between the employer and the employee. This provision applies to all categories of workers and is not dependent on the length of service with the same employer. No flexibility in its use is provided.
- **Unpaid leave** (*neplaten otpusk*). An employee may request unpaid leave without giving reasons even *before* exhausting their entitlements to paid leave. There is no fixed maximum duration of this type of leave, however, only 30 days per calendar year are counted as work experience.
- Employment protection and non-discrimination throughout Maternity/Parental leave. The Labour Code sets out regulations to ensure employment protection and non-discrimination throughout Maternity, Paternity, and Parental leave of employed people. It prohibits the dismissal of a mother with a child under 3 years, without permission obtained from The Executive Agency 'General Labour Inspectorate'. The legal right to return to the same work position, or – if the position no longer exists – to an equivalent one, is also guaranteed by the Labour Code. Furthermore, it states the right to benefit from any improvements of the working conditions or indexation of the salary that occurred during childcare-related leave.
- A pregnant woman, a breastfeeding woman, or a woman who is in an advanced stage of in-vitro treatment has the right to refuse work which presents hazards to her and her child's health. A list of hazardous jobs and working conditions is regulated by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy and the Minister of Health. Based on the recommendation of the responsible healthcare authorities, the employer has a duty to temporarily rearrange working conditions and/or schedule in order to remove the risk and safeguard the woman's health. If this is impossible due to objective reasons, the woman shall be temporarily assigned to another job. To account for any waiting period before starting the new, more appropriate job, the woman will be compensated by her employer (to the sum of her gross monthly remuneration). If the remuneration on the new job is lower than that of the former one, the employer must pay compensation to settle the difference in payments. Each year, in coordination with the healthcare authorities, the

employer determines a list of work positions suitable for pregnant, breastfeeding or in-vitro treated women.

- Employed pregnant women, women who are in an advanced stage of in-vitro treatment procedure, or mothers with a child under the age of 3 years cannot be sent on a business trip without their consent. This right may be used by the father if the mother is not in a condition to benefit from it.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is 36 months, but well-paid leave only lasts for 12 months.[92] Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is obligatory for children aged four (in the year the child is going to reach four), five and six years. There is therefore a gap of one year between the end of leave and the start of an ECEC entitlement and a gap of three years between the end of well-paid leave and an entitlement to ECEC.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' on cross-country comparisons page.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

In 2025, two major changes were introduced in the legislation concerning paid leave arrangements. From 1 July 2025, amendments to the Social Security Code entered into force, under which the payment of Maternity, Paternity and Parental leave benefits is suspended if the parent receiving them works under a second employment contract that includes coverage for general illness and maternity. The rationale behind this change is that full benefits are intended to support full-time childcare at home. However, parents remain entitled to receive 50 per cent of the benefits due for early return to work if they resume the employment they held prior to taking any childbirth- or childcare-related leave.

The second major change aims to expand the group of parents eligible for flexible working arrangements. In 2025, amendments to the Labour Code introduced the possibility for parents (adoptive parents) of children up to 12 years of age to ask the employer to allow them to work flexible working hours. The employer must examine the request in accordance with the law and, in case of refusal, state the reasons for this refusal. Previously, this option was available only to parents (or adoptive parents) of children up to 8 years of age. This change is intended to support a better work–life balance for a broader group of working parents.

In 2025, the period during which employees can request temporary flexible work arrangements – such as changes to working hours (duration and distribution), remote work, or other adjustments to support work-life balance – was extended.

[92] Bulgaria has no law or policy document entirely devoted to early childhood development. The legislative and political framework concerning ECEC is contained within the sectoral laws and policies in the healthcare, education and social sphere.

Previously, employees could make such requests until their child turned 8 years of age; this limit has now been increased to 12 years of age of the child.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

The general Maternity leave of 135 days is obligatory and it is considered a recovery period for mothers, as well as time for immediate childcare. This is documented by health authorities (i.e., GPs and hospitals). Data from the National Social Security Institute shows that in 2025, there were 72,688 beneficiaries of Maternity leave, of whom 327 (or less than 1 per cent) were men. These fathers (adoptive and biological) took the period of Maternity leave from the 6th month until 1 year after childbirth.[93] Among the first year paid beneficiaries, 786 (78 of them are adoptive parents) received 50 per cent financial compensation because they returned to work during the leave. Survey data shows that parents are in favour of highly paid Maternity leave during the first year of their child's life.[94]

b. Paternity leave

For eligible fathers, the 15 days of Paternity leave are obligatory, intended to foster fathers' involvement in childcare immediately after the birth. According to the National Social Security Institute, 21,314 fathers (including 4 adoptive fathers) took paid leave in 2025: this is equivalent to less than half of all the children born that year. The 15 day leave is the most used type of Paternity leave in Bulgaria; the 2 month additional Paternity leave was taken by 2,059 fathers in 2025, including adopters.[95]

c. Parental leave

In 2025, the second year of Parental leave was taken by 79,208 beneficiaries, of whom 706 were fathers. Moreover, 15,537 of beneficiaries received 50 per cent of the benefits for the second year because they returned to employment. Well-paid and higher qualified mothers prefer to return to work and choose other options for childcare (e.g., babysitter, relatives, or a crèche) rather than staying at home.[96]

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[93] National Insurance Institute, 2025. See https://nssi.bg/wp-content/uploads/SPRAVKA_bolnicni_31122025.pdf

[94] In Bulgaria, 73 per cent of all children up to 3 years of age are cared for at home by their parents and do not visit childcare facilities. In 2016, this was the highest percentage in the EU (see: Slavova, Z. (2016) 'Bulgaria is the country where the highest percentage of small children cared for by their parents', *IME Newsletter*. Available at: http://ime.bg/bg/articles/bylgariya-e-stranata-v-koyato-nai-mnogo-ot-malkite-deca-se-otglejdat-ot-roditelite-si/#ixzz59SWQJ3W9). Survey data on parents' attitudes toward family policy in Bulgaria demonstrate that most parents are highly appreciative of paid Maternity leave during the first year (see Kotzeva, T., E. Dimitrova, K. Ilieva and S. Moraliiska (2016) 'Survey on attitudes of parents towards family policy in Bulgaria', *Family Policy Vision – Parents' Views and Europe's Experience*, Sofia: NMD. Available at: http://nmd.bg/dve-novi-publikatsii-po-proekta-viziya-za-semeyna-politika/

[95] National Insurance Institute, 2025. See https://nssi.bg/publikacii/statistika/obshto-zabolyavane-i-maichinstvo/

[96] Survey data on parents' attitudes shows that approximately half of the respondents, mainly those with high levels of education and well-paid jobs, living in urban environments, are critical towards low-paid Parental leave during the second year, as well as towards the

For mothers without paid social security, who may be entitled to a monthly social benefit for 1 year after the birth, the National Agency for Social Assistance reports that 11,101 received this social benefit of BGN200 [€102.26] in 2025 (i.e., about one fifth of all mothers who gave birth that year).[97]

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No information available.

lack of services for children aged one to three. The experts interviewed in this survey are also sceptical about the genuine opportunity for highly qualified and educated parents to take second year leave, due to the negative effects of long-term Parental leave on labour market and women's qualifications (see Kotzeva et al., 2016; footnote 3).

[97] Report on the Activity of the Agency for Social Assistance in 2025. Available from https://asp.government.bg/bg/za-agentsiyata/misiya-i-tseli/otcheti-i-dokladi/

Canada[98]

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April 2026

N.B. Canada is a federal state.

Note on federal and provincial/territorial responsibility: In Canada, the federal Employment Insurance (EI) programme, funded by employers and employees and administered by the Department of Employment and Social Development Canada, provides Maternity and Parental leave benefits to parents residing outside the province of Québec. Since 2006, Canada has had two programmes for parental benefits with the province of Québec administering its own provincial Maternity, Paternity, and Parental leave benefit programme called the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP) for employed and self-employed workers.

Eligibility for job-protected unpaid leave is separate from eligibility for the payment of benefits under the two (federal and Québec) programmes. Entitlement to job-protected leave from employment is granted through labour laws (employment standards acts) that fall under the jurisdiction of the ten provinces and three territories (referred to below as 'jurisdictions') as well as through the Canada Labour Code for the 7 per cent of employees in federally regulated industries. This results in 14 different legislated leave entitlements. Variations between jurisdictions have implications for how (unpaid) legally entitled leave and the two benefit programmes are accessed and used. Two separate sets of rules apply to the federal wage-compensation benefit programme and provincial/territorial/federal legal entitlements to job-protected leave. In Canada, 'leave' therefore refers to either unpaid, job-protected time off work or to benefit programmes.

The information below refers to Canada's two benefit programmes (EI and QPIP). Details of the QPIP programme are given under 'regional or local variations in leave policy.' Details regarding unpaid job-protected leave appear at the end of the Parental leave section.

[98] The authors express gratitude to previous co-authors who made significant and lasting contributions: Berenger Nounagnon, U., Poulin E., Wazen, S.J. and Lero, D. S. Please cite as: Thompson, K., McKay, L., Pettigrew, R., Mathieu, S., Tremblay, D.-G., Ragued, S., Doucet, A. and Stecy-Hildebrandt, N. (2026) 'Canada country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A. A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International review of leave policies and research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

For comparisons in this review between Canada's and other countries' leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the beginning (they are also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

- **Current leave and other employment-related policies that support parents**

Table 1 compares benefits under the Canadian and Québec programmes. For both, parents must pay premiums through insurable employers (or as self-employed individuals) in order to qualify.

Table 1: Canada (EI) and Québec (QPIP)				
	Canada EI		**Québec QPIP[8]**	
Eligibility[1]	600 hours of employment in the previous 52 weeks		CAN$2,000 [€1,243.16][99] in qualifying period	
Self-employed workers	If opted-in 12-months prior to claiming, with minimum net income of CAN$9,254 [€5,752.11] in self-employed earnings in 2025		Automatically covered	
Waiting period	1 week per couple		None	
***Weeks by wage-replacement rate (per cent of gross (EI)/average weekly (QPIP) earnings during the qualifying period up to the* Maximum Insurable Earnings level)[4]**				
Plan	***Standard***	***Extended***	***Basic***	***Special[2]***
Maternity[3]	15 at 55 per cent		18 at 70 per cent	15 at 75 per cent
Paternity	None		5 at 70 per cent	3 at 75 per cent
Parental (including adoption) (shareable)	35 at 55 per cent	61 at 33 per cent	32 (7 at 70 per cent + 25 at 55 per cent)	25 at 75 per cent
Additional Parental Sharing Benefit (including adoption)	+5 at 55 per cent	+8 at 33 per cent	+4 at 55 per cent once 8 shareable parental benefit weeks paid to each parent	+3 at 75 per cent once 6 shareable parental benefit weeks paid to each parent

[99] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://data.ecb.europa.eu/currency-converter.

Additional Single Parent (birth or adoption)	None		+5 at 70 per cent	+3 at 75 per cent
Additional for Multiple Births or adoptions (Non-transferable)	None		+5 weeks to each parent at 70 per cent	+3 weeks to each parent at 75 per cent
Additional Adoption (Non-transferable)	None		5 weeks to each parent at 70 per cent	3 weeks to each parent at 75 per cent
Adoption Welcome and Support Benefits (Shareable)	None		13 at 70 per cent	12 at 75 per cent
Adjusted annually:				
Maximum weekly benefit, 2025	CAN$729 [€453.13]	CAN$437 [€271.63]	CAN$1,386 [€861.51]	CAN$1,486 [€923.67]
Maximum insurable earnings, 2025	CAN$68,900 [€42,826.95]/year		CAN$103,000 [€64,022.87]/year	
Maximum total weeks per couple	Standard parental: 35 (40 if shared) Extended parental: 61 (69 if shared)		55 (59 if shared)	43 (46 if shared)
Low-income supplement[5]	Up to 80 per cent of net family income		Up to 85 per cent of individual income	Up to 100 per cent of individual income

Sources: Adapted from 'EI maternity and parental benefits: What these benefits offer,' Employment and Social Development Canada (2025), https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/ei-maternity-parental.html, and 'Québec Parental Insurance Plan,' Emploi et Solidarite sociale, Québec, http://www.rqap.gouv.qc.ca

Table 1 Notes:

1. 600 hours of insurable employment in the calendar year before the claim is made (or since the last EI claim, e.g., for unemployment, sick leave, Caregiving, or Compassionate Care benefits). In Québec, CAN$2,000 [€1,243.16] must be earned in the prior year but an extension to up to 104 weeks before the start date for benefits can be considered if the claimant was unable to work for a portion of the year before the claim.
2. Only QPIP has a separate option for adoptive parents and for surrogacy; EI Parental leave benefits are the same for biological and adoptive parents.
3. Maternity leave is for the pregnant person who gave birth, a gestational carrier for surrogacy arrangements. QPIP has parallel benefits for surrogacy arrangements (see https://www.rqap.gouv.qc.ca/en/about-the-plan/tables-of-benefits). This leave is also available for pregnancies that are miscarried, terminated or stillbirth after 19 weeks for QPIP and 20 for EI. Sickness benefits (EI) may be available for health complications during pregnancy.
4. The EI benefit calculation uses a 'best weeks' formula to determine 'average insurable earnings' up to the Maximum Insurable Earnings level for that year. EI uses the previous 52 weeks. QPIP uses average weekly earnings during the past 26 weeks (an extension is granted if earnings were lower for certain reasons). Benefits may be extended for Canadian Forces members who must defer or interrupt parental leave and if the child is hospitalized.
5. The low-income supplement under EI is for families with a net annual income of less than CAN$25,921 [€16,112.01] and takes the number of children and their ages into account. The amount received is also capped at 80 per cent of average insurable net family earnings. It should be noted that CAN$25,921 [€16,112.01] is below the low-income cut-off rate (poverty line) for

two persons (parent and child). In September 2021, Québec enhanced the additional support offered to low-income parents. See 1c for details.

a. Maternity leave (*congé de maternité*)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 16 to 19 weeks depending on the jurisdiction (See Table 2, below)

Payment and funding of two benefit programmes

- 15 weeks of EI benefits at 55 per cent of average insured earnings up to an upper limit (see table above). Low-income families can qualify for a higher benefit rate, up to a maximum of 80 per cent of insured earnings.
- There is no payment for the first week, which is treated as a 'waiting period'. Payment is provided for 14 weeks and parents have only one 'waiting period' per birth; unpaid leave entitlement is 16-19 weeks (see Table 2).
- Administered under the federal EI programme, Maternity and Parental leave benefits are funded by premiums paid by employers and employees, based on a premium rate that applies to every CAN$100 [€62.16] of insurable earnings to the maximum insurable earnings threshold (MIE), which was higher in 2025 (see table above). The rates are set by the Employment Insurance Financing Board each year. Employers pay premiums that are 1.4 times those of employees, up to a maximum of CAN$1,123.07 [€698.08] per employee for the year in 2026[100].
- In 2026 employee premiums were set at CAN$1.63 [€1.01] per CAN$100 [€62.16] of insurable earnings reaching a maximum of CAN$1,123.07 [€698.08] for those who earn CAN$68,900 [€42,826.95] or more. The premium rate for workers in Québec is CAN$1.30 [€0.81] of insurable earnings in 2026; employer premiums were set at CAN$2.28 [€1.42] per CAN$100 [€62.16] of insurable earnings (for Québec Employers, at CAN$1.82 [€1.13]).
- Self-employed individuals outside of Québec who opted into the EI programme to be eligible for special benefits pay the same as employees: CAN$1.64 [€1.02] per CAN$100 [€62.16] of insurable earnings to a maximum of CAN$68,900 [€42,826.95] of earnings or CAN$1,109.29 [€689.51] annually.[101]
- Maternity and Parental leave benefits are taxed.
- See *Regional or Local Variations* below for details about additional contributions paid in Québec.

Flexibility in use of benefits

- Pregnant mothers may start receiving benefits as early as 12 weeks before their due date or delay receiving benefits until the actual week that they give

[100] Government of Canada (2024) *EI premium rates and maximums*. Ottawa: Canada Revenue Agency. Available at: https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/businesses/topics/payroll/payroll-deductions-contributions/employment-insurance-ei/ei-premium-rates-maximums.html

[101] Government of Canada (2025) *2025 Actuarial Report on the Employment Insurance Premium Rate*. Ottawa: Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions. Available at: https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/ei/ei-list/reports/premium/rates2023.html#h2.3

birth.
- Normally, Maternity Leave benefits must end by 17 weeks after the week in which the mother was expected to give birth or gave birth. Maternity benefit receipt can be delayed/extended by the amount of time a newborn is hospitalized, but Maternity benefits must be received within 52 weeks of the birth.
- Maternity benefits may be combined with regular benefits in the event of job loss or with other special benefits such as Parental benefits, Sickness benefits, Compassionate care benefits, or Family Caregiver benefits for adults or for parents of seriously ill children up to a maximum of 102 weeks (with proof of eligibility for the latter benefits). Eligibility criteria and other rules regarding combining benefits can sometimes result in reducing the duration of claims.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- Eligibility criteria and duration of leave entitlements vary across provinces and territories. The rules generally apply to all leave-taking types (Maternity, Paternity, Parental, Compassionate Care, etc.). See Table 1 above.
- Québec offers benefits up to an earnings maximum (see Table 1 for rate) for 18 weeks of Maternity leave, without a waiting period.[102] Maternity leave use is flexible: it is possible to have a higher income replacement rate for a shorter period, or a lower rate for a longer period. Under the 'special' plan, Maternity Leave benefits are paid at 75 per cent of weekly income for 15 weeks, whereas under the 'basic' plan, it is 70 per cent of weekly income for 18 weeks.
- Under the Basic plan, Québec parents gain 4 additional shareable weeks at 55 per cent if each parent takes at least 8 weeks of shareable parental or adoption leave.
- Under the Special plan, Québec parents gain 3 additional shareable weeks at 75 per cent if each parent takes at least 6 weeks of shareable parental or adoption leave.
- Maternity benefits may begin no sooner than the 16th week before the week scheduled for childbirth.
- It is possible for a claimant to receive QPIP maternity benefits while continuing to work. To determine the amount of income one can earn without affecting the amount of their QPIP benefits, they must calculate the difference between their average weekly earnings and the benefit amount.
- Benefits in Québec are financed by contributions from employers, employees, and the self-employed, who pay the standard contribution to EI (less a reduction, but with a supplementary contribution to cover the higher benefits offered in the province).

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Eligibility for job-protected unpaid leave varies between Canada's 14 employment jurisdictions (its federal jurisdiction, 10 provincial jurisdictions, and 3 territorial jurisdictions) and is separate from eligibility for the payment of benefits under the two (federal and Québec) programmes. The rules generally apply to all leave-taking types. See section

[102]Government of Québec. For information on QPIP, see: https://www.rqap.gouv.qc.ca/en/what-is-the-Québec-parental-insurance-plan

'b. Paternity leave.'

- Eligibility requirements for wage-compensation benefits under the federal programme are 600 hours of continuous employment in the previous 52 weeks. Many part-time and non-standard (contract) workers do not have enough hours to qualify, even though they pay EI premiums. For the Québec QPIP programme, workers are eligible if they earned at least CAN$2,000 [€1,243.16] in the 52 preceding weeks, regardless of the number of hours worked.
- In 2006, when the QPIP programme began, self-employed workers in Québec became eligible for Maternity, Paternity, Parental, and Adoption benefits if they had made a minimum of CAN$2,000 [€1,243.16] in self-employment earnings in the previous year. Surrogate mothers are also eligible. Outside Québec, EI special benefits (Maternity, Parental, Sickness, Compassionate Care and Family Caregiver for Children or Adults) were extended to the self-employed on a voluntary, opt-in basis in 2010 (implemented in 2011). Until 2011, most self-employed parents (outside of Québec) were not eligible for benefits because they typically work under business or service contracts and therefore are not considered to have insurable employment. To receive Maternity/Parental benefits, self-employed parents outside of Québec must register one year prior to seeking benefits and qualify if they have reduced the amount of time devoted to their business by more than 40 per cent because of childbirth/care, have paid contributions to the regime, and have earned at least CAN$9,254 [€5,752.11] from self-employment in 2025. There are no leave entitlements or benefits for parents who do not meet these eligibility criteria.
- Graduate students and postdoctoral fellows who have been granted a scholarship from one of three large granting Tri-Council funding agencies[103] can receive limited benefits (Maternity, Paternity, and Parental) according to work-related earnings. Research/teaching assistant and postdoctoral employment contracts vary in terms of being counted as insurable earnings.

Variations in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births, poor health or disability of child or mother, lone parent) or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- Maternity leave entitlement can be extended in some jurisdictions if the child or the mother has health-related complications (in British Columbia this applies to the child if they have a physical, psychological, or emotional condition that requires additional care). This extension can be for up to 6 weeks. See Table 2.
- In cases where a birth mother is ill during or after pregnancy, up to 26 weeks of federal Sickness benefits can be received, increased from 15 weeks prior to December 2022. This results in a maximum of 102 weeks of benefits (26 weeks of Sickness benefits, 15 weeks of Maternity benefits, and 61 weeks of Parental benefits). If a newborn or newly adopted child is seriously ill, the mother may combine Maternity benefits with up to 35 weeks of EI benefits for Family Caregivers for Children. Parents in Québec

[103] The Tri-Council funding agencies include The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC). These are the major sources of research funding for post-secondary institutions across Canada.

can combine QPIP benefits with EI Sickness and/or Caregiver benefits if they qualify for them.
- Leave entitlements and benefits are offered per birth, not per child. Parents of multiple-birth infants follow the same entitlements and benefits as parents of single infants under the EI plan. In Québec, QPIP offers 5 additional benefit weeks at 70 per cent to each of the parents in case of multiple births or adoptions (3 weeks at 75 per cent under the special plan). Additional provisions are also available for single parents.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- Some employers provide a supplemental benefit plan that partially or wholly makes up the difference between the federal Maternity benefit and the worker's salary and that often includes coverage during the waiting period before federal benefits are provided. Several collective agreements and employment contracts in Québec likewise include provisions for supplementary benefits that are designed to top up benefits provided under QPIP.

b. Paternity leave (congé de paternité in Québec, where this is the responsibility of the Ministry of Work, Employment and Social Solidarity)[104]

Length of leave (before and after birth) entitlement

- No statutory entitlement.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- Québec offers up to 5 weeks of Paternity leave after birth; 3 weeks at 75 per cent of average weekly earnings or 5 weeks at 70 per cent to an earnings upper limit are available (see Table 1 for rate). Funding is the same as for Maternity leave.
- Fathers in Québec (including self-employed workers) are eligible if they have earned at least CAN$2,000 [€1,243.16] in the 52 preceding weeks. This covers the parent who did not give birth. For same-sex male parents, the partner of the biological father is entitled to adoption benefits if he was part of the adoption process. In the case of two female parents, the partner of the birth mother is entitled to Paternity leave and Parental leave benefits if her name is on the birth certificate.

c. Parental leave (*congé parental*)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- For unpaid job-protected leave, see regional variations below.

[104] The French translation of the name of this ministry is *Travail, Emploi et Solidarité Sociale*.

Payment and funding

- The EI system provides two Parental leave options that apply to both parents of newborns and newly adopted children. Standard Parental leave benefits stipulate that 'up to 40 weeks can be shared between parents, but one parent cannot receive more than 35 weeks' at 55 per cent of average insured earnings up to a maximum (the same rate as Maternity leave). Alternatively, Extended Parental leave benefits offer longer duration for less money: up to 69 weeks can be shared, but one parent cannot receive more than 61 weeks at 33 per cent of earnings (see Table 1 for rates). In both cases, sharing benefits is incentivized.[105]
- *Parental Sharing Benefits:* An EI Parental Sharing Benefit[106] was implemented on 17 March 2019. This policy provides an additional 5 weeks of benefits under the standard option (up to 40 weeks) when couples share the benefits, and a maximum of an additional eight weeks when parents share benefits under the extended leave option. The aim of this programme is to enhance gender equality by encouraging more fathers to take a portion of Parental leave. It is important to note that families are only eligible for this new option if *both* parents qualify for and receive benefits.[107] It also aims to be inclusive of all types of families, such as families with same-sex parents and adoptive parents. The extra 5 or 8 weeks are available only to parents of children born or placed with them for adoption on or after 17 March 2019.
- *Low-income families* (i.e., families with a net income of CAN$25,921 [€16,112.01] or less per annum) are eligible for a family supplement under the EI programme, up to a maximum of 80 per cent of average insurable earnings (calculated on net family income). The specific benefit amount received also depends on the number and ages of children in the family (under 18 years). In 2022-23, close to 51,400 claims received the family supplement[108]. Evidence of the total number of claimants receiving the family supplement for low-income families for any of the 'special' benefits, indicates a consistent decrease each year (since 2001-2002), largely because the threshold for the family supplement has been constant since 1997 (at a net annual income of less than CAN$25,921 [€16,112.01]), while average family income has risen. In September 2021, Québec raised the eligibility threshold for a benefits top-up to the equivalent of the annual minimum wage of a person who works 40 hours a week. The amount rose to CAN$28,080 [€17,454.00] in 2021. This threshold will now

[105] Government of Canada (2025) *Maternity and parental leave benefits*. Ottawa: Employment and Social Development Canada Available at: https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/ei-maternity-parental.html

[106] Government of Canada (2025) https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/campaigns/ei-improvements/parent-sharing.html Ottawa: Employment and Social Development Canada.

[107] For an overview of the high numbers of mothers who do not receive Maternity and Parental benefits in Canada, see McKay, L., Mathieu, S. and Doucet, A. (2016) 'Parental-leave rich and parental-leave poor: Inequality in Canadian labour market-based leave policies', *Journal of Industrial Relations,* 58, 4: 543–562. Available at: https://doi: 10.1177/0022185616643558

[108] Employment and Social Development Canada (2025) *2023/2024 Employment insurance monitoring and assessment report*, *Canada.* Available at: https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/images/programs/ei/ei-list/reports/monitoring2024/2023-2024-EI-MAR-EN.pdf

be indexed to minimum wage increases and it increased to CAN$33,488 [€20,815.51] on 1 May 2025. In addition, in Québec the benefit calculation is now based on individual income instead of family income. Low-income parents who qualify for an increased benefit can see it reach up to 85 per cent or 100 per cent of their average weekly insurable income now, depending on the choice of plan. Finally, both parents can receive an increase in their benefits simultaneously if they both qualify.

- *Working while on claim*: In Canada, it is possible for a claimant to receive EI Maternity and Parental leave benefits while continuing to work. If they are earning a maximum of 90 per cent of their previous earnings (in the 52 weeks before going on leave), which is equivalent to approximately 4½ days of work per week, they will receive 50 cents for every eligible benefits dollar. If a claimant works above this 90 per cent cap, their benefits are deducted dollar-for-dollar. If they choose to work a full-time week, they will no longer be eligible to receive benefits (regardless of earnings), but this will not decrease the total amount of weeks payable on their claim. Working while on claim does not need a separate application. If claimants are already receiving Maternity and/or Parental benefits, they only need to declare their earnings online. Québec has different rules regarding working while receiving QPIP benefits (see additional details below).
- *Students and post-doctoral fellows*: Parental leave is available for 12 months for student researchers and post-doctoral fellows receiving federal research grants or scholarships. This programme is administered by federal Tri-Council funding agencies (see footnote 7).

Flexibility in use

- Both in Canada and in Québec, benefits payment can be claimed by either parent or can be shared (if both parents qualify). In Canada, the total duration is 35 weeks (40 weeks if shared) under the standard plan, which stipulates that leave benefits must be used within 52 weeks after the birth. In Québec, the period during which Parental leave can be taken is 78 weeks (see page 16).
- When they apply for benefits, parents must choose either the standard plan or the longer extended benefit plan. This decision cannot be changed once the first weeks' payment has been distributed.
- Each of the 14 labour laws establishes rules regarding flexibility of use. For details, see notes under Table 2 in 'Regional or Local Variations in Leave Policy'. Parents of a newborn or newly adopted child who is hospitalized for an extended period have a window of up to 2 years to claim Parental benefits.
- Parental leave benefits can be combined with EI-covered Sickness or Compassionate Care benefits or Family Caregiver benefits while a parent is on leave.
- Canadian Forces members ordered to return to duty while on Parental leave or whose Parental leave is deferred because of military requirements may receive benefits for an extended window of up to 2 years following their child's birth or adoption.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- As Canada has 14 jurisdictional Employment Standards Acts, provinces and territories use different unpaid job-protected leave entitlement criteria. In

all jurisdictions but Quebec, where residency determines eligibility for QPIP, place of employment, rather than residency, determines which legal rules parents must follow. These rules pertain to length of leave, flexibility of use, potential extensions related to special circumstances, eligibility for leave, and employment entitlements during leave (e.g., accrual of work benefits such as pensions). Additional regional variations in eligibility for leave entitlement are noted in the next section.

Following the federal government's introduction of an optional extended Parental benefit period of 61 weeks, it amended legislation to allow 63 weeks of unpaid, job-protected Parental leave for workers in federally regulated industries governed by the Canada Labour Code. The federal government works with the provinces and territories to encourage similar changes under provincial employment standards laws. The chart below shows which provinces and territories have made this change as of May 2, 2024. Most jurisdictions require continuous leave within and across types of leave. In Québec, paternity and parental leave can be broken down into weeks.

Table 2: Maximum Duration of Unpaid Leave Entitlement by Jurisdiction

Employment Jurisdiction	Maternity Leave (weeks)	Paternity Leave (weeks)	Parental Leave (weeks)	Adoption Leave and surrogate mothers (weeks)*
Federal	17		63; 71 if shared	
Alberta	16		62	
British Columbia	17		Standard Benefits: 35; 40 if shared Extended Benefits: 61; 69 if shared	
Manitoba	17		63	
New Brunswick	17		62; 78 for birth mothers who took Maternity leave	
Newfoundland and Labrador	17		61	17; can be combined with Parental Leave to maximum of 78
Northwest Territories	17		61; 69 if shared	
Nova Scotia	16		77	
Nunavut	17		37	
Ontario	17		63; 61 for birth mothers who took Maternity Leave	
Prince Edward Island	17		62	
Québec	18	5	65	
Saskatchewan	19		59 for birth or primary adoptive parent; 71	19

			for parent who did not take Maternity or Adoption leave	
Yukon	17		63	

Table2 notes:
In most jurisdictions, Parental and Adoption leaves are not differentiated; in others, they are equivalent to Maternity benefits. Table cells are merged as appropriate to reflect this.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- In most provinces and territories, to qualify for unpaid job-protected Maternity, Paternity, or Parental leave, an employee must complete a specific period of continuous employment in the year prior to taking leave. The exceptions are British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Québec, and, as of 2019, the federal jurisdiction, where there is no minimum length of service required. From shortest to longest duration, Alberta requires a minimum of 90 days with the same employer, Ontario and Saskatchewan require 13 continuous weeks, and Newfoundland and Labrador requires 20 continuous weeks. Prince Edward Island requires employment over any 20 weeks in the previous 52 weeks of leave, while New Brunswick requires 6 months of continuous employment and Manitoba requires seven months. The Northwest Territories, The Yukon Territories and Nunavut require 12 months.
- Additionally, in all jurisdictions, a medical certificate is required or may be requested by the employer, and an employee must notify the employer (usually 2 to 4 weeks in advance or 6 weeks in Alberta, eight weeks (2 months) or sooner in New Brunswick), of their intent to take Maternity or Parental leave. Employees are often required to provide advance notice of their intended date of return.
- Non-citizens and migrant workers with a valid social insurance number and who meet other eligibility criteria may be eligible for Maternity and Parental benefits.[109]
- To be eligible for EI paid benefits in Canada, a parent must have worked in insurable employment for 600 hours in the previous 52 weeks or since their last Employment Insurance claim. Outside Québec, self-employed individuals are eligible if they register in advance for the EI Special Benefit programme, have paid premiums for at least one year, and have earned a minimum net income (see Table 1 for rate).
- Self-employed workers in Québec are automatically included in the maternity and paternity benefits programmes and are eligible for 25 or 32 weeks of shareable parental benefits (excluding additional weeks in the case of a more equal split) if they have earned at least CAN$2,000 [€1,243.16] in the 52 weeks preceding the birth of their child.
- Québec has less demanding eligibility conditions that allow more parents,

[109] Government of Canada (2025) *Maternity and parental leave benefits*. Ottawa: Employment and Social development Canada. Available at: https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/ei-maternity-parental/eligibility.html

including self-employed workers and students, to receive benefits: it requires earning an insurable income of CAN$2,000 [€1,243.16]. This threshold has remained unchanged since 2006; as a result, with each passing year, it is increasingly easy to qualify to receive benefits.
- Although nearly 80 per cent of full-time Canadian students are in the labour force, they are unlikely to work enough hours to qualify for federal EI leave benefits in Canada. By comparison, under QPIP, earning CAN$2,000 [€1,243.16] over the previous year enables more students to access Parental leave benefits.

Specific differences between Québec QPIP and EI-based benefits in the rest of Canada

- As of 1 January 2022, an extension is provided in Québec for single parents (when only one parent is indicated on the birth certificate or equivalent document): 5 more weeks under the Basic plan at 70 per cent of income up to maximum insurable income; 3 more weeks under the Special plan at 75 per cent of income up to maximum insurable income. There are no additional provisions for single parents under EI.
- In February 2024, Quebec passed a law that made the names of maternity and paternity benefits more inclusive of sexual minorities, transgender, and non-binary parents. Maternity benefits are now referred to as 'maternity benefits or exclusive benefits for the person, in connection with pregnancy or delivery'. Paternity benefits are now termed 'paternity benefits or exclusive benefits for the non-birthing parent and exclusive or shareable parental benefits in connection with the birth of a child'[110]
- In terms of benefits, the QPIP offers a Basic Plan entitlement of seven weeks at 70 per cent of average insured income, plus 25 weeks at 55 per cent, up to an earnings ceiling (see Table 1 for rate). There is also a Special Plan, which applies to Parental leave, offering a shorter period of leave (25 weeks) with higher benefits (75 per cent of earnings).
- Under the Basic plan, parents gain 4 additional shareable weeks at 55 per cent if each parent takes at least 8 weeks of shareable Parental or adoption leave. Under the Special plan, parents gain 3 additional shareable weeks at 75 per cent if each parent takes at least 6 weeks of shareable parental or adoption leave.
- The period during which Parental leave can be taken is 78 weeks (18 months).
- *Working while on claim*: It is possible for a claimant to receive QPIP benefits while continuing to work. Parents can combine work income and benefits, up to 100 per cent of the weekly income recognized for the calculation benefits, regardless of the type of benefits (maternity or exclusive for the person in connection with pregnancy or delivery, paternity or exclusive for the non-birthing parent, shareable parental in connection with the birth of a child or surrogate pregnancy, exclusive to the woman or person for pregnancy or childbirth, shareable childcare, exclusive adoption, adoption-related welcome and support, shareable adoption). Earnings above this cap will result in dollar-for-dollar benefits deductions.

[110] https://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/document/cs/A-29.011

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent), or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- In Nova Scotia, if the child for whom leave is taken is hospitalized for more than one week, an employee can return to work and take the unused portion of the leave when the child is released (this can only be taken once per leave).
- As noted for Maternity benefits, no additional EI parental benefits are provided in the case of different circumstances, although parental benefits can be combined with EI benefits for family caregivers for children who are critically ill.
- In Québec, non-shareable parental benefit weeks are granted to each parent and solo parents in case of multiple births or adoptions (5 weeks to each parent or single parent at 70 per cent in the basic plan and 3 weeks to each parent or single parent at 75 per cent in the special plan). Non-shareable parental benefit weeks are also granted to single parents (5 weeks at 70 per cent in the basic plan and 3 weeks at 75 per cent in the special plan).

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions; or rights to postpone)

- Some employers have a supplemental benefit plan that partially makes up the difference between federal EI Parental benefits and the worker's salary and some also offer additional periods of leave. A survey conducted by Statistics Canada in February and March of 2020, before the full onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, found that 41.9 per cent of Canadian workers had access to Supplemental Maternity, Paternity, Parental or Employment Insurance income as an employer-provided benefit. Access to this supplemental income was far more prevalent among workers with permanent (continuing) jobs than among fixed contract, temporary, seasonal, or on-call workers.[111] Data from Statistics Canada's Employment Insurance Coverage survey indicate that in 2019, 30 per cent of mothers with an infant under 12 months who worked as a paid employee in the previous 2 years received a top-up payment from their employer.[112]
- Many universities have adopted a policy of 'pausing the tenure clock' (extending the period before a mandatory tenure decision) for parents who take Maternity, Parental, or Paternity leave.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

- None exist under labour laws or regulations at national or provincial levels.
- In some collective agreements in the Québec public service (for example, in education), it is possible to defer income, working 4 years at 80 per cent of earnings, followed by a one-year career break, again at 80 per cent of earnings. This is, however, part of a collective agreement, and

[111] Statistics Canada (2021) 'Aspects of quality of employment in Canada, February and March 2020', *The Daily, 22 March 2021.* Available at: https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210322/dq210322a-eng.htm

[112] Choi, Y. (2023). The likelihood and timing of mothers returning to work after parental leave. Statistic Canada, Economic and Social Reports. Catalogue no. 36-28-0001.

not a labour law or regulation.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- Outside of Québec, the same regulations for unpaid Parental leave entitlement generally apply for adoptive parents and birth parents (see Table 2), with the exception of Saskatchewan where adoptive parents are eligible for Adoption leave that is equivalent to Maternity leave, to which Parental leave can be added. The EI programme offers Parental leave benefits, but not Maternity leave benefits for parents of newly adopted children.
- In Québec, the QPIP offers multiple types of adoption benefits:
  - Non-shareable benefits: 5 weeks to each parent at 70 per cent (3 weeks at 75 per cent under the special plan)
  - Shareable Adoption-Related Welcome and Support Benefits: 13 weeks at 70 per cent (12 weeks at 75 per cent under the special plan).
  - Shareable benefits: 32 weeks (seven weeks at 70 per cent + 25 weeks at 55 per cent). Under the special plan, the QPIP offers 25 weeks at 75 per cent. Benefits are extended when shared by both parents. Under the basic plan: 4 additional shareable benefit weeks at 55 per cent once eight shareable adoption benefit weeks have been paid to each parent. Under the special plan: 3 additional shareable benefit weeks at 75 per cent once 6 shareable adoption benefit weeks have been paid to each parent.
  - In case of multiple adoption: Non-shareable benefits of 5 weeks at 70 per cent (3 at 75 per cent under the special plan)
  - For single parents: Non-shareable adoption benefits of 5 weeks at 70 per cent (3 at 75 per cent under the special plan)
- The period during which adoption leave can be taken is 78 weeks (18 months) in Québec.

Time off for the care of dependents (see also Section 3)

Employees' rights to paid or unpaid time off for sick leave, family responsibility leave, and personal leave that may be used either when an employee or other family member is ill, if available, is covered under provincial/territorial employment standards legislation and the Canada Labour Code for federally regulated workers. Collective agreements and employer benefits practices may also provide for paid or unpaid leave for these purposes. A recent review of the legislation and statistics on the availability of such leaves indicates that access is limited and inequitable across Canada.[113]

- The Canada Labour Code (covering employees in federally regulated industries) has changed to provide up to 5 days per year for **personal or family responsibility leave**, including 3 paid days after 3 months of continuous employment.

[113] Cai, M., Lero, D. and Fuller, S. (2025) *Care/Work Policies for Managing Routine and Unpredictable Caregiving. Vanier Institute of the Family Policy Brief.* Available at: https://vanierinstitute.ca/resource/policy-brief-care-work-policies-for-managing-routine-and-unpredictable-caregiving/

- British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Nunavut allow 3 to 5 days per year of unpaid **leave to care for a sick child or family member**; Newfoundland and Labrador allows up to 7 days of unpaid sick leave or family responsibility leave.
- In Québec, employees are entitled to 10 days per year of unpaid **leave, which can be used for a sick child or other family member** under the *Loi sur les normes du travail* (minimum employment standards law).
- All jurisdictions have **Compassionate Care leave** provisions, which entitle employees to take 27 or 28 weeks of unpaid time off to care for (or arrange care for) a family member who 'is at significant risk of death within a 26-week period,' and which generally align with unpaid leaves available to employees under provincial legislation. '**Compassionate Care benefits'** provide up to 26 weeks of benefits for those caring for an individual of any age who requires end-of-life care using the same rules required for parental leave benefits. In addition, two more recently introduced benefit programmes are the '**Family caregiver benefit for children**,' that provides up to 35 weeks of benefits for those caring for a critically ill or injured child under the age of 18 and the '**Family caregiver benefit for adults**' that offers up to 15 weeks of financial assistance for those caring for a critically ill or injured person over the age of 18 or a family member who has experienced a significant change in their health and requires the care or support of one or more family members. Each of these benefits are offered through EI, providing up to 55 per cent of recipients' earnings, to a maximum (see Table 1 for current rate).[114] Provisions for unpaid leave that match these benefit programmes are provided under the Canada Labour Code and provincial/territorial employment standards legislation.
- The 35 weeks of Family Caregiver Benefits for Children may be shared among any family members (or people considered to be like family) who meet the existing eligibility requirements for EI special benefits, requiring 600 hours of insurable employment during the qualifying period.[115] These caregiving benefits are also available to eligible self-employed individuals who have contributed to EI and may be combined with Compassionate Care leave benefits if the child/adult's health worsens. Claimants must provide a medical certificate attesting that the child/adult is critically ill. All provinces and territories have amended their legislation to provide matching periods of unpaid leave (36-37 weeks for the care of Critically Ill Children and 16-17 weeks to care for a Critically Ill Adult).

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- None.

[114] Government of Canada (2026) *EI caregiving benefits*. Ottawa: Employment and Social Development Canada. Available at: https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/caregiving.html

[115] Government of Canada (2018) *Introducing a new EI Family Caregiver benefit*. Ottawa: Employment and Social Development Canada. Available at: https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/campaigns/ei-improvements/adult-care.html

Flexible working for carers

- *Work-Sharing* is a small, federally run programme supported through the Employment Insurance (EI) fund designed to minimize layoffs. Although not specifically designed for parents, it allows employees to reduce their weekly working hours by 10-60 per cent. Employers and employees must agree to participate in Work-Sharing and apply together. The duration of Work-Sharing is a maximum of 26 weeks; if needed, an extension may be requested, providing up to 12 additional weeks, bringing the maximum up to 38 weeks. Participants in this program receive EI benefits to supplement their wages and the employer must maintain all existing employee benefits during the Work-Sharing agreement. In the province of Québec, while some larger firms made it possible for workers to reduce their hours, many did not. There were no governmental regulations in Québec with respect to this.
- In the federal and Québec jurisdictions, a pregnant woman or nursing mother is entitled to consult with a health care practitioner to establish whether continuing any aspect of her work poses a risk to her health or that of the unborn child or nursing infant. If needed, she is obliged to ask her employer to temporarily modify her duties or to assign her to another position if necessary.
- In Québec, a pregnant worker can qualify for Workers' Compensation if no other suitable position is available at their workplace.
- Employees in the federal jurisdiction have a right to request flexible working arrangements after 6 months of continuous employment. Employees may request changes to the number of work hours per week, their work schedule, or the employee's location of work, such as working from home or a satellite location. Employers are required to consider such requests but may not grant them if the requested change would result in additional costs that would constitute an undue financial hardship for the employer or would result in negative impacts on the quality or quantity of work, the ability to meet customer demand, and/or the performance of the employee's workplace. No other jurisdiction has introduced a formal right to request flexible work arrangements, but they may be introduced through collective agreements.
- In November 2023, 30 per cent of parents with at least 1 child aged 5 years or younger worked exclusively from home or had a hybrid arrangement, including 33.2 per cent of mothers and 27.4 per cent of fathers. In comparison, 23.5 per cent of workers without a young child worked exclusively from home or had a hybrid work arrangement.[116]

Antenatal appointments and care

- No statutory entitlement.

Other provisions of leave

- None.

[116] Statistics Canada (2023) 'Labour Force Survey, November 2023'*, The Daily*, *December 1, 2023*

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care (ECEC) policy

Early childhood programmes fall under provincial jurisdiction, requiring that federal leadership and funding be paired with provincial/territorial government commitments and collaborative relationships to effect significant, sustained changes in early childhood policies and provision. Recent efforts, beginning in 2017 and gaining considerable momentum since 2021, are finally resulting in transformative changes in Canada's approach to early learning and childcare, including significant commitments to ensure Indigenous-led programmes that respect and honour Indigenous children, families, and communities. While not without significant challenges, significant multi-year funding and the negotiation of bilateral agreements with each province/territory[117] and with Indigenous partners as part of a Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care system are designed to result in more affordable, accessible, inclusive, high-quality childcare for all Canadians who wish to use it.[118]

In December 2022, the government introduced legislation that would enshrine in law current programmes and policies to establish and sustain progress made to develop a Canada-wide early learning and childcare system. Bill C35, An Act Respecting Early Learning and Child Care in Canada, became law in 2024. On 6 March 2025, the Government of Canada announced agreements with 11 of 13 provincial and territorial governments to extend the Early Learning and Child Care agreements until 2031.

There is no entitlement to early childhood education and care in Canada. Parents must make their own arrangements for child care at the end of parental leave to return to paid work. The most current information available estimates that in 2021 there was a full or part-day child care centre/preschool space available for only 28 per cent of children age 0-5 across the country[119]. While initiatives and funding provided under CWELCC agreements include commitments to substantially increase the number of regulated child care spaces, progress has been slower than expected. In 2023, a higher proportion of parents of young children had difficulty finding available child care (62 per cent, compared to 53 per cent in 2019). Difficulties finding and affording child care, particularly outside of Québec, may result in parents postponing their return to the work force, limiting their work hours, or using multiple or temporary arrangements[120].

Canada is not included in the comparative table on ECEC enrolment produced for the OECD Family Database. Child care program policies, licensing standards, and

[117] Separate funding is provided to Québec, given its well-developed child care system in an asymmetrical agreement.

[118] Government of Canada (2021) *A Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan.* Ottawa: Department of Finance Canada. Available here: https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/news/2021/12/a-canada-wide-early-learning-and-child-care-plan.html

[119] Beach, J., Friendly, M., Nguyen, N.T., Borges Nogueira, P., Taylor, M., Mohamed, S., Rothman, L. and Forer, B. (2023). *Early childhood education and care in Canada 2021*. Childcare Resource and Research Unit.

[120] Government of Canada: Statistics Canada (2023) 'Child Care Arrangements, 2023', *The Daily*. Available at: https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/231205/dq231205a-eng.htm

funding mechanisms are under provincial/territorial jurisdiction and vary considerably.

Across the country (outside Québec), jurisdictions have provincially/territorially/municipally funded, provincially or municipally delivered childcare subsidy programmes. These programmes subsidize childcare for young children (birth to 5 years old) and before and after school care for older children. Under this programme, only families that can provide continual proof that both parents (or a lone parent) are working or studying can qualify, and childcare must be provided by a licensed early childhood programme or a regulated childcare provider. Eligibility criteria are income-based and social (i.e., for children with a disability or special need and for families referred by Child and Family Services agencies) and there are minimal fees and surcharges in some provinces. Most provinces offer publicly funded kindergarten to children who are 5 years old.

Although most parents do not qualify for provincial/municipal child care subsidies, they are a crucial resource for lower-income parents, including parents who are students, enabling them to complete qualifications and/or work at lower paying jobs. Notably, these are the very parents who are less likely to qualify for Parental leave entitlement and benefits. Levels of funding, available places, and waitlist backlogs vary by municipality and province and change over time; often, there are long waiting lists for these subsidies.[121]

Across the country, child care fees vary depending on provincial policies and market rates, with infant care being the most expensive. Canada's patchwork of provincial/territorial child care policies continues to limit children's access to high quality early childhood programmes and has a considerable impact on family incomes and women's employment.[122] As aforementioned, many provinces/territories are improving access and/or reducing parental fees under the new child care plan, but the limited supply of qualified early childhood educators remains an issue. There are strong calls by childcare advocates and women's groups to ensure that every jurisdiction develops an effective Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) workforce strategy. While the new child care plan accounts for workforce concerns, the extent to which the provinces/territories are implementing measures—such as appropriate wage grids and improvements to working conditions and benefits to attract, recruit, and retain qualified early childhood educators—vary considerably. Plans for expansion first require stabilizing the existing supply of programmes, which was impacted to a significant degree by decreased enrolments and additional expenses required during the Pandemic.[123]
In Québec, there is a network of non-profit child care financed largely by the Québec government, which in 1997 offered day care at CAN$5 [€3.11] a day. The February 2014 budget increased the amount parents pay for child care to CAN$7.79 [€4.84] and it was increased to CAN$8.25 [€5.13] in 2019 and

[121] Macdonald, D. and Friendly, M. (2020) *In progress: Child care fees in Canada*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.
[122] For an overview of the costs of day care in Canadian cities, see Macdonald, D. and Friendly, M. (2019) *Developmental milestones: Child care fees in Canada's big cities, 2018.* Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.
[123] MacDonald, D. and Friendly, M. (2021) *Sounding the alarm: COVID-19's impact on Canada's precarious child care sector*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Available at: https://www.policyalternatives.ca/TheAlarm.

CAN$8.70 [€5.41] in 2020.[124] In 2026, the daily rate for subsidized care is CAN$9.65 [€6.00]. Subsidized spaces are insufficient to meet demands; however, parents who use unsubsidized child care are entitled to a refundable tax credit that reimburses between 26 and 75 per cent of their expenses, depending on family income. In 2021, Québec announced the introduction of a 'Major initiatives for families' (*Grand chantier pour les familles*) to complete Québec's child care network. The objective is for the network to be completed by 2025, so that every child has access to a child care space. In 2024, there is still an important lack of child care spaces, with more than 30,000 children on the waiting list.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

A change originally announced in 2023, by the federal government, has become law but has yet to be implemented.[125] Exclusive to the federal program (Québec already has these provisions) is a new 15-week shareable parental benefit for adoptive parents (and parents whose child is born via surrogacy). This equalizes adoptive and surrogacy coupled parents with birth parents. The law also includes provisions, under federal labour law, for employees and self-employed people when a child's placement or arrival is delayed, or a child is hospitalized, and leave for pregnancy loss and bereavement.

4. Uptake of leave and benefits

Unpaid leave

No data available.

Paid leave

For receipt of leave benefits, there are three sources of information: a Statistics Canada national survey (the Employment Insurance Coverage Survey, EICS), Québec administrative data[126], and EI administrative data that are collected by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and published in an annual *Employment Insurance (EI) Monitoring and Assessment Report* (MAR) by the Employment Insurance Monitoring Commission. The most recent MAR dated 2025 covers the period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The numbers can be slightly different between survey and administrative data. Further, the MAR often cites EICS survey data.

The EICS excludes parents from the three territories and those living on First Nations reserves. Data are collected from one parent per household, usually

[124] Finances Québec (2020) *Connaître le coût quotidien net des services de garde* [Knowing the net daily cost of childcare services]. Available at : http://www.budget.finances.gouv.qc.ca/Budget/outils/garde_fr.asp

[125] See here: https://www.parl.ca/documentviewer/en/44-1/bill/C-59/royal-assent

[126] The *Conseil de gestion de l'assurance parentale* (CGAP) collects data on the take-up of benefits in Québec. These data are only collected for parents who receive benefits and that are relevant for the payment of these benefits and therefore, little is known about new parents who do not receive benefits. The CGAP plans to work on the profile of parents who do not receive benefits, based on both internal and external databases, and on the linkage of the administrative data it holds with other databases.

mothers; prior to 2020 only mothers were asked about fathers' use/intended use of leave and benefits). The EICS and Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) sources sometimes report national figures, which obscure the major differences in patterns of leave and benefit taking between parents in Québec who utilize the QPIP programme and those in the rest of Canada who utilize EI leave benefits. ESDC provides annual information on EI Maternity and Parental benefits, with most disaggregation about provincial uptake but also some about mothers' and fathers' use of benefits. Recent changes to EICS methods have resulted in the latest reports referring to parents and spouse/partners, rather than to mothers and fathers.

In the Employment Insurance Coverage Survey, 2024 released Oct 29, 2025, for all parents of a child aged 18 months or younger (Québec and the Rest of Canada combined), 81.2 per cent of parents with a child 18 months or younger had paid EI premiums and among these parents, 92.8 per cent (the vast majority mothers) received maternity or parental benefits (in 2023 this rate was 92.2 per cent, and in 2022 this rate was 94.2 per cent).[127] Surveyed parents (usually mothers) reported that among their spouses (mostly fathers), 51.9 per cent claimed or intended to claim paternity or parental benefits in 2023 (in 2023 this rate was 49.3 per cent and in 2022 it was 42.6 per cent).

Receipt of EI benefits

When we break down the national numbers by benefit program, the 2024 EICS found the following uptake data for parents with a child 18 months or younger living *outside Quebec* using the EI program: 75.6 per cent had insurable employment (24.4 per cent did not). Among these new parents with insurable employment, 91.3 per cent reported having received maternity or parental benefits, which is slightly less than the previous year (92.4 per cent in 2022).[128]

The MAR report provides information about the uptake of the EI extended Parental leave benefits option that was introduced in December 2017. During the 2023-2024 Fiscal Year, there were 244,005 new parental benefit claims[129]. Less than 1 per cent of all parental benefit claims (about 1,200) came from adoptive parents.

Most EI parental benefit claims (69.5 per cent) were made by women. The percentage of claims established by men has been increasing in recent years, at 30.5 per cent in 2023/2024, compared to 29.3 per cent the previous year and 23.5 per cent the year prior. Prior to the introduction of the parental sharing option, women received 90.6 per cent of the total amount of parental benefits paid and men received 9.4 per cent.

Parents whose children were born or placed for adoption on or after December 3, 2017, had the option to choose to take standard or extended parental benefits.

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[127] Statistics Canada (2025). Employment Insurance Coverage Survey, 2024. The Daily, Oct 29, 2025. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/251029/dq251029a-eng.htm

[128] Employment and Social Development Canada (2025). *2023/2024 Employment insurance monitoring and assessment report*, *Canada.* Available at: https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/images/programs/ei/ei-list/reports/monitoring2024/2023-2024-EI-MAR-EN.pdf (p. 143)

[129] Ibid.

Standard parental benefits provide up to 35 weeks of benefits at 55 per cent of weekly insurable earnings over a maximum of 12 months – with 40 weeks of benefits available to parents who choose to share parental benefits because of policy changes introduced in March 2019. Extended parental benefits provide 61 weeks of benefits at a benefit rate of 33 per cent of weekly insurable earnings with an additional 8 weeks of benefits available to couples who share benefits over a maximum of 18 months.

In the fiscal year 2023-2024, 17.9 per cent of all parental claims were for extended benefits. The average weekly extended parental benefit amount received was CAN$353 [€219.42], while the average weekly standard benefit received was CAN$582 [€361.76] weekly. 62.1 per cent of standard benefit claimants received the maximum weekly benefit available; 62.9 per cent of claimants received the maximum weekly extended parental benefit rate.[130] Data from the 2021 EICS survey revealed that one quarter of new parents (both mothers and fathers) outside Quebec (225.2 percent) chose the extended EI parental benefits option.[131]

Using weeks and amounts of benefits claimed expressed per family (rather than per claim), analysis for 2023/24 indicates that, as in previous fiscal years, eligible parents used almost all the EI Maternity and Parental leave weeks to which they were entitled. Most mothers in receipt of maternity benefits (92.8 per cent) used the full 15 weeks available for an average duration of 14.7 weeks. The average number of weeks of parental benefits received in 2023/24 was 32.9 weeks for mothers and 17.5 weeks for fathers for those receiving standard parental benefits. Among parents who claimed extended benefits, mothers received an average of 57.9 weeks of Parental leave benefits and fathers claimed 34.0 weeks[132]. Data from the 2024 EICS survey shows the average leave duration for parental leave increased by 0.6 months compared to the previous year.[133]

Sharing paid benefits between parents

Eligible parents in two-parent families can share and use benefits at the same time or at different times. Based on EICS data, in Quebec in 2023, 80.2 per cent of spouses or partners had claimed or intended to claim paternity or parental benefits from QPIP, down from 92.9 per cent in 2022. In provinces outside Quebec, 39.3 per cent of spouses or partners claimed or intended to claim benefits in 2023, up 8.0 per cent from a year earlier.

The EI Monitoring and Assessment Report for 2020/2021 was the first report to provide results on sharing and using the additional weeks of parental benefits made available to parents whose children were born or adopted on or after 31 March 2020. Of all families sharing standard parental benefits, 89.3 per cent used at least one of the extra 5 weeks available to them, and 57.4 per cent used all 40 weeks of parental benefits offered. 72.7 per cent of claimants used all 69 weeks

[130] Calculated from data found at: *https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/documents/programs/ei/ei-list/reports/monitoring2021/2020-2021_EI_MAR-EN.pdf*
[131] Statistics Canada (2022) 'Employment Insurance Coverage Survey, 2021', *The Daily, 24 November 2022*
[132] Ibid.
[133] Statistics Canada (2025) 'Employment Insurance Coverage Survey, 2024', *The Daily, 29 October 2025*. Available at: https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/251029/dq251029a-eng.htm

of parental benefits available. In nearly all families, both parents took maternity or parental leave at the same time, with an average of 5.4 weeks of overlap for families receiving standard parental benefits, and 8.1 weeks for those receiving extended parental benefits. The average duration of shared parental benefits was, for standard parental benefits, 17.5 weeks for men and 32.9 weeks for women.

As extended parental benefits can be paid over a maximum of 18 months, the duration of shared parental benefits is reported biannually to ensure data captures both parents who have completed their claim. As a result, there is no current data on the percentage of families who used one or more weeks available through shared extended parental benefits, nor the average leave duration for claimants who opted for shared extended parental benefits.

Because some of the information available combines Maternity and Parental leave and benefits, the section below is organized under two headings: 'mothers' and 'fathers'[134]. Readers should note that statistics are kept separately for those who claim EI benefits under the federal plan and individuals in Québec who receive Maternity, Paternity, or Parental benefits under the QPIP.

Mothers

Based on EICS data, the proportion of Québec parents who are eligible for and receive benefits under the QPIP program is higher than in the rest of Canada. In 2021, 99.8 per cent of recent mothers with insurable employment received QPIP Maternity or Parental leave benefits, compared to 89.3 per cent of mothers in the rest of Canada[135]. This means that, of parents with insurable employment, 0.2 per cent in Québec and 10.7 per cent outside Québec were not receiving benefits. In 2021, 82.9 per cent of parents with a child aged 18 months or younger outside of Québec had insurable employment. This left 17.1 per cent without insurable employment, and therefore not eligible to receive any benefits. Thus, adding 10.7 per cent and 17.1 per cent, we see that 27.8 per cent of parents outside Québec did not receive any parental benefits in 2021. It is critical to pay close attention to these exclusions, as they are not reflected in reporting by Statistics Canada.

In the rest of Canada, most mothers who receive Maternity benefits (98.5 per cent) go on to receive Parental leave benefits. Women tend to receive Parental benefits for longer periods than men. In 2023/24, 92.8 per cent of mothers used all the 15 EI maternity weeks offered to them, with an average duration of 14.7 weeks.[136] On average, QPIP mothers took 45 weeks of benefits in 2023.[137]

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[134] By fathers, we refer to spouses/partners of recent mothers. This includes same-sex partners.

[135] Statistics Canada (2022) 'Employment Insurance Coverage Survey, 2021', *The Daily*. Available at: https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/221124/dq221124b-eng.pdf?st=PAARNK8c

[136] Employment and Social Development Canada (2025) *2023/24 EI monitoring and assessment report*. Available at: *https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/images/programs/ei/ei-list/reports/monitoring2024/2023-2024-EI-MAR-EN.pdf*

[137] Gouvernement du Québec (2025) *Profil des Prestataires 2023*, *Régime québécois d'assurance parentale* [Service Providers Profile 2023, Quebec Parental Insurance Plan]. Available at: https://cdn-contenu.quebec.ca/cdn-contenu/adm/min/emploi-solidarite-sociale/conseil_gestion_assurance_parentale/statistiques/profil_prestataires/RA_profil_prestataires_RQAP_2023.pdf

The average weekly Parental benefit for mothers receiving the standard benefit was CAN$564 [€350.57] compared to CAN$623 [€387.25] per week for fathers. Among those parents who opted for extended Parental benefits at a lower income replacement rate, the average weekly benefit received was CAN$342 [€212.58] per week for women and CAN$382 [€237.44] for men. Most parents who received both standard and extended Parental benefits received the maximum weekly benefit available (for standard benefits, 71.2 per cent used the maximum of 35 weeks offered; for extended benefits, 72.7 per cent used all 61 weeks available to them)[138].

Fathers

In 2022/23, fathers accounted for 29.3 per cent of those who claimed Parental leave benefits outside of Québec. Previous years have shown a slow but steady increase in the uptake of Parental leave benefits among eligible fathers in Canada (excluding Québec*)*, indicating that more couples are sharing benefits. In 2019, for all provinces combined (including Québec), EICS survey responses indicated that the proportion of fathers who claimed or intended to claim Parental leave rose to 49.3 per cent in 2023, up from 46.6 per cent in 2022, compared to 32.1 per cent in 2020[139]. These data obscure major differences in the uptake of Parental leave by fathers in and outside of Québec.

The introduction of the QPIP, which includes leave that is exclusively for fathers, has had a huge impact on the number of fathers claiming or intending to claim leave in Québec: from 27.8 per cent in 2005 to 92.9 per cent in 2022 and then to 80.2 per cent in 2023[140]. In 2023 in Québec, both parents took parental leave in 72 per cent of all births registered by QPIP. In the remaining families, only one parent was paid benefits: 9 per cent were fathers and 19 per cent were mothers. Thus, for 81 per cent of births covered by QPIP, fathers took leave (either Paternity, Parental or both).[141]

On average, fathers who receive benefits following a birth or adoption take significantly fewer weeks than women who receive benefits. The 2023/2024 *EI Monitoring and Assessment Report* indicated that fathers received an average of 17.5 weeks of standard unshared Parental benefits following birth or adoption, compared to 32.9 weeks for mothers under the standard Parental benefit option; men took an average 8.3 weeks of standard shared parental benefits, while women took 31.7. As aforementioned, data on the duration of shared extended benefits for 2023/24 are not yet available to accommodate for the 18-month period through which extended parental benefits can be paid to either parent. However, in 2022/23, fathers received an average of 17.1 weeks, compared to 54.8 weeks for

[138] Employment and Social Development Canada (2025) *2023/24 EI monitoring and assessment report*. Available at: *https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/images/programs/ei/ei-list/reports/monitoring2024/2023-2024-EI-MAR-EN.pdf*.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Statistics Canada (2024) 'Employment insurance coverage survey 2023', *The Daily*, *30 October 2024*. Available at: https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/241030/dq241030a-eng.pdf?st=j0BYiny6
[141]Gouvernement du Québec (2025) Profil des Prestataires 2023, Régime québécois d'assurance parentale [Service Providers Profile 2025, Quebec Parental Insurance Plan]. Available at: https://cdn-contenu.quebec.ca/cdn-contenu/adm/min/emploi-solidarite-sociale/conseil_gestion_assurance_parentale/statistiques/profil_prestataires/RA_profil_prestataires_RQAP_2023.pdf

mothers; for unshared benefits, men took an average of 34.7 weeks, and women 57[142].

As for Quebec, almost all fathers took advantage of the maximum weeks of paternity benefits to which they were entitled. Regarding parental shareable benefits, 51 per cent of QPIP fathers used them in 2023. On average, QPIP fathers took 10.6 weeks of benefits in 2023. In 2023, among families where both parents received QPIP benefits, the proportion who shared the shareable parental benefits rose by 17 percentage points over 2 years—representing over 9,000 additional families. The new sharing incentive is likely a key factor behind the significant rise observed[143].

In summary, patterns of parental leave and benefit taking are continuing to evolve for eligible parents as Canada's EI leave benefits and Québec's QPIP policies change, with both offering more flexibility and encouragement of benefit sharing between men and women in two-parent families. The two programmes also continue to diverge as Quebec enacts changes to be more inclusive, generous to singles and parents of multiple births, and raises the benefit floor for low-income recipients.

[142] Employment and Social Development Canada (2025) *2023/24 EI monitoring and assessment report*. Available at: *https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/images/programs/ei/ei-list/reports/monitoring2024/2023-2024-EI-MAR-EN.pdf*

[143] Gouvernement du Québec (2025) *Profil des Prestataires 2023*, Régime québécois d'assurance parentale. Available here: https://cdn-contenu.quebec.ca/cdn-contenu/adm/min/emploi-solidarite-sociale/conseil_gestion_assurance_parentale/statistiques/profil_prestataires/RA_profil_prestataires_RQAP_2023.pdf

Chile[144]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave *(pre y postnatal maternal)* (responsibility of Ministry of Labour and Social Security)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 18 weeks: 6 weeks before the birth and 12 weeks after the birth.
- It is obligatory to take all the above leave.
- Women are entitled to an additional 12 weeks of leave after obligatory Maternity leave is finished.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 'Dependent' worker: 100 per cent of earnings, up to an upper limit of UF73.20 [€2,706.72] per month.[145] To avoid fluctuations, an average income is calculated for 3 months from the beginning of the Maternity leave. The obligatory monthly contribution to pension insurance (10 per cent) is also paid.
- Payments are made to the parent by the health insurance institution of the worker; each worker can choose between a private (ISAPRE) or public (Compin-FONASA) health insurance.
- Independent worker: 100 per cent of earnings with a taxable limit of UF73.20 [€2,706.72] per month; a monthly payment is made based on the average earnings of the worker, which is calculated based on the commercial invoice issued 3 months before the beginning of the Maternity leave.

[144] Please cite as: Bosch, M.J. (2026) 'Chile country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, Á.A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

[145] The national currency is the Chilean peso. *Unidad de Fomento* (UF) is a unit of account used in Chile, adjusted in line with inflation. It was created in 1967 to maintain the value of savings against inflation. Later, its use was extended to the financial system, pensions system, health system, education, and other fields. Conversion of the UF currency undertaken on 20 July 2026 using: https://www.unitconverters.net/currency-converter.html.

- Payments are made to the parent by the health insurance institution of the worker.
- Payment is not subject to taxation.

Flexibility in use

- Women can choose to go back to work on a part-time basis for the second period of leave (after obligatory leave), in which case they may extend this leave period by 6 weeks to a total of 18 weeks.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- 'Dependent' worker: all employees with permanent job contracts are entitled to take Maternity leave. Employees on fixed-term contracts must meet the following conditions:
  - Renewal of their contract.
  - If the contract is not renewed the worker must have at least:
    - One year of contribution to the pension system through the administration of the individual pension funds (the name in Chile is AFP.
    - The last contribution to the pension system must be as a dependent worker, no matter the type of contract (permanent or fixed term).

- Independent worker: independent workers are entitled to Maternity leave if they meet the following requirements:
  - A one-year contribution to the pension system (AFP).
  - At least six contributions to the pension system during the last 12 months before stopping work before giving birth.
  - Contribute to a health insurance institution (public or private).

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- If any health complications are detected by a doctor during pregnancy, the worker is entitled to supplementary leave before the birth: the length is specified by the doctor and a medical certificate is required.
- In the case of multiple births, the leave is extended by 7 days for every child, starting with the second baby.
- In the case of a premature birth, Maternity leave is extended from 12 to 18 weeks after birth. In the case of a premature and multiple birth, the longer extension applies.
- If childbirth occurs more than 6 weeks after the mother started her pre-birth leave, the pre-natal leave is extended until the date of the birth.
- If the child dies during or after childbirth, the mother is entitled to use Maternity leave, though it is not obligatory.
- If the mother has any health problems because of childbirth, Maternity leave is extended according to medical judgement.
- If the mother dies during or after childbirth, all Maternity leave rights are transferred to the father or a legal guardian.
- Women can choose to transfer a period of the second (non-obligatory) part of Maternity leave to the father, in one of two ways: (i) the mother transfers the last 6 weeks of full-time leave to the father and his health insurance

pays 100 per cent of his earnings and pension insurance up to a taxable limit of UF73.20 [€2,706.72]; or (ii) the mother transfers 12 weeks of part-time leave to the father and his health insurance pays 50 per cent of his earnings and pension insurance, while the employer pays the other 50 per cent.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- Private or public companies may have internal policies that extend Maternity leave periods beyond statutory entitlements. Additionally, organizations may offer supplementary benefits, such as gradual return-to-work arrangements following statutory leave. These practices, however, are not mandatory and vary according to individual company policies.

b. Paternity leave (*Permiso pagado del padre en caso de nacimiento - postnatal paternal*) (responsibility of the employer)

Length of leave

- 5 working days.
- It is obligatory to take the whole period.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings.
- Payments are made to the parent by the employer.
- Payment is not subject to taxation.

Flexibility in use

- The father can choose to take leave in one continuous period immediately after childbirth or can distribute the 5 days over the first month after the birth.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employees are eligible if they have a contract (permanent or fixed term).
- Self-employed workers do not receive any payment.
- Fathers who are deprived of their parental rights by a court lose all their rights of Paternity leave and transferred Maternity leave.
- Same-sex couples are not recognized in Chilean law.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- Chile does not provide additional Paternity leave entitlements or variations based on specific child or family circumstances, nor does it allow delegation of leave entitlements to individuals other than the mother.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- Private or public companies may have internal policies that extend paternity leave periods beyond statutory entitlements. These practices, however, are not mandatory and vary according to individual company policies.

c. Parental leave (*postnatal parental)* (responsibility of Ministry of Labour and Social Security)

No statutory entitlement.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- Parents that adopt a child are entitled to the same leave as biological parents. If the adopted child is over 6 months of age, the mother is only able to use the 1st part of Maternity leave.

Time off for the care of dependents

- Every working mother or father is entitled to paid **leave in the case of serious illness of a child under the age of 1 year**. This must be certified by a doctor who should also specify the length of the leave. Paid at 100 per cent of earnings by the parent's health insurance with a taxable cap of UF73.20 [€2,706.72]. The father can take the leave only if the mother permits it. In case the mother dies, all her rights are transferred to the father. In the case of single mothers, these rights are transferred to the legal guardian of the child.
- Every working mother is entitled to **leave in the case of a serious illness (i.e., cancer, organ transplant, or terminal disease) or of a serious accident of a child between 1 and 18 years of age**. If a child has cancer, mothers are entitled to 15 days leave, with the possibility of extension to 90 days full-time or 180 days part-time in a period of 12 months. In the case of an organ transplant, they are also entitled to 15 days of leave, with the possibility of extension to 90 days full-time or 180 days part-time in a period of 12 months. In the case of a child diagnosed with a terminal disease, they are entitled to take leave until the death of the child. Finally, if a child has a serious accident, mothers are entitled to 15 days leave, with the possibility of extension to 45 days. The employee chooses how to distribute the hours (e.g., as complete days, partial days, or a combination). If both parents work, the mother can transfer this leave to the father.

Parents taking leave receive 100 per cent of earnings, with no upper limit. The insurance is funded by contributions of 0.03 per cent of employees' taxable income. To be eligible for this leave, an employee must have a job contract and have paid 8 contributions to pension insurance in the 24 months preceding the start of leave.[146] Self-employed workers should have at least 12 months of contribution to the pension system in the last 24 months, and their health insurance payment must be up to date. Finally, laid off workers are also entitled to this benefit if they register at least 12 months of contributions to the pension system before the leave starts.

- Every worker is entitled to take a leave of up to 10 days per year to **care for a disabled person for whom they are responsible**. The period of leave taken should be made up by working extra hours or using holidays; if this cannot be done, earnings are reduced. To use the leave, the dependent person must be enrolled in the National Disability Registration. Any carers can use the leave, however the decision for a male worker to use leave rests with his female partner (unless she has died).

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Every working mother has the right to use at least 1 hour daily to feed a child under the age of 2 years. This can be taken in one of 3 ways: (i) during the working day; (ii) dividing the breastfeeding hour into two half hours (at the beginning or at the end of the working day); or (iii) postponing the beginning of the working day or leaving earlier.
- The employee receives 100 per cent of her earnings.

Flexible working for carers

- Workers who have personal care responsibilities for a child under 14 years, or who are responsible for the care of a person with a disability or in a situation of severe or moderate dependence, regardless of the age of the person being cared for, have the right to work remotely or telework, allowing workers to perform all or part of their daily or weekly schedule in these ways to the extent that the nature of their jobs permits it.
- Workers who have care responsibilities for a child under 14 years or a teenager under 18 years with a disability have the right to request statutory holidays during the vacation period set by the Ministry of Education, with their request being given priority over those without these responsibilities. Likewise, workers meeting these criteria have the right, during the vacation period defined by the Ministry of Education and when the nature of their jobs permits it, to request temporary modifications to shifts or the distribution of the daily and weekly schedule to reconcile work with care needs during these periods.

Antenatal appointments and care

- Pregnant employees have the statutory right to attend antenatal medical appointments and examinations. Employers are legally obligated to grant

[146] Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile (2016) *Recuperado el 14 de Marzo de 2019, de Ley Fácil*. Available at: https://www.bcn.cl/leyfacil/recurso/licencia-medica-para-el-acompanamiento-de-hijos-e-hijas-enfermos-graves-o-en-estado-terminal

the necessary time off for antenatal care without loss of remuneration or negative repercussions on employment conditions.

Other provisions of leave

- **Bereavement leave**. Employees are entitled to 7 days of paid leave in the event of the death of a spouse, civil partner, or child, and 3 days for the death of a parent or unborn child.
- **Domestic violence leave**. Employees experiencing domestic violence are entitled to paid leave, granting them time off for protective measures and necessary legal procedures.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is around five and a half months, paid at a high rate. There is no entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).

The Labour Law requires that all companies that employ more than 20 female workers must either provide a day nursery or pay for this service outside of the workplace.[147] In practice, this law has become a 'tax' for female employment, so increasing the cost of labour for the employer and providing a real obstacle to women joining the labour market.

Other ECEC policies are focused on the most vulnerable families in the country. Public services have increased their coverage, efficiency, and quality for their target population: every child between birth and five years of age in the bottom 60 per cent of households, in terms of wealth. In this context, the government has developed three programmes:

- Chile Crece Contigo: this inter-sectoral policy deals with early childhood development, covering health, education, social protection, justice, and employment, with guidelines from the Ministry of Social Development, and offering all its services at a local level. ECEC is the largest budgetary item on this programme, but there are no official statistics for coverage rates.[148]
- Two other programmes provide ECEC for vulnerable families:
  - Kindergartens administered by the National Council of Kindergartens (Junta Nacional de Jardines Infantiles- JUNJI).
  - Kindergartens and day nurseries administered by the Integra Foundation.

In 2018, JUNJI kindergartens and nurseries[149] covered 92 per cent of the target population, which is children from the bottom 60 per cent of households, in terms of wealth, enrolled in the Social Registry of Homes (*Registro Social de Hogares*). This means that the coverage of the program descended from 2017, when kindergartens received 98 per cent of the target population[150]. In terms of

147 Dirección del Trabajo (2019).*Código del Trabajo.* Santiago de Chile.

148 PNUD (2014) *Chile Crece Contigo: El desafío de la protección social a la infancia.* Santiago de Chile.

149 Ministerio de Desarrollo Social (2018) *Informe de Seguimiento de Programas Sociales: Jardín Clásico Administrado por Junji y Vía Transferencia de Fondos.* Santiago de Chile.

150 Ministerio de Desarrollo Social (2017) *Informe de Seguimiento de Programas Sociales: Jardín Clásico Administrado por Junji y Vía Transferencia de Fondos.* Santiago de Chile.

attendance, JUNJI kindergartens and nurseries presented a low increase from 77.2 per cent in 2017 to 79.0 per cent in 2018.

The situation of the Integra Foundation[151] for both nurseries and kindergartens is similar: the programme covered 93.4 per cent of its target population in 2018.

These numbers may suggest that the coverage of kindergarten population for vulnerable families is quite high, however, the potential population with needs of primary education is much higher. A recent evaluation made by the Ministry of Social Development, stated that JUNJI kindergartens and nurseries only cover 21.6 per cent of the population that face a gap between parental leave and elementary education in Chile.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

No structural changes to Maternity, Paternity or Parental leave legislation were enacted during the period covered by this report (April 2025 to April 2026).

However, two legislative developments with indirect implications for leave-related benefits came into effect. First, the minimum wage was adjusted upwards by Law N° 21.751 (published in the *Diario Oficial*, 28 June 2025), setting it at CLP$529,000 [€496.97][152] from 1 May 2025 and CLP$539,000 [€506.44] from 1 January 2026. Because the minimum daily amount of maternal subsidies (prenatal, postnatal, and postnatal parental) is calculated as a fraction of the minimum wage for non-remunerational purposes, this adjustment raised the minimum daily subsidy floor to CLP$5,683 [€5.33] from 1 May 2025 (SUSESO, 2025). Second, the Pension Reform Law (N° 21.735) came partially into effect in August 2025, introducing a new employer contribution of 1 per cent of taxable wages. Of this, 0.9 per cent is directed to a new Social Insurance fund that includes a Compensation for Life Expectancy Differences for women, a measure aimed at reducing the gender pension gap arising from women's greater longevity.

A parliamentary bill proposing a substantial extension of postnatal parental leave was under discussion during this period. The bill would extend the postnatal parental leave period to 40 weeks in total (compared to the current 12 weeks), with a decreasing subsidy schedule (100 per cent for the first 28 weeks, 80 per cent for weeks 29–40, and 50 per cent for weeks 41–52), and would expand paid paternity leave from 5 working days to 4 weeks. The bill was approved in June 2025 by the Lower Chamber's Labour Committee but, as of April 2026, had not completed its full parliamentary process and had not been enacted into law. Experts and legislators noted that, given the bill's complexity and the absence of executive urgency designation, enactment was unlikely before the end of the current presidential term.

[151] Ministerio de Desarrollo Social (2018) *Informe de Seguimiento de Programas Sociales: Jardines Infantiles y Sala Cuna de Administración Delegada.* Santiago de Chile.
[152] Conversion of the UF currency undertaken on 20 July 2026 using: https://www.xe.com/.

4. Uptake of leave[153]

a. Maternity leave

Data on the use of the obligatory period of Maternity leave is only available for up to 2017. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, approximately 42.9 per cent of mothers in that year took the leave 6 weeks before the birth of the child. Additionally, 44.6 per cent of mothers took Maternity leave after childbirth. These percentages are based on all mothers, but Maternity leave can only be taken by women who are employed, and the female employment rate is 48.5 per cent[154]. More recent data from SUSESO show a declining trend in postnatal subsidies initiated, from 98,505 in 2018 to 75,554 in 2024 and 71,575 in 2025, consistent with Chile's falling birth rate. Prenatal subsidies initiated followed a similar pattern, declining from 96,418 in 2018 to 72,664 in 2024 and 68,361 in 2025 (SUSESO, 2026).[155] The data also does not include women working in national defense (army, air force, navy, and police).

The additional period of part-transferable Maternity leave started in 2012. That year, 37.4 per cent of mothers took the leave: this number had increased to 44.4 per cent in 2017. Approximately 99 per cent of women who took the leave did so full-time, which means taking 12 weeks of leave. This ratio has been a continuous tendency until 2019. More recent SUSESO data show that postnatal parental leave subsidies initiated declined from 97,468 in 2017 to 85,047 in 2023, 73,682 in 2024, and 71,269 in 2025, again reflecting the downward trend in births (SUSESO, 2026).

This leave is transferred to fathers in very few cases. Only 1,802 transfers have been made from 2011 to 2019. This means that, every year, only 0.2 per cent of leaves have been transferred to the father. The average number of days taken was 33.8: i.e., less than the six weeks allowed. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, this low level of transfer is due to several reasons: (i) many women are still breastfeeding at a time when they might transfer leave; (ii) the decision to transfer leave is the mother's to make; (iii) the legal procedure for transferring leave is complex and unknown in most human resources departments due to its low uptake; and (iv) fathers do not have the same maternal jurisdiction that mothers have at work. Maternal jurisdiction lasts two years, while paternal immunity only doubles the period in which they took the leave.

b. Paternity leave

No information available.

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[153] INE (2019) *Anuario de Estadístcas Vitales, 2017;* Ministerio del Trabajo y Previsión Social (2017) *Protección a la maternidad en Chile: Evolución del postnatal parental a cinco años de su implementación 2011-2016* Santiago de Chile; Superintendencia de Seguridad Social (2020) *Estadísticas de Seguridad Social*. Available at: https://www.suseso.cl/608/w3-propertyvalue-10364.html

[154] INE (2017) *Brechas de género en el mercado laboral chileno a nivel nacional*. [Gender gaps in the Chilean labor market at the national level]. Available at: http://historico.ine.cl/genero/files/estadisticas/pdf/infografias/0_infografia_brecha_genero_mercado_laboral.pdf

[155] Suseso (2026) Estadísticas. Estadísticas e subsidios maternales. Available at: https://www.suseso.cl/608/w3-propertyname-775.html

c. Parental leave

No statutory leave entitlement.

d. Other types of leave

Regarding the use of serious child illness leave (EGNM — Enfermedad Grave del Niño Menor de un año), SUSESO data indicate that subsidies initiated under this provision increased substantially, from 187,680 in 2019 to 209,384 in 2024, before a slight decline to 184,303 in 2025. This growth likely reflects increased awareness and use of the benefit since the Ley SANNA extensions (from 2018 onwards), as well as broader coverage of qualifying conditions (SUSESO, 2026).

China[156]

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April 2026

N.B. There are 31 provincial administrative regions in mainland China (including provinces, municipalities directly under the central government, and autonomous regions). These provinces are subordinate to the leadership, authority, and direction of the central government. The central government formulates national policies, which are nationally binding. Provincial local governments, in line with these central policies, can independently develop their own policies based on their respective conditions.

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (产假) (responsibility of State Council at a national level and Local People's Congresses at a provincial level)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 98 calendar days: 15 days before the birth and 83 days after the birth. Individual provinces offer additional days (see Table 1)
- It is not obligatory to take leave.

Payment and funding

- 100 per cent of earnings, or the average salary of the workplace, whichever is higher.
- Funded by the Maternity Insurance Fund for employees included in maternity insurance; and/or by employer (employer covers the balance if the maternity allowance is higher than the female employee's salary; and they pay the full benefit if the female employee did not participate in paying maternity insurance).

[156] Please cite as Li, X. and Wu, F. (2026) 'China country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A. A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/

- In provinces such as Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, the provincial government subsidises part (50 per cent – 80 per cent) of the employer's contributions for up to 6 months, sharing the cost with employers.
- In most provinces, the maternity allowance (生育津) is paid directly to individual mothers (instead of processed through the employer).

Flexibility in use

- None, except in Beijing and Guangdong where Maternity leave can be transferred to Paternity leave.

Eligibility

- All female employees are entitled to 98 days of paid Maternity leave, whether they meet the requirements of fertility policies or not (see Section 3). Female staff who conform to fertility policies can (in most parts of the country) get a reward of extended paid Maternity leave or other additional social benefits in addition to the 98 days of Maternity leave (see 'regional or local variations' above).
- Unemployed, flexibly employed, self-employed, or agricultural workers are not eligible for Maternity leave. In 2025, certain provinces began to include flexibly employed women who have paid for medical insurance for a certain period of time (e.g., 12-24 months) in maternity allowance.
- All female employees are entitled to the national provision of 98 days of paid maternity leave regardless of marital status. Unmarried female employees are entitled to the same provincial extensions in Guangdong, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, and Anhui Provinces.
- China does not legally recognise same-sex marriage, so all family policies refer to heterosexual couples.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- Female employees who suffer from dystocia can have an additional 15 days of leave (20 days in Chongqing, 30 days in Guangdong Province).
- Female employees who have multiple births are entitled to an additional 15 days of leave for each additional birth.
- Five provinces (Hebei, Inner Mongolia, Shaanxi, Guangxi, Zhejiang) adopt tiered maternity leave for higher-order births: In Hebei, Inner Mongolia, and Zhejiang Province, mothers giving birth to the first child are entitled to 158 days of maternity leave (98 days national standard + 60 days provincial extension), and those giving birth to the second and third child are entitled to 188 days (98 days of national standard + 90 days provincial extension). In Shaanxi Province, mothers giving birth to the first or second child are entitled to 158 days of maternity leave (98 days national standard + 60 days provincial extension), and those giving birth to the third child are entitled to 173 days (98 days of national standard + 75 days provincial extension). In Guangxi, mothers giving birth to the first child are entitled to 158 days of maternity leave (98 days national standard + 60 days provincial extension), those giving birth to the second child are entitled to 168 days (98 days of national standard + 70 days provincial extension), and those

giving birth to the third child are entitled to 178 days (98 days of national standard + 80 days provincial extension).
- Female employees who miscarry within 4 months of pregnancy can have 15 days of maternity leave; female employees who miscarry after four months of pregnancy shall have 42 days of maternity leave.
- In four provinces, female employees who still cannot work after the end of Maternity leave, due to physical problems or other difficulties, can (with the approval of their employer) obtain additional leave. In Zhejiang, Jilin, and Chongqing, leave can be extended to one year after birth (including statutory Maternity leave), with the salary continuing to be fully paid (Zhejiang) or paid at 75 per cent or above (Jilin and Chongqing).

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- There are provincial extensions of 60 to 267 days, totalling 158 to 365 days. See Table 1 below for variations by province.

Table 1. Maternity Leave, Paternity Leave, and Parental Leave Days by Province/Region

Province/ Region	Maternity Leave (98 days National offering + Local Extension)	Paternity Leave (Days)	Parental Leave (Days per Year per Parent)
National Standard	98 days	None	None
Anhui	158 days	30 days	10 days (0-6)
Beijing	158 days (can extend 1-3 months upon employer agreement)	15 days	5 work days (0-3)
Chongqing	178 days	20 days	5–10 days (0-6) (or one of the parents until child is 1)
Fujian	158 days (can be extended to 180 days)	15 days	10 days (0-3)
Gansu	180 days	30 days	15 days (0-3)
Guangdong	178 days	15 days	10 days (0-3)
Guangxi	158 days (1st birth); 168 days (2nd birth); 178 days (3rd birth)	25 days	10 days (0-3)
Guizhou	158 days	15 days	10 days (0-3)
Hainan	188 days	15 days	10 days (0-3)
Hebei	158 days (1st/2nd birth); 188 days (3rd birth)	15 days	10 days (0-3)
Heilongjiang	180 days	15 days (work day)	10 days (0-3)

Henan	188 days	30 days	10 days (0-3)
Hubei	158 days	15 days	10 days (0-3)
Hunan	188 days	20 days	10 days (0-3)
Inner Mongolia	158 days (1st/2nd birth); 188 days (3rd birth)	25 days	10 days (0-3)
Jiangsu	158 days	15 days	10 days (0-3)
Jiangxi	188 days	30 days	10 work days (0-3)
Jilin	180 days (can extend to one year upon employer agreement)	25 days	20 days (0-3)
Liaoning	158 days	20 days	10 days
Ningxia	158 days	25 days	10 days
Qinghai	188 days	15 days	15 days (0-3)
Shaanxi	158 days	15 days (20 days for couples living in different cities)	10 days (0-3)
Shandong	158 days	15 days	10 days (0-3)
Shanghai	158 days	10 days	5 work days (0-3)_
Shanxi	158 days	15 days	15 days (0-3)
Sichuan	188 days (1st/2nd birth); 218 days (3rd birth)	30 days	10 days (0-3)
Tianjin	158 days	15 days	10 work days (0-3)
Tibet	365 days (1 year); 1.5 years in border regions	30 days	15 days (0-3)
Xinjiang	158 days	20 days	10 days (0-3)
Yunnan	158 days	30 days	10 work days (0-3)
Zhejiang	158 days (1st birth); 188 days (2nd/3rd birth)	15 days	10 work days (0-3)

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective ageements, employer exclusion, or rights to postpone)

- No data available.

b. Paternity leave (陪产假) (responsibility of State Council at a national level and Local People's Congresses at a provincial level)

Length of leave

- No statutory entitlement nationally. Individual provinces offer leave of varying lengths (see Table 1 above).

Payment and funding

- 100 per cent of earnings.

Flexibility in use

- Whereas there is no national guideline on the flexibility of Paternity leave, some provinces require that Paternity leave be taken within the period of Maternity leave and in one period of time (e.g., Shanghai).

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All male employees who conform with fertility policies are eligible.
- China does not legally recognise same-sex marriage, so all family policies refer to heterosexual couples.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- All provinces now provide Paternity leave, ranging from 10 to 30 days, with 15 days being the most common length (see Table 1 above). Provinces vary in whether Paternity leave includes work days only or calendar days. In Shaanxi, where the provincial standard Paternity leave is 15 days, additional days are granted to fathers who live in a different city from their partners (20 days instead of 15) and those who are having 3 children (25 days instead of 15).

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusion, or rights to postpone)

- None.

c. Parental leave (育儿假)

Length of leave

- No statutory entitlement nationally. However, China's Population and Family Planning Law (2021 revision) encourages provincial offering of Parental

leave, and individual provinces offer leave of varying lengths (see Table 1 above).

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings.

Flexibility in use

- None.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employees who conform with fertility policies are eligible.
- China does not legally recognise same-sex marriage, so all family policies refer to heterosexual couples.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- In all provinces, Parental leave is provided to parents with children under 3 years, ranging from 5 days (e.g., Beijing and Shanghai) to 20 days/one month (e.g., Jilin) per parent per year. The days are typically calculated according to the child's birth time (e.g., see Beijing) although some provinces calculate according to calendar year (e.g., see Anhui). See Table 1 above.
- Regional variations exist in the age limit of the child, and the possibility of accumulating Parental leave in families with multiple children. For example, in Anhui and Chongqing, parents enjoy annual Parental leave up until their child turns 6 years of age. In Beijing and Shanghai, parents with two children have double the number of days per person per year for parental leave; in Yunnan, parents with multiple children under 3 can take up to 15 days per parent per year, whereas in provinces like Anhui, Jiangxi, Guangdong, and Shaanxi, parents with multiple children under the age threshold do not get additional days.
- In Chongqing, it is also possible, upon employer's agreement, for one of the parents (no specification on parental sex) to take parental leave after maternity/paternity leave until the child is one year of age, at no less than 75 per cent of salary and no less than the minimum monthly wage. In Guangdong, parental leave can be taken in no more than two blocks per year. In Shanghai, parental leave can be taken flexibly within the year.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective ageements, employer exclusion, or rights to postpone)

- None.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

- No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- None

Time off for the care of dependants

- In China, adult children are legally responsible for the care of their aging parents. Currently, 25 provinces entitle adult children to care for their aging parents that are above 60 years of age and are receiving in-patient treatment at a hospital (elder-care leave, or 陪护假 or 护理假), with singleton adult children entitled to slightly more days than non-singleton adult children. Elder-care leave for singleton adult children ranges from 5 days (Zhejiang and Guangdong) to 20 days (Henan, Heilongjiang, Inner Mongolia, Yunnan, Anhui, Shandong, Tianjin, Xinjiang), with 15 days being the standard in Hainan, Guangxi, Hubei, Shanxi, Sichuan, Guizhou, Liaoning, Hunan, Hebei, Shaanxi, Gansu and Ningxia. Elder-care leave for non-singleton adult children is typically 7 days (Anhui, Hebei, Jiangxi, Shandong, Sichuan, Ningxia) or 10 days (Guizhou, Hubei, Heilongjiang, Yunnan Provinces, Tianjin, Xinjiang).
- Employees taking leave receive full earnings.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- For working mothers with infants under 1 year of age, employers should arrange at least 1 paid hour of feeding time, regardless of whether the infant is breastfed or bottle fed. Employers must not extend work hours or arrange night shifts for such mothers. Female employees with multiple births are entitled to an extra paid hour of feeding time per infant per day.
- In some provinces, additional breastfeeding leave can be applied for after the end of Maternity leave. In Shaanxi, if employers are unable to guarantee breastfeeding time and provide breastfeeding conditions due to special circumstances, three to six months of paid breastfeeding leave can be granted. In Shanghai, with the employer's agreement, 6½ months of breastfeeding leave can be granted. In Hainan and Guangxi, after Maternity leave, upon negotiation with the employer, female employees can take breastfeeding leave until the child's first birthday, paid at no less than 80 per cent of the employee's basic wage; Hainan explicitly includes temporary and contract workers.

Flexible working for carers

- No statutory entitlement. From early 2025 certain provinces (Guangdong, Zhejiang, Shandong, Shanghai) piloted 'childrearing friendly workplaces', allowing flexible and remote work for parents in certain professions (e.g., new media and digital workers).

Antenatal appointments and care (*slobodan radni dan za prenatalni pregled*)

- Female employees are entitled to fully paid antenatal appointments during work hours (usually starting from the initial check-up at around 12 weeks of pregnancy). In Shaanxi Province, mothers who take antenatal appointments receive 10 additional days of Maternity leave. In Guangxi, fathers are entitled to 5 days to accompany their partners to antenatal appointments.

Other provisions of leave

- Bereavement leave. 1 to 3 days.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

As Chinese children are entitled to ECEC only from 3 years of age, there is a gap of at least 2 years between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement, even considering the recent expansions in Parental leave. This means informal care is dominant for children under 3 years. Nation-wide, two-thirds of elderly people have been involved in childcare; in Shanghai, three-quarters of families with children under 3 years live with grandparents, and more than 80 per cent have grandparents involved in their care.
Currently, the last year of kindergarten (for children 5-6 years old) is free of charge for those attending public kindergartens (and similarly subsidised for those attending private kindergartens).

No information for ECEC attendance levels in 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

Whereas there have been no national-level policy changes in the length of Maternity, Paternity and Parental leaves since April 2025, from 2026, in most provinces, the maternity allowance (生育津贴) is paid directly to individual mothers (instead of being processed through the employer).

From September 2025, China has made the last year of kindergarten (for children 5-6 years old) free of charge for those attending public kindergartens (and similarly subsidised for those attending private kindergartens).

A national provision of 30 days for Paternity leave was proposed to the National People's Congress in 2025.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

Most Chinese mothers have taken some leave after childbirth. A survey on the implementation of Maternity leave for female employees in 2021 found that, when

asked 'how long have you taken Maternity leave', about four-fifths of female employees take the full amount. However, several recent studies also reveal a significant policy-implementation gap. The same survey as above showed that nearly 22 per cent of female employees take fewer than 98 days of Maternity leave. Similarly, a study by All China's Women Federation in 2024 found that approximately one-third of female employees (35.1 per cent) have taken fewer than 98 days of Maternity leave, due to concerns about the consequences of leave-taking on income, job security, and career development, and also due to requests from the workplace. A latest study conducted by Peking University (2026) suggested that more than half of mothers have not taken the entire Maternity leave that they are entitled to, an issue particularly severe among women working in the private sector, where women also suffer from a significant income reduction during Maternity leave.

b. Paternity leave

According to the Fourth Survey of Chinese Women's Social Status (2020), among working women under 35 years of age, 81.2 per cent of their spouses have taken paid Paternity leave, and 70.8 per cent took more than 7 days of leave, reflecting a significant increase from statistics from the Third Survey of Chinese Women's Social Status (2010).

c. Parental leave

According to the study by All China's Women Federation in 2024, 15.8 per cent of female employees have never taken the Parental leave they were entitled to when their children were under 3 years of age. Women working in the private sector are less likely to have taken Parental leave (18.4 per cent) than those working in the public sector (9.9 per cent). Among the spouses of the surveyed women, even a higher percentage of the fathers (24.1 per cent) have never taken parental leave.

The predominant reasons for both fathers and mothers not taking Parental leave include disapproval from the workplace, lack of knowledge about the policy, and concern about job security and career development.

Colombia[157]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave *(pre y postnatal maternal)* (responsibility of Ministry of Labour and Health System)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 18 weeks: 1 or 2 weeks before the birth and 16 or 17 weeks after birth. If for medical reasons a mother does not take the weeks before birth, she is entitled to take all 18 weeks after birth.
- It is obligatory to take the post-natal leave weeks.
- Any woman who is pregnant or covered by Maternity leave or by breastfeeding provisions cannot be dismissed without 'just cause' approved by the Ministry of Labour.

Payment, funding and taxation

- Dependent worker (employee): during the leave, the employer pays the employee's full salary. The Health Provider institution (*Entidad Promotora de Salud,* EPS) of the employee re-imburses the employer for 100 per cent of an ordinary salary, but only 70 per cent of an 'integral salary', i.e., salary plus social contributions. The employer has up to three years to claim the leave money from the EPS.
- Independent worker (self-employed): for independent workers who issue invoices and contribute to the health system, the EPS reimburses 100 per cent of the Basic Income Value (IBC, i.e., the worker's income on which their social security contribution is calculated) for 18 weeks, or for the months that the worker has contributed before the birth of the child.
- Payments are taxed.
- Pension rights are maintained.

[157] Please cite as: Idrovo-Carlier, S. (2026) 'Colombia country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, Á.A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2024*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

- EPS is funded by contributions of 12.5 per cent of earnings, 8.5 per cent from the employer and 4 per cent from the employee.

Flexibility in use

- The last 6 weeks of leave can be taken half time and extending the period of leave correspondingly.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Dependent worker: employees with permanent job contracts are entitled to take Maternity leave. For employees on fixed-term contracts, the employer must cover the Maternity leave fully and extend the contract until the end of the leave.
- Independent worker: independent workers are entitled to Maternity leave benefits if they meet the following requirements:
  - To be affiliated to the Health System (EPS) as a contributor.
  - To have contributed to the Health System during the period of pregnancy. If the worker has not paid contributions to the health system during pregnancy, she can pay her dues up to the birth date. In which case she will receive leave benefits.
- Same-sex couples who adopt a child can determine who will take the leave, but this decision cannot be changed for subsequent adoptions. In March 2026, the Constitutional Court (SU-068) granted Maternity leave (16 weeks after birth) to both women in a same-sex couple, considering that one gave birth but the other was the one who would assume the care of the child; it remains uncertain whether this will apply to all future same-sex couples.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In the case of multiple births or if the child is born with a disability, leave is extended by 2 weeks for a total of 20 weeks.
- In the case of a premature birth, the weeks between the actual birth and the planned birth date will be added to the 18 weeks of Maternity leave. In the case of multiple births and premature and multiple births, the two additional weeks for multiple births will be added to the difference in time between the actual birth and the planned birth date plus the 18 weeks of Maternity leave.
- In the case of an abortion or a premature non-viable birth the mother is entitled to paid leave for 2 to 4 weeks. If the child dies after childbirth, the mother is entitled to use the full period of Maternity leave.
- If the mother dies during or after childbirth, all Maternity leave rights are transferred to the father or a legal guardian.
- Women must take the first 12 weeks of leave, but the following 6 weeks may be transferred to their spouse or partner, which is called 'Shared Parental Leave' (*Licencia parental compartida*). These 6 weeks must be taken in one continuous period and cannot be taken simultaneously with the mother, unless the mother has a certified post-natal illness.

b. Paternity leave (*Permiso pagado del padre en caso de nacimiento - postnatal paternal*) (responsibility of the employer/health provider institution)

Length of leave

- 14 working days.
- Any worker whose spouse or partner is pregnant or in the 18 weeks after birth and not employed cannot be dismissed without 'just cause' approved by the Ministry of Labour.

Payment, funding and taxation

- As for Maternity leave.
- Employees must notify their employer in advance of the expected date of birth, and immediately once the child is born. The father must present the civil registration of the newborn child to the EPS within 30 days of the birth in order for the institution to pay the leave.

Flexibility in use

- Paternity leave starts immediately after the child´s birth. The father can choose to take the second week of leave half time and extend the leave period by an additional week. Leave has to be taken continuously and cannot be interrupted, unless the employer agrees.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employees are eligible if they have a contract, permanent or fixed term.
- Independent workers who have contributed to the health system during pregnancy are entitled to Paternity leave benefits.
- Same-sex couples who adopt a child can determine who will take the leave and must continue this determination for any later adoptions.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- None.

c. Parental leave

No statutory entitlement.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- Parents that adopt a child are entitled to the same leave as biological parents.

Time off for the care of dependants

- Each parent is entitled to 10 days **leave annually to care for a child under 18 years of age in the case of a severe illness or terminal condition**. Parents can ask their respective employers for the leave at different times. 100 per cent of earnings are paid to employees on leave, with the employer re-imbursed by the health provider institution (EPS). Parents can take the leave in one continuous period or in several periods, but with the employer's agreement.
- **Medical Appointments for Children/Dependants**: paid leave is available for medical appointments, including emergency care and specialist consultations, for children or other dependants under the employee's care. Employers are required to grant such leave without any deduction from the employee's salary. Employees are not required to make up the hours missed for a medical appointment, provided that prior notice is given and supporting documentation is submitted.
- **Leave Related to Endometriosis**: endometriosis is explicitly recognised in the employer's duty to grant paid leave for urgent and specialist medical appointments.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Every working mother has the right to use 2 breaks daily of 30 minutes each to feed a child under the age of 2 years. This can be taken in one of three ways: (i) during the working day dividing the breastfeeding hour into 2 half hours; (ii) starting the working day later; or (iii) leaving earlier. The breaks are fully paid.
- Larger employers or those employing 50 or more women must provide premises (*salas amigas*) for mothers to express milk for their children.

Flexible working for carers

- A family member who is employed, and recognised as a care person or personal assistant (i.e., defined as the person who (paid or not) helps a person incapable of performing basic daily tasks by themselves and who requires support to do them), has the right to work flexibly. The details of how this flexible working will be implemented must be agreed with the employer.

Antenatal appointments and care

- A female employee who is pregnant is entitled to take time away from work to attend antenatal appointments as part of her basic employment rights.

Other types of leave

- **Grave domestic crisis leave** (*Calamidad doméstica*). All employees are entitled to take leave in the case of a grave domestic crisis, i.e., hospitalization of a relative for whom he/she is economically responsible; earthquake, flood, fire, vandalism, burglary; any other situation that greatly

affects the worker. The leave is fully paid by the employer. There is no specified length for the leave but two criteria need to be considered when determining it: reasonability and proportionality.

- **Mourning leave**. All employees are entitled to 5 working days of leave when a relative (father or mother; son or daughter; brother or sister; grandfather or grandmother; grandchildren; spouse or partner; mother or father-in-law) dies. The leave begins immediately after the death of the relative and can be extended up to 10 days. The employee is fully paid by the employer.
- **School Accompaniments**: paid leave is available for attendance at school-related appointments for a parent, guardian, or designated representative, when so required by the educational institution.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is around 4 months, and this is fully paid. It is compulsory for children to attend ECEC from 5 years of age. leaving a gap of over 4 years between the end of well-paid leave and the start of an entitlement to ECEC.

Since the implementation of the 2011 *Estrategia para la Atención Integral de la Primera Infancia - De Cero a Siempre* (Early Childhood Comprehensive Care Strategy – From Zero to Forever), there is a national goal to achieve universal coverage of ECEC with a particular focus on the country's poorest and most vulnerable children. The actors involved in this strategy are the Ministry of National Education (*Ministerio de Educación Nacional*, MEN), the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, and the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (*Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar*, ICBF). Decree 1411 of 29 July 2022[158] establishes the right to early childhood education for all children from 0 to 6 years; at present, this entitlement is a goal and not achieved.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

The original proposal that the length of Paternity leave would increase by 1 additional week for every percentage point that unemployment decreased (compared to the unemployment rate at the time the law was implemented), up to a maximum of 5 weeks, has been dropped. There is a project to introduce a bill for 12 weeks Paternity leave, but this has yet to be discussed or approved by the legislature.

The Labour Reform of 2025 introduced a number of new paid leaves for carers, including medical and school appointments for children and other dependants (see 1e). Following Law 2338 in 2023 that created the legal basis for Colombia's public policy on endometriosis, focusing on prevention, early diagnosis, and

[158] www.mineducacion.gov.co/1780/articles-411579_archivo_pdf.pdf

comprehensive treatment; a 2023 Constitutional Court decision recognising that endometriosis may place a person in a condition of manifest vulnerability and may justify reinforced labour protection; a 2024 debate in the legislature about menstrual rights and leave, Law 2466 in 2025 explicitly included endometriosis in the employer's duty to grant paid leave for urgent and specialist medical appointments.

A new care policy was approved in June 2023 and is being gradually implemented, with full implementation in 2026. The new policy establishes the role of a care person or personal assistant, defined as the person who (paid or not) helps a person incapable of performing basic daily tasks by themselves and who requires support to do them. When the care person or personal assistant is a family member (first-degree of consanguinity) and is also a dependent worker with a job to undertake, this person will have the right, in agreement with the employer and with certification of his/her role as a care person or personal assistant, to work flexibly.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

No information available.

b. Paternity leave

No information available.

c. Parental leave

No statutory entitlement.

Costa Rica[159]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

Leave entitlements in Costa Rica are primarily governed by the Labour Code (Código de Trabajo, Law No. 2 of 15 August 1943, as amended) and the regulations of the Costa Rican Social Security Fund (CCSS). The Labour Code applies to all employees in the private sector and public sector with a formal employment contract. Self-employed workers who voluntarily contribute to the CCSS may also be eligible for certain benefits. However, informal workers, domestic workers who are not registered, and undocumented migrants may not be covered. The *Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social* (CCSS) administers the country's social insurance system, and provides coverage for maternity benefits, sickness insurance, and disability insurance.

a. Maternity leave (*Licencia por maternidad*) (responsibility of the CCSS and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 120 calendar days: 30 days before the birth and 90 after the birth.
- It is obligatory to take all the above leave.
- Women are entitled to an additional 12 weeks of leave after obligatory Maternity leave is finished.
- The pre-natal portion may begin earlier if a medical practitioner certifies that the pregnant worker is unable to continue working due to pregnancy-related health complications. In this case, the post-natal period is shortened unless further complications arise affecting the health of the mother or the newborn after birth, in which case a separate legal procedure to obtain the leave is required.

[159] Please cite as: Martínez Franzoni, J. (2026) 'Costa Rica country note', in Dobrotic, I., Arnalds, Á.A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings, with no upper limit.
- Payment is made directly from the CCSS.
- Payment is not taxed.
- Pension contributions are not deducted from the maternity benefit, and the CCSS continues to credit the worker's pension account during the Maternity leave period, ensuring that the leave does not affect the worker's future pension entitlements.
- Funded by the employer (who pays 50 per cent) and the CCSS (that pays the remaining 50 per cent). CCSS is financed by contributions from employers and employees; the employer contribution rate is 26.83 per cent of the employee's gross earnings and the employee contribution is 11.49 per cent (the IVM employee component increased from 4.17 per cent to 4.33 per cent). Self-employed workers who voluntarily contribute to the CCSS are funded entirely by their own contributions.

Flexibility in use

- Employees can adjust the distribution of their 120 days of leave between before and after birth in consultation with her employer and the CCSS, provided that the total of 120 days is maintained. The leave is non-transferable and cannot be deferred to a later date beyond the childbirth period. In the event of the death of the mother during or after childbirth, the surviving biological father may apply to complete the remaining period of the Maternity leave, provided that the child survives.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All women who work and are registered with the CCSS are eligible for Maternity leave, whether employed in the private sector, public sector, or as self-employed contributors. The employee must have completed at least 90 days of service with the employer and be registered with the CCSS at the time the Maternity leave begins. Domestic workers who are registered with the CCSS are entitled to the same maternity benefits as other employees.
- Housewives or students who do not earn a salary but who make voluntary monthly contributions to the CCSS can access maternity benefits after contributing for a qualifying period. Unemployed mothers who have recently lost their job may still be eligible for the maternity benefit if they have sufficient CCSS contributions, though the details of such eligibility depend on the continuity of their insurance coverage.
- Foreign nationals working legally in Costa Rica who are registered with the CCSS have the right to Maternity leave, without the requirement of citizenship or permanent residency.
- Access to leave for same-sex couples is formally possible within the framework of equality and non-discrimination, particularly following the recognition of same-sex marriage in May 2020. However, the structure of the leave system has been primarily based on biological criteria, which historically led to differences in its application. In the case of female same-sex couples, the gestational mother is entitled to the full 4 month Maternity leave, while since January 2025 the Sala IV has recognized a leave for non-gestational mothers similar to available Paternity leave. In the case of male

same-sex couples, there is access to adoption leave (3 months, gender-neutral, divisible between both parents). Since 2020, same-sex married couples have had the legal right to joint adoption, as confirmed by a landmark Family Court ruling in July 2022. Nonetheless, important regulatory gaps persist, resulting in unequal access based on sex and reproductive roles, and highlighting the need to shift towards a care-based rather than a purely gestation-based approach.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- If the mother's life or the baby's life is at risk, the attending physician may certify the need for extended rest, which may result in the granting of additional leave on medical grounds through the CCSS sickness insurance system.
- In the event of the death of the mother during childbirth or during Maternity leave, the biological father may apply to complete the remaining period of leave.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- Collective bargaining agreements and internal workplace policies in both the public and private sectors may supplement Maternity leave entitlements beyond the statutory minimum, for example by providing additional paid days or salary top-ups. There are approximately 30 agreements in the private sector and between 60 and 80 in the public sector. Their coverage differs significantly: in the private sector, they cover less than 1 per cent of the labour force, whereas in the public sector coverage exceeds 50 per cent. Not all agreements include provisions related to leave.

b. Paternity leave (*Licencia por paternidad*) (responsibility of CCSS)

Length of leave

- Public sector: 30 calendar days
- Private sector: 2 days per week during the first 4 weeks after the birth of the child

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings, with no upper limit
- Paid and funded by the employer.
- Payment is not subject to taxation.
- The payment does not affect pension contributions, as the employer continues to make social security contributions during the Paternity leave period.

Flexibility in use

- Public sector: must be taken as a continuous period of time after the birth.
- Private sector: the 8 days of leave must be taken as 2 days per week during the first 4 weeks after the birth; the father cannot take leave as a single continuous period. The leave cannot be deferred or taken before the birth.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Public sector: biological fathers who are government employees are eligible.
- Private sector: biological fathers who are registered with the CCSS and have an active employment contract are eligible for paternity leave. Unemployed fathers, self-employed workers who are not registered as employees, and fathers working in the informal economy do not have a statutory right to Paternity leave. Foreign nationals working legally in Costa Rica who are registered with the CCSS are eligible for paternity leave.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- Collective bargaining agreements may supplement Paternity leave.

c. Parental leave

No statutory entitlement.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- For an individual adoption, the adoptive parent is entitled to a special paid leave of 90 calendar days; for joint adoptions, this leave period may be divided between the two adoptive parents as they see fit. Each adoptive parent's employer is responsible for funding half of the leave payment; the rest is paid by CCSS. Adoption leave rights are extended to both parents regardless of gender, promoting greater equality in adoptive parenting arrangements.

- Adoptive fathers in the private sector do not have a specific Paternity leave entitlement under the Labour Code.

Time off for the care of dependants

No statutory entitlement.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Every working mother is entitled to a paid break of up to 1 hour per day for breastfeeding, not transferable to another family member. Employers are required to grant this break for as long as the mother continues to breastfeed, and no upper time limit on the duration of this entitlement is specified in the legislation. Additionally, employers are required to grant paid time off of up to 1 day so that the employee can obtain a medical certificate from the CCSS confirming lactation status.

Flexible working for carers

No statutory entitlement.

Antenatal appointments and care

- Employers are required to grant paid leave of up to 1 day for employees to obtain a medical certificate confirming pregnancy from the CCSS. There is no specific statutory entitlement for time off to attend routine antenatal appointments. However, if a medical practitioner certifies that the pregnant worker requires time off for health reasons related to the pregnancy, such leave may be covered under the CCSS sickness insurance system from the 4th day of absence (the first three days being paid by the employer).

Other provisions of leave

- None reported.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is around 3 months, paid at a high rate. There is no entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), although Costa Rica has developed a comprehensive public childcare infrastructure that provides services to children from birth through the early years.

The main public childcare provider is the National Childcare and Development Network (*Red Nacional de Cuidado y Desarrollo Infantil*, REDCUDI), which was established in 2014 with the aim of systematizing and expanding childcare services across the country. REDCUDI coordinates a range of services offered by various government institutions, with the goal of providing comprehensive childcare, nutrition, and child protection services. A key component of this system is the network of CEN-CINAI (*Centros de Educación y Nutrición y Cuidado Integral, Education Centers for Nutrition and Holistic Care*), which are community-based centres that offer childcare, nutrition programmes, and child development services

for children from birth up to the age of 7 years. CEN-CINAI centres are particularly important in rural and underserved communities, where they serve as the primary source of early childhood services.
Costa Rica has made notable progress in expanding access to pre-primary education. The country's education system provides universal pre-primary education for children aged 4 years (*ciclo interactivo*) and aged 5 to 6 years (*ciclo de transición*), and the government has invested in expanding access to early education for younger children as well. The National Policy on Childhood and Adolescence 2024–2036, issued in April 2024, includes guidelines for strengthening early childhood development services and improving access to quality childcare and education for all children, with particular attention to vulnerable and disadvantaged populations.

Despite these advances, serious challenges remain in terms of coverage, quality, and accessibility of ECEC services, particularly for children under the age of 3 years. The coverage of formal ECEC services remains limited for the youngest children, and many families continue to rely on informal childcare arrangements.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2024 (including proposals currently under discussion)

The most significant policy development since April 2024 has been the Constitutional Chamber (Sala IV) ruling number 92412-2024, in February 2025, which expanded Maternity leave rights for same-sex parent families. The ruling resolved an action of unconstitutionality filed against Article 95 of the Labour Code, ensuring that both partners in a same-sex couple who are registered as parents of a child may share the Maternity leave entitlement. This landmark decision extends the protections previously available only to heterosexual couples and represents a significant step toward greater gender equality and recognition of diverse family structures in Costa Rica's labour law framework.

The government also issued the National Policy on Childhood and Adolescence 2024–2036 on 18 April 2024, which provides a comprehensive framework for policies affecting children and adolescents over the next 12 years. While not specifically a leave policy, this document includes guidelines for strengthening family support, improving access to early childhood services, and promoting the well-being of children and families.

The disparity between Paternity leave for the private and public sectors has been the subject of ongoing policy debate in Costa Rica. A bill (*expediente 25049*) has been proposed in the Legislative Assembly to extend private sector Paternity leave to 1 month, seeking to close the gap between the two sectors and promote greater gender equality in caregiving responsibilities. This proposal reflects ongoing efforts to promote shared caregiving responsibilities and reduce gender inequalities in the labour market. As of the time of writing, the bill remains under discussion and has not yet been enacted into law.

In addition, the CCSS has continued to adjust employer and employee contribution rates to the social security system. The contribution rate to the sickness and

maternity insurance regime has increased incrementally in recent years, with further adjustments planned for the coming years to ensure the financial sustainability of the social security fund.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

No information available, but uptake is likely to be close to 100 per cent among eligible workers, as Maternity leave is compulsory as well as a legal entitlement with full salary replacement funded jointly by the employer and the CCSS. However, women working in the informal economy who are not registered with the CCSS may not have access to maternity benefits, which affects overall uptake rates.

b. Paternity leave

No information available. Uptake in the private sector may be limited due to the relatively short duration of the entitlement (8 days spread over 4 weeks) and the requirement to take the leave in short sections. The structured format of the leave may make it difficult for some fathers to use, particularly those in jobs with inflexible working arrangements. In the public sector, where 1 month of leave is available, uptake is expected to be higher. Cultural attitudes toward father involvement in early childcare remain an important factor affecting take-up rates in both sectors.

c. Parental leave

No statutory entitlement.

Croatia[160]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*rodiljni dopust*); Maternity exemption from work (*rodiljna pošteda od rada*); Maternity care for the child (*rodiljna briga o novorođenom djetetu*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Demography and Immigration)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- **Maternity leave**. 28 calendar days before the expected date of birth, then until the child turns 6 months of age. The start of leave is determined by the mother's doctor.
- Mothers are required to take 98 calendar days (28 days before the expected date of delivery and 70 days after the birth), without interruption. In exceptional circumstances, based on a medical assessment, leave can start 45 days before the expected date of delivery.
- **Maternity exemption from work/maternity care for the child**. From the day of birth until the child turns 6 months of age.

Payment, funding and taxation

- **Maternity leave**. 100 per cent of average earnings, calculated on the average earnings on which health care contributions were paid during the six months prior to the leave, with no upper limit on payment.
- A parent who does not meet the condition of at least 6 months of continual insurance (or 9 months of insurance with interruptions over the last two years) before the leave starts receives 159 per cent of the 'budgetary base rate' of €441.44 per month [€701.89]. The net average earnings in December 2025 were €1,494,[161] and the minimum net wage in 2026 is €800.

[160] Please cite as: Dobrotić, I. and Varga, M. (2026) 'Croatia country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A. A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

[161] See: https://podaci.dzs.hr/2025/hr/97037 .

- **Maternity exemption from work/maternity care for the child**. 114 per cent of the budgetary base rate per month (€503.24).
- Payments are not taxed.
- Funded by the Croatian health insurance fund from health care contributions (Maternity leave) and general taxation (Maternity exemption from work/maternity care for the child).
- Employed parents on Maternity leave maintain their pension insurance and the contributions are paid by the state on the level of maternity benefit. Unemployed and inactive parents entitled to Maternity exemption from work/maternity care for the child have the right for pension insurance to be paid by the state until the child turns 1 year of age (if there is a 2nd child born within this 1st year, the pension insurance based on the birth of the 1st child stops, and 1year pension insurance based on the birth of the second child begins). For each childbirth or adoption, the mother is entitled to 12 months of 'additional pension insurance period' (the father can be entitled only if he has used most of Maternity or Parental leave).

Flexibility in use

- **Maternity leave**. After the compulsory Maternity leave, mothers can use the remaining period of leave ('additional Maternity leave') on a part-time basis, in which case the duration is doubled with compensation at half the level of full-time leave. The period of part-time leave taken after a child reaches 6 months of age cannot exceed the period of part-time leave taken before the child reaches this age, and the maximum period of part-time leave is until 9 months after birth.
- **Maternity leave**. After the compulsory Maternity leave period, the father of the child has the right to use the remaining period of Maternity leave ('additional Maternity leave'), if the mother agrees and transfers the right to Maternity leave to the father in a written form.
- **Maternity exemption from work/maternity care for the child**. From day 71 after birth and in the case of the mother starting employment, she can terminate the use of Maternity exemption from work/maternity care for the child, in which case the father of the child has the right to the remaining share of the unused leave, according to his employment status. In the latter case, the mother must, along with the request for termination of the right, also submit a request for the transfer of the right to the father.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- **Maternity leave**. All employed and self-employed parents residing in Croatia are eligible, regardless of their migration status, with payment dependent on insurance duration (see 'Payment, funding and taxation' above for more information).
- **Maternity exemption from work**. Parents employed on a different employment basis (e.g., parents who are earning a second income on which contributions have been paid), farmers, and unemployed parents who meet the following conditions: they are Croatian nationals or foreigners granted long-term residence or permanent stay in Croatia, who have resided in Croatia continuously for at least 3 years until birth, are registered with the unemployment office and have health insurance.
- **Maternity care for the child**. Parents outside the labour system (e.g., due to retirement, incapacity, or studying) must have health insurance and 5

years continuous residency (as a national or foreign citizen granted long-term residence or permanent stay in Croatia).
- Persons granted international or subsidiary protection, as well as asylum seekers, are excluded from citizenship-based entitlements (i.e. maternity exemption from work and maternity care for the child), however, if they are in (self-)employment (which is possible after they are granted the protection status, or within 3 months for asylum seekers), they are eligible for maternity leave under the same conditions as Croatian citizens.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In cases of poor health or health risks for the mother and child, the pregnant mother is entitled to sick leave before birth for the duration of the risk (referred to as 'sick leave due to illness and complications related to pregnancy'), in addition to Maternity leave. The mother is paid at a rate of 100 per cent of previous earnings with an upper limit of €995.45 per month. She must fulfil eligibility criteria for full benefit (9 months of the previous insurance period without interruptions or 12 months with interruptions within the period of 24 months before the leave start); if eligibility criteria are not met, she has a right to the minimum benefit of €353.15 per month.
- Leave is extended in the case of premature births, for the number of days corresponding to the number of days the child was born prematurely.
- If the parent taking leave dies or is, for any other justified reason, unable to exercise the right, leave can be transferred to the other parent.
- In the case of a stillborn child or if the child dies while the mother is on Maternity leave (or Parental leave), the mother can continue using the Maternity leave (or Parental leave) for another 3 months after the child's death. These 3 months can be used up until the child would have turned 8 years.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusion, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave (*očinski dopust*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Demography and Immigration)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 20 working days after birth.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of average earnings, calculated on the average earnings on which health care contributions were paid during the 6 months prior to the leave, with no upper limit on payment.

- A parent who does not meet the condition of at least 6 months of continual insurance (or 9 months of insurance with interruptions over the last 2 years) before the leave starts receives 159 per cent of the 'budgetary base rate' of €441.44 per month (€701.89).
- Payments are not taxed.
- Funded from general taxation.
- Fathers wanting to use their right have to notify their employer in writing no less than 15 days before their intended start of leave. Leave right and benefit are administered and paid for by Croatian health insurance fund.

Flexibility in use

- The leave can be used until the child turns 6 months of age.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Employed and self-employed resident fathers are eligible, regardless of migration status.
- Same-sex couples are eligible in cases where the parent's partner has secured partner-guardian status (via court decision), in accordance with the Same-sex Life Partnership Act.[162]

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- 30 days for twins or other multiple births.
- In the case of a stillborn child, the father has the right to Paternity leave. If the child dies while the father is on Paternity leave, the father can continue to use the remaining Paternity leave days.
- Leave cannot be transferred to another person.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective ageements, employer exclusion, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

[162] https://www.zakon.hr/z/732/Zakon-o- per centC5 per centBEivotnom-partnerstvu-osoba-istog-spola

c. Parental leave (*roditeljski dopust*) / Parental exemption from work (*roditeljska pošteda od rada*) / Parental care for the child (*roditeljska briga o novorođenom djetetu*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Demography and Immigration)

Length of leave

- **Parental leave**. 4 months (120 calendar days) per parent per child for the first- and second-born child; see 'Variation in leave' section below for third or higher-order births.
- Leave is an individual entitlement, but 2 months can be transferred from one parent to the other.
- **Parental exemption from work/parental care for the child**: from 6 months of age until the child turns 1 year of age, for the first- and second-born child; or until the child turns 3 years of age for twins or for the 3rd and every subsequent child.

Payment, funding and taxation

- **Parental leave**. 100 per cent of average earnings for the first six months of Parental leave, or eight months if both parents use Parental leave, with an upper monthly limit of 680 per cent of the budgetary base rate[163] (€3,001.80); 182 per cent of the budgetary base rate after the first 6 (or 8) months in the case of birth of twins, third or any subsequent child (€803.42), and 159 per cent of the budgetary base rate (€701.89) if parents do not fulfil the condition of either six months of continual insurance period or nine months of insurance with interruptions in the last two years.
- **Parental exemption from work/parental care for the child**. 114 per cent of the budgetary base rate (€503.24).
- Payments are made to parents by the Croatian health insurance fund.
- Payments are not taxed.
- Funded from general taxation.
- Employed parents on Parental leave maintain their pension insurance and the contributions are paid by the state on the level of parental benefit. Unemployed and inactive parents entitled to parental exemption from work/parental care for the child have the right to pension insurance paid by the state until the child turns 1 year of age (if the second child is born within this 1st year, the pension insurance based on the birth of the 1st child stops, and 1 year pension insurance based on the birth of the 2nd child begins).

Flexibility in use

- Parental leave is a personal right of both parents, with 2 months of their entitlement being non-transferable. The father's entitlement is conditional on the mother's participation in the labour market. In other words, if the mother is unemployed/inactive, the father cannot use his entitlement to parental leave, and the mother must use the entitlement to parental exemption from work/parental care for the child. The only exception is the situation in which the mother did not use or does not meet the eligibility criteria for parental exemption from work/parental care for the child.
- Parents can use their entitlement at the same time or consecutively.

[163] The budgetary base rate amounts to €441.44 per month.

- Parental leave can be taken in the following ways: (i) fully (i.e., in one period); (ii) partially (no more than two times per year, each time for no less than 30 days); (iii) part-time (duration is doubled, and compensation is 220 per cent of the budgetary base rate).
- Leave can be taken until the child turns 8 years of age.
- Unless leave starts right after Maternity leave ends, a parent has to notify their employer in writing no less than 30 days before their intended start of leave.
- Parental exemption from work/parental care for the child: if a mother terminates their leave due to employment/self-employment, the father has the right to use the unused share of leave with the mother's written consent.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Same as for Maternity leave (including in terms of citizenship/residency conditions for unemployed/inactive parents).
- For parents, legal recognition of parenthood is the primary trigger for eligibility; a non-resident parent (e.g., after divorce) remains eligible. In other words, biological and adoptive parents are recognised as right-holders regardless of a shared household, preserving their individual leave right even if they live apart from the child. However, for legal guardians, Article 8(4) explicitly conditions eligibility on living in a shared household with the child.
- Same-sex couples are eligible in cases where the parent's partner has secured partner-guardian status (via court decision), in accordance with the Same-sex Life Partnership Act.[164]

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- 15 months (450 days) per parent for twins, other multiple births, and the third and every subsequent child. Two months are non-transferable from one parent to another (i.e., a maximum leave for a couple is 30 months). This leave is paid at a lower rate of 182 per cent of the budgetary base rate after the child turns 1 year (or 14 months if both parents use their entitlements, see 'Payment, funding and taxation' section above for the benefit level until the child is 12 or 14 months of age).

[164] https://www.zakon.hr/z/732/Zakon-o- per centC5 per centBEivotnom-partnerstvu-osoba-istog-spola; please note: It can obtain legal status through partner-guardianship status (hrv. *partnerska skrb*, Articles 44-49): if mother/father is the sole parent (the other biological parent is unknown, deceased, or has been deprived of parental care), the other mother/father can apply to the court to become a partner-guardian. Once granted, this status is permanent and is recorded in the child's birth certificate in the "Notes" (hrv. *napomene*) section, effectively granting the partner full parental responsibilities. Following a 2022 ruling by the High Administrative Court, same-sex life partners in Croatia have the right to apply for adoption under the same conditions as heterosexual couples. This involves undergoing the same mandatory assessment procedure in order to be entered into the register of potential adopters. However, the Family Act regulating adoption has not been amended, and under the current interpretation of the administrative bodies, adoption by same-sex couples cannot be finalised, despite the Court's clear position that discrimination on this ground is not permitted.

- If the parent taking leave dies or is for any other justified reason unable to exercise the right, leave can be transferred to the other parent.
- The scope of parental leave is also adjusted in the case of lone parents. The right holder of parental leave is a parent (individual right). However, under Article 22, if the other parent is unknown, deceased, seriously ill, imprisoned, or has been deprived of parental care, their entire portion of the leave - including the 2 month non-transferable quota - is transferred to the lone parent (in case of imprisoned parent, with a written consent). Consequently, in these specific cases, the lone parent is entitled to the full length of the leave (e.g., 8 or 30 months) on the same basis as coupled parents combined.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective ageements, employer exclusion, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

- If parents have fully used Maternity and Parental leave, one of the employed parents has the right to not work until the child turns 3 years of age. During that time, the parent's rights and obligations regarding their employment are suspended, and the rights to compulsory health insurance and retirement insurance are maintained. This is unpaid, and contributions for pensions and healthcare are not paid during that period.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- Employed/self-employed adoptive parents can take adoption leave (providing the spouse of the adoptive parent is not the parent of the child) of 6 months per family for an adopted child under 18 years of age (paid the same way as Maternity leave). Adoption leave is extended for 60 days in the case of the adoption of twins or a child who is the 3rd child or any subsequent child in the family, or of a child with developmental difficulties. The (self-)employed parent who is not on adoption leave, has a right to the 'leave of the second adoptive parent' (*dopust drugog posvojitelja*) of the same duration and with the same benefit level as Paternity leave. After this period of leave, the adoptive parents of a child under eight years of age have the right to Parental leave under the same conditions as biological parents (see 1c). They receive all the other rights that employed/self-employed parents do.
- In the case of other adoptive parents (i.e., not employed or inactive), one adoptive parent has the right to adoption exemption from work/adoption care for the child (providing the spouse of the adoptive parent is not the parent of the child) of 12 months for an adopted child under 18 years of age. This leave is extended for 60 days in the case of the adoption of twins, 2 or more children or a child that is the 3rd child or any subsequent child in the family, or of a child with developmental difficulties. Unused leave can be transferred to the

other adoptive parent on resumption of employment/self-employment under the same condition as parental exemption from work/parental care for the child. Payment is at 114 per cent of the budgetary base rate.

- **Foster care leave.** Foster parents are not eligible for Parental leave per se, but are entitled to a specific 'foster care leave' (*udomiteljski dopust*); employed or self-employed foster parents are entitled to 6 months of continuous leave for a child under the age of 7, or 1 month for a child aged 7 to 14. This period is extended by 60 days in cases of fostering siblings or children with disabilities. Eligibility is triggered by the formal decision on child placement and is contingent upon the foster parent providing actual accommodation and care for a child. Foster parents are not eligible for the standard parental benefit. However, during the period of foster care leave, they are entitled to an increase in foster care remuneration amounting to 600 per cent of the statutory base amount in the social welfare system (equivalent to €570 per month in 2026).

Time off for the care of dependants

- There is an entitlement to **leave if a co-resident spouse or child is ill**, with length and payment depending on the child's age: for a child under 7 years of age, up to 60 working days per family for each illness at 100 per cent of average earnings (minimum of 80 per cent of budgetary base rate); for a child aged seven to 18 years, up to 40 working days for each illness at 70 per cent of average earnings (minimum of 80 per cent of budgetary base rate); older child and co-resident spouse, up to 20 working days for each illness at 70 per cent of average earnings, but only for serious medical conditions defined by regulation (minimum of 80 per cent of budgetary base rate). Leave for children under 18 years of age can be extended based on a medical committee decision and can be used only if the other co-resident parent is in employment or if a parent lives alone with a child (e.g., single parents and divorced parents). All payments are subject to an upper limit of €565.04 per month. It can be used on a part-time basis.
- A worker has the right to 7 days' fully paid **leave per year for important personal needs**, including those related to marriage, childbirth, or the serious illness of a member of the immediate family.
- A worker has the right to 5 days of unpaid leave per year to provide **care to a member of the immediate family** or a person living in the same household who is in need of care due to serious health issues.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- During the first 12 months after the child's birth, mothers employed full-time and who are breastfeeding are entitled to two hours' absence from work (once a day for two hours or two times a day for one hour), paid at 100 per cent of the budgetary base rate, recalculated to the hourly rate.
- If an employed pregnant woman or mother breastfeeding her child works on a job that is harmful to her health and the health of a child she is breastfeeding, and if the employer has not provided another position for her within the company, she has the right to leave at full earnings paid by the employer.

Flexible working for carers

- After Parental leave, one of the employed/self-employed parents has the right to work shorter hours until a child turns three years of age if the child requires increased care due to their health and development, and only if Parental leave was fully used – this is paid at 159 per cent of the budgetary base rate (recalculated to the hourly rate, and paid only for hours outside of the working day). The right can be exercised by one of the parents, provided that both parents work, or by an employed parent who takes care of the child alone (e.g., lone parent, the other parent cannot take care of a child due to their own health, etc.).
- Employed or self-employed parents of a child with a serious developmental problem, including physical disability, have the right to take leave to care for the child or to work shorter hours until the child is 8 years old. Parents can then work shorter hours, until there is a need. Payment during this period is: (i) during leave, 182 per cent of the budgetary base rate; (ii) during shorter working hours, the difference in salary if the beneficiary has 9 months of continual insurance period or 12 months of insurance with interruptions in the last two years, otherwise 114 per cent of the budgetary base rate recalculated to the hourly rate. The right can be exercised by one of the parents, provided that both parents work, or by an employed parent who takes care of the child alone (e.g., lone parent, the other parent cannot take care of a child due to their own health, etc.).
- An employee has the right to be absent from work for 1 day in a calendar year because of a particularly important and urgent family reason caused by illness or an accident (i.e., force majeure leave).
- An employee has a right to request telework to be able to balance work and family obligations or personal needs better for a certain period of time in the case of (i) a need for health protection due to a diagnosed illness or disability, (ii) pregnancy or care for children under the age of 8 years, or (iii) personal care for a family member or a household member (due to serious health reasons). An employee may request to terminate the agreement on telework before the end of the period for which the agreement was concluded. The employer must consider the employee's request for telework (or its earlier termination), taking into account the needs of the employee and the organisation. The employer must provide a written response within 15 days, and in the case of the rejection or the approval of the request with a delayed start of implementation, these should be explained.
- An employee with a child under 8 years of age or an employee providing personal care for a family member or a household member (due to serious health reasons) has a right to request part-time employment (in a written form), or a change or adjustment of the working time schedule (i.e., flexible working arrangement). An employee can request this change only if they have been previously working for an employer for 6 months (before the request). An employee may request to terminate the agreement on a flexible working arrangement before the end of the period for which the agreement was concluded. The employer must consider the employee's request for a flexible working arrangement (or its earlier termination), taking into account the needs of the employee and the organisation. The employer must provide a written response within 15 days, and in the case of the rejection or the approval of the request with a delayed start of implementation, these should be explained.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care (*slobodan radni dan za prenatalni pregled*)

- Pregnant workers have a right to use several hours, equivalent to 1 working day off per month, in order to attend pre-natal examinations. Pregnant workers are obliged to inform employers of their intention to use this right in a written form, two days in advance.

Other provisions of leave

- **Bereavement leave.** In the case of a stillborn child or if the child dies while the mother or father are on Maternity or Parental leave, they can continue using the leave for another 3 months after the child's death. These 3 months can be used up until the child would have turned 8 years. In the case of a stillborn child or if the child dies while the father is on Paternity leave, the father can take or continue taking remaining Paternity leave no later than six months from the date of birth.
- Employees are entitled to paid leave for significant personal circumstances, including death of an immediate family member, for a total of 7 working days per year, unless otherwise provided by a collective agreement, workplace rules, or an employment contract. Immediate family members include a spouse, blood relatives in direct line and their spouses, siblings, stepchildren and adoptees, children entrusted for care and upbringing or children in out-of-family care, stepparents, adoptive parents, a person whom the employee is legally obliged to support, and a person with whom the employee lives in an informal partnership, same-sex civil partnership, or an informal same-sex partnership.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of paid post-natal leave is 12 or 14 months (depending on whether both parents use leave entitlements) for the first and second born child, or 34 or 36 months (depending on whether both parents use leave entitlements) for twins, other multiple births and the third and every subsequent child. This is paid at 100 per cent of previous average earnings up to a ceiling for Parental leave (flat-rate for (self-)employed parents who do not fulfil eligibility criteria, occasionally employed, and unemployed or inactive parents). All children must attend a pre-school programme of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) for at least 250 hours, a year before starting primary school at 6 years of age as preparation for school (minimum 150 hours if the local community cannot organise a full programme): attendance is obligatory. There is, therefore, a gap of around 4.5 years between the end of leave and the start of this period of obligatory attendance of 150-250 hours per year, and around 5.5 years between the end of leave and the start of primary school.[165]

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

[165] Dobrotić, I. (2022) 'The (in)equality dynamic of childcare-related policy development in post-Yugoslav countries', *Journal of European Social Policy*, Vol.32, 3: 270–286. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/09589287221088167

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

The Compulsory Health Insurance Act has been amended and in force since 1 August 2025. The changes include:

- The minimum compensation (benefit) parents are granted when on sick leave to care for a child has increased from 25 per cent of the budgetary base rate to 80 per cent of the budgetary base rate.
- Parents of children under 7 who are on sick leave to care for a child are now entitled to 100 per cent of previous earnings, whereas previously only parents of children under 3 were entitled to that level of compensation.
- The upper limit for the compensation for 'sick leave due to illness and complications related to pregnancy' has increased from €565.04 to €995.45 per month for mothers who fulfil eligibility criteria of 9 months of previous insurance period without interruptions or 12 months with interruptions within the period of 24 months before the leave. For mothers not fulfilling eligibility criteria, the compensation has increased from €110.36 to €353.15 per month.

The Pension Insurance Act has been amended and in force since 1st July 2025. A parent who has used most of the leave period is now entitled to 12, instead of 6, months of 'additional pension insurance period'.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

No information available on overall uptake rates. Although there is the possibility for fathers to use part of Maternity leave (if mothers agree), official data show that Maternity leave is predominantly used by mothers. According to the latest information (2025), fathers used the transferred right in 0.18 per cent of cases (130 fathers). Both Maternity exemption from work and Maternity care for the child were used only by mothers.[166]

b. Paternity leave

In 2025, 19,595 fathers used Paternity leave (19,245 of them for 20 days, and 322 of them for 30 days).[167]

c. Parental leave

There is no official information on uptake rates, but the latest official data (2025) confirm that the transferable portion of Parental leave is predominantly used by mothers, while the non-transferable quota is overwhelmingly used by fathers. According to the latest official data (2025), fathers accounted for 4.52 per cent (2,269 fathers) of all recorded instances of (transferable) Parental leave used, while mothers accounted for the remaining 95.48 per cent (47,890). By contrast, fathers accounted for 98.65 per cent (17,609) of all instances of use of the non-

[166] https://www.prs.hr/application/uploads/Izvjes%CC%8Cc%CC%81e_PRS_2025.pdf
[167] Ibid.

transferable part of Parental leave. This represents a substantial rise compared to 2024, when 11,178 instances of fathers' use of the non-transferable quota were recorded[168]. The increase coincides with a major reform that came into force in March 2025, raising the monthly cap on Parental leave benefit from approximately €1000 to €3000.[169]

Parental exemption from work and Parental care for the child are also predominantly used by mothers: fathers accounted for 0.25 per cent of all instances of Parental exemption of work (7 fathers) and for 0.20 per cent of all instances of Parental care for the child (16 fathers).[170]

The above stated figures should be read with caution – the statistics record the number of instances of leave use, rather than the number of unique users. Parental leave may be taken in up to two separate instances per calendar year (each time no less than 30 days), meaning that the same parent may be counted twice within a single reporting year. This is particularly relevant for interpreting fathers' use of the non-transferable part of Parental leave, where the count of unique fathers may be considerably lower than the number of recorded instances.

[168] Ibid.

[169] The data on uptake of the non-transferable part of Parental leave have only been made public in 2025 during the public consultation process regarding amendments to the Act on Maternity and Parental Benefits, and show that since 2020 the instances of fathers's use have consistently made up over 96 per cent, steadily raising from 4,504 in 2020 to 17,609 in 2025 (data also available in the following report: https://www.prs.hr/application/uploads/Izvjes%CC%8Cc%CC%81e_PRS_2025.pdf)

[170] Ibid.

Cyprus[171]

Maria Angeli (Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies)

April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave

Length of leave (prior to and following childbirth)

- 22 weeks. It is obligatory to take 11 weeks, including 2 weeks prior to the week of the expected birth and the rest following childbirth.

Payment, funding and taxation

- Payment as percentage of earnings, with no upper limit, depends on the number of dependants (including the new baby, existing children and a dependent spouse):
  - No dependants: 72 per cent of earnings.
  - 1 dependant: 80 per cent of earnings.
  - 2 dependants: 90 per cent of earnings.
  - 3 or more dependants: 100 per cent of earnings.

- Payments are not taxed.
- Funded by the Social Insurance Services, with contributions by employers and employees (6.8 per cent of earnings from each) and the State (4.3 per cent).

Flexibility in use

- Maternity leave can start 2 weeks before the expected week of birth or from the week of the actual birth.

[171] Please cite as: Angeli, M. (2026). Cyprus country note, in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A. Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Full-time and part-time female employees, as well as self-employed women and voluntarily insured women who are expecting a child, have adopted a child up to 12 years of age, surrogate mothers or mothers who have had a child through surrogacy are entitled to Maternity leave.
- Persons who have a permit or the right to reside and work in Cyprus are entitled to the benefits irrespective of nationality.
- The mother must have been insured for at least 12 months within the 24 months prior to the leave.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent) or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- The length of leave is determined by how many children the mother has: 22 weeks for 1st and 2nd child, 26 weeks for 3rd child and subsequent children.[172]
- In the case of the birth of multiple children, the period of 22 weeks remains the same for the 2nd child but is increased by 4 weeks for the 3rd child (e.g., 22 weeks for twins and 26 weeks for triplets). Payment increases to 80 per cent, 90 per cent or 100 per cent of earnings for the second, third and fourth child respectively.
- In the case of premature labour or in any other case where the infant is hospitalised right after birth for health reasons, the mother is entitled to additional Maternity leave as follows: for the first 21 days that the infant is in an incubator, the employee is entitled to one additional week of Maternity leave. If the infant remains hospitalised after the first 63 days in an incubator, the employee is entitled to an additional week of leave for every additional 14-day period of hospitalisation up to a maximum of eight additional weeks in total.
- To be granted leave over and above a period of 22 weeks, the employee must provide her employer with written certification from the hospital and from a doctor with the relevant speciality.
- In the case of surrogate mothers, there is 14 weeks of leave starting two weeks before the expected week of confinement; and 22 weeks in the case of a woman getting a child through surrogacy, starting two weeks before confinement or from the same week. The leave period remains the same for the second child and extends to 26 weeks for the third or more children.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- For public sector employees, the first 12 weeks of leave are fully compensated, while the following six weeks are paid at 72 per cent of the employee's salary.

[172] The Maternity Protection (Amendment) Law of 2024 (L. 14(I)/2024). Available at: https://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/arith/2024_1_014.pdf

- Some private companies cover the remaining 28 per cent for the first child: in such cases, an employer can request the maternity benefit from the state on behalf of the employee, then add the balance, so that the employee receives a full salary from the employer.

b. Paternity leave

Length of leave

- 2 consecutive weeks.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 72 per cent of earnings with no upper limit.
- Payments are not taxed.
- Funded as for Maternity leave..

Flexibility in use

- Paternity leave may be used across any two consecutive weeks up to 2 weeks after the end of the Maternity leave, following the birth or the adoption of the child.
- The right to Paternity leave also applies in the case of childbirth resulting in the birth of a stillborn child.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Paternity leave is granted to men whose partners have given birth or had a child through a surrogate mother; or have adopted a child under the age of 12 years.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent) or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In the case of multiple births, payment increases to 80 per cent, 90 per cent or 100 per cent of earnings for the 2nd, 3rd and 4th child respective.
- If the mother passes away before or during childbirth, or during her Maternity leave, the right to Paternity leave increases by the same number of weeks as the remaining weeks of Maternity leave that the mother would have been entitled to if she had not passed away. This applies even if the mother was not entitled to the benefit herself.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave

Length of leave

- 18 weeks per parent per child.
- Leave is an individual entitlement. A parent may transfer up to 9 weeks of unpaid Parental leave to the other. The paid portion is an individual, non-transferable right.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 72 per cent of earnings with no upper limit, duration of payment depending on the family size:
  - 1st child: 8 weeks paid.
  - 2nd child: 10 weeks paid.
  - 3rd child: 12 weeks paid.
  - 4th child and subsequent: 14 weeks paid.
- The employee's social insurance contribution continues to be paid into their social insurance fund for the entirety of the leave period, directly from the Social Insurance Services.
- Funded as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- Parental leave can be taken any time between the end of Maternity or Paternity leave up until a child turns 15 years old. Parents with disabled children can take Parental leave until their child reaches 21 years.
- Parental leave can be taken for between 1 day (minimum) and 5 weeks (maximum) per calendar year for 1 or 2 children, and 7 weeks (maximum) for 3 or more children.
- When one parent has taken Parental leave of at least 2 weeks in a year, they can transfer 2 weeks per year from the rest of their leave to the other parent.

Eligibility

- All employed parents with non-disabled children up to the age of 15 years or disabled children up to the age of 21 years, who have completed at least six months of continuous employment with the same employer and have been employed for a period of 12 months within the previous 24 months before the start of the period for which parental leave benefits are being applied.
- Same-sex couples cannot legally parent a child together in Cyprus. They cannot adopt a child together or be recognised as the parent of a child who was conceived by a female partner through medically assisted reproduction. They are also not eligible to apply for surrogacy.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- In the case of premature birth or the mother having health issues, Parental leave can be taken before the expected week of birth.

- The duration of paid Parental leave is increased by 10 weeks for the second child and 12 weeks for the third child.
- In the case of widowed parents or single parents, the leave can be increased to 23 weeks.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- 20 weeks if the child is under the age of 12 years.
- 14 weeks for surrogate mothers and 18 weeks for mothers who have a child through a surrogate mother.

Time off for the care of dependants

- An employee is entitled to take seven days per year of unpaid **leave on grounds of *force majeure*** (i.e., for urgent cases such as a dependant being sick or in an accident). A dependant is defined as a child, parent, spouse, or partner in a civil union, or a person living in the same household who requires care due to serious medical reasons. Such leave may be taken as one continuous period or in parts. For married couples, each spouse is individually entitled to such leave.

Breastfeeding breaks

- Following Maternity leave, for the purposes of breastfeeding, a working mother has the right to arrive at work one hour later, leave work one hour earlier, or take a one-hour break during the workday for a period of six months.

Flexible working for carers

- Working parents have the right to request flexible working arrangements for care reasons. This includes adjusting employment patterns through remote work, flexible schedules, or reduced hours. To be eligible, employees must have completed six months of continuous employment with the same employer. Employers must respond to requests within one month and have the right to reject or postpone the request, providing relevant reasoning for their decision.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- Pregnant employees are permitted paid time off for antenatal examinations, provided that such examinations need to be carried out during working hours. They should give advance notice to their employers and provide a relevant doctor's note.

Other provisions of leave

- None reported.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is six months, with well-paid leave lasting only 5.6 months (including the new Parental leave). Attendance at ECEC is obligatory for children from the age of four years and five months. The target is to decrease the entry age by one month each year until it will be four years. There is a gap, therefore, of just over four years between the end of leave and an ECEC entitlement, and even longer between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

No changes reported.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

7,895 applications for Maternity leave were approved in 2024.

b. Paternity leave

3,783 applications for Paternity leave were approved in 2024.

c. Parental leave

6,905 applications for Parental leave were approved in 2024.

Czech Republic[173]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*materska dovolena*) (responsibility of the Social Security system)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 28 weeks: 6 to 8 weeks before the birth and 20 to 22 weeks following the birth.
- It is obligatory to take 14 weeks, including at least six weeks after the birth.

Payment (applied for the whole period of Maternity leave), funding and taxation

- 70 per cent of daily assessment base up to a maximum payment of CZK60,000 [€2,480.36][174] per month in 2026.
- Payments are made to mothers by the Social Security Administration. Employees apply to their employer (including former employers), who will ensure that the application and other documents relevant to the benefit decision are forwarded to the relevant Social Security Administration.
- Payments are not taxed.
- Payments are funded from the sickness insurance scheme with employers paying contributions of 2.1 per cent of gross earnings, and employees 0.6 per cent of gross earnings while participation of the self-employed is voluntary.

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be started 6 to 8 weeks before birth.

[173] Please cite as: Kocourková, J. (2026) 'Czech Republic country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

[174] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://data.ecb.europa.eu/currency-converter.

- Parents on leave can work from the start of the 7th week after childbirth, but not on the same job from which they are taking leave.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- To be eligible for maternity benefit, an employee must have contributed to sickness insurance for at least 270 calendar days during the last 2 years. There are no citizenship requirements.
- A self-employed worker must meet the same condition as an employee, and, in addition, have contributed to sickness insurance for at least calendar 180 days during the last year.
- Students are not automatically eligible. Periods of study may count towards the 270-day requirement as credited periods, but entitlement requires current insurance coverage or being within the protection period.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In the case of multiple births, the length of leave is increased by nine weeks.
- From the start of the seventh week after childbirth, either parent may use the Maternity leave, i.e., the mother may alternate with the father of the child, with no restriction on the frequency of alternation. If the father uses the leave, he must do so for at least 7 days.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported

b. Paternity leave

Length of leave

- 14 calendar days.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 70 per cent of daily assessment base up to an upper limit of CZK28,000 [€1,157.50] per 14 days in 2026.
- Payments are made to fathers by the Social Security Administration. Employees apply to their employer (including former employers), who will ensure that the application and other documents relevant to the benefit decision are forwarded to the relevant Social Security Administration.
- Payments are not taxed.
- Funded as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- It can be taken at any time during the six weeks after the birth of the child; this period can be extended by the child's hospitalisation period.
- All 14 days must be taken as one continuous period.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Sickness insured workers, including employees and self-employed men.
- The recipient must be officially registered as the father.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave (*rodicovska dovolena*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs)

Length of leave

- Both parents can take leave until the child's third birthday. Leave is an individual entitlement, but only one parent at a time is entitled to the benefit.

Payment, funding and taxation

- A parental benefit or **Parental Allowance** (*rodicovsky prispevek)* is available to all families who meet the eligibility conditions, whether or not they take Parental leave. It can be considered as a home-care benefit for at-home parents, as well as – partly – a benefit to subsidise care costs, since parents can work full-time or part-time while receiving this benefit (but access to publicly-funded childcare is then limited, see below).
- A parent who personally and duly cares for a child who is the youngest in the family is entitled to the Parental Allowance. The Parental Allowance is provided until the total amount of CZK350,000 [€14,468.79] has been drawn, before the child's 3rd birthday. In the case of twins or more children born at the same time, the total amount extends to CZK700,000 [€28,937.58]. A one-time payment of the unused amount is provided if another child is born before drawing the entire amount of CZK350,000 [€14,468.79].
- A parent may choose the amount of monthly Parental Allowance they receive and thus the period of its drawing. The monthly amount of Parental Allowance is calculated based on the same daily assessment base as is used for the determination of Maternity benefit or Sickness benefit related to the child's confinement or adoption according to the Act on sickness insurance.

If at least one parent in a family is a person participating in sickness insurance, the amount of Parental Allowance can reach 70 per cent of 30 times the daily assessment base (in 2026, CZK60,000 [€2,480.36] per month at the most). When the daily assessment base can be determined for both parents, the higher one is used for calculation. If the daily assessment base cannot be set for any parent, parents may select a monthly amount of up to CZK15,000 [€620.09]. In the case of twins or more children born at the same time the monthly amounts are adjusted accordingly.

- The parental benefit is paid until the child's 3rd birthday.
- Payments are made to the parent by the Labour Office of the Czech Republic.
- Payments are not taxed.
- Funded from general taxation.

Flexibility in use

- The choice of the amount of Parental Allowance can be changed once every 3 months.
- Parents on leave can work without any limitation, but as they cannot make use of public childcare facilities, they are then responsible to ensure the care of the child by another person.
- Both parents can take Parental leave at the same time, but only one of them is entitled to the Parental Allowance. They can alternate in receiving the benefit as often they want.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- There are no special requirements for leave; however, each parent must ask for formal approval of the employer.
- Parents can choose the period and amount of the parental benefit that they receive, on the condition that at least one parent in a family is a person paying sickness insurance.
- Non-Czech nationals must have been registered as resident for at least one year.
- Payment of the parental benefit is conditional: where there is a child under 2 years of age, parents must not use a publicly funded ECEC service for more than 92 hours a month. There is no limitation on service use for older children.
- Parental leave is available to registered partners.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- In case of multiple births, the maximum amount payable for the whole period is CZK700,000 [€28,937.58]. The upper limit per month is two times higher than in the case of a single birth. Accordingly, if a parent has not paid sickness insurance, the upper limit is CZK30,000 [€1,240.18].
- Parental Allowance can be taken by grandparents or other persons where they provide day care for the child and the parents agree to transfer their entitlement.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- For adoptive parents, the same regulations for Parental leave apply as for other parents.
- Same-sex couples can legally adopt.

Time off for the care of dependants

- Employees can take **leave to care for a sick relative** at home (in all cases of illness for a child under 10 years, otherwise only in the case of a serious illness). Leave is paid at 60 per cent of earnings up to an upper limit of CZK1,452 [€60.02] per day. A parent can take no more than nine days of leave in one continuous period, but there is no limit regarding the frequency of taking leave; parents may alternate with each other in taking leave to care for a sick child. There are no length of service requirements in order to be eligible.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- None.

Flexible working for carers

- Flexible working arrangements in Czechia are regulated by the Labour Code (Act No. 262/2006 Coll.), in particular provisions on working time organisation (e.g. flexible working hours under §§ 85, 97 and 98) and part-time work (§ 80).
- According to § 241 of the Labour Code (Act No. 262/2006 Coll.), employees caring for a child under the age of 15 years (as well as pregnant employees and carers) may request shorter working hours or other suitable adjustments to working time. The employer is obliged to grant such a request unless prevented by serious operational reasons.
- Remote work (homeworking/telework) is also regulated by the Labour Code (Act No. 262/2006 Coll., in particular § 317 following the 2023 amendment); however, it is not an entitlement and requires mutual agreement between the employer and the employee. Parents of a child under the age of 15 have the right to request remote work, and employers must provide written justification if such a request is refused.
- In addition, a reduction in employer social security contributions applies to certain groups of part-time workers (including parents of a child under the

age of 15), allowing employers to receive a 5 per cent discount on contributions for eligible employees working reduced hours.
- Despite these measures, part-time work is often associated with disadvantages, including limited career progression, reduced access to employee benefits, lower job security, and reduced participation in training. Lower earnings may also translate into lower social security contributions and, consequently, lower pension entitlements.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- None.

Other provisions of leave

- **Bereavement leave**. When the child is stillborn, the mother is granted 14 weeks of Maternity leave. Paternity leave is also payable to a father whose child was stillborn or died within 6 weeks of the date of birth.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of paid post-natal leave is three years, but the period of well-paid leave depends on how parents use the Parental Allowance. There is an entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) from three years of age and attendance is compulsory from five years of age, one year before compulsory schooling begins. There is no gap, therefore, between the end of leave and an ECEC entitlement but a gap between the end of well-paid leave and the start of an ECEC entitlement.

The most recent reform is Act No. 84/2025 Coll., which strengthens access to childcare services. From 1 January 2026, municipalities are required to ensure access to a childcare place, either in a kindergarten, a children's group, or another registered childcare arrangement, for children from their third birthday until the start of the school year if they are not admitted to their catchment kindergarten. The reform is intended to address capacity shortages and help bridge the gap between Parental leave and access to publicly supported childcare.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3.Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

An amendment to the Labour Code effective from 1 June 2025 allows employees on Parental leave to conclude agreements on work performed outside the employment relationship (DPP or DPČ) with the same employer, including for the same type of work. This removes previous legal constraints and enables parents to earn additional income while maintaining their employment relationship.
The amendment also strengthens return guarantees: employees who return from Parental leave before the child reaches the age of 2 years are entitled to return to their original job and workplace. Under the previous regulation, this guarantee applied only to employees returning from Maternity leave.

If the employee returns later (i.e., between the child's 2nd and 3rd birthday), the employer must assign the employee to work corresponding to the employment contract, but not necessarily to the same position previously held. Employees are also protected from any unfavourable treatment related to requesting or taking Parental leave.

Since 1 January 2026, the parental allowance for twins or other multiple births has been set at twice the standard amount, i.e. CZK 700,000 [€28,937.58], instead of the previous 1.5 multiple.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

Nearly all mothers take Maternity leave.

b. Paternity leave

Over 40 per cent of fathers take Paternity leave, with the proportion of men taking Paternity leave increasing slightly since 2018 when it was introduced, i.e., from 38 per cent in 2018 to 43 per cent in 2021 (this information is from a research report rather than official data).

c. Parental leave

Legislation on Parental leave (so that fathers could take leave) was introduced in 1990, but truly equal conditions for both parents were not introduced until January 2001. However, the number of men receiving the parental benefit (Parental Allowance), in comparison to women, has remained negligible: in 2001, men accounted for 0.77 per cent of recipients of this benefit, and subsequently there was a slight increase, but only to 0.99 per cent in 2003, 1.4 per cent in 2006 and 1.5 per cent in 2008, when 5,724 men received the parental benefit (for context, 375,876 women recieved the benefit in that year). Since 2008, however, there have been no further increase: in 2010, 4,986 men received the parental benefit, compared with 328,777 women (i.e., 1.5 per cent of recipients were men, the same proportion as in 2008). Since 2011 a slight and continous increase is apparent. In 2015, 5,100 men received the parental benefit (i.e., 1.8 per cent of all recipients) and in 2016, 5,200 men received the parental benefit (i.e., 1.9 per cent of all recipients). Currently the proportion of men drawing parental allowance is close to 2 per cent. Men accounted for 5,046 recipients (1.89 per cent) in 2023 and 5,172 recipients (2.11 per cent) in 2024. This represents only a modest increase compared with 2019 (4,960; 1.74 per cent) and 2022 (5,002; 1.77 per cent).

There is no information about how long women or men take Parental leave for. It is assumed that most parents taking leave do so only until their child's 3rd birthday (when their entitlement to leave, although not the benefit, ends) as they prefer not to lose their jobs.

Denmark[175]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

Note on terminology. With the implementation of the EU Directive 2019/1158 from August 2022, the term *Leave* is commonly used in the general guidelines. For the sake of clarity, the following terms are applied in the report: *Graviditetsorlov* (Pregnancy leave) is the leave to be taken by the mother before birth; *Barselsorlov* (Maternity leave) the leave reserved for the mother after birth; *Fædre/med-moderorlov* (Paternity/co-mother leave) the leave reserved for the father or same-sex co-mother after birth; and *Forældreorlov* (Parental leave) the leave available for both parents after birth.

Note on total leave period.

The Danish system distinguishes between leave entitlements (time off work) and benefit entitlements (weeks with payment). These do not correspond one-to-one. While each parent has the right to 24 weeks of leave after birth, benefit entitlement consists of 32 weeks of parental leave benefits per family (transferable between parents) and 11 weeks of non-transferable benefit entitlement for each parent (i.e. 32+11+11 weeks), but with some overlap.

As a result, not all leave weeks are necessarily paid, and the number of weeks with full benefit depends on how parents allocate the shared benefit period. The maximum leave period with benefit is normally 48 weeks per family.

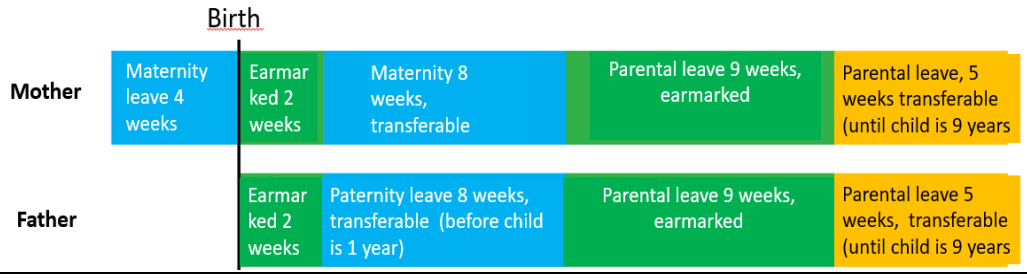
The full leave period with benefits is composed as follows(see Figure 1):

- 2 weeks non-transferable leave after birth for each parent (Maternity and Paternity/co-mother leave) and a further 9 weeks of non-transferable, leave for each parent (Parental leave). This means that in total there are 11 weeks of

[175] Please cite as: Diop-Christensen, A. and Rostgaard, T. (2026) 'Denmark country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (Eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

non-transferable leave with benefits for each parent after birth (marked with green in the figure).
- 13 weeks transferable leave for each parent (for the mother eight weeks Maternity and five weeks Parental leave, and for the father 8 weeks of Paternity and five weeks of Parental leave)
- In addition, there are 4 weeks non-transferable, earmarked leave with benefits prior to the birth for the mother (Pregnancy leave).

Figure 1. Composition of leave periods with benefits, mother and father



a. Pregnancy and Maternity leave (*Graviditets og fødselsorlov*: *see* 'note on terminology') (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour)

Length of leave with benefits (before and after birth)

- 14 weeks: 4 weeks before birth and 10 weeks after the birth (see Figure 1).
- It is obligatory to take the first 2 weeks after birth.

Payment, funding and taxation

- All employees and self-employed persons are entitled to a daily cash benefit based on former earnings, up to an upper limit of DKK5,085 [€680.21][176] per week for full-time employees, before tax.[177] This is the same amount paid for unemployment and sickness benefit.
- Payments are taxed, typically between 38 to 41 per cent.
- The Danish pension system is based on three pillars: (i) a universal and tax-based public pension scheme; (ii) occupational pensions which may be quasi-mandatory given the collective agreements; and (iii) private pension savings. The public pension is not affected by taking leave. If full earnings are paid, pension payments to the occupational pension scheme are not affected by taking leave either. If leave is awarded without full pay, occupational pensions are normally affected since payments from the employer and employee are discontinued. The collective agreement may, however, specify that the employer must continue payments. Special conditions apply for employees working in the state and municipalities where the employer must continue payments to the occupational pensions. Payments to the private pension scheme are entirely covered by the employee who may/may not decide to continue payments.

[176] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://data.ecb.europa.eu/currency-converter.
[177] https://www.borger.dk/arbejde-dagpenge-ferie/Dagpenge-kontanthjaelp-og-sygedagpenge/sygedagpenge/sygedagpenge-hvis-du-er-ledig

- Funded by the state from general taxation, except for first eight weeks when municipalities bear half of the cost, and is paid out by the public agency, *Udbetaling Danmark*.

Flexibility in use

- None.

Eligibility (e.g. related to employment or family circumstances)

- Eligibility for full compensation for an employee is based on a period of work of at least 160 hours in the four months preceding the paid leave, i.e., regardless of the partner's labour market situation. Workers must also have worked at least 40 hours per month in 3 of those 4 months, and they must be working up to the first day of the leave. Workers with temporary contracts are excluded only if they are not eligible for unemployment benefit.
- Eligibility for the cash benefit for the self-employed (including helping a spouse) is based on at least part-time professional activity for at least 6 months within the last 12-month period, of which one month immediately precedes the paid leave. Likewise, the company must produce a profit. Eligibility also requires that the person is caring for the child on a daily basis. If the individual has recently started their company and has been self-employed less than 6 months, they can count regular paid work (not including various forms of public benefits) as work.
- People who have just completed a vocational training course for a period of at least 18 months, or who are doing a paid work placement as part of a vocational training course, are eligible for the cash benefit.
- Unemployed people are entitled to cash benefits from unemployment insurance or similar benefits (activation measures).
- Mothers who have a child while studying are entitled to a total of up to 12 months' extra study grant, with the understanding that the 14 weeks of Maternity leave are covered via the study grant. Male students are entitled up to six months extra study grant.
- People on sickness benefits continue to receive these payments which is the same amount as the Maternity leave benefit.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- If the mother is employed and returns to full-time work, there is the right to transfer up to 8 weeks of leave to the father or co-parent, if they were co-residing at birth. The weeks of leave must be taken within 1 year.
- In the case of illness or death, the 2 weeks of compulsory leave can be transferred to the father or co-parent.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- Leave is not only regulated via national legislation, but also via collective agreements in the labour market and agreements at company level. In 2018, 82 per cent of the total workforce was covered by such collective agreements (compared to 74 per cent in the private sector).[178] These workers receive compensation during leave from their employer, up to the value of their former earnings, i.e., their employer supplements the state benefit.
- A number of collective agreements and work contracts have the requirement that the employee must have been employed in the company for a certain period, for instance 18 months. This positions young women poorly in regard to their right to full pay but also for taking up work elsewhere.[179]
- To help employers finance the costs regarding compensation up to the workers' former earnings (see above), different leave reimbursement funds have been set up.
- Employees in municipalities and regions are entitled to eight weeks before birth and employees working in the state sector six weeks prior to birth.

a) Paternity/co-mother leave (*Fædre/medmoderorlov:* see 'note on terminology') (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour)

Length of leave

- 10 weeks.

Payment, funding and taxation

- Payment and funding are the same as for Maternity leave, including pension payments.

Flexibility in use

- The first 2 weeks must be taken immediately after the birth, but the remaining period can be taken within the 1st year.
- Up to 8 weeks of leave can be transferred to the mother or co-parent, if they were co-residing at birth.

Eligibility

- Employees and self-employed people in a recognized partnership, including same-sex partnerships. The parental status must have been established. The provisions are the same as for Maternity leave.
- Children born into a female same-sex family can be adopted by the co-mother as a stepchild. This means that an adoptive mother who is the registered partner or spouse of a female biological mother is also entitled to the Paternity (and Parental) leave cash benefit. Male same-sex couples who

[178] DA Analyse (2020) *I Danmark er de fleste dækket af overenskomst* [Most are covered by collective agreements in Denmark]. Available at: https://www.da.dk/politik-og-analyser/overenskomst-og-arbejdsret/2018/hoej-overenskomstdaekning-i-danmark/.
[179] Politiken, 3 March 2023: *Vil virksomheder helst undgå unge kvinder med planer om at blive mødre?*

have conceived children via a surrogate mother do not have the same possibilities.
- Unemployed fathers receive unemployment benefit and people on sickness benefits receive sick benefit in the two weeks of Paternity leave.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- All male employees covered by collective agreements receive full earnings during the Paternity leave. However, as stated earlier (see 1a additional note), the percentage of the Danish workforce covered by collective agreements is declining, especially among the younger age groups.

b) Parental leave (*Forældreorlov*: see 'note on terminology') (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour)

Length of leave

- 32 weeks per parent.
- Leave is an individual entitlement, part of which is transferable (see 'Payment, funding and taxation').

Payment, funding and taxation

- Each parent is eligible for 14 weeks of Parental leave benefit, 5 weeks of which is transferable to the other parent. Payment and funding are the same as for Maternity leave, including pension payments

Flexibility in use

- Subject to agreement with the employer, it is possible to return to work on a part-time basis, with a reduced benefit payment spread over this extended period of leave (e.g., a parent may work part-time and thus prolong the leave period from 32 to 64 weeks).
- The 14 weeks of paid leave must be taken within 1 year after the birth of the child. A further 5 weeks of the 32 week leave can be postponed but must be taken as one continuous period before the child turns 9 years. Additional weeks can be postponed with the agreement of the employer, and that too must be used before the child turns age 9 years.
- If leave is transferred, the employer must agree to postpone this period until after the child is 1 year old.
- Both parents can be on leave at the same time. Simultaneous leave-taking may reduce the total duration of leave with full benefits available to the family.
- Each parent can prolong their 32 weeks' leave to 40 weeks (for all) or 46 weeks (only employed and self-employed people). In this case, the benefit level is reduced over the extended leave period.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- As for Maternity leave.
- Fathers who are studying receive a total of up to nine months' extra study grant.
- Same-sex parenting couples have the same eligibility as described above in 1b.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent)

- Parents who have 2 or more children from the same birth or adoption are entitled to 26 additional weeks of Parental leave with parental benefits. These extra weeks are divided equally: 13 weeks for each parent, to be taken within the child's first year of life. This leave is non-transferable between the parents but can be transferred to a social parent. Solo parents are entitled to 13 extra weeks of leave, and can apply for an additional 13 weeks, which can be transferred to a close family member or a social parent.
- In the case that the mother and father/co-mother do not cohabitate at the time of birth, do not have shared custody, or if the child only has one judicial parent at the time of birth (if the child is conceived by donor of the other parent has passed away), the single parent has a right to 46 weeks of leave after birth. Single parents can transfer up to 13 weeks of leave to near family members.
- LGBT+ families can transfer leave to so-called social parents (non-biological co-parents), so they can share leave between all parents, e.g., two legal parents and two so-called social parents.
- Social parents are defined as: the spouse of a legal parent, the cohabiting partner of a legal parent if they have lived together for a minimum of two years, a known donor with a parental relation to the child, or the spouse/cohabiting partner of the known donor if this person has a parental relation to the child. The legal parents can each transfer up to 13 weeks of leave to a social parent.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- All employees covered by collective agreements receive full earnings during part or all the Parental leave period (a maximum coverage may be set in the agreements, however); see above in 1a additional note.
- See 1a regarding the reimbursement fund for the self-employed.
- From 2007, the industrial sector (representing 7,000 employers nationwide, including production, service, knowledge, and IT, and encompassing more than 500,000 employees) introduced a paid father's quota in Parental leave. The entitlement was up to 9 weeks' Parental leave with payment, 3 weeks with pay for the father, 3 weeks for the mother, and 3 weeks for the parents to share – the weeks for the mother and the father respectively were quotas and, therefore, lost if not used. Later agreements have prolonged the period

to first 4+4+3 weeks (in 2014)[180], to 5+5+3 weeks (in 2017) and from 2020, 8+5+3, i.e., the father has now the right to half of the earmarked weeks.[181] [182] Parents covered by this agreement can take Parental leave with pay within a year after the birth of the child.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- For adoptive parents, the same regulations for Parental leave apply as for other parents, with the exception that there is a right to take two of the 48 weeks by both parents together.

Time off for the care of dependents

- No statutory entitlement. Most working contracts and labour market agreements include the right to take one day of paid leave per episode of illness to care for a sick child.
- Following the 2026 collective bargaining round in the public sector (state, regional and municipal levels), provisions have been expanded to include additional rights for caring for sick children, including for example a "third sick-child day" and adjustments to care-day rules. These rights depend on the applicable collective agreement and are not statutory.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- None.

Flexible working for carers

- Parents with 1 or more children under 9 years old may apply in writing for changes in work hours, or work patterns in a specific period of time. Flexible work may include distance working, working from home, or a reduction in work hours. If the application is denied, the employer must say why. The right against dismissal, which is in place during leave, also encompasses when the employee applies for changes in the work arrangement.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- Workers can take paid leave for antenatal appointments.

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[180] http://kooperationen.dk/media/69502/CO-Industriens-Overenskomst-2014-2017.pdf

[181] CO Industri & DI (2017) Industriens Overenskomst 2017-2020. https://di.dk/Shop/Overenskomster/Produktside/Pages/Produktside.aspx?productId=6549

[182] CO Industri & DI (2020) Industriens Overenskomst 2020-2023, https://www.danskindustri.dk/vi-radgiver-dig-ny/di-dokumenter-for-personale/personalejuras-dokumenter/overenskomster/industriens-overenskomst/

Other provisions of leave

- **Bereavement leave**. This is available to a parent whose child is stillborn or dies before reaching the age of 18 years. The parent may receive up to 26 weeks of bereavement leave with Maternity/Parental leave benefits, subject to the applicable eligibility conditions. The leave begins the day after the child's death and can be taken flexibly

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The duration of leave with full benefit depends on how the shared Parental leave benefits are allocated between the parents. In practice, most families can cover approximately ten–11 months with benefits at the standard rate, though this varies.

There is an entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) from when the child is six months of age, so there is no gap between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' on cross-country comparisons page.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

A new law improving Parental leave rights for parents of hospitalized newborns entered into force on 1 January 2026. Under the new rules, parents may extend their Parental leave with benefits for up to 12 months in cases where the child is hospitalized or receives equivalent treatment at home. This represents a substantial extension compared to the previous maximum period. In addition, eligibility for bereavement leave benefits was expanded from July 2025, extending access to benefits for parents in cases of child loss.

The 2026 public sector agreements introduced improvements in paid leave for caring for sick children (e.g. additional sick-child days).

4. Uptake of leave

Statistics on the uptake of leave do not provide data on the proportion of parents using either Maternity, Paternity or Parental leave; instead uptake is grouped across the three forms of leave. Most statistical accounts use data on parents who are entitled only, and the following presentation will focus on parents in couples who are entitled for the cash benefits. This section refers to the latest available figures, which are from April 2024. These show that the EU Work-Life Balance Directive has had a clear effect on leave take up and that the trajectory it initiated continues in the same direction, albeit far less marked than when the reform was first introduced, with fathers still gradually increasing their share of leave.[183]

[183] NYT: Fædre holder længere barselsorlov - Danmarks Statistik

a. Mothers on leave

Focusing on cohabiting couples where both parents were entitled for the cash benefits, in 2024, 99 per cent of entitled mothers took leave (based on data for cohabiting parents with children born between 2 August and 31 December). This is the same proportion for mothers as in 2023 and the year before the Directive.[184]

Though the Directive did not change whether mothers take leave or not, it reduced the number of leave days with an overall decrease of approximately 40 days from 2020 to 2024. Concretely, mothers of children born in 2020 took on average around 280 days of leave following birth, compared with approximately 240 days for the 2024 cohort. The majority of this decline occurred in the period following the introduction of the EU Directive, particularly between 2021 and 2023, when the reduction amounted to around 36 days. Nevertheless, a further slight decrease is also observed between the 2023 and 2024 cohorts, at just under two days.[185]

b. Fathers on leave

The effect of the Directive for fathers is evident both in the proportion of fathers taking leave and in their total leave period. The share of fathers entitled to leave benefits who actually take leave increased by one percentage point since 2023, reaching 93 per cent for the 2024 cohort. This is based on data for cohabiting parents with children born between 2 August and 31 December in 2023 compared with the same period in 2024. Prior to the leave reform introduced on 2 August 2022, the proportion of fathers taking leave had remained relatively stable at around 83 per cent.[186]

While mothers' total leave days have decreased by about 40 days with the implementation of the EU Directive (between 2020 and 2024), fathers' days of leave have increased by approximately the same number. Fathers of children born in 2020 took on average about 37 days of leave, increasing to 39 days for the 2021 cohort. In 2023, the first full year after the reform, this figure rose substantially to about 71 days. This upward trend continued into the most recent data, with fathers of children born in 2024 taking an average of 77 days of leave.[187]

The decline in leave taken by mothers, alongside an increase in leave taken by fathers, has resulted in an overall reduction of nine leave days per family in recent years (2020–2024). Children born in 2020 spent an average of 302 days in their first year of life with at least one parent present. For children born in 2023, this figure decreased to 291 days. However, between 2023 and 2024, there was a slight increase of approximately two days, bringing the total to 293 days. These figures apply to cohabiting parents in which both are entitled to leave benefits.[188]

Despite the implementation of the EU Directive in 2022, the statistics show that it is still primarily mothers who care for the youngest children. Among cohabiting parents who both took leave, most mothers who had a child in the last five months

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[184] Based on authors own calculations from StatBank Denmark: https://www.statistikbanken.dk/barlov1

[185] https://www.dst.dk/Site/Dst/Udgivelser/nyt/GetPdf.aspx?cid=53889

[186] Based on authors own calculations from StatBank Denmark: https://www.statistikbanken.dk/barlov1

[187] https://www.dst.dk/Site/Dst/Udgivelser/nyt/GetPdf.aspx?cid=53889

[188] https://www.dst.dk/Site/Dst/Udgivelser/nyt/GetPdf.aspx?cid=53889

of 2024 combined their own earmarked leave, their non-earmarked leave, as well as the father's non-earmarked leave within the child's first 36 weeks. The women who finish their leave earliest do so around week 26, after which the number of mothers on leave gradually declines until week 37, by which point the mother has used up most of the leave she is entitled to with benefits. Only then, around 37 weeks after the child's birth, do fathers in larger numbers begin to take their earmarked leave. This pattern is the same as for parents of children born in the corresponding months of 2023. Prior to the implementation of the EU Directive (for the 2021 cohort) the transition from the mother taking leave to the father was more gradual with quite many mothers still being on leave in weeks 38-46.[189]

There may be a number of other reasons why fathers do not take leave or take less than they are entitled to. A representative survey conducted among 2,500 men who became fathers after the reform of the parental leave showed that 24 per cent took less than the 11 weeks.[190] The study was conducted in August 2023, and thus one year after the reform. It revealed a mix of economic and attitudinal reasons preventing the fathers from taking leave, but also that the partner has superior leave rights and a job situation that was more accommodated taking up leave. The main reason was financial concerns (50 per cent), that the mother wanted to take leave (26 per cent), having insufficient leave rights (22 per cent), the work situation did not allow it (22 per cent), the child needs a mother (for instance breastfeeding) (22 per cent), would negatively affect my career (11 per cent), the mothers leave rights are superior to mine (10 per cent), the mother is best fit to care for the child (nine per cent), the child is better off with its mother (9 per cent), other (17 per cent).

Yet the reform had a clear impact on gender equality. Recent evidence from the Ministry of Employment further supports the trends identified in this report. According to Status of the Labour Market (October 2024), the fact that mothers return to work earlier contributes to a reduction in the gender pay gap between parents by approximately DKK23,000 [€3,076.68] within the child's first year. The reform is also associated with long-term financial gains for mothers, including higher pension savings. Importantly, these changes are observed broadly across sectors, industries, and municipalities, indicating that the policy has had a widespread and structural impact on both gender equality and labour market outcomes.[191]

[189] Based on authors own calculations from StatBank Denmark: https://www.statistikbanken.dk/barlov2

[190] https://moedrehjaelpen.dk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/MoedrehjaelpenTema_14Januar_2024_De-nye-barselsreglers-indflydelse-paa-familielivet16.01.24.pdf

[191] https://www.bm.dk/nyheder/pressemeddelelser/2024/10/oeremaerket-orlov-mindsker-loenforskellen-mellem-foraeldre?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Estonia[192]

Katre Pall (Praxis think tank)

April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*emapuhkus)* (responsibility of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications); Maternity benefit (ema vanemahüvitis – mother's parental benefit) (responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 100 calendar days: an employed mother can use Maternity leave up to 70 days before the child's expected date of birth and 30 calendar days after the child's expected date of birth.
- It is obligatory to take 30 days after the birth.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of average earnings, calculated based on employment during reference period, with an upper limit on payment of €3,806.10 per month (equivalent to two times average earnings).
- A mother who is considered as non-economically active (not employed) receives the mother's parental benefit for 30 consecutive calendar days starting from the birth of the child. A benefit rate of €886 is paid if the mother did not work during the reference period.
- Payments are made to the mother by the Social Insurance Board.
- Payments are taxed as part of income tax.
- Funded from general taxation.

Flexibility in use

- If the mother takes Maternity leave at least 31 days before the expected date of birth of the child, her Maternity leave duration is at least 61 days. The

[192] Please cite as: Pall, K (2026) 'Estonia country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

unused days of Maternity leave are transferred over to the period of the shared Parental leave.
- If the mother takes Maternity leave later than 30 calendar days before the expected date of birth of the child, then her Maternity leave duration is at least 30 calendar days. In this case, the unused days of the Maternity leave are not carried over to the period of the shared Parental leave.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employed mothers are eligible for Maternity leave, including workers with temporary contracts if the contract lasts more than 1 month. There are no conditions linked to length of service.
- Self-employed people qualify for mother's parental benefit with the same conditions as workers, even without taking up the leave (for which they are not eligible).
- Benefit is paid to Estonian residents; there are no conditions linked to citizenship.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother.

- In case of premature birth 70 days or earlier, mother's parental benefit is paid for 100 consecutive days for working mothers and 30 days for non-working mothers from the birth of the child.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave (*isapuhkus – literally 'father's leave')* (responsibility of Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications); Paternity benefit (isa vanemahüvitis – father's parental benefit) (responsibility of Ministry of Social Affairs)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 30 calendar days.

Payment and funding

- 100 per cent of earnings, calculated according to the rules of parental benefit (see 1c).
- Payments are made to the father by the Social Insurance Board.
- Payments are taxed as part of income tax.
- Funded from general taxation.

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be taken during 30 days before the expected birth of a child up to the time the child reaches 3 years.
- Leave can be taken in several periods of calendar days.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employed fathers with permanent or temporary employment contracts are entitled to Paternity leave. There are no conditions linked to length of service. All fathers are entitled to parental benefit for fathers regardless of employment status (i.e. including unemployed and inactive).
- Self-employed or unemployed fathers are not eligible for Paternity leave but are entitled to parental benefit for fathers.
- Spouses in same-sex couples are eligible for Paternity leave and benefit.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave (*vanemapuhkus)* (responsibility of Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications); Parental benefit (jagatav vanemahüvitis – shared parental benefit)(responsibility of Ministry of Social Affairs)

Length of leave

- Until the child reaches 3 years.
- Leave is a family entitlement.

Payment and funding

- Shared parental benefit (jagatav *vanemahüvitis)* is paid at 100 per cent of personal average earnings (calculation is based on reference period of 12 months prior to pregnancy) for 475 days (i.e., 68 weeks): from after the end of Maternity leave, and with an upper limit of €3,806.10 per month (equivalent to two times average earnings). For parents who are not on leave and not working, the benefit is paid from the birth of the child for 515 days (altogether with mother's parental benefit and fathers' parental benefit 575 days). The minimum benefit paid to parents who worked in the reference period is the minimum wage: €946 per month (i.e., in case of very low wage or short work experience). For parents who were not working during the

reference period, the parental benefit is paid at a flat rate (benefit rate) of €886 per month.
- Payments are made to the parent by the Social Insurance Board.
- All payments are taxed as part of income tax.
- All types of parental benefits are funded from general taxation.
- There are two types of pension credits for parents with children under 3 years of age (independent of Parental leave or employment), available simultaneously. The state pays a social security contribution, calculated based on the minimum wage, to the first pension pillar (public pay-as-you-go system) over 3 years. Also, the state pays contributions to the second pension pillar (public contributions-based system) over 3 years: the sum of this public pension contribution is four per cent of the average wage.

Flexibility in use

- Parental leave may be used as one continuous period or in several periods at any time until a child is 3 years.
- Being on leave while receiving the benefits is not compulsory. When a parent takes up employment after the birth of a child, the parental benefit is paid fully.
- Fathers can take Paternity leave and/or receive Parental Benefit for Fathers during mother's Maternity leave or Parental leave.
- Parents will be able to take up to 60 days of parental leave at the same time. At this time, both parents receive parental benefit.

Eligibility (e.g. related to employment or family circumstances)

- All working parents are eligible for Parental leave.
- Self-employed and unemployed parents are not eligible for Parental leave.
- All parents are eligible for parental benefits. Also, a parent's spouse, a person in custody of the child, and adoptive parents have the right to parental benefits.
- Fathers are eligible for shared parental benefit after having used father's parental benefit.
- Spouses in same-sex couples are eligible for shared parental benefit.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement. See 1e for supplementary annual holiday entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave (lapsendamispuhkus) and pay

- 70 days of adoption leave per child for parents adopting a child under 18 years of age at 100 per cent of average earnings, with an upper limit of €3,806.10 per month (equivalent to two times average earnings). Adoptive parents are eligible for Parental leave for a child under the age of 3 years and qualify for parental benefits.
- Same-sex couples can adopt as a couple.

Time off for the care of dependants

- Leave of 60 calendar days per episode of illness can be taken by either parent to **care for a sick child** under the age of 12 years, with 80 per cent of earning replacement for up to 60 calendar days per illness episode. Paid by the Health Insurance Fund.
- **Parents with a disabled child** may take one day of leave per month with full earnings replacement. Paid by Social the Insurance Board.
- Child leave benefit: each parent is entitled to a total of ten days of **child leave per child** (i.e., a total of 20 days per child in the case of two parents) until the child reaches the age of 14 years; leave is not calculated on an annual basis, but over the period until the child reaches the age of 14 years. The child leave benefit is paid under similar principles to that of the parental benefit, at 50 per cent of previous income. Child leave can be taken for each child separately, up to a maximum of 30 calendar days per year. Paid by the Social Insurance Board.
- **Unpaid child leave**: Ten days annually per each parent raising a child up to 14 years of age or a disabled child up to 18 years of age.
- Leave of 7 calendar days for **illness of a family member**. Paid by the Health Insurance Board.
- Leave of 5 working days per year to **care for a relative with a severe disability**. There is a flat-rate payment based on minimum wage. Paid by the employer who is reimbursed by the Social Insurance Board.
- Benefits paid by the Health Insurance Board are financed from social tax contributions, payments by the Social Insurance Board are funded from general taxation.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Breastfeeding mothers with a child under 18 months of age can take either a 30 minute breastfeeding break every 3 hours or a 1 hour break per day. The state fully compensates the breaks, except for mothers who receive parental benefit for raising a child. Paid by the employer who can later claim compensation from the Social Insurance Board. Funded from general taxation.

Flexible working for carers

- An employee has the right to request opportunities for reconciliation of work and family life, including flexible working arrangements from the employee. The employer is required to provide an explanation to the person whose application has been refused or postponed.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- An employer must allow an employee time for health checks and pay their average wage.

Other provisions of leave

- **Leave for stillbirth or death of newborn child**. In the case of a stillborn child, the mother is entitled to 100 days of Maternity leave and mother's parental benefit; in the case of a death of a newborn child, the mother is entitled to 30 days of Maternity leave and benefit after the death of the child. In both cases, the father
  is entitled to 30 consecutive days of Paternity leave and father's parental benefit.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is 36 months, with just over half of the period paid at a high rate. According to the Social Welfare Act, municipalities are obliged to provide a place in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) for all children (but there is no individual right to a place), starting from the age of 18 months. In principle, therefore, there is no gap between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement; however, in practice, not all municipalities are fully able to meet this obligation. Many municipalities pay a special childcare benefit to working parents who use a private licensed carer or centre.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

From 1 January 2026 the upper limit for parental benefit was decreased from three times the average wage to double the average wage. The upper limit was applied to Mother's parental benefit. From 1 January 2026 shared parental benefit is not reduced when receiving income from employment.

The minimum wage increased as of 1 April 2026. Under the Family Benefits Act, benefits linked to the minimum wage were calculated based on the minimum wage in effect on 1 January of the same year. This legislation has been amended and aligned with the increase of the minimum wage.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

No information available on take up of Maternity leave. In 2025, 10,415 persons received maternity benefit (11,000 persons in 2024).[193] In 2025, there were 9,092 births, but there is no information on how many of these mothers were eligible for Maternity leave.

b. Paternity leave

In 2020, the number of men who used Paternity leave represented 60 per cent of live births, rising to 74.7 per cent in 2021. There is no information available on take up of Paternity leave for 2025, but 10,396 men received paternity benefit.

c. Parental leave

No information available on take up of leave. Information is available only for recipients of the benefit. In 2025, 23,267 persons received shared parental benefit of whom 19.8 per cent were men and 80.2 per cent women. The share of benefit paid to fathers has increased over time from just one to two per cent in 2004-2006 to 19.4 per cent in 2024. The increase started in 2007 after fathers were allowed to take up the parental benefit right after the end of Maternity leave (when the child was 70 days old). Previously the access was limited, and they could take the benefit only after child was six months old.

However, these numbers do not reflect the level of take-up of Parental leave by fathers as leave-taking is not an eligibility condition for receiving the benefit. While working while receiving the benefit is allowed, in 2025, between 72-74 per cent of male recipients of the parental benefit (12-14,3 per cent of females) received simultaneously also income from work. In 2019, 57 per cent of fathers receiving parental benefit continued working during the whole period and eight per cent worked at least for six months of the benefit period. The average wage received was higher than the average wage in the country. This indicates that many fathers, although receiving the benefit, are not the primary caregivers. Due to the changes in legislation that enable them to receive wage plus parental benefit simultaneously, fathers' uptake of the benefit has increased, but they continue working.

d. Other types of leave and flexible working

No information available.

[193] Source: Social Insurance Board, statistics.

Finland[194]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

Note on terminology: a new leave scheme came into effect in August 2022 and major changes were introduced in leave policy. 'Maternity leave' was replaced with 'Pregnancy leave' and 'Paternity leave' was abolished as Parental leave was divided evenly between parents. Names of the different types of leave are given in Finnish and Swedish. Finland is a bilingual country with a Swedish-speaking minority.

a. Pregnancy leave (formerly Maternity leave, see note on terminology) (raskaus*vapaa/graviditetsledighet*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Labour)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 40 working days (for all types of leave, one calendar week consists of six working days). Leave can start 30 days before and no later than 14 days before the estimated due date.
- It is obligatory to take leave for the last 2 weeks before the due date and 2 weeks after the birth.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 90 per cent of the individual's annual earnings between €10,665 and €70,379, with a lower percentage (32.5 per cent) for earnings above this level. There is no ceiling to earnings or the benefit. Parents not employed and those whose annual earnings are less than €10,665 get a minimum flat-

[194] Please cite as: Lammi-Taskula, J.,Miettinen, A. and Närvi, J. (2026) 'Finland country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

rate allowance of €31.99 per working day (€800 per month). In 2025, 13 per cent of pregnant/birthing parents received the minimum allowance, equal to the level in 2024.
- Pregnancy allowance is not paid for days when the pregnant/birthing parent is working, and the days cannot be saved and used later. Working on Sundays does not affect the benefit.
- A pregnant parent can receive the pregnancy allowance when studying during pregnancy. Receiving study grant payments does not prevent payment of the pregnancy allowance.
- Payments are made to the parent by the Social Insurance Institution (*Kela*). If an employer pays a salary to the parent during Pregnancy leave on the basis of collective agreements, the pregnancy allowance is paid to the employer.
- Payments are taxed.
- Pregnancy leave accumulates the beneficiary's pension based on 121 per cent of the yearly earnings from which the leave benefit is calculated (2026). These earnings accumulate the pension at 1.5 per cent per year. For an unemployed beneficiary or a student, the pension is accumulated as if the earnings were €896.42 a month.
- Earnings-related payments are funded by the sickness insurance scheme, financed by contributions from employers (in 2025, 64 per cent of the total cost), contributions from employees (in 2025, 29 per cent of the total cost), and the remaining 7 per cent is funded by the state. In 2025, employers paid 1.89 per cent of their total salary bill and employees paid 0.87 per cent of their taxable earnings higher than €17,245: these percentages are subject to annual change in the state budget. The minimum flat-rate allowances are funded from state taxation.

Flexibility in use

- None. Pregnancy allowance days must be taken consecutively and cannot be postponed until later.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Entitlements are based on being insured under the Finnish Health Insurance Act.
- The basic formula is that a person entitled to family benefits is also entitled to leave.
- A pregnant/birthing parent is entitled to pregnancy allowance after the pregnancy has lasted 154 days.
- Benefits are based on annual income in the preceding 12 months regardless of length of service. In certain situations (for example, the parent has recently returned to work after Parental or Child Home Care leave), the allowance can be calculated on the basis of the last three months of the 12-month period. If the estimated due date of the new baby is before the previous child turns three years old, parental allowance can be based on the same annual or earned income that was used to calculate the allowance for the previously born child.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or parent; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parent

- In the case of premature birth, if the baby is born earlier than 30 days before the due date, the birthing parent is entitled to benefit and leave from the next day for the following 40 days.
- Pregnancy allowance is paid only to the pregnant/birthing parent, it cannot be transferred to the other parent even if the beneficiary falls ill during pregnancy leave. But if the beneficiary of pregnancy allowance dies (or is unable to care for the child), the other parent is entitled to parental benefit; if the pregnant/birthing parent dies and the other parent does not care for the child, the Parental benefit can be paid to another person responsible for the care of the child.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., frequent supplement of state benefit by collective agreements; employer exclusions or right to postpone)

- Many collective agreements now include full pay during Pregnancy leave and part of Parental leave for both parents. According to a report on collective agreements covering the largest sectors in Finland[195] there is considerable variation across sectors in the length of full pay during parenting leaves. Since the Parental leave reform in 2022, many collective agreements have been slow to update their clauses, often still favoring mothers with longer periods of fully paid Pregnancy and Parental leave compared to the fathers. A typical length of paid leave for mothers is about three months. There are however sectors where paid leave for fathers has been increased e.g. from one week to five weeks. During periods of full pay, the daily benefit is paid to the employer. However, as shown in the 2023 Labour Force Survey,[196] due to the high prevalence of fixed-term contracts for women of child-bearing age, a high proportion of women giving birth do not have an effective employment contract; so not all women on leave (called Maternity leave in the old system) receive pay from the employer. In addition, according to a study by *Kela* on Family Leave Compensation paid to employers, around 2020 in only a half of the started leaves (called Maternity leave in the old system) was the benefit paid to the employer (on the basis of the employer paying full wage for the employee during leave).[197]

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[195] Kaunisto, T. (2024) *Miten työehtosopimukset huomioivat perheet? Selvitys suurimpien alojen sopimuksista 2024* [How do collective labor agreements take families into account? A review of the biggest sectors' agreements 2024]. Monimuotoiset perheet -verkosto. Available at: Miten-tyoehtosopimukset-huomioivat-perheet-selvitys-2024.pdf

[196] Sutela, H., Viinikka, J. and Pärnänen, A. (2024) *Työolot murrosten keskellä - Työolotutkimuksen tuloksia 1977-2023* [Working Conditions in Times of Change - Results of the Working Conditions Survey 1977-2023]. Tilastokeskus.

[197] Miettinen, A., Mustonen, J. and Räsänen, T. (2022) *Perhevapaakorvauksen käyttöönotto. Tuloksia selvityshankkeesta* [Introduction of family leave compensation. Results from the survey project], Kela Työpapereita 167/2022.

- **Compensation for employers for indirect leave costs**. Employers are able to claim compensation for indirect leave costs such as finding and training a replacement for a female employee taking Maternity/Pregnancy leave. The compensation is available to employers who pay full-time employees a salary during at least one month of their leave. A prerequisite for family leave compensation is that the employee must have at least 3 months service before the leave or, in the case of an adoptive parent, before the Parental leave, and that the employment must last at least 1 year. The amount of the lump-sum compensation is €2,500. In 2025, the Social Insurance Institution (*Kela*) paid compensation to 4,394 employers for 23,700 parents,[198] less than half of the parents taking Maternity/Pregnancy allowance

b. Paternity leave (*isyysvapaa/faderskapsledighet*)

No statutory entitlement. But see Note on terminology and 1c on Parental leave.

c. Parental leave (*vanhempainvapaa/föräldraledighet*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Labour)

Length of leave

- 160 working days per parent, counting 6 working days per calendar week.
- Leave is an individual entitlement, part of which (63 days) is transferable to the other parent or to a partner who is not the child's parent or to the partner of the child's other parent or to another person who is the child's legal guardian. The non-transferable leave per parent is 97 working days (approximately 4 months).

Payment, funding and taxation

- Ninety per cent of earnings to both parents for the first 16 Parental leave days (the amount is calculated as in Pregnancy leave, see a). For the remaining period, benefit is paid at 70 per cent of the individual's annual earnings between €13,713 and €445,744, with a lower percentage for earnings above this level (40 per cent up to €670,379 and 25 per cent above this). Those whose annual earnings are less than €13,713 before the birth get the minimum flat-rate allowance (€31.99 per weekday, approximately €800 per month). There is no ceiling to earnings or the benefit.
- Payments are taxed.
- Pension is the same as for Pregnancy leave.
- Funding is the same as for Pregnancy leave.

Flexibility in use

- The birthing parent can take Parental leave after the end of Pregnancy leave. The baby's other parent can take Parental leave from the day the baby is born.

[198]Social Insurance Institution, statistical data Perhevapaakorvaus [Compensation for family leaves]. Available at: https://tietotarjotin.fi

- Parents can get parental allowance at the same time for a maximum of 18 days.
- Parental allowance can be used flexibly at the times of one's preference, in as many and as short periods (minimum one day) as requested until the child turns two years. However, employed parents can take Parental leave in four periods, each of a minimum duration 12 days per calendar year, and if the employer agrees, in more periods or even as individual days.
- 63 days of leave are transferable to the other parent or to a partner who is not the child's parent or to the partner of the child's other parent or to another person who is the child's legal guardian.
- Parental allowance is not paid for days when a parent is working more than 5 hours; but as parental allowance is only paid for weekdays (Monday to Saturday) a parent can be paid for work on Sundays or midweek holidays.
- Leave can be taken part-time if the daily working time is no more than 5 hours per day. Partial parental allowance is half of what the allowance is for full-time leave. To get the partial Parental leave, employed parents must make an agreement with their employer regarding part-time work.
- Parents can take partial Parental leave for the same period of time.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Entitlement is based on being insured under the Finnish Health Insurance Act, just as it is for Pregnancy leave.
- Parental allowance is available to biological or adoptive parents, and to any legal guardian of a child. Same-sex couples have the same leave rights as other couples.
- Both parents are entitled to Parental benefit even if the parents do not live together, provided that the parent is not working and is responsible for childcare.
- A parent can get Parental benefit while studying during Parental leave, as long as she or he is able to take care of the child.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or parent; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parent

- In the case of multiple births, the length of leave is extended by 84 days for each additional child. Parental leave is divided equally between both parents: in the case of twins, both parents get 202 days and in the case of triplets for 244 days of Parental leave. A parent of twins can transfer 105 days and a parent of triplets 147 days to the other parent.
- In multiple birth families, in addition to the usual 18 days, 90 days can be taken out at the same time for the 2nd and each additional child.
- If, due to premature birth, the Pregnancy leave has started earlier than 30 days before the expected date of delivery, Parental leave is extended by as many days. Both parents can use half of these additional days or transfer some or all of them to another person.
- Parental allowance cannot be used for two different children at the same time. Parents can choose for which child they apply for the benefit. Otherwise, there are no restrictions concerning the use of parental allowances payable on the basis of different children.

- If the right to parental allowance starts after a 1 year old (but below 2 years old) child has moved to Finland, the number of available parental allowance days is halved.
- Single parents can use all 320 days of Parental leave if the other parent has not been confirmed, the other parent is not the child's legal guardian, the other parent is not insured under the Finnish Health Insurance Act or the other parent is, due to illness or injury, unable to take care of the child and cannot therefore be paid parental allowance. Of the 320 days, 126 days can be transferred to another person.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., frequent supplement of state benefit by collective agreements; employer exclusions or right to postpone)

- See 1a 'Additional note'.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

- Childcare leave, referred to as 'Home-care leave' (*hoitovapaa/ vårdledighet*) can be taken after 160 Parental benefit days have been used, or from when the child is 6 months old until a child's 3rd birthday. While taking leave, a parent can receive Child home care allowance *(kotihoidon tuki/hemvårdsstöd).*
- Childcare leave can be taken in two parts, the minimum length being one month. Parents can alternate the use of Child home care allowance and Parental leave in the case that one parent (usually the father) uses their Parental leave days later and not right after the other parent (usually the mother) has used their quota days.
- The Child home care allowance can be paid to any parent – whether or not they are on Childcare leave from their job – as long as their child is not in a childcare service provided or funded by the local authority.
- The Child home care allowance consists of a basic payment of €377.68 per month, with an additional €113.07 for every other child under 3 years of age and €72.66 for every other pre-school child over 3 years of age, plus a means-tested supplement (up to €202.12 per month).
- The average Home-care allowance per family in 2025 was €442 per month.
- In 2024, 25.5 per cent of municipalities paid a municipal supplement to the Child home care allowance, most commonly in big municipalities. These supplements averaged €188 per month per child, with a range from €50 to €400.[199] The municipalities usually impose specific conditions on paying the supplement, most frequently that all children in the family below school age have to be taken care of at home. Over the past few years, paying a municipal supplement has started to increase again: in 2022, 21 per cent of municipalities offered it, in 2014, 30 per cent.

[199] Lahtinen, J. and Svartsjö, M. (2024) *Selvitys kotihoidontuen ja yksityisen hoidon tuen kuntalisistä ja niiden maksuperusteista sekä palvelusetelistä 2024* [Municipal supplements of home care allowance and private care allowance and service vouchers], Helsinki: Kuntaliitto.

- If a child under school age is taken care of in a private day care centre, by a private nanny, or another person employed by the family and accepted by the local authority, the family is entitled to Private day care allowance *(yksityisen hoidon tuki/privatvårdsstöd)*, which is €192.28 per month per child. An addition of up to €265.85 per month per child can be paid, based on the size and income of the family. In 2024, 34 per cent of municipalities paid a municipal supplement to the private day care allowance, the average varying between €281 to €418 in full-time care depending on the age of the child and the type of ECEC. The local authorities usually impose specific conditions on paying the supplement, most frequently related to the hours of private day care. In 2024, 39 per cent of municipalities offered a service voucher for private day care services, the average (for full-time care) varying between €426 to €1,344 (depending on the type of ECEC used, family income, and child's age): offering vouchers has grown more popular among the municipalities over the years[3].
- Child home care allowance and municipal supplement are taxable income.
- During Childcare leave, pension is accumulated as if the earnings were €896.42 per month. These earnings accumulate the pension at a rate of 1.5 per cent per year.
- Child home care allowance is mainly funded by the municipalities. The state funds those allowances which are paid for a child who is not residing in Finland but at least one of the parents is working in Finland and is covered by employment pension insurance

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- Adoptive parents of a child (under 18 years of age) are eligible for Parental leave of 320 working days. Each parent is entitled to 160 days of leave starting from the day the child comes to their care, up until two years have elapsed from that date.
- Entitlements are based on being insured under the Finnish Health Insurance Act.
- Adoptive parents in both same- and opposite-sex couples are entitled to Parental leave allowance.
- A single parent who adopts and takes care of a child is entitled to all 320 days of Parental leave the same way as single parents having biological children.
- An adoptive parent can receive parental benefit also during studies as long as the parent is able to take care of the child.
- Adoptive parents are entitled to Child home care allowance for a period which ends two years after the day when the child comes to their care, even if the child is older than three years of age (but below school-age).
- A parent who adopts their partner's child (intra-family adoption) is entitled to the same Parental allowance and parental leave days as parents having biological children when their parentage has been confirmed. If the biological parent has already used more than 160 days, the adoptive parent is entitled to the remaining days.

Time off for the care of dependants

- Parents of children under 10 years of age can take up to four days **leave when a child falls ill** ('temporary childcare leave'; *tilapäinen hoitovapaa/tillfällig vårdledighet*). There are no limits on how often parents can take leave for this purpose during the course of a year. Payment is dependent on collective agreements but is often at full earnings for three or four days at a time. A parent with joint custody who does not live with a child is entitled to the leave.
- If an employee needs to be absent from work in order to **care for a family member or other close person**, the employer must try to organise work so that the employee can be absent for a fixed time period. The employer and the employee agree on the length of leave and other arrangements. Return to work must be agreed upon between the employer and the employee prior to the leave commencing. If an agreement cannot be reached, the employee can, with reasonable grounds, interrupt the leave by announcing this to the employer one month before their return at the latest. The employee must account for the grounds of the absence and for interrupting it, if the employer requests it. No benefit or wage is paid during this leave.
- A 'Special care allowance' is available for a parent who is not able to work on the following grounds:
    - because they must engage in the hospital care of a child under seven years, a severely ill child between the ages of seven and 15 years, or in the rehabilitation of a child under the age of 16 years.
    - because they provide home care for a severely ill child under the age of 16 years, when home care is in connection to hospital care.
    - because they must be available during the school or day care assessment of a severely ill child.

  Both biological and adoptive parents are entitled to the allowance. It can also be granted to employees who care for the child of their spouse. During hospital care or rehabilitation, the allowance can be paid to both parents if the child's physician considers the participation of both parents to be necessary. The allowance is not paid to parents who receive parental, sickness, or unemployment benefit. The payment is equal to 70 per cent of annual earnings between €13,713 and €45,744, with a lower percentage (40 per cent for annual earnings up to €70,379, and 25 per cent above this) for earnings above this level. Employees whose annual earnings are less than €13,713 get a minimum flat-rate allowance of €31.99 per working day (€800 per month). The allowance is paid for at maximum for 60 working days for hospital care or rehabilitation of the same illness and for 60 working days for home care. Receiving the allowance does not entitle the beneficiary to a leave of absence from work.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- None. Breastfeeding leave has not been considered necessary, as Parental leave available to the mother lasts until the child is nine to ten months old.

Flexible working for carers

- Parents can work reduced working hours (Partial Childcare leave, *osittainen hoitovapaa/partiell vårdledighet*) from the end of Parental leave until the end of the child's 2nd year at school. The employee is entitled to Partial Childcare leave if they have been working for the same employer for at least six months during the past 12 months. The employee should negotiate the reduction in hours with the employer, and the employer can only refuse if the reduced working hours would lead to serious disadvantages for the organisation – in which case, working hours must be a maximum of 30 hours per week. Both parents can take Partial Childcare leave during the same period but cannot take leave during the same hours of the day.
- Parents of children under 3 years are entitled to Flexible care allowance *(joustava hoitoraha/flexibel vårdpenning)* if, after taking Parental leave, they work less than 80 per cent of the normal full-time hours in their respective field. The Flexible Care allowance is €179.49 per month if the weekly working hours are no more than 30 hours, or 80 per cent of the normal full-time hours, and €269.24 per month if the weekly working hours are no more than 22.5 hours, or 60 per cent of the normal full-time hours. Flexible care allowance can be paid to both parents at the same time if they take care of the child during different hours of the day or different days of the week. Parents can receive Flexible care allowance even if the child attends municipal ECEC. Flexible care allowance is paid for only one child, even if the family has more than one child entitled to the allowance. The allowance is not paid for a leave period shorter than one month.
- Employees taking Partial Childcare leave during the child's 1st and 2nd year at school are entitled to Partial care allowance *(osittainen hoitoraha/partiell vårdpenning)* of €108.15 per month. Partial care allowance is paid for only one child, even if the family has more than one child entitled to the allowance. The allowance is not paid for a leave period shorter than one month.
- Partial care allowance and Flexible care allowance are taxable income.
- Partial care allowance and Flexible care allowance are funded by the municipalities.
- Parental leave can be taken on a part-time basis (see 1.c)

Antenatal appointments and care

- During pregnancy, employees can visit maternity clinics during working hours without loss of pay if it is not possible to do so outside working hours. Paid leave for antenatal appointments may be covered by collective agreements in some sectors.

Other provisions of leave

- **In case of miscarriage**, if the pregnancy has lasted at least 154 days the parent who was pregnant can get pregnancy allowance for 40 days and parental allowance for 65 days if not working.
- **If the child is stillborn or dies shortly after birth**, the birthing parent is entitled to Pregnancy allowance and an additional 65 Parental allowance days (the birthing parent is always entitled to 105 consecutive Pregnancy and Parental leave days if the pregnancy has lasted 154 days). The other parent is entitled to 24 Parental allowance days starting from the day following the

child's death. If the child dies later, but before two years of age, each parent is entitled to 24 Parental allowance days, starting from the day following the child's death (if there are Parental allowance days left). Parents can use these 24 days at the same time.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of paid post-natal leave is 36 months (including low paid Home-care leave). The maximum period of highly paid leave is 13.8 months after birth. As there is an entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) from the month the child turns nine months old, there is no gap between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement.

If a parent takes part of her/his Parental leave days after the child has started in ECEC, the child is entitled to return to the same daycare place if the leave is no longer than 13 weeks.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

The government is proposing a reform of the Home care allowance so that it could be granted if the recipient has lived in Finland for at least 3 years and if paid only to the parent or other guardian who is primarily responsible for caring for the child. The aim of the reform is to speed up the transition of immigrant parents into working life, increase children's participation in early childhood education, and strengthen gender equality. The reform is intended to enter into force in January 2027, and it would apply to individuals who move to Finland after the law has come into effect.

In a review commissioned by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health,[200] the current parenting leave system is evaluated by a group of researchers. Drawing on available research, the group proposes abolishing the Home care allowance system and extending Parental leave by several months for each parent, compensated with a flat-rate benefit higher than the Home care allowance. To promote fathers' leave use, they propose raising the compensation level of the income-related parental allowance. In addition, the working group proposes integrating flexible and partial home care allowances and ensuring access to high-quality early childhood education and care services.

[200] Lammi-Taskula, J., Miettinen, A., Jalovaara, M., Helske, S., Nisén, J., Närvi, J., Räsänen, T. and Österbacka, E. (2026) *Selvitys perhevapaajärjestelmän kehittämiseksi.* Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriön raportteja ja muistioita 2026:21 [Report on developing the parental leave system. Reports and memos from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2026:21], Helsinki: Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö. Available at: https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-00-9860-5

4. Uptake of leave

a. Pregnancy leave

Almost all pregnant mothers use the entire leave.

b. Paternity leave[201]

After the 2022 leave reform, there is no longer a leave called Paternity leave. Parents can take 18 days of simultaneous Parental leave which practically corresponds to the same amount of Paternity leave days of the old leave scheme that fathers could take when the mother of the child was on Maternity or Parental leave.

After the 2022 reform, about 71–72 per cent of fathers have taken one to 18 days of Parental leave simultaneously while the mother is on her leave.[202] Also before the reform, about 70–74 per cent of fathers used their leave simultaneously with the mother.

Since 2008, the average length of the leave taken while the mother is on Maternity or Parental leave has been 15 working days, increasing to about 17 days among fathers with children born in 2023[9].

According to a survey in 2022, just before the latest leave reform, the take-up of Paternity leave (simultaneous leave with the mother) was less typical among fathers not in employment or with very low income (see previous country notes for more information on non-take-up). In addition, some employed fathers who did not take Paternity leave simultaneously with the mother, took annual vacation instead.[203]

c. Parental leave and fathers' individual leave

Mothers continue to take the majority of the parental leave days apart from the days which are earmarked to the father, as they did already before the 2022 reform. However, according to preliminary information, among fathers of children born in 2022 (who were eligible for the new parental leave scheme), the proportion of fathers who took more leave than their earmarked days has increased to 15 per cent, compared to seven per cent among fathers of children born in 2021.[7]

The popularity of the fathers' individual leave (97 days of Parental leave after the 2022 reform, 36–54 days of Paternity leave before the reform) increased gradually

[201] 1 to 18 days which can be taken while the mother is on leave.

[202] Miettinen, A. & Saarikallio-Torp, M. (2025). Perhevapaauudistus lisäsi isien itsenäistä vanhempainvapaiden käyttöä [Family Leave Reform 2022 increased fathers' use of independent parental leave (without the mother)]. Kela Tutkimusblogi 10.12.2025, available at: https://tietotarjotin.fi/tutkimusblogi/1305816/perhevapaauudistus-lisasi-isien-itsenaista-vanhempainvapaiden-kayttoa

[203] Saarikallio-Torp, M., Lammi-Taskula, J. and Närvi, J. (2024) 'Isien perhevapaiden käyttö' [Fathers' use of parenting leaves], in Kinnunen, A., Lammi-Taskula, J., Miettinen, A., Närvi, J. and Saarikallio-Torp, M. (eds.) *Perhevapaat ja työn ja perheen yhteensovittaminen muuttuvassa työelämässä* [Parenting leaves and the reconciliation of work and family in changing working life], Helsinki: Kela.

since its introduction in 2003, reaching 56 per cent of fathers of children born in 2021, calculated in relation to started maternity allowances.[204] After the 2022 reform, the proportion of fathers taking individual (earmarked) parental leave has risen to about 73 per cent.[9] Of all Parental leave days paid to parents, fathers used 12 per cent in 2022 and 23 per cent in 2025 (note that the data for both years include parental leave allowances paid under the old and new scheme).[205] The length of leave used by fathers almost doubled after the reform: in 2021 it was in average 42 days and in autumn 2022 in average 81 days.[9]

Statistics indicate that before the 2022 reform, about one in five fathers did not take any Paternity or Parental leave.[206] After 2022, the share of non-users has decreased to about 15 per cent.[9]

According to a survey in 2022, half (52 per cent) of the fathers using Paternity leave after Parental leave period took the opportunity to postpone the take-up, and 61 per cent took the leave in several parts.[9]

The fathers' individual leave has also contributed to their growing independent care responsibility: in 2013, in the majority of families the mother, even if not on leave, stayed at home during at least part of the father's Paternity leave weeks, whereas in 2022, only one in four mothers stayed at home and most were either working or studying.[12] Significantly more fathers thus now seem to use the leave to care for the child alone, without the mother being present.

According to a survey in 2022 (on fathers with children born in 2019–2021 and therefore before the latest leave reform), fathers of a first- or second-born child as well as fathers with high education level or a good income, and especially those whose partners have a high education level and a good income were more likely to take the fathers' individual leave, (the part of Paternity leave to be taken after Parental leave), whereas the leave was less typically taken by self-employed or unemployed fathers or young fathers under the age of 25 years. Among employed fathers, the take-up of this leave was more common if the father worked in a female-dominated workplace, or in a workplace with a large number of employees. Parental leave that could be used by either of the parents was more typically taken by highly educated fathers, fathers of first-born children, and those with a spouse who had a higher education level and income.[207]

A recent register-based study showed that the reform in 2022 increased fathers' parental leave uptake in all income groups, but the increase was (in relative terms) larger in the lowest income categories, consequently diminishing income

[204] The Social Insurance Institution (Kela), statistical database (Kelasto): Daily allowances for parents by child's year of birth.
[205] The Social Insurance Institution (Kela), statistical database (Kelasto): Allowances for parents: Number of recipients and allowances paid out 2022–
[206] Miettinen, A. and Saarikallio-Torp, M. (2020) 'Isälle kiintiöidyn vanhempainvapaan käyttö ja sen taustatekijät' [Trends and socioeconomic determinants in the use of father's quota], *Yhteiskuntapolitiikka,* Vol.85, 4
[207] Närvi, J., Saarikallio-Torp, M. and Miettinen, A. (2024) 'Vanhempien työmarkkina-asema, työn laatu ja perhevapaiden käyttö' [Parents' position in the labour market, quality of work and the use of parenting leaves], in Kinnunen, A., Lammi-Taskula, J., Miettinen, A., Närvi, J. and Saarikallio-Torp, M. (eds.) *Perhevapaat ja työn ja perheen yhteensovittaminen muuttuvassa työelämässä* [Parenting leaves and the reconciliation of work and family in changing working life], Helsinki: Kela.

disparities in fathers' parental leave use. On the other hand, the difference between fathers of Finnish and migrant origin increased although leave take-up increased in both groups.[208]

The part-time option for taking Parental leave was not popular before the 2022 reform. Statistics show that in 2022, only 463 parents used it.[209] After the 2022 reform, the proportion of parents using Partial Parental allowance has increased. In 2023, it was used by 1,261 parents.[210]

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

Almost all families (87 per cent in 2020[211]) take advantage of the Child home care allowance (HCA) at least for some time after Parental leave. Since 2006, statistics are available regarding its use by parents, showing that HCA is used almost entirely by women. Only six to nine per cent of the recipients of HCA per year (2006-2021) have been men. In 2025, 8 per cent of the recipients of HCA were men.[212]

In the long run, HCA has become less popular; the proportion of children aged zero to two years taken care of at home supported by HCA has dropped from 51 per cent in 2010 to 30 per cent in 2023.**Error! Bookmark not defined.** The overall decreasing popularity matches the growing proportion of young children attending childcare services: the proportion of under three year old children in these services has risen from 30 per cent in 2015 to 41 per cent in 2024.[213]

The proportion of fathers taking HCA has remained low. A register-based study showed that about 10 percent of fathers of children born between 2015-2021 took HCA, on average for 5.5 months. The use of HCA was lower among fathers of foreign origin (about 6 percent used HCA), but they used it for a longer period (7.5 months) than Finnish-born fathers. [214][211]

A survey in 2022 with parents who had a child between 2019–2021 shows that HCA was more typically taken by fathers with a high education level and high income on one hand, and by fathers outside the labour force or with low income

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[208] National Audit Office of Finland (2026). Family leave reform and multi-sectoral cooperation in services for families with children. Available at: https://vtv.fi/en/report/family-leave-reform-and-multi-sectoral-cooperation-in-services-for-families-with-children/

[209] *Kelan Lapsiperhe-etuustilasto 2022* [Social Insurance Institution Statistics on Family Benefits, 2022] Official Statistics of Finland, Social Security 2023.

[210] *Kelan Lapsiperhe-etuustilasto 2023* [Social Insurance Institution Statistics on Family Benefits, 2023] Official Statistics of Finland, Social Security 2024.

[211] Statistical Yearbook of the Social Insurance Institution 2020; Take-up of child care subsidies before the child's 3rd birthday, Helsinki: Kela 2021.

[212] The Social Insurance Institution (Kela), statistical database (Kelasto): Child care allowances: Number of recipients and allowances paid out 2007-

[213] Statistics Finland, Early Childhood Education and Care. Available at: https://stat.fi/julkaisu/cln2tn5dg2xie0bvz67v1dkhhNumber of children in early childhood education and care by Year, Age and Information. PxWeb

[214] Miettinen & Saarikallio (2026). Kotihoidon tuen käyttö Suomessa ja ulkomailla syntyneillä vanhemmilla [The use of home care allowance among parents born in Finland and abroad]. Kela Raportteja 13. http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-284-241-1

on the other hand. The use of HCA was also more common among those fathers whose spouses had a high education level and a high income (see previous years' notes for more details).[12]

The proportion of mothers taking HCA has decreased from 86 percent (mothers of children born in 2015) to about 82 percent among mothers with children born in 2021. Mothers with immigrant background were less likely than Finnish-born mothers to use HCA, but used it for a longer time.[28]

Among mothers receiving HCA at some point before their child turns three years of age, the proportion taking longer HCA periods (13+ months) has decreased and the proportion taking short periods (1-6 months) has increased. On average, mothers with children born in 2022 took HCA for 10 months (median 8 months).[7]

Mothers' take-up of child-care leave or HCA is related to their education and position in the labour market as well as their family type. A study using Kela's register data on parents of children born 2010-2018 found that highly educated mothers and those with high income (before the birth of the child) were more likely not to use HCA at all or used it for shorter periods than lower-educated/low-income mothers. Longer periods of HCA were also more common among mothers with many children, with immigrant background, if the mother was a single-parent or had been unemployed before the childbirth.[28]

Findings from a survey in 2022 to parents with a child born between 2019–2021 show that while the use of HCA among mothers was almost equally common despite their socioeconomic or demographic background, longer HCA periods were more often taken or planned by single mothers, mothers with low education level, low income, who were unemployed, or by those who did not have an effective employment contract (and were not working as entrepreneurs) at the time of the birth of their child (one fourth of the respondents).[215] [216] However, an insecure position in the labour market can have a twofold effect as mothers who had experienced several periods of unemployment or even a threat of unemployment in their job also more typically than other mothers did not use HCA at all. Among mothers who had been employed before the birth of their child, longer HCA periods were taken among those working in the municipal sector and in female-dominated workplaces.[2078]

The Flexible Care allowance, available from the beginning of 2014, has gradually increased its popularity. In 2014, 15,766 families, and in 2025, 22,473 families received Flexible Care allowance[19], although the proportion of children under 3 years being taken care of by this allowance is low, about 10 per cent.[7] Flexible Care allowance has been more popular among highly educated mothers and those whose spouse has high income level, although, compared to the previous Partial

[215] Miettinen, A. and Närvi, J. (2024) 'Äitien kotihoidon tuen käyttö' [Mothers' use of home care allowance], in Kinnunen, A., Lammi-Taskula, J., Miettinen, A., Närvi, J. and Saarikallio-Torp, M. (eds.) *Perhevapaat ja työn ja perheen yhteensovittaminen muuttuvassa työelämässä* [Parenting leaves and the reconciliation of work and family in changing working life], Helsinki: Kela.

[216] Kinnunen, A. and Miettinen, A. (2024) 'Yhden vanhemman kotitaloudet ja perhevapaat' [Single parent households and parenting leaves], in Kinnunen, A., Lammi-Taskula, J., Miettinen, A., Närvi, J. and Saarikallio-Torp, M. (eds.) *Perhevapaat ja työn ja perheen yhteensovittaminen muuttuvassa työelämässä* [Parenting leaves and the reconciliation of work and family in changing working life], Helsinki: Kela.

Care allowance with a lower benefit, the new allowance has increased the take-up also among mothers with lower education levels.[217] In 2025, 12 per cent of the Flexible Care allowance recipients were men.[16]

In 2023, 30 per cent of employed mothers with children aged one to two years worked part-time. Among employed fathers, only four per cent worked part-time irrespective of the age of the child.[218]

In 2024, Partial Home-care allowance during the child's first and second years at school was used by 15,763 families, to take care of seven per cent of children seven and eight years of age. 11 per cent of the recipients of Partial Home-care allowance were men.**Error! Bookmark not defined.**[6]

The use of the Private Day Care allowance for children under the age of three is relatively rare. Altogether 8,078 families received Private Day Care allowance in 2025 for children aged zero to seven years. One per cent of one-year-olds and two per cent of two-year-olds were taken care of supported by this allowance in 2025.**Error! Bookmark not defined.**[6]

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

There are no annual statistics available on the uptake of temporary childcare leave to care for an ill child. In the Quality of Work Life Survey (2023),[219] 70 per cent of employed women and 66 per cent of employed men with children under ten years of age had taken temporary childcare leave for one to four days during the past 12 months – this is compared to 67 per cent of women and 52 per cent of men in 2013. In families where both parents have full-time employment, 71 per cent of mothers and 73 per cent of fathers had taken temporary childcare leave, compared to 71 per cent of mothers and 60 per cent of fathers in 2013. The gender gap has thus decreased or even disappeared over the years.

[217]Pekkarinen, T. and Tuomala, J. (2019) 'Joustavan hoitorahan työllisyysvaikutusten arviointi' [An assesment of the effects of the Flexible care allowance on employment]. *Valtioneuvoston selvitys- ja tutkimustoiminnan julkaisusarja 2019*:46, Helsinki: Valtioneuvoston kanslia.

[218] Statistics Finland, Labor Force Survey 2023. Available at: https://stat.fi/julkaisu/cln0fvd43884u0avtkiua21yu

[219] Sutela, H., Viinikka, J. and Pärnänen, A. (2024) *Työolot murrosten keskellä – Työolotutkimuksen tuloksia 1977–2023* [Quality of Work Life Surveys 1977–2023*],* Helsinki: Statistics Finland.

France[220]

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For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*congé de maternité*) (responsibility of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Family, Solidarity and Urban Affairs)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 16 weeks: 6 weeks before the birth and 10 weeks after the birth.
- It is obligatory to take 8 weeks, including at least 6 weeks after the birth.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 79 per cent of gross salary, which is close to the net monthly salary, up to an upper limit of €104.02 per day and a minimum level of €11.12 per day. Average net monthly earnings in France are €2,440 for women and €2,820 for men.
- Self-employed workers receive a flat-rate payment of €65.84 per day during Maternity leave (approximately €1,975.20 per month). Additionally, self-employed mothers receive a flat-rate 'maternity rest benefit' of €4,005 (half paid at the start of Maternity leave, the other half at the end).
- Payments are taxed.
- Maternity leave is taken into account in the calculation of retirement rights (i.e., mothers continue to accumulate retirement rights based on Maternity leave benefits).
- Funded by health insurance,[221] financed by contributions from both employees and employers. The total amount of this contribution is 21 per

[220] Please cite as Sponton, A. and Gaboret, G. (2026) 'France country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

[221] The present social security system, including statutory health insurance, officially came into being with the Ordinance of 4 October 1945 which aimed to cover all the so-called 'social risks'. In 1967, social security was separated into four branches: health insurance (which represents the largest share of expenditures devoted to social protection),

cent of gross pay, including all social contributions, with employees contributing 2.35 per cent and employers 13.10 per cent.

Flexibility in use

- Up to 3 of the 6 weeks of pre-birth leave can be postponed until after birth, allowing for a total of 13 weeks of post-birth leave.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employees and self-employed workers.
- There is some length of service conditionality for the self-employed (to have been working for at least six months). To qualify for full coverage, the average annual income over the past 3 years must have exceeded €4,582 in 2026. If the income is lower, the benefits will be significantly reduced (flat-rate 'maternity rest benefit' divided by ten and daily allowance of €6.584 per day).
- Jobseekers are eligible for compensation if they receive or have received unemployment benefit in the last 12 months. In this case, the duration of the Maternity leave postpones the end of their unemployment benefit.
- Leave is available for same sex parenting couples for the person giving birth.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In the case of twins, the length of leave is increased to 34 weeks (12 weeks before birth and 22 weeks after); and in the case of triplets, the length is increased to 46 weeks (24 and 22 weeks)
- In the case of the mother already having two children, the length of leave is increased to 26 weeks (eight weeks before birth and 18 weeks after).
- In case of medical complications, pregnant employees can be granted up to two weeks of 'prenatal medical leave' immediately before the start of their Maternity leave, and/or up to four weeks of 'postnatal medical leave' immediately after the end of the Maternity leave.
- If childbirth occurs more than 6 weeks before the expected due date and the child is hospitalised, Maternity leave is extended to cover the period leading up to the originally scheduled start of prenatal leave.
- If the child remains hospitalised for more than 6 weeks after birth, mothers can request to return to work and postpone the unused postnatal leave until the end of the child's hospitalisation.
- In the event of late delivery, the prenatal leave is extended, and the length of the postnatal leave remains unchanged.
- In the event of the mother's death, the father may take the mother's remaining postnatal Maternity leave and request a deferral of the 6 month period allowed for taking his Paternity leave.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

pensions, family allowances, and insurance for work-related accidents and occupational illnesses.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- In the public sector, leave is fully paid (i.e., there is no upper limit). In the private sector, some collective agreements or employers may provide longer leave in addition to statutory entitlements and/or compensate salaries that exceed social security income limits. For instance, the banking sector offers six months of Maternity leave.
- The most comprehensive information on this topic is quite outdated[222] (2005), but according to this source, 70 per cent of private non-profit institutions, and 59 per cent of institutions that are part of a group provide additional compensation or even full salary maintenance. However, only 35 per cent of independent institutions in the private for-profit sector offer this benefit. For civil servants, full salary maintenance is guaranteed.

b. Paternity leave (*Congé de naissance – literally 'birth leave'* - and *Congé de paternité et d'accueil de l'enfant* – literally 'leave for looking after a child') (responsibility of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Family, Solidarity and Urban Affairs)

Length of leave

- Four weeks, consisting of 25 calendar days of Paternity leave (*congé de paternité et d'accueil de l'enfant*) plus, for employees only, three extra working days of birth leave (*congé de naissance)*.
- It is obligatory to take the 3 days of *congé de naissance* and the 4 days of *congé de paternité et d'accueil de l'enfant* together; self-employed workers must take 7 consecutive days of *congé de paternité et d'accueil de l'enfant*.

Payment, funding and taxation

- *Congé de paternité et d'accueil de l'enfant*: Payment and funding as for Maternity leave.
- *Congé de naissance*: 100 per cent of earnings, paid by the employer.

Flexibility in use

- One week must be taken immediately after the birth. The remaining days can be divided into two additional periods of at least 5 days each, within the 6 months following the birth. So, in total, Paternity leave can be divided into a maximum of three periods. For example, after the first mandatory week, fathers can take 2 more weeks 2 months later, and a last week in the 5th month.

Eligibility (e.g. related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employees are entitled to the 3 days of *congé de naissance*.
- All employees and self-employed workers are eligible for the 25 calendar days of *congé de paternité et d'accueil de l'enfant*.

[222] Lefèvre, C., Pailhé, A. and Solaz, A. (2007) 'Comment les Employeurs Aident-Ils Leurs Salariés à Concilier Travail et Famille' [How Employers Help Their Employees Balance Work and Family], *Population & Sociétés*, 440(11) : 1-4.

- For the self-employed fathers there is some length of service conditionality(to have been working for at least six months). To receive the fixed daily allowance (€65.84 per day in 2026), the average annual income over the past 3 years must have exceeded €4,582.00 in 2026. If the income is lower, the benefits will be significantly reduced (daily allowance of €6.584 per day). (Fathers are not eligible for the flat-rate "maternity rest allowance" available to self-employed mothers).
- Jobseekers are eligible for compensation if they receive or have received unemployment benefit in the last 12 months. In this case, the duration of the Paternity leave postpones the end of their unemployment benefit.
- Leave is available for same-sex parenting couples and for cohabiting couples, including if the partner is not the biological father.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In the case of twins or multiple births, Paternity leave is extended to 32 calendar days. No specific leave is granted for single fathers.
- In the case where the mother is single and has no partner, Paternity leave cannot be transferred to a close relative.
- For fathers couples, Paternity leave (not Maternity leave) is granted to the biological father. However, there are no legislative provisions regarding the partner of the biological father; their eligibility appears to be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- If the child is immediately hospitalised after birth, employees (only) are entitled to a leave of up to 30 consecutive calendar days for the entire hospitalisation period. This leave is in addition to the Paternity and Parental leave.
- See also 1e regarding bereavement.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- As for Maternity leave.

c. Parental leave (*Congé parental d'éducation*) (responsibility of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Family, Solidarity and Urban Affairs)

Length of leave

- Until the child reaches 3 years.
- Leave is an individual, non-transferable entitlement.

Payment, funding and taxation

- A childcare allowance or childrearing benefit - 'PreParE' (*Prestation partagée d'éducation de l'enfant)* - is paid to all parents and dependent on whether the recipient works and, if so, for how long. In 2026, the basic benefit is €456.05 per month if not working; €294.81 per month if working less than half of full-time hours; and €170.07 per month if working 50 to 80 per cent of full-time hours.
- A supplementary means-tested allowance, *Allocation de base*, is paid to lower income parents, depending upon the size of the family and paid either at a full rate €196.59) or at a part-rate (€98.30).
- For parents with a single child, *PreParE* is paid for 6 months per parent after the end of the Maternity leave, i.e. to a maximum period of 12 months if both parents claim benefit, which can only be received if the parent receiving the benefit stops employment or reduces working hours. For parents with two or more children (under 20 years), *PreParE* can be paid until a child is 3 years old, but only for a maximum period of 24 months to any one parent, which means that the remaining 12 months can only be received by the other parent if he/she stops employment or reduces working hours.
- 'PreParE' is not taxed.
- *PreParE* is funded by the local CAFs (*Caisse des Allocations Familiales*), the Family Allowance funds that are part of the social security system and provide a wide range of benefits for families with children. CAFs are financed by contributions from employers only, amounting to 5.4 per cent of gross wages, and not by employees unlike the Maternity and Paternity leaves that are funded from the health insurance scheme.
- Non-employed parents (including those taking leave) receive pension credits for childrearing: *Assurance Vieillesse du Parent au Foyer* (AYPF).[223] AYPF is paid by the local CAFs (*Caisse des Allocations Familiales*) to guarantee retirement rights to people who stop or reduce their professional activity to take care of one or several children or a person with a disability. This allowance is means-tested.

Flexibility in use

- Parents taking leave may work between 16 and 32 hours per week. Employers can refuse to let parents work part time if they can justify this on business grounds.
- Parents can take full-time leave simultaneously. They can also take part-time Parental leave simultaneously and receive benefit at the same time from the *PreParE,* but the total amount of payment cannot exceed €456.05 (unless eligible for the *Allocation de base).*

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employees are eligible for Parental leave if they have worked at least 1 year for their employer before the birth of a child. Eligibility for the child allowance *PreParE* becomes less restrictive as the number of children increases. For example, with one child, parents must have completed 8 quarters of pension contributions over the 2 years preceding the birth; with two children, over the past 4 years; and with three or more children, over the past 5 years.

223 *See* http://www.caf.fr/aides-et-services/s-informer-sur-les-aides/petite-enfance/assurance-vieillesse-du-parent-au-foyer-avpf.

- Self-employed workers are also eligible for the child allowance *PreParE* if they can demonstrate a partial or full suspension of their professional activity and have completed the required number of pension contribution quarters. Leave is available to same-sex parenting couples.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents)

- Where a child is seriously ill or disabled, Parental leave (regulated by the Labour code) can be extended by a year.
- Single parents are entitled to the full period of *PreParE*

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- For adoptive parents the same regulations for Parental leave apply as for other parents.

Time off for the care of dependants

- Parents are entitled to annual **sick leave to care for their child**. The duration of sick leave is generally 3 days per year, or 5 days per year if the child is under 1 year or if the parents have three or more dependent children. Some collective agreements provide additional sick days (for instance, in the public sector, employees can take 14 days a year).
- Every employee is eligible for an '**Parental presence leave'** *(Congé de présence parentale*) to care for a sick child under the age of 20 years whose health condition requires continuous presence and demanding care. The leave is granted for a maximum of 310 working days per child over a three year period, based on the duration of the child's treatment. It can be taken on a part-time basis. Parents may be eligible for an additional Parental presence leave, extending the total to 620 days, once the initial three year period ends.

  Although this leave is unpaid, employees can receive a Daily Parental Presence Allowance *(Allocation Journalière de Présence Parentale (AJPP).* The allowance is paid for a maximum of 310 days over the 3 year period, and the level of the allowance depends on the duration of work in the

enterprise and on the family structure; in 2026, in couples, the amount is €66.4 per day if one parent stops work completely.

- **Leave to care for a dependent relative** (*Congé Proche Aidant*): employees may temporarily stop working to care for a person with whom they have close and stable ties who is disabled, incapacitated, experiencing a loss of autonomy or elderly. Unless otherwise stipulated by contract, the maximum duration of the leave is 3 months, renewable for up to 1 year. The leave is unpaid, but employees may receive an allowance of €66.64 per full day or €33.32 per half-day, up to 22 days per month and 66 days per person cared for.
- **Leave to care for a close relative at the end of life due to a serious or incurable illness** (*Congé de Solidarité Familiale*): all employees are entitled to three months of leave, renewable once. The leave is unpaid, but employees may receive an allowance of €64.41 per full day or €32.21 per half-day.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- After returning to work, employed mothers are eligible to take 1 hour off per day to breastfeed (30 minutes in the morning and 30 minutes in the afternoon). If specific breastfeeding facilities are provided, the time is reduced to two 20 minute breaks. The break is not paid.

Flexible working for carers

- Employees in the public and private sector are entitled to work part time for family reasons. Parents therefore have a right to request or to reduce their working time if the child is under 3 years, but under the condition that the request is made in the context of being on a statutory Parental leave and that the parent has been working with the company for at least 1 year. Parents have the right and are guaranteed to return to work afterwards on full-time or part-time basis.
- All employees (not specifically parents) have a right to (request to) work (a certain percentage) from home. The most common arrangement is to combine one or two days of telework with 3 or 4 days in the office during the week. Under such an agreed arrangement their employment contract cannot be broken by employers.
- The 'family tax credit' (*Crédit d'Impôt Famille*, CIF), introduced in 2004, is a financial incentive provided to companies to encourage them to develop family-friendly initiatives for their employees. The CIF stipulates that 25 per cent of related expenses are deductible from taxes paid by the company up to an upper limit of €500,000 per year and per company.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- During pregnancy, employed mothers are entitled to time off for the 7 mandatory medical exams as required by health insurance. After childbirth, employed mothers are entitled to time off for the mandatory postnatal check-up. These absences are considered as working time for the calculation of paid leave and seniority and do not result in a reduction of salary.
- The person with whom the employee lives in a couple (marriage, PACS, or common-law partnership) is also entitled to time off to attend 3 of these mandatory medical exams.

- In case of assisted reproductive technology (ART), employed mothers are also entitled to time off for necessary medical procedures. These absences are considered as working time for the calculation of paid leave and seniority and do not result in a reduction of salary.

Other provisions of leave

- **Death and bereavement leave**. Grieving parents have a right to (i) a 'death leave' of 7 working days (for employees only) to be taken around the time of the child's death. In practice, mothers' partners are usually the beneficiaries, as mothers are often on Maternity leave during this period; (ii) a 'bereavement leave' of 8 days, which can be taken in separate periods over 1 year, funded by social security. This applies to all working parents who had actual responsibility for the child, including private-sector employees, the self-employed, non-salaried agricultural workers, job seekers, and civil servants. In the event of the child's death after birth (provided the birth occurred after 22 weeks of amenorrhea or the foetus weighed at least 500 grams), postnatal Maternity leave and Paternity leave remains in effect.
- In the event of the child's death after birth (provided the birth occurred after 22 weeks of amenorrhea or the foetus weighed at least 500 grams), postnatal Maternity leave and Paternity leave remains in effect.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is three years, but most of this is low paid; leave paid at a high rate lasts for less than four months. There is an entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) from three years of age: the French Education code states that 'every child upon reaching the age of three has the right to attend a nursery school located as close as possible to his or her residence if her or his family claims a place'; attendance is also compulsory from three years. There is no gap, therefore, between the end of leave and an ECEC entitlement, but a substantial gap of more than two and a half years between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

An 'additional birth leave' (*congé supplémentaire de naissance*) will be available from July 2026, entitling each parent to 1 or 2 additional months of paid leave following Maternity or Paternity leave, to be taken before the child turns 9 months. This will include all parents of children born or adopted on or after 1 January 2026 (including those born prematurely with a due date on or after that date). The leave will be paid at 70 per cent of net salary for the 1st month and 60 per cent of net salary for the 2nd month, up to an upper limit of €4,005 per month; this will be taxed and funded by health insurance.

All employees and self-employed workers are eligible. Although the exact arrangements are still being discussed, it is currently planned that self-employed workers receive a flat-rate benefit equivalent to 70 per cent of the standard daily allowance during the 1st month of leave (about €46 per day, or €1,380 per month), and 60 per cent during the 2nd month (about €39 per day, or €1,170 per month).

The leave may be taken in two separate 1 month periods, and parents may take the leave either simultaneously or alternating with the other

4. Take-up of leave

a. Maternity leave

Almost all mothers take up Maternity leave, a period of which is obligatory, although the length of leave taken varies, with women in higher status employment taking less leave.

b. Paternity leave

The take-up rate of paternity leave has gradually increased since its introduction in 2002 (around 70 per cent), reaching 81 per cent in 2024[224,225]. The proportion of fathers taking paternity leave in the absence of the mother has also risen following the 2021 reform which extended the leave from two to four weeks, reaching 8 per cent compared to around 4 per cent previously.

However, take-up varies significantly depending on fathers' labour market situation. In 2024[226], 39.7 per cent of self-employed fathers took Paternity leave, compared with 90 per cent of those on permanent contracts. Take-up also differs according to income level. In 2017[227], take-up ranged from 58 per cent among fathers in the lowest income quintile to 79 per cent among those in the highest quintile, and reached 92 per cent among fathers in the middle-income groups (€2,500 to €2,999 per month). The take-up rate is also higher in large firms with more than 200 employees (88 per cent)) than in firms with fewer than ten employees (75 per cent).

c. Parental leave and childrearing benefit (*PreParE)*

Statistics are limited to childcare allowance (essentially *PreParE*) provided by the National Family Allowance Fund, and it is not possible to find out how many recipients are also on Parental leave without receiving any allowance.

[224] Pailhé, A., Solaz, A., Sponton, A. and Tô, M. (2026). Fathers Have Embraced Longer and More Flexible Paternity Leave. Population & Societies, 640(1), 1-4. Available online.
[225] Guedj, H. and Le Pape M.-C. (2023) 'Premiers jours de l'enfant : un temps de plus en plus sanctuarisé par les pères via le congé de paternité' [The child's first days: a time increasingly protected by fathers through paternity leave], *Etudes et Résultats*, 1275.
[226] Pailhé, A., Solaz, A., Sponton, A. and Tô, M. (2026), *Ibid*.
[227] Sponton, A. (2023) 'Reluctant Fathers? A Mixed-Methods Approach to Grasp the Diversity of Mechanisms Behind Paternity Leave Non-Take-Up', *Population*, vol.78, 1: 83-116.

In 2024, 192,000 families received a childcare allowance (*PreParE).*[228] Among the beneficiaries receiving the *PreParE*, 53 per cent were stopping their work, 47 per cent worked part-time. The number of beneficiary families has been decreasing over the last decade, especially after the 2015 reform[229], and in parallel with the decline in birth rates in France.

Research provides evidence that women make up 94 per cent of parents taking leave,[230] and there has been little change since the introduction of *PreParE.*[231] Research also suggests that mothers who were in employment just before taking Maternity leave are more likely to claim *PreParE* if they are entitled to Parental leave because they have a job guarantee (Labour Code). With high unemployment, most working mothers who are not entitled to Parental leave cannot take the risk of losing their job unless their partner has secure employment.

A number of factors help to explain why fathers are so reluctant to claim Parental leave, including: the unequal gender distribution of domestic and child-raising tasks within the family still persisting in France; traditional value systems; in most couples, the man earning more than the woman; and a workplace culture in the private sector that makes it difficult for a man, in particular at management level, to take Parental leave. The small number of fathers who take childcare allowance full time are mostly blue-collar workers or employees with a stable job beforehand. Compared to fathers who do not take Parental leave, they are more likely to work in the public sector or female-dominated sectors and to have partners with a higher level of education, a higher status job and higher earnings. Besides, the majority of fathers on Parental leave take it on a part-time basis.[232]

This strong segmentation as far as the behaviour of mothers with young children is concerned is partly the result of the inconsistencies between the Parental leave scheme (part of employment legislation detailed in the Labour code) and the allowance provided under strict eligibility conditions by the Social Security.

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[228] National Office for Family Allocations (CNAF) (2025), *L'accueil des jeunes enfants edition 2025* [Report by the National Observatory for Early Childhood (ONAPE)]. Available online.
[229] See Périvier H., Verdugo G., 2024, 'Where Are the Fathers? Effects of Earmarking Parental Leave for Fathers in France', *ILR Review*, Vol.77, 1: 88-118. Prior to 2015, a parent was entitled to Parental leave allowance for one year for a first child, and up to three years for subsequent children. The reform designated 6 months of paid leave for first-time fathers and one year for subsequent children, while concurrently reducing the maximum duration of paid leave available to mothers. The reduction in the number of mothers receiving benefits was not compensated, likely due to the low amount of the allowance.
[230] National Office for Family Allocations (CNAF) (2024) *L'accueil des jeunes enfants edition 2024* [Report by the National Observatory for Early Childhood (ONAPE)]. Available online.
[231] Périvier, H. and Verdugo, G. (2024) 'Where Are the Fathers? Effects of Earmarking Parental Leave for Fathers in France', *ILR Review*, Vol.77, 1: 88-118.
[232] Guergoat-Larivière, M. and Narcy, M. (2024) 'La réforme du congé parental de 2015 : un impact hétérogène sur les mères et les pères selon les groupes sociaux et le contexte local' [The 2015 parental leave reform: a heterogeneous impact on mothers and fathers according to social groups and the local context], *Revue d'économie politique*, Vol.134, 2: 329-363.

Germany[233]

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Germany is a federal country with 16 federal states (Länder).

For cross-country comparisons of leave provision and early childhood education and care (ECEC) services, please refer to the tables at the beginning of this review (also available separately on the Leave Network website). To contact the authors of the country notes, please consult the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

Note on terminology: German legislation (*Bundeselternzeit- und Elterngeldgesetz* (*BEEG*)) distinguishes between two dimensions of Parental leave: '*Elternzeit*' refers to job protection rights and the right to work part-time, while '*Elterngeld'* and '*ElterngeldPlus'* refer to Parental leave benefits.

a. Maternity leave (*Mutterschutz*) (responsibility of the Federal Ministry for Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 14 weeks in total: 6 weeks before the the expected date of birth and 8 weeks after the birth.
- It is obligatory to take 8 weeks after the birth, or 12 weeks in the case of premature or multiple births, as well as in cases where the child is born with a disability.
- Beyond the Maternity leave period, pregnant and breastfeeding women are protected from workplace hazards, night work and overtime hours. In the case of asylum seekers, deportation is generally suspended during maternity protection periods.

Payment, funding and taxation

[233]Please cite as: Reimer, T., Blum, S., Fischer, J., Peukert, A., Schober, P. and Stertz, A. M. (2026) 'Germany country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P., and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

- For women covered by statutory health insurance, health insurance funds pay benefits up to €13 per day. The employer pays a top-up to cover the difference between this amount and the woman's average net earnings in the last 3 months before the start of Maternity leave, resulting in full income replacement with no upper limit.
- Women who are privately insured or not employed may receive a lump-sum maternity benefit of up to €210 in total, paid by the Federal Office for Social Security.
- Women receiving unemployment benefits (*Arbeitslosengeld* [ALG I]) are entitled to maternity benefits equivalent to their previous unemployment benefit, paid by the statutory health insurance fund.
- Women receiving basic income support (ALG II / *Bürgergeld*): do not receive maternity benefit as an earnings replacement, since they are not in insured employment., and continue to receive basic income support. Additional needs related to pregnancy (e.g., a pregnancy allowance and one-off benefits for initial equipment) may be granted.
- Women receiving basic income support but are/were working in Minijobs (earnings below €556 per month receive the lump-sum maternity benefit (up to €210) on top of their income to the subsistence level.
- Women with very low earnings (e.g., in marginal employment) may receive only limited maternity benefits (e.g., the lump-sum payment of up to €210 if not covered by statutory health insurance).
- Most payments are usually made via the employer, who is fully reimbursed through the statutory health insurance (U2 scheme). The maternity benefit paid by the statutory health insurance fund (up to €13 per day) is transferred directly to the mother. For women not in dependent employment but covered by statutory health insurance with entitlement to sickness benefits (e.g., some self-employed women), maternity benefit is paid directly by the health insurance fund; if not covered by statutory health insurance, a lump-sum maternity benefit (up to €210 in total) is paid by the Federal Office for Social Security.
- If a woman is prohibited from working outside the statutory maternity protection period (e.g. due to workplace health risks), she receives continued payment from the employer. This corresponds to her average earnings in the last three months before the pregnancy began (is reimbursed through the health insurance (U2 scheme).
- Payments are not subject to income tax, but are taken into account under the progression clause (*Progressionsvorbehalt*), which may increase the tax rate applied to other taxable income.
- Funded by a combination of statutory health insurance and employer contributions. Employers are fully reimbursed for their payments through the U2 reimbursement scheme, which is financed by a levy paid by all employers (not only for female employees). The contribution rate is set individually by each health insurance fund and typically amounts to around 0.2–0.4 per cent of gross wages.

Flexibility in use

- Expectant mothers may choose to continue working or studying during the last 6 weeks before the expected date of birth provided they explicitly declare their consent. This consent may be withdrawn at any time.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Entitlement to Maternity leave is universal for women in employment, education or similar situations, while entitlement to Maternity leave benefits depends primarily on health insurance status and employment situation.
- The following groups receive Maternity leave payments:
  - Women who are statutorily insured and in employment receive maternity benefit (*Mutterschaftsgeld*) and an employer top-up.
  - Women not covered by statutory health insurance (e.g., privately insured or marginally employed without entitlement to statutory benefits) may receive a lump-sum maternity benefit of up to €210 in total, paid by the Federal Office for Social Security.
  - Self-employed women are entitled to maternity benefits only if they are covered by statutory health insurance with entitlement to sickness benefits; otherwise, they may receive only the lump-sum payment.
  - Women without employment (e.g., asylum seekers) are not entitled to maternity benefit as an earnings replacement, but may receive support through the general social protection system (e.g., benefits under asylum seekers' benefits law).
  - If no maternity benefit is payable (e.g., for unemployed women, self-employed women without statutory health insurance or adoptive mothers), Parental leave benefit (*Elterngeld*) may be claimed from the day of birth and thus effectively replaces Maternity leave benefits from that point onward.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In the case of multiple births, premature , or when a child is born with a disability, the postnatal maternity protection period is extended from 8 to 12 weeks. In the case of premature birth, any part of the prenatal leave not taken is added to the postnatal period.
- In exceptional cases (e.g., death of the mother), other caregivers may receive certain benefits, but not Maternity leave as such.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave

There is no statutory entitlement.

c. Parental leave *(Elternzeit)* (responsibility of the Federal Ministry for Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth)

Length of leave (*Elternzeit*)

- 3 years per child.
- Leave is an individual, non-transferable entitlement.

Payment, funding and taxation (Basiselterngeld/ElterngeldPlus)

- An income-related benefit is paid if parents reduce or interrupt employment to care for a child. Parents can choose between (or successively combine) two types of Parental leave benefits: (i) *Basiselterngeld* (for full-time Parental leave) and (ii) *ElterngeldPlus* (for part-time Parental leave).

  Basiselterngeld

  - Replaces a proportion of former income, if parents take full-time leave to care for their child/ren.
  - Paid for up to 12 months after birth, with 2 additional months (making a total of 14 months) if both parents take at least 2 months each (partner months, *Partnermonate*), or for single parents.
  - Generally paid at 65 per cent[234] of previous net earnings (higher rates of up to 100 per cent for low incomes), with a minimum of €300 per month and a maximum of €1,800 per month.
  - Interaction with Maternity leave benefits: Maternity leave benefits received after childbirth are fully offset, so that for mothers the effective duration is typically reduced (e.g. to around ten months, or 12 months for single mothers).
  - Parents without prior earnings receive the minimum amount (€300/month). Parental benefits (*Elterngeld*) are taken into account when calculating means-tested benefits during unemployment such as *Bürgergeld* and are therefore largely offset against these benefits.

  ElterngeldPlus

  - Replaces a proportion of the loss in income if parents reduce their working hours to care for their child/ren.
  - Paid for a period of 24 months, with 2 to 4 additional months (partnership bonus, *Partnerschaftsbonus)* per parent if both parents work 24-32 hours per week for at least 2 to 4 consecutive months.

[234] Parents with a previous net income between €1,000 and €1,240 per month receive benefits at a rate of 67 per cent and parents with a previous income of €1,240 and higher receive benefits at a 65 per cent rate, up to the limit of €1,800 per month for the parental benefit (*Elterngeld*) payment. Parents with a net income of less than €1,000 per month receive an increased benefit: for every €2 that their monthly earnings are below €1,000, their parental benefit increases by 0.1 per cent. For parents with monthly incomes above €1,240, on the other hand, the income replacement rate is reduced: for every €2 their monthly earnings exceed this sum, their parental benefit decreases by 0.1 per cent, to a minimum rate of 65 per cent. For parents on leave who work part-time during the leave, the income replacement rate is 65 per cent of the difference between the previous year's net earnings before birth and the current earnings after the birth.

- The benefit level is calculated based on lost income due to reduced working hours; it is generally at 65 per cent, but capped at 50 per cent of the *Basiselterngeld* amount (i.e., €150–€900 per month).
- Maternity leave benefits are also offset against *ElterngeldPlus*, effectively reducing the actual benefit period available to part-time employed mothers to 22 months.

Additional elements of Basiselterngeld and ElterngeldPlus

- Sibling bonus (*Geschwisterbonus*): +10 per cent (minimum €75/month for *Basiselterngeld*; €37.50 for *ElterngeldPlus*) under specified conditions (two children under 3 years of age, or three or more children under 6 years of age, or two children of which at least one is disabled and under 14 years of age in the household).
- Multiple birth supplement: €300 (*Basiselterngeld*) or €150 (*ElterngeldPlus*) per additional child.

- *Elterngeld* is not taxed directly. However, it is counted when calculating the applicable tax rate (*Progressionsvorbehalt*). In effect, the Parental leave benefit can lead to being grouped in a higher tax rate class, and thus to higher taxes on the rest of the income.
- Up to 3 years per child are credited (pension credits, *Kindererziehungszeit*) in the statutory pension system; the parents may decide how pension credits are to be divided. Credits apply regardless of whether parental leave is taken. Each year of recognised child-rearing time entails a monthly pension increase of €33.05 in Western Germany and €31.89 in Eastern Germany. Pension credits for child-rearing are currently paid through Germany's contribution-based pension system.
- *Basiselterngeld* and *ElterngeldPlus* are funded by the federal government through general taxation.

Flexibility in use

- Parents may choose between *Basiselterngeld* and *ElterngeldPlus* or combine both types of paid leave.
- Employment of up to 32 hours per week is permitted while receiving benefits. In this case, parental benefit is paid only for the loss of income. For example, if a parent worked 40 hours per week before taking parental leave and continues working 30 hours per week thereafter, they receive 65 per cent (or 67 per cent to 100 per cent for lower incomes) of the difference between their previous and current income, in addition to their earnings from employment.
- Parental leave may be split into up to three periods (more with employer consent)However, once the child is over 14 months old and both parents completed their parental benefits, they cannot apply for a new period of parental benefit receipt even if they have not exhausted the maximum length.
- Up to 24 months of the unpaid Parental leave period can be taken between ages 3 and 8 years.
- Parents can take leave simultaneously, but receipt of *Basiselterngeld* (full-time parental leave benefits) for both parents at the same time is limited to a maximum of 1 month and only within the first 12 months of the child's life.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Parental leave (*Elternzeit*): all parents gainfully employed at the date of birth. During the Parental leave, parents must not be employed more than 32 hours per week.
- Parental benefit (*Basiselterngeld* and *ElterngeldPlus*):

    - Biological parents, adoptive parents and parents in pre-adoptive foster care.
    - Parents not working more than 32 hours per week.
    - Parents living in the same household as the child (this includes separated parents with joint custody).
    - Self-employed parents.
    - Same-sex couples (if legally recognised as parents, if the couple is partnered/married *or* a step child adoption is planned).
    - Parents or a single parent with a (joint) taxable income not exceeding €175,000 per annum (reference period: tax year preceding the birth).
    - EU/EEA/Swiss citizens residing or working in Germany; Ttird-country nationals with a valid residence/work permit.
    - Eligibility for asylum seekers depends on their residence status and access to the labour market; in particular, entitlement requires that employment is permitted and actually taken up[235].
    - Others who take over the care of the child in exceptional circumstances (see below)

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- Single parents can claim the full 14 months of *Basiselterngeld*.
- Grandparents may take Parental leave under specific conditions (e.g., if the parent is a minor or in education/training).
- Additional months of parental benefit are granted for premature births depending on how early the child is born: 1 month extra if at least 6 weeks early: 2 months if at least 8 weeks early: 3 months if at least 12 weeks early; 4 months if at least 16 weeks early.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- Parental leave legislation is regulated at the federal level. While some federal states previously provided additional benefits, such schemes have largely been phased out. Currently, only Saxony continues to provide a supplementary state-level benefit (*Landeserziehungsgeld*):
    - This benefit is typically payable in the 2nd or 3rd year of the child's life, usually following the end of parental benefit receipt. If the benefit is claimed in the 2nd year of life, payment for a first child is up to 5 months, for a second child up to 6 months, and for a third and subsequent children up to seven months. If claimed in the 3rd year of life and no publicly

[235] Under Section 61 of the Asylum Act, asylum seekers are generally granted access to the labour market after three or six months, depending on their status. Eligibility for parental benefit is conditional on both permission to work and the actual engagement in gainful employment.

funded childcare has been used since the child's 14th month, payment for a first and second child: is up to 9 months, and for a third and subsequent children up to 12 months.
    - The benefit level level is up to €150 per month for the first child; up to €200 for the second child; up to €300 for each additional child. Full benefit is paid up to a net household income of €24,600 per year (€21,600 for single parents); above this threshold, payments are gradually reduced; the threshold increases by €3,140 per additional child.
    - Eligibility conditions: residence in Saxony and co-residence with the child; the child is not enrolled in publicly funded childcare during the period of receipt (with limited exceptions, e.g., during education or training); employment does not exceed 30 hours per week.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoptive leave and pay

- Adoptive parents are entitled to Parental leave and Parental leave benefits (see above). They are eligible for parental benefit from the date the child is placed in their household (adoptive placement), rather than from the date of birth.

Time off for the care of dependants

- **Child Sick Days** (*Kinderkrankentage*) and Child Sick Pay (*Kinderkrankengeld*): In the event of a child's illness (generally up to age 12 years), parents covered by statutory health insurance (not parents with private health insurance) are entitled to take leave from work. Each parent may take up to 15 working days per child per year (30 days for single parents)Parents receive 90 per cent of their net earnings (100 per cent in certain cases, e.g., one-off payments). The total annual entitlement is capped at 35 days per parent (70 days for single parents), even if there are several children. If the child is hospitalised and requires parental presence, entitlement may be extended beyond the standard limits.
- Employees may take up to 10 working days of **short-term care leave** (*Kurzzeitige Arbeitsverhinderung*) per year per care-dependent relative in cases of acute care needs. During this period, they are entitled to a care support allowance (*Pflegeunterstützungsgeld*), usually amounting to around 90 per cent of net earnings. The allowance is paid by the compulsory long-term care insurance of the person in need of care.
- Employees in a workplace with more than 15 employees may take up to six months of unpaid **long-term care leave** (*Pflegezeit*) to care for a close relative in a home environment. During this period, employees have the legal right to apply for an interest-free government loan to compensate for lost income. The loans have to be repaid within 48 months after the start of the leave of absence. *Pflegezeit* does not require the consent of employers.
- Employees in workplaces with more than 25 employees may reduce their working time to a minimum of 15 hours per week for up to 24 months. This

family long-term care leave *(Familienpflegezei*) is also a statutory entitlement (subject to conditions). Income losses may be compensated by an interest-free government loan, repayable within 48 months after the start of the leave.

Specific provisions for breastfeeding

- Mothers are entitled to paid time off for breastfeeding during the child's first 12 months: at least 60 minutes per day or 90 minutes per day if working more than eight hours. These breaks are fully paid and cannot be transferred.

Flexible working for carers

- Employees who have been employed for more than 6 months in establishments with more than 15 employees have the right to request a permanent reduction in working hours (*Teilzeit*[236]), unless there are operational reasons to refuse, which include cases where the reduction in working hours causes severe impairment in workflow, organisation, and safety issues, or which result in a disproportional amount of costs. Reduction to part-time hours does not include an automatic right to return to full-time work.
- Employees who have worked longer than 6 months in the same workplace with more than 45 employees are entitled to reduce their working hours for a fixed period (*Brückenteilzeit)* of 1 to 5 years with a right to return to full-time work afterwards. Employers may refuse employees' requests for such temporary working hour reductions on the grounds of operational reasons.
- There is no general statutory right to work from home, although such arrangements are often regulated in collective agreements or company policies.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- Women are entitled to paid time off for medical examinations and care related to pregnancy and maternity.

Other provisions of leave

- **Stillbirth leave**. In the event of a stillbirth from the 24th week of pregnancy, women are entitled to the full maternity protection period. In such cases, they may choose to return to work after 3 weeks, provided they expressly declare their willingness to do so and there are no medical objections.
- Germany has no statutory entitlement to bereavement leave. Paid time off following the death of a close relative may arise from Section 616 of the Civil Code, collective agreements, works agreements or individual employment contracts, but the law does not specify either the eligible relatives or a fixed

[236] Overall, in 2024, 30.6 per cent of all employed persons in Germany worked part-time. The part-time rate was significantly higher among women (49.5 per cent) than among men (13.9 per cent). Care responsibilities are an important reason for part-time employment: 23.5 per cent of part-time workers report reducing their working hours to care for children, persons with disabilities or dependent relatives, with a markedly higher share among women (28.8 per cent) than among men (6.8 per cent). (https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2026/01/PD26_N007_13.html).

number of days. In practice, paid leave days (at the rate of 100 per cent of former earnings) following the death of a close relative are usually provided for in collective agreements and range from 1 to 3 days.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

All children in Germany are entitled to publicly funded early childhood education and care (ECEC) from the completion of their first year of life. This entitlement may be fulfilled through a place in a day-care centre or publicly funded family day care. In principle, there is therefore no formal gap between the end of well-paid parental allowance and entitlement to ECEC. In practice, however, access may be constrained by the availability of places, local opening hours and regional differences in provision.

Federal legislation regulating ECEC, the Social Code Book VIII (SGB VIII), establishes a legal entitlement but does not define a uniform number of hours. For children from age 1 to under 3 years, the scope of provision is based on individual need, including the needs of the child and the parents' employment or training or job-search situation. For children aged 3 years to school entry, federal law provides an entitlement to a place in a day-care centre. Public youth welfare authorities are also required to work towards a needs-based supply of full-day places.

However, this does not amount to an unconditional nationwide legal entitlement to a full-day place. The practical scope of provision is therefore shaped partly by Länder legislation and local implementation. As a result, substantial regional differences remain. In particular, opening hours and the availability of full-day provision may not always be compatible with standard full-time working hours. Full-day care continues to be more widespread in Eastern Germany than in Western Germany.

According to the latest available data, as of 1 March 2025, around 801,300 children under the age of three were enrolled in ECEC in Germany. Although this was 47,100 fewer children than in the previous year, the participation rate increased slightly to 37.8 per cent, because the total number of children in this age group declined even more strongly. A substantial regional gap persists: in Eastern Germany, including Berlin, the participation rate for children under three was 54.9 per cent, compared with 34.5 per cent in Western Germany.

Across all age groups, just over 4.06 million children were in ECEC in Germany in 2025. Of these, 96.4 per cent were cared for in centre-based early childhood education and care, while 3.6 per cent were cared for in publicly funded family day care, for example by childminders.

For children aged three to under six, participation is close to universal. In 2025, 95.0 per cent of children in this age group attended ECEC. The rate was 94.3 per cent in Western Germany and 98.2 per cent in Eastern Germany, including Berlin.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

In 2025, the main policy change was a further reduction in the income threshold for eligibility. For children born from 1 April 2025, couples and single parents are no longer entitled to parental allowance if their taxable income in the calendar year before the birth exceeds €175,000.

Since 1 June 2025, maternity protection periods after miscarriage have been staggered according to the stage of pregnancy. After a miscarriage from the 13th week of pregnancy, the protection period is 2 weeks; from the 17th week, it is 6 weeks; and from the 20th week, it is 8 weeks. The woman may choose to return to work voluntarily, but can revoke this decision at any time.

Several further changes are under discussion but have not yet been adopted. According to the 2025 coalition agreement, the parental allowance is to be simplified, minimum and maximum benefit amounts are to be increased, income thresholds are to be reviewed, and stronger incentives for a more equal sharing of leave are envisaged. The coalition also announced plans to improve parental allowance rules for self-employed parents and to examine the introduction of maternity protection for self-employed women. However, the federal government stated in May 2026 that its considerations on the further development of parental allowance had not yet been concluded. A separate statutory paid Paternity leave has still not been introduced, although related legal proceedings and EU-law questions continue to put pressure on the issue.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

There is a 100 per cent uptake of Maternity leave among eligible women after childbirth, as the postnatal protection period is compulsory and employment is prohibited during this time. No data are available on the uptake of Maternity leave before birth.

b. Paternity leave

There is no statutory entitlement to Paternity leave.

c. Parental leave benefit

In 2025, about 1.19 million women and 417,000 men in Germany received parental benefits. Overall, around 1.61 million women and men received parental benefit, around 62,000 fewer than in 2024, corresponding to a decline of 3.7 per cent. The number of parental benefit recipients therefore declined for the fourth year in a row and was 13.9 per cent lower than in 2021, a development that also reflects the decline in births in recent years. The share of fathers among all parental benefit recipients stood at 25.9 per cent in 2025, slightly higher than in 2024.

In the same year, 648,000 recipients of parental benefit planned to claim Elterngeld Plus, namely 45.2 per cent of eligible mothers and 26.1 per cent of fathers. Overall, the proportion of parental benefit recipients who also planned to receive Elterngeld Plus was 40.3 per cent, up from 36.7 per cent in 2024. Demand for paid parental leave in part-time has therefore continued to increase since the introduction of Elterngeld Plus in 2015. Around 54,000 recipients of Elterngeld Plus planned to use the partnership bonus, corresponding to 8.3 per cent of Elterngeld Plus recipients.

The share of fathers claiming parental leave benefits was highest in Saxony, at 30.0 per cent, followed by Baden-Württemberg at 28.0 per cent and Bavaria at 27.6 per cent. It was lowest in Saarland, at 21.0 per cent, followed by Bremen at 21.5 per cent.

In 2024 (latest data available), fathers received an average of 1,337 euros in parental benefit per month, while mothers received substantially less, at 830 euros per month. This difference reflects the fact that fathers were more often employed before the birth of the child and had higher relevant earnings for the calculation of parental benefit. However, the overall amount received was higher for mothers, because they claimed benefits for much longer periods: fathers received an average total of 4,185 euros, compared with 11,462 euros for mothers. The average planned duration of benefit receipt in 2024 was 14.8 months for women and 3.8 months for men. Many fathers who claim parental benefit do so, at least partly, for the first month after the birth of the child and thus use parental leave entitlements in a way similar to paternity leave.

Completed parental leave benefit claims: For children born in the third quarter of 2023, a total of 175,685 children in Germany were recorded in parental benefit statistics. For 83,170 of these children, at least one father received parental benefit, corresponding to a father participation rate of 47.3 per cent. By contrast, mothers received parental benefit for 172,931 of these children, corresponding to a mother participation rate of 98.4 per cent.

Greece[237]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

Note on leave information. the information given below is based on. (i) leave arrangements for employees in the private sector that are covered by legislation and the National General Collective Agreements (NGCA) signed between the most representative national employers' organisations (SEV, GSEVEE, ESEE, and SETE) and the General Confederation of Labour, which set the uniform minimum provisions for all workers in the private sector;[238] (ii) leave arrangements for public sector employees that are covered by basic laws and the Code for Civil Servants and relevant legislation.

i. Private sector (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security)

a. Maternity leave (basic leave – *Άδεια Μητρότητας;* special leave for the protection of maternity – *Ειδική Άδεια για την Προστασία της Μητρότητας)*

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- **Basic leave.** 17 weeks: 8 weeks before the birth and 9 weeks after the birth.
- It is obligatory to take all the basic leave.

[237] Please cite as: Moschovakou, N. and Karamessini, M. (2026) 'Greece country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A. Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at. https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

[238] Provisions for leave arrangements are also included in other kinds of Collective Labour Agreements (i.e., sectoral, professional, and enterprise), which are signed between employers and confederations of large sub-sectors of the economy (e.g., the banking sector) or enterprises of the wider public sector (e.g., the electricity company). Due to the fact that such agreements cannot include worse provisions than the minimum standards included in the National General Collective Agreement, they usually have improved provisions for working parents.

- **Special leave.** 9 months, granted after basic Maternity leave and before the beginning of the Childcare leave if the latter is taken as reduced daily hours of work (see 1d).

Payment, funding and taxation

- **Basic leave.** 100 per cent of earnings, paid by the e-EFKA, on the condition that these do not exceed those granted to insured persons who belong to the highest insurance class of e-EFKA (the National Social Security Agency, where all employees working under private law contracts are insured (former IKA-ETAM). However, if the amount of salary/wage exceeds this upper limit, the employee can claim a supplementary benefit that is equal to the difference between the employee's salary and the basic benefit received by e-EFKA. The supplementary benefit is granted by DYPA, the Public Employment Service which is, inter alia, the social insurance fund for income protection against unemployment.
- Mothers are entitled to a 50 per cent reduction of their insurance contributions for the 12 months that follow the birth month or the 12 months following the maternity benefit irrespective of whether they work or are on leave during this period.
- **Special leave.** Minimum daily wage as defined by law, as well as social insurance coverage. It is funded by DYPA (Public Employment Service).
- **Basic leave.** Payments are taxed. **Special leave.** Payments are not taxed.
- Maternity leave (both basic and special) is fully insured and gives entitlement to full pension rights.

Flexibility in use

- **Basic leave.** None, except for when leave can start. If the birth takes place before the time envisaged, the rest of the leave can be granted after the birth, as long as the total time taken remains at 17 weeks.
- **Special leave.** If the parent uses Childcare leave as a continuous time off work, then the Special leave is taken after the Childcare leave. If not, the leave is taken after the basic Maternity leave.

Eligibility (e.g. related to employment or family circumstances

- **Basic leave**. To ensure full compensation, 200 working days during the previous two years, irrespective of whether on a fixed-term or permanent contract (or citizenship). Mothers acquiring children through surrogacy are also entitled to receive the post-natal part of the leave. Parents in same-sex couples have to declare which parent will make use of the leave.
- **Special leave**. All categories of employees or self-employed, as well as farmers. Mothers acquiring children through surrogacy are also entitled to this benefit. Mothers can transfer up to 7 months of their leave to fathers, irrespectively of the employment status of fathers. Parents in same-sex couples declare who will make use of the leave. The parent making use of the leave in same-sex couples can transfer up to seven months to the other parent.
- Self-employed women, who are directly insured in the Social Security Fund for the Self-Employed (OAEE now e-EFKA) and the United Fund for the Self-Employed (ETAA now e-EFKA), and fully covered for medical and pharmaceutical care at the time of the child's birth, are entitled to get a

monthly payment for nine) months. The monthly pay is equivalent to the minimum wage (€920). Consequently, the total annual amount of the benefit is €8,280. Self-employed surrogate mothers and mothers acquiring children through surrogacy are also entitled to receive this benefit.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- **Special leave**. Mothers have the right to transfer up to 7 months of Maternity leave to fathers.

Regional or local variation in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave *(Άδεια πατρότητας)*

Length of leave

- 14 working days.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings.
- Funded by the employer.
- Payments are taxed.

Flexibility in use

- 2 days can be granted before the date of expected birth and the rest should be used within 30 days after birth.

Eligibility

- There are no length of service conditions or conditions related to the conjugal or family circumstances of the working father
- Same-sex fathers are entitled to this leave but they must declare who will make use of the leave.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- None.

Regional or local variation in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave *(Γονική Άδεια*)

Length of leave

- 4 months per child for each parent.
- Leave is an individual non-transferable right.

Payment, funding and taxation

- Minimum wage level for the first 2 months.
- The leave is considered as real time service. The paid part of the leave is fully insured, seizure-exempt and non-taxable.
- The non-paid part of the leave can be fully insured too, but in this case the employee pays both the employee and employer contributions.
- Funded as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- Leave may be taken up to the time that the child turns 8 years.
- Leave may be taken in one or several periods of time or as daily reduced hours or as days of leave distributed weekly or monthly, subject to the agreement of the employer who, in case of disagreement with the time suggested by the employee, needs to explain in writing the reason of his/her disagreement. In any case, the employer needs to provide the leave within two months from the submission of the request.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employees who have completed 1 year's continuous or consecutive fixed-term contacts with the same employer.
- Though the leave is for each child, it is necessary that one year of work with the same employer is completed after the end of any Parental leave taken for a previous child.

Regional or local variation in leave policy

- None.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- Parents with multiple births can receive the benefit for an additional 2 months, irrespectively of the number of children born together.

- Parents who are single due to the death of the other parent or total removal of custody or non-recognition of the child by the other parent are entitled to the receive double Parental leave (time and benefit).

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- Leave is granted by the employer according to a set of priorities. requests for Parental leave from parents of children with a disability, with long-term illness or sudden illness and from single parents (due to the death of parent, total removal of parental responsibility, or non-recognition of the child) and mothers who have taken their basic and special Maternity leave are dealt with as an absolute priority. Also, priority is given to parents whose child is hospitalised or ill or whose spouse or close relative is seriously ill as well as parents of multiple or premature births. So, though the employer cannot refuse Parental leave, he/she can negotiate with the employee to take it later if other employees who request leave at the same time meet the priority criteria.

d. Childcare leave *(άδεια φροντίδας τέκνου)* or career breaks

- A working parent, even if his/her spouse is not working, is entitled to a childcare leave that may be taken as: (i) Two hours less per day for the first 12 months and one hour less per day for another six months; (ii) full working days that are distributed on a weekly basis; (iii) a period or equal periods of time during the 30 months after Maternity leave. This last option means that a parent can take a number of months off work, up to an estimated 3.6 months or (iv) any other way that the two parties agree. The leave is a family entitlement and is fully compensated. Working parents have an independent right to the use of this leave, after deciding who and for how long each will take the leave.
- This leave is considered part of working time, so is paid and funded by the employer with no upper limit on payment and no reclaiming provision for the employer.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- Adoptive and foster parents can receive the post-natal portion of Maternity leave, Parental leave and Childcare leave from the time the child is placed in the family. Paternity leave is granted for adopted or fostered children up to 8 years old, after the placement of the child in the family.

Time off for the care of dependants

- **Carer's leave**. Each working person that has completed 6 months of continuous work or work with consecutive fixed-term contracts is entitled to an unpaid carer's leave up to 5 days in a year for the care of a person who lives in the same household that needs such care due to a serious medical reason.
- **Absence due to reasons of *force majeure*.** Up to twice a year and up to one day each time a working parent or carer is entitled to a paid leave for

reasons of *force majeure* for urgent family reasons related to illness or an accident.

- **Leave for children's sickness***.* Up to six working days per year per parent of unpaid leave if the parent has one child; up to 8 working days if they have two children; and up to 10 working days if they have three or more children. Children should be under 16 years of age or older if they need special care. The leave is also granted for other dependent members of the family (e.g. a disabled spouse, as well as disabled parents or unmarried siblings who cannot care for themselves and the worker cares for them if their annual income is less than the basic income of an unskilled worker).
- **Leave for visiting children's school***.* up to 4 working days' paid leave per year per parent for each child that attends school up to the age of 18, funded by the employer. This is a family leave and can be taken by one parent or shared between them.
- **Leave for parents of children with a disability***.* 1 hour per day, if the parent asks for it (unpaid and only applied in businesses with more than 50 employees).
- **Leave for parents whose children, irrespectively of their age, need regular transfusion or dialysis or a transplant or have cancer, significant learning difficulties, Down's syndrome, or autism**. 10 working days' paid leave per year, funded by the employer. This is an individual right.
- **Leave for parents due to the hospitalisation** of a child, irrespectively of his/her age, which requires their immediate presence. up to 30 working days' unpaid leave per year. This is an individual right.
- **Leave for working parents who have sole custody** of the child, or third parties who have been granted exclusive parental responsibility for the child up to the age of 12 years: in addition to other leaves, 6 working days' paid leave per year. If the parent has three or more children, the leave is 8 working days per year. The leave payment is funded by the employer.

Specific provision for (breast) feeding

- None

Flexible working

- See also above 1d.
- Each working parent of a child up to 12 years of age or a carer is entitled, for caring reasons, to ask for flexible working arrangements such as telework, flexible daily work schedule and or part-time work. To claim such arrangements the working parent or carer must have completed 6 months of continuous work or consecutive fixed-term work contracts with the same employer. The employer should document the reason for possible rejection or postponement of the request.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- Pregnant women who need to attend prenatal examinations during their working time are excused from work in order to attend such medical appointments.
- Women are entitled to 7 paid working days for medically assisted reproduction treatment.

Other provisions of leave

- **Bereavement leave***.* Working parents are entitled to 20 days paid leave in the case of the death of their child.

ii. Public sector (responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior)[239]

a. Maternity leave *(Άδεια Μητρότητας)*

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 5 months.: 2 months before the birth and 3 months after the birth.
- It is obligatory to take all the leave.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings, with no upper limit.
- Maternity leave is fully insured and gives entitlement to full pension rights.
- Payments are taxed.
- Funded through general taxation.

Flexibility in use

- If the birth takes place before the time expected, the rest of the leave can be granted after the birth, so long as the total time taken remains at 5 months. If the birth takes place after the time expected, the leave is extended until the actual birth date, without any respective reduction in the post-natal leave.

Eligibility

- No conditions linked to the length of service.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In the case of multiple births, Maternity leave after the birth is extended by 1 month for each additional child.
- For every child after the 3rd, the length of post-natal leave is extended by 2 months.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

[239] The leave entitlements described in this section cover civil servants, employees of public entities, and local government, as well as any other employee in the above bodies not covered by special regulations.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave *(Άδεια Πατρότητας)*

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 14 working days. 2 days can be granted before the date of expected birth and the rest should be used within 30 days after birth.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings.
- Payments are taxed.
- Funded through general taxation.

Flexibility in use

- *None.*

Eligibility

- No conditions linked to the length of service or conditions related to the conjugal or family circumstances of the employee.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the father

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave *(Γονική άδεια)*

Length of leave

- 5 years per parent.
- Leave is an individual non-transferable entitlement.

Payment, funding and taxation

- Minimum wage level for the first 2 months for employees with one or two children (see below provisions for special categories of parents).

- Funded by general taxation.
- For each child, 4 months of the Parental leave are considered as real time service for pension or other purposes.

Flexibility in use

- Leave may be taken at any time until the child turns 8 years.
- Leave may be taken in one period or several periods of time or as daily reduced hours.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- No conditions linked to the length of service.
- An employee can use this leave if his/her spouse does not make use of the Childcare leave or flexible working arrangements at the same time
- An employee can make use of this leave irrespective of the employment situation of his/her spouse.
- In cases of separation, divorce, widowhood, or birth without marriage, only the parent that cares for the child is entitled to this leave.
- Adoptive and foster parents receive the leave from the time that the child is placed in the family.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- In the case of three or more children, 3 months of the leave are fully paid.
- Employees with twins or triplets or multiple births can receive the Parental leave for each child and can, in addition to the 2 paid months, receive the benefit for 2 extra months irrespective of the number of children in multiple births.
- Parents that are single due to the death of the other parent or total removal of parental custody or non-recognition by the child by the other parent can receive a double leave, i.e., for both length and payment.
- Priority in the granting of the leave is given to special categories of parents such as disabled parents or with a disabled child or a child with long-term or sudden illness, parents with many children, single parents as defined above and mothers following their Maternity leave. Priority is also given to parents due to the hospitalisation or illness of the child or due to disability or serious illness of the husband/wife, partner or relative, to parents of twins, triplets or multiple births as well as to parents following premature birth.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

d. Childcare leave *(Άδεια φροντίδας τέκνου)* or career breaks

- A parent can use this fully paid leave in two ways. (i) in a single continuous period of 9 months or (ii) as reduced hours of daily work, that is, 2 hours less per day until the child turns 2 years and 1 hour less if the child is between 2 and 4 years.
- The leave is paid by the employer, funded through general taxation, and is granted after the Maternity leave. The leave does not constitute a personal entitlement and can be used by either or both parents within the total nine-month period.
- For a parent who is unmarried, widowed, divorced, or has a severe disability, the leave is extended by 1 month if it is taken as one continuous period or by 6 months if it is taken as reduced daily hours of work. In the case of multiple births, an extra 6 months is provided for each child if leave is taken as reduced daily hours of work; in the case of the birth of a 4th child, flexible working is extended by two years.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

All of the provisions below for heterosexual working parents, also include same-sex working parents, who have to declare which parent will make use of each provision.

Adoption leave and pay

- Three months fully paid leave is granted to adoptive and foster parents during the first six months of the finalisation of the foster or adoption process if the child is younger than eight years. One of these months can be granted before the finalisation of the process. Parents that obtain a child through substitute motherhood have the right to a three month fully paid leave immediately after the birth of the child.
- Mothers that adopt a child up to eight years or that obtain a child through surrogacy are also entitled to receive the post-natal part of Maternity leave. Paternity leave is granted for children up to 8 years after the placement of the child in the family.
- Adoptive and foster parents can receive Parental leave from the time that the child is placed in the family. Adoptive and foster parents of children up to 8 years also have the right to receive care leave, that is, reduced working hours per day or the 9 months leave, unless the time that is left before the child turns 4 years is less than 9 months.

Time off for the care of dependants

- **Leave for children's illness**. Up to 4 working days of paid leave per year if the employee has one or two children; up to 7 working days of paid leave per year if the employee has three children; up to 10 working days of paid leave per year if the employee has four or more children; and up to 8 working days of paid leave per year if the employee is a single parent. The leave constitutes an individual right. In addition, parents are entitled to one month of unpaid leave in the case of the hospitalisation of their child due to illness or an accident that requires their presence.
- **Leave for visiting children's school**. Up to 4 working days of paid leave for one child, and up to five working days for two or more children. If the

children attend different levels of schools, an extra day is granted. The leave is not a personal entitlement. i.e., if both parents work in the public sector, the total number of days is for both parents to share.

- Up to 22 working days of paid leave per year for employees whose **children or spouses need regular transfusion or periodic therapy, or whose children, even if they are adults have a serious mental disability or Down's syndrome or Pervasive Developmental Disorde**r that prevent them from working. In the case the employee cares for more than one person the leave goes up to 32 days per year. In the case that more than one employee is entitled to this leave (i.e., spouses caring for a child with PDS), the leave can go up to 32 days for both.
- Employees that are not entitled to the above leave and either themselves or his/her child, irrespective of his/her age, has **disability classified as being more than 50 per cent** that prevents him/her from working are entitled to a special paid leave of 6 working days annually. In the case the employee cares for more than one person the leave goes up to 10 working days annually. In the case that more than one employee is entitled to this leave, the leave can go up to ten days for both.
- Employees who have a **spouse or a child that suffers from cancer** and is subject to various forms of treatment are entitled to a special leave for the day the treatment takes place and the following day.
- **Leave for employees** who have the exclusive care of a child (lone parents): in addition to other leaves, 6 working days paid leave per year. If the parent has sole custody of three or more minor children is entitled to 8 working days of leave per year.

Specific provision for (breast) feeding

- None

Flexible working for carers

- Employees can ask for the reduction of their hours of work by up to 50 per cent, with a reduction of their pay, for a period of up to five years. The hours of non-employment are not considered as real time service. For working parents of children up to 8 years the leave does not need an approval of the Service Council.
- Employees with children or spouses with a disability can reduce their working time by 1 hour per day, with full recompense of pay.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- Women are entitled to 7 paid working days for medically assisted reproduction treatment.

Other provisions of leave

- **Bereavement leave**. Working parents are entitled to 20 days paid leave in the case of the death of their child.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

There is an entitlement to ECEC at around four years of age. This means that there is no gap between the end of post-natal leave and an entitlement to ECEC for public sector workers, but there is a gap of around two years for workers in the private sector. However, the gap is larger for both groups (almost 2.5 years for the private sector and almost three years for the public sector) if one considers paid leave only.

According to Eurostat statistics, rates of attendance at formal ECEC services for children both under and over three years of age had fallen due to the pandemic. For children above three the rate fell from 94.1 per cent in 2019 to 86.9 per cent in 2020, 83.4 per cent in 2021 and 80.5 per cent in 2022. However, it went up to 87 per cent in 2023 and to 91.1 in 2024. The 2024 rate was higher than the EU average (27 countries) which stood at 89.3 per cent in the same year.
For children below three the attendance rate fell from 32.4 per cent in 2019 to 21.5 per cent in 2020 but went up to 32.3 per cent in 2021 to fall again to 29.1 per cent in 2022. In 2023, it slightly rose to 29.6 per cent before falling to 28.9 per cent in 2024. The 2024 rate stood below the EU-27 average (39.3 per cent).

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

From 1 April 2025 (Joint Ministerial Decision 8233/27-03-2025), the minimum monthly and daily wages were increased, which led to an automatic increase of leave payments and other benefits by the same rate. In April 2026 the minimum monthly and daily wages were further increased (Joint Ministerial Decision 8934/27-03-2025) with the same effect as above.

In July 2025, the pilot implementation phase of the Programme 'Neighbourhood Babysitters' was completed. In 2026, the Programme is planned to expand nationwide, offering financial assistance (vouchers) of up to €500 per month to parents with children aged 2 months to 2.5 years.

In October 2025, Law 5239/2025 introduced provisions that affect leaves and benefits for parents. In particular, with the new Law: a) a minimum period of insurance for mothers under a single fund is no longer required, as a unified recognition of insurance periods for maternity and childbirth benefits is promoted; b) the Parental leave benefit is established as tax-exempt, non-transferrable, and exempt from seizure for public debts; and c) the post-natal portion of the Maternity leave is extended to include foster mothers.

In January 2026 the Law 5270/2026 (art 20) amended the Civil Servants' Code and the Code of Status of Municipal and Community Employees by adding the provision of a 6 or 8 day leave for employees that have sole custody of minor children.

4. Uptake of leave

Statistics provided by the Labour Inspectors' Authority on private sector employees record people on leave by sex; however, there is no information about how many employees are eligible, but do not make use of their entitlement. Furthermore, these statistics are collected under the equal treatment legislation and do not provide any data on the uptake of leaves that apply exclusively to mothers.

In any case, the available data show an overwhelming use by mothers of the fully compensated Childcare leave (see 1d). In 2024, 16.6 per cent of female employees in full-time employment compared to only 0.9 per cent of male employees used this leave.

Generally, according to data provided by the Labour Inspectors' Authority on the uptake of a wide range of leaves (childcare leave, Parental leave, leave for visiting children's school, leave for children's sickness, leave for parents of children with a disability, leave for working parents who are single) clearly show gender differences in their use, reflecting the unequal sharing of childcare responsibilities among working parents. In total, 32.6 per cent of female full-time employees used at least one of the above-mentioned leaves, compared to 4.5 per cent of their male counterparts.

The recent introduction of an obligation to digitally record leaves may fill the gap in the provision of this kind of data at least for the private sector but the system is still far from being fully implemented.

Hungary[240]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

Note on terminology: the Hungarian terms for the two elements of the Parental leave arrangements discussed in Section 1c. (GYES and GYED) include the word *gondozás*, that is 'care'. By contrast, GYET - available for families with at least three children, after the youngest child is older than three years of age (see Section 1d) - includes the word *nevelés*, that is 'upbringing'. The Hungarian terms for these three leave arrangements (Sections 1c and 1d) literally refer only to the payment element, although, in practice, they cover both leave periods and cash benefits (e.g., GYES is *Gyermekgondozást segítő ellátás*, literally 'allowance to support childcare'[241]). The payment related to Maternity leave, has been re-named as 'infant care payment' (CSED – *Csecsemőgondozási díj*) in 2015.

a. Maternity leave (*csecsemőgondozási díj,* CSED) (responsibility of the Ministry of Culture and Innovation, State Secretariat for Family Affairs)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 24 weeks: up to 4 weeks prior to birth.
- It is obligatory to take 2 weeks.

Payment (csecsemőgondozási díj), funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of average daily earnings, with no upper limit. In cases when there has been previous employment (i.e., the pregnant woman is eligible), but no actual income can be determined on the first day of eligibility (e.g.,

[240] Please cite as: Gábos, A and Makay, Zs. (2026) 'Hungary country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A.,, Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

[241] The name of GYES has been slightly modified since 2016, while keeping the acronym (previously *Gyermekgondozási segély*).

the pregnant woman is on sick leave for several months, or is self-employed and does not have a current income), the payment is twice the daily amount of the official minimum wage.
- Payments are not subject to income tax. Social security (health and pension insurance) contributions continue to be paid and are not deducted from the gross amount of CSED.
- Payment is made to the mother either by the corporate social insurance payment services (when the employer has more than 100 persons on payroll) or the Treasury (in other cases).
- Funded by the NHIF (National Health Insurance Fund), which is financed through contributions from employers, employees, and general taxation.

Flexibility in use

- The starting date can be from 4 weeks prior to the birth up to the date of birth itself.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All mothers are entitled to 24 weeks' unpaid Maternity leave.
- Employees and self-employed women with an employment record of at least 365 days within two years prior to the birth of a child (and the birth is no later than day 42 after the end of employment) are entitled to the benefit payment during the period of Maternity leave. The 365-day period may include: 180 days of secondary or tertiary school attendance, duration of CSED or GYED (excluding diplomás GYED).
- Beyond the employment criteria, citizenship is not linked to eligibility.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- If the new-born is cared for in an institute for prematurely born infants, the unused portion of Maternity leave can be taken after the child is home for up to 1 year after the birth of the child.
- The father (birth or adoptive) is eligible if the mother dies or is not present in the household due to health-related reasons.
- Guardians who care for the child are eligible.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave[242] ("apasági szabadság") (responsibility of the Ministry of Culture and Innovation, State Secretariat for Family Affairs)

Length of leave

- 10 working days.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of absence fee (i.e., equal to the payment received for annual leave), with no upper limit on payment during the first five days; 40 per cent of absence fee for the remaining period.
- Funded for the first 5 days by the National Treasury; and by the employer for the remaining period.

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be taken during the first two months of the child's life and can be split into no more than two periods.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employed, biological and adoptive fathers. As same-sex couples are neither allowed to marry nor to adopt, they are not eligible for Paternity leave as a couple.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave (responsibility of the Ministry of Culture and Innovation, State Secretariat for Family Affairs)

Taking an unpaid leave after childbirth and until the third birthday of the child is an individual right in Hungary. There are two types of benefits which can be claimed during this period: (i) for insured parents, *Gyermekgondozási díj* (GYED); and (ii)

[242] Paternity leave has no separate name in Hungarian; it is just listed as one of the eligible reasons for leave days in the code of Labour legislation.

for non-insured parents, *Gyermekgondozást segítő ellátás* (GYES). Both are family entitlements.

In addition, there is an individual, non-transferable entitlement to 44 days of leave for parents having at least one child below the age of 3 years and being employed for more than one year. Parents taking leave are paid 10 per cent of earnings.

Length of leave

- **GYED**: from the end of the Maternity leave period until the child's 2nd birthday, for insured parents.
- **GYES**:
  a. From the end of GYED (child's 2nd birthday) until the child's 3rd birthday, for insured parents.
  b. From birth until the child's 3rd birthday for parents who are not insured.

Payment, funding and taxation

- **GYED:** benefit of 70 per cent of average daily earnings calculated for the last 180 days prior the birth, up to a limit of 70 per cent of twice the minimum daily wage (HUF322,800 [€893.32][243] per month; the amount of the benefit is a maximum of HUF451,920 [€1,250.64]) in 2026.
- The payment is free of PIT form 1 July 2025. Pension contributions are deducted.
- Funding and delivery is the same as for Maternity leave.
- **GYES:** until the child's 3rd birthday, a flat-rate benefit equal to the amount of the minimum pension, HUF28,500 [€78.87] per month. This is a gross amount from which pension contribution is deducted. For multiple births, 200 per cent of this amount is paid in the case of two children; 300 per cent for three children; then there are similar increases for additional children.
- Funded by the Treasury from general taxation.

Flexibility in use

- A parent taking GYED can work unlimited hours after the child turns 6 months old, while still receiving the full benefit until the child's second birthday (GYED extra). If the parent takes up GYED and works, they can still access public childcare for children under 3 years (*bölcsőde*).
- The family can keep receiving the benefit after the first child if a second child is born (sibling GYED).
- A parent taking GYES cannot work until the child is 6 months old, but can then work unlimited hours while still receiving the full benefit until the child's 3rd birthday. If the parent takes up GYES and works, they can still access public childcare for children under the age of 3 years (*bölcsőde*).

[243] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://data.ecb.europa.eu/currency-converter

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- **GYED**: either of the parents living with the child is eligible as long as they have been employed for at least 365 days within the two years prior the birth of the child; however, only one parent at a time can actually take GYED. Foster parents are not eligible.
- Women who would not be eligible under the above listed criteria, but who have completed two semesters at a higher education institution recognised by the state within the two years prior to the birth of the child (*diplomás GYED*). In this case, they are eligible for two years of payment, beginning at the birth of the child. Those studying at undergraduate level receive a payment equal to the 70 per cent of the minimum wage, HUF225,960 [€625.32] per month in 2026, while for those at post graduate or PhD level, the payment is 70 per cent of the guaranteed minimum wage (HUF373,200 [€1,032.79]), HUF261,240 [€722.96] per month in 2026.
- Self-employed parents are eligible if they fulfil all criteria, e.g., in the case of GYED, that they have been insured prior to the birth.
- As same-sex couples are neither allowed to marry nor to adopt, they are not eligible for Parental leave as a couple; if one of the partners has a young child, they are eligible in their own right, but their partner is not.
- **GYES**: all parents are eligible, as are guardians.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- **GYED**: The duration of the benefit lasts until the children's 3rd birthday in the case of twins.
- GYED can be also taken by non-pensioner grandparents, if they undertake the care and the upbringing of the child, while parents are working. One grandparent at a time can take GYED, but for more than one grandchild if the case. The amount of grandparents' GYED is the same as for parents: maximum 70 per cent of twice the minimum daily wage (HUF322,800 [€893.32] per month, which is a maximum of HUF451,920 [€1,250.64]).
- **GYES**: parents of a child with a long-term illness or disability can take leave until the child's tenth birthday (or even longer in discretionary cases); parents of twins are eligible until the children start elementary school, and receive a payment equal to the amount for one child multiplied by the number of twins.
- GYES can be taken by grandparents from the first to the third birthday of the child, if the child is looked after in their own home and if the parents agree. Grandparents taking GYES can work fewer than 30 hours per week, or without limitation if the work is done in the home and the child is older than three years of age.
- If a family has another child while still receiving one of the child-raising allowances for their previous child/children (GYED or GYES), they can receive both benefits, including the benefit for the new baby (CSED, GYES or GYED).

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

- Either parent in a family with three or more children under 18 years of age, may take leave during the period between the 3rd and 8th birthday of the youngest child (*Gyermeknevelési támogatás,* GYET). Benefit payments are made in the same way as for GYES. The person taking GYET can work fewer than 30 hours per week, or unlimited hours if the work is done at home. While GYES and GYED are intended to promote childbirth and support reconciliation between work and child-rearing, GYET is considered an acknowledgement of parenthood as paid work and, consequently, recipients are credited with social insurance contributions.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- The same regulations regarding Maternity, Paternity and Parental leave apply for adoptive parents as for other parents. Eligibility depends however on the age of the child: GYED for insured adoptive parents can be claimed during 168 days after the arrival of the child if the child is between 2 and 18 years; GYES for non-insured adoptive parents can be claimed for six months if the child is between 3 and 18 years.
- Paternity leave can be taken during the 2 months following the official resolution.

Time off for the care of dependants

- ***Gyermekápolási táppénz*** is part of the sick-pay system, the length of which depends on the age of the child: under one year, unlimited; 12 to 35 months, up to 84 days per child per year; 36 to 71 months, 42 days; and 6 to 12 years, 14 days. Single parents are entitled to a double period of leave. Leave is a family entitlement and sickness benefit is paid at 50 or 60 per cent of actual earnings up to a limit.
- Parents caring for a child facing long-term illness or disability may take ***Gyermekek otthongondozási díja*** **(GYOD)**. The benefit is provided regardless of the age of the child. The gross amount of the benefit is equal to the minimum wage, which is HUF322,800 [€893.32] per month. In the case that more than one child is affected, the amount of the benefit is 1.5 times the base amount, HUF484,200 [€1,339.98] in 2026. If GYOD is provided for one of the children in a family, the other parent can claim GYES for another child in the same family. If both GYOD and GYES are claimed by the same parent, the amount of GYOD is reduced by the amount of GYES. Either of the parents (adoptive or biological) is entitled to GYOD.
- Employees may request **unpaid carer's leave** for a maximum of 5 working days per calendar year to care for seriously ill family members and persons living in their households.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Mothers are entitled to two paid one-hour breaks per day for breastfeeding until a child is six months old; and to a one-hour break until a child is nine months old. The number of hours is doubled in the case of twins.

Flexible working for carers

- Employers are required to provide part-time employment for parents of children under four years of age if requested. By default, this means a working time of four hours per day, but other arrangements are also possible upon the agreement of the employer and the employee. For parents with three or more children, the possibility is available until the youngest child turns six years.
- Working parents with children below the age of eight years are eligible for flexible working hours and flexibility in their place of work, which requests can only be refused for a serious reason by the employer.
- Employed parents with children below 16 years are eligible to additional days off: two days for one child; four days for two children; and seven days for three or more children. Parents working in the Central Administration have double these days for leave.

Time off for cntenatal appointments and care

- In order to be able to participate in antenatal appointments, pregnant women are exempted from work and receive an absence fee.

Other provisions of leave

- **Stillbirth leave**. Fathers are eligible for Paternity leave in case of stillbirth or the death of a child.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is three years per child (except for families with three or more children, where leave can be taken until a child is 8 years of age); the last year is paid at a low flat-rate, but insured parents taking leave are paid at a high earnings-related level until a child is two years old. Attendance at Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) (*óvoda*/kindergarten) from three years of age is compulsory for at least four hours per day. Children under three years of age are also entitled to an ECEC service (*bölcsőde*/nursery) place if the parent studies full-time or if the child turns six months old. However, there is a shortage of spaces in Hungary: while legislation is in place, implementation varies. According to legislation, therefore, there is no gap between the end of well-paid leave and the start of an ECEC entitlement, such a gap exists in practice, due to a shortage of places in nurseries. Otherwise, there is a one year gap between the end of well-paid leave (GYED) and an effective entitlement to ECEC.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

Since 1 July 2025, both CSED and GYED are free of personal income tax.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

Statistics are only available on the number of women receiving benefits.[244] The average number of mothers per month was 24,772 in 2025 (25,869 in 2024), which is 11.96 recipients per 1,000 women of fertile age in 2025 (12.24 in 2024) and 31.69 recipients per children aged 0 in 2025 (29.69 in 2024). It is supposed that almost all eligible women take the leave.

b. Paternity leave

No information available.

c. Parental leave

Statistics are only available on the number of recipients of the benefits and the average amount of the benefit per capita. The average monthly numbers in 2025 were: for GYED, 103,142 (110,123 in 2024), or 49.8 recipients per 1,000 women of childbearing (15-49) age (in 2025)[245] (52.12 in 2024) and 62.28 recipienst per child aged below 2 years in 2025 (62.15 in 2024); for GYES, 143,424 (143,297 in 2024), or 69.24 recipients per 1,000 women of fertile age in 2025 (67.83 in 2024) and 56.06 recipienst per child aged below 3 years in 2025 (52.69 in 2024); and for GYET, 26,189 (27,553 in 2024), or 12.14 recipients per 1,000 of women of childbearing age in 2025 (12.77 in 2024). There is no information on the proportion of parents taking leave, how long they take, or on the number of fathers taking Parental leave.

There is no information about how many parents work either full-time or part-time while receiving one of the Parental leave benefits (GYED, GYES or GYET).

In 2024[246], the average monthly amount per recipient of GYED was HUF286,372 [€792.51], that of GYES was HUF30,958 [€85.67], while that of the GYET was HUF28,196 [€78.03]. The daily amount of the CSED was HUF16,051 [€44.42] in 2024 (HUF14,338 in 2023 [€39.68].

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[244] All statistics in this section are based on the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (*Központi Statisztikai Hivatal)* Yearbook of Welfare Statistics (see section 3); and HCSO STADAT online database, available at: https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/szo/hu/szo0050.html)

[245] https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/szo/hu/szo0006.html

[246] https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/szo/hu/szo0007.html

d. Other types of leave and flexible working

In 2024,[247] the total number of days on paid leave to care for a sick child was 1,402,000 (5.6 per cent of all paid leave days).

[247] https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/szo/hu/szo0031.html

Iceland[248]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

Note on terminology: The term *fæðingarorlof* (literally 'birth leave') is used in law to refer to paid Parental leave; there is no separate Maternity or Paternity leave. Indeed, the law was changed in 2006 to address parents without mentioning the sex of the parent, in order to avoid discriminating on the basis of gender or sexual orientations. LGBT couples have the same rights as heterosexual couples in all areas. Sometimes the term *feðraorlof* (Paternity leave) is used in day-to-day conversations about the non-transferable individual rights that fathers are entitled to (the father's quota) even though the law does not make such distinction between the Parental leave of fathers and mothers.

Foreldraorlof refers to the unpaid leave included in section 1d under the heading of 'Childcare leave', though it translates literally into 'Parental leave'.

a. Maternity leave (*fæðingarorlof*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour)

- There is no separate Maternity leave, but it is obligatory for a parent that has given birth to take 2 weeks Parental leave after delivery and 1 month may be taken before the expected birth date (see 1c).
- Additional leave is possible if healthy working conditions for a pregnant person cannot be ensured or if a pregnant person has to stop working sooner than one month before expected birth due to health issues related to the pregnancy.

[248] Please cite as: Arnalds, A. A., Eydal, G.B. and Gíslason, I.V. (2026) 'Iceland country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A.A., Dobrotić, I., Kaufmann, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2024*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

b. Paternity leave (*fæðingarorlof*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour)

No statutory entitlement. See 'Note on terminology' at start of Part 1.

c. Parental leave (*fæðingarorlof*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour) (see note on terminology at the start of Part 1)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 6 months per parent.
- Leave is an individual entitlement, 6 weeks of which is transferable to the other parent.
- It is obligatory for the parent giving birth to take 2 weeks of leave following the birth and 1 month may be taken before the expected birth date (see 1a).

Payment, funding and taxation

- 80 per cent of the individual's average total earnings for a 12 month period ending 6 months before birth, up to an upper limit of ISK900,000 [€6,284.92][249] per month.
- The minimum payment to a parent working shorter, part-time hours (i.e., between 25 and 49 per cent of full-time hours) is ISK207,708 [€1,450.47] per month; and the minimum payment for a parent working 50 to 100 per cent of full time-hours is ISK275,688 [€1,925.20] per month.
- For those working under 25 per cent of full-time hours, and those outside the labour market, the amount is ISK131,260 [€916.62] per month. Students/pupils (75 to 100 per cent of full-time studies) receive a flat-rate payment of ISK262,061 [€1,830.03] per month. As a frame of reference, the minimum wage in Iceland in 2024 was ISK457,616 [€3,195.64] per month.
- Payments are taxed.
- Non-employed parents are not entitled to any pension credits while caring for their child. Employed parents taking leave continue to accumulate their pension entitlements (and in indeed all other entitlements) as if they were at work.
- Funded by the Maternity/Paternity Leave Fund, which is financed by an insurance levy paid by employers.

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be used until 24 months after the birth.
- Parents can choose to take leave on a full-time or part-time basis. It is also possible to take leave in one continuous period or as several periods of time (i.e., leave can be 'uninterrupted' or 'interrupted'). This must be negotiated with the employer.
- Parents can be on leave together, part of the time or for the whole period.

[249] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://data.ecb.europa.eu/currency-converter.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All biological or adoptive parents have individual rights to 6 months paid Parental leave, regardless of sexuality or marital status; 6 weeks are transferable to the other parent. A non-custodial parent has a right to Parental leave if the custodial parent agrees to its access to the child while on leave or if courts decide on access.
- Icelandic citizenship is not required, but activity in the Icelandic labour market for 6 consecutive months is usually required. Those outside the labour market must have had permanent residence in Iceland for 12 months prior to the birth of the child.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In the case of a miscarriage after 18 weeks, the parents are entitled to 2 months of leave each and, in the case of stillbirth after 22 weeks, each parent is entitled to 3 months of leave.
- If the mother becomes seriously ill during pregnancy and that illness continues after birth, the leave can be extended by up to 2 months.
- Parents have a shared right to 6 additional months of leave for each additional child in the case of multiple birth and the same goes for adoptions.
- If a child has to stay in hospital for more than 7 days after birth, suffers from serious illness or disability that calls for increased care by parents, it is possible to extend the leave for up to 7 months. This is a joint right, which parents can divide as they choose.
- In cases where there is only one parent (the other parent has died, in cases of artificial insemination, or an individual adopts or takes a child into their permanent foster care), the parent has a right to 12 months paid Parental leave.
- If a mother is unable to fulfil her legal duty to name the father of a child, she has a right to all 12 months.
- In special cases, if one of the parents is in prison or hospital or is unable to take care of the child due to health reasons, it is possible to transfer the rights of that parent to the other parent.
- If a parent is subject to restraining order, if either parent has no right to Parental leave, neither in Iceland nor elsewhere and if either parent will not be taking care of the child due to being prohibited access by authorities with that right or the courts the other parent has the right to all twelve months.
- If one parent is not entitled to paid Parental leave under this Act, and also has no independent entitlement to Maternity/Paternity leave or a maternity/paternity grant in another state, the other parent acquirse an entitlement to a Parental leave grant for up to 12 months in connection with the birth, primary adoption or taking of a child into permanent foster care. If one parent has an independent entitlement to Maternity/Paternity leave or a maternity/paternity grant in another state, the other parent may acquire an entitlement to a maternity/paternity grant for up to twelve months, minus the entitlement which the aforementioned parent has in another state in connection with the birth, primary adoption or taking of a child into permanent foster care.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- Some of the unions have collective agreements whereby statutory entitlements are supplemented. It is unclear how many parents benefit from this.
- Some companies also offer their employees compensation in cash or goods.
- Banks offer parents the possibility to postpone their mortgages and insurance companies offer extra insurances during pregnancy.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks *(foreldraorlof)*

- Each parent may take 4 months of non-transferable unpaid leave until the child is 8 years old.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- Regulations on paid Parental leave apply if a child is adopted before turning 8 years.

Time off for the care of dependants

- There are no legal entitlements. The Equal Status Act instructs employers to do what they can to make it possible for employees to fulfil their responsibilities towards their families, but that is all. Most or all unions have negotiated a number of leave days for when children are sick, but there seem to be no instances where unions have negotiated a right to leave in the case of any other close relative being ill.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- If the working situation of a pregnant woman or a breastfeeding woman can be seen as dangerous or detrimental to her health or the health of the baby, the employer is obliged to make arrangements to safeguard their health. Such arrangements may not have the effect of reducing her wages.

Flexible working for carers

- Employers are required by the Equal Status Act to make the necessary arrangements to enable both men and women to balance family life and work, including the arrangement of work in a flexible manner and parents being able to take leave from work in the case of serious or unusual family circumstances.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- None.

Other provisions of leave

- ***Bereavement leave (sorgarorlof).*** A parent is entitled to 6 months leave following the death of a child, 3 months following a stillbirth and 2 months following a miscarriage, with payment as for Parental leave.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is 20 months when there are two parents, 12 months of well-paid leave and then each parent has 4 months of unpaid leave. There is no legal entitlement to ECEC. However, most municipalities offer ECEC for children but, due to a gap still existing between the end of Parental leave and admission to public ECEC services in many municipalities, parents need to seek other solutions to bridge the gap. The municipalities subsidize private childminders, but they are few so many parents need to bridge the gap without public support. A few municipalities offer cash for care if there is no room in playschools after the parental leave.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

The 3 month shared extension of leave for each additional child in the case of multiple birth has been increased to 6 months. This will apply to all parents whether the children are born to them, adopted or taken into permanent foster. If the mother becomes seriously ill during pregnancy and that illness continues after birth, the leave can be extended by up to 2 months. This used to apply only to mothers whose illness was related to the delivery, but now it also applies to cases where the mother becomes ill due to pregnancy.

It has been made clear that an unemployed person can take up to 10 days holiday abroad and still be seen as actively searching for a job, which is a prerequisite for the time being counted as participation in the labour market when applying for paid Parental leave. It has also been clarified how to calculate earnings (for leave payments) for people who have worked less than 4 months in Iceland but have worked in other European countries.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

In 2023 (the last year for which final figures are available) 95 per cent of women applying for leave used at least the 4.5 months which are available only to mothers. For more details, see Section 4c.

b. Paternity leave

See 4c.

c. Parental leave (i.e., parents' joint rights)

In total, 92 per cent of fathers of children born in 2023 applied for parental leave (which could involve using a part or all of their individual right to 6 months, of which 4.5 months are non-transferable), taking an average of 130 days' leave (compared to 219 for mothers).

As has been mentioned earlier, 6 weeks of leave are transferable from one parent to the other. In 2023, 76 per cent of parents did that; 4 per cent transferred from the mother to the father while 72 per cent transferred from the father to the mother.

Ireland[250]

Stephan Köppe and **Dorota Szelewa** (University College Dublin)

April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (responsibility of the Department of Social Protection)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 42 weeks: 26 weeks of 'basic maternity leave' and 16 weeks of 'additional maternity leave'.
- It is obligatory to take at least 2 weeks before the birth and 4 weeks after the birth.

Payment, funding and taxation

- A maternity benefit rate of €299 per week is paid to qualifying persons for 26 weeks (i.e., 'basic maternity leave'); the remaining 16 weeks (i.e., 'additional maternity leave') is unpaid. Mothers who are already on certain social welfare payments are entitled to half-rate maternity benefit.
- Payments are taxable.
- Contributions to the state pension are automatically covered during paid Maternity leave, but not contributions to occupational pensions.
- Funded by the Social Insurance Fund (SIF), which is financed by contributions from employers and employees. Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI) rates vary across different types of employment. However, the majority of employees pay 4 per cent of earnings and employers pay 11.05 per cent.

[250] Please cite as: Köppe, S. and Szelewa, D. (2026) 'Ireland country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, Á.A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be started between 16 and 2 weeks before the expected date of delivery.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- To be eligible for maternity benefit, an employee or self-employed woman must meet certain conditions relating to payment of Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI), e.g., to have been employed for 39 weeks, during which PRSI was paid in the 12-month period before the first day of Maternity leave or 52 weeks of prior contributions paid in the case of self-employed.
- Transgender men who have obtained a gender recognition certificate and subsequently given birth are covered by the employment law protections surrounding maternity and pregnancy related leave and entitlements and hence, have the right to maternity leave.
- Since 2024 also all elected officials in local councils and the national parliament chambers (Oireachtas members of the Daíl and Seanad) are eligible.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- Fathers are entitled to Maternity leave if the mother dies within 40 weeks of the birth. In these circumstances, the father is entitled to a period of leave, the extent of which depends on the date of the mother's death. If the mother dies within 24 weeks of the birth, he has an optional right to the additional Maternity leave. If the mother's death is over 24 weeks after the birth, the father is entitled to leave until 40 weeks after the birth. The leave starts within seven days of the mother's death.
- In the case of a child who is hospitalised, the mother may postpone her Maternity leave, if she has taken 14 weeks (including at least four weeks since the baby was born) up to a period of 6 months, with the agreement of the employer.
- Maternity leave can be postponed for between 5 and 52 weeks, if the mother becomes seriously ill while on leave and needs ongoing treatment for her health condition. A serious health condition is one that is a serious risk to the mother's life and health, and covers both physical and mental illnesses that are certified by a doctor. Two weeks' notice and providing a medical certificate to the employer is obligatory when postponing Maternity leave.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- Members of the Civil and Public and Services Union (CPSU) and other public sector workers are entitled to 26 weeks' Maternity leave at full payment.

b. Paternity leave (responsibility of the Department of Social Protection)

Length of leave

- 2 weeks.

Payment, funding and taxation

- A paternity benefit payment of €299 per week.
- Paid, taxed and funded as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- Paternity leave may be taken at any time within the first 6 months following the birth or adoption of a child, but must be taken in one continuous period.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- To be eligible for paternity benefit, an employee or self-employed person must meet certain conditions relating to payment of Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI): for example, to have been employed for 39 weeks, during which PRSI was paid in the 12 month period before the first day of Paternity leave or 52 weeks of prior contributions paid in the case of self-employed.
- It is paid to an employee or self-employed person who is a relevant parent, defined as: the father of the child; the spouse, civil partner or co-habitant of the mother of the child; or the parent of a donor-conceived child. In the case of an adopted child, the relevant parent may include: the nominated parent in a married same-sex couple; the spouse, civil partner, or co-habitant of the adopting mother; or sole male adopter.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- Paternity leave can be postponed if the birth is later than expected or if there is a delay in the placement of an adopted child.
- If a father (a parent) is sick before Paternity leave starts, the leave can be postponed until recovery. Employer should be notified in writing and illness evidence should be provided.
- All or part of the leave can be postponed if the baby is hospitalised, after informing the employer in writing.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- Employers can provide top-ups. All public sector workers receive a 100 per cent salary top-up; in the private sector, about 52 per cent of companies

provide top-ups.[251] In total, Köppe (2023) estimates that about 55 per cent of fathers have access to these supplementary payments by employers.[252]

c(i) Parental leave (responsibility of the Department of Social Protection)

Length of leave

- 26 weeks per parent.
- Leave is an individual non-transferable entitlement. The one exception is when parents are employed by the same employer, in which case they can transfer a maximum of 14 weeks of their Parental leave entitlement to the other parent, subject to the employer's agreement.

Payment, funding and taxation

- None.

Flexibility in use

- Leave may be taken up to the child's 12th birthday, and up to their 16th birthday in the case of children with disabilities and serious illnesses.
- Leave may be taken in separate periods of a minimum of 6 continuous weeks. Employers may grant shorter periods of leave at their discretion; for example, parents may break the leave into working days or hours (or a combination of both).
- Parents can be on leave together, for part of the period or for the whole period.
- If parents have more than one child, Parental leave is limited to 26 weeks in a 12 month period.
- If parents work part-time, their entitlement to parental leave is reduced on a 'pro-rata basis'.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employees who have completed 1 year's continuous employment with their current employer. If the child is very near the age threshold and an employee has been working for a current employer for more than 3 months but less than 1 year, Parental leave can be used pro-rata.
- Parents in same-sex relationships are eligible.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to a person other than the parents

- As leave is allocated per child, the leave period is doubled for parents of twins, and tripled for parents of triplets.

[251] Ibec Research Unit (2020) *Paternity Benefit Report 2020*. Dublin: Irish Business and Employers Confederation.
[252] Köppe, S. (2023) 'Ireland's Paternity Leave: Sluggish Benefit Take-up and Occupational Inequalities', *Journal of Family Studies,* Vol.29,.6: 2524-2539. doi: 10.1080/13229400.2023.2179527

- Parents with a disabled child do not get additional Parental leave, but are eligible for carer's leave and can take that leave until the child's 16th birthday.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- Parental leave can be postponed for 6 months (to a date agreed upon by both the employer and employee) if the granting of the leave would have a substantial adverse effect on the operation of the business.
- An employee who falls ill while on Parental leave, and as a result is unable to care for the child, may suspend the Parental leave for the duration of the illness, following which period the Parental leave recommences.
- Statutory codes of practice specify the manner in which Parental leave and *force majeure* leave might be taken, and the manner in which an employer can terminate Parental leave.

c(ii) Parent's leave (responsibility of the Department of Social Protection)

Length of leave

- 9 weeks per parent.
- Leave is an individual non-transferable entitlement.

Payment, funding and taxation

- A Parent's benefit of €299 per week.
- Paid, taxed and funded as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- Parent's leave may be taken at any time within the first 2 years following the birth or adoption of a child.
- Parents must take Maternity/Paternity leave before Parent's leave.
- Employees who are entitled to Paternity leave and Parent's leave can take these leave entitlements in whichever order they wish subject to the relevant time limits.
- Leave may be taken as a continuous period of 9 weeks or in individual weeks.
- Parents can be on leave together.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- The 'relevant parent' entitled to the leave includes an employed or self-employed: parent of the child, a spouse, civil partner or cohabitant of the parent of the child, a parent of a donor-conceived child, the adopting parent or parents of a child, the spouse, civil partner or spouse of the adopting parent of the child, as well as each member of a married same-sex couple,

of a couple that are civil partners of each other, or of a cohabiting same-sex couple.
- A person who has satisfied the PRSI conditionality for maternity/paternity/adoptive benefit will be deemed to have satisfied the conditionality for Parent's benefit.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to a person other than the parents

- In the case of multiple births or the adoption of more than one child at the same time, a parent is only entitled to one period of Parent's leave.
- Where one of the parents entitled to leave dies within the period of 52 weeks following the birth or adoption of a child, the employed surviving parent of the child is entitled to a period of transferred Parental leave.
- Leave can be postponed by the employee if he/she becomes ill after notifying their employer of their intention to take the leave or in the event of hospitalisation of the child.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- The leave can also be postponed by the employee if the date of placement of a child for adoption is postponed or where the child's birth occurs after the date selected by the employee as that on which the parent's leave will begin. In these circumstances, the parent will be entitled to select another date, but must comply with the sequence of the leave (i.e., only after taking Maternity leave or transferred Paternity leave, where applicable).
- The leave can be postponed by the employer if taking the leave by the employee would result in substantial adverse effect on the operation of their business, profession or occupation. Reasons for postponement can include: the seasonal variations in the volume of work, the unavailability of another person to carry out the duties of the employee during the leave period, and staffing levels over the period of the requested leave.
- In the private sector, about 19 per cent of companies provide top-ups;[253] compared to Maternity/Paternity leave, public sector employees do not receive top-ups.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

[253] Ibec Research Unit (2020) *Parent's Leave Report 2020*. Dublin: Irish Business and Employers Confederation.

e. Other types of leave and working

Adoption leave and pay

- Forty weeks of leave for adopting mothers or sole male adopters of children under 8 years of age, with 24 weeks being paid and 16 weeks being unpaid. Payment and eligibility are the same as for Maternity leave. If the child is under 3 years of age at the time of adoption, unpaid Parental leave can be taken before the child reaches five years of age. However, if the child is aged between 3 and 8 years at the time of adoption, the leave must be taken within 2 years of the adoption order.
- Adoptive leave and/or additional adoptive leave may be split in the event of the hospitalisation of the adopted child, subject to the agreement of the employer.
- New adoptive parents (other than the mother of the child) can get 2 weeks' statutory Paternity leave from employment or self-employment following the birth or adoption of a child. Parent's leave and Parent's benefit is also available for adoptive parents of children.

Time off for the care of dependants

- Three days of paid leave per worker within any 12 consecutive months, up to a limit of 5 days within any 36 consecutive months, treated as ***force majeure***.
- **Leave for medical care** enables employees to provide care or support for a serious medical reason to a specified person who is a child, co-habitant, parent, grandparent, sibling or co-occupant of the same household. The leave, which is unpaid, is available for 5 days per year, and may be taken as single or multiple days.
- **Carer's Leave and Benefit** is available to care for a dependent, mainly related to long-term care, but also in the case of serious illness of a child or spouse; the dependent does not have to be a family member or spouse, but can be a friend or colleague. Unpaid leave can be taken of between 13 and 104 weeks. A Carer's Benefit can be paid, at a rate of €271 per week for 1 dependent, with an increased rate if dependent children are living in the household; when caring for more than 1 person the rate is €406.50 per week. To receive this benefit, a carer must have at least 3 years of social contributions; continuous contributions in the last 39 weeks (see Maternity leave); and be younger than 66 years. The net income disregard for the insurance-based benefit will be increased from €625 per week to €1,000 for single adults in July 2026 (€2,000 for couples).

  If a claimant does not have enough PRSI contributions, they can apply for a means-tested Carer's Allowance. For carers aged younger than 66 the maximum rate is € 270 per week for one dependent and € 405 per week when caring for more than one person. The entitlement is based on the dependent's need for care, and the assessment is conducted by the Department of Social Protection after checking with the dependent's GP.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Breastfeeding mothers are entitled to adjust their working hours or, if breastfeeding facilities are provided at work, to take breastfeeding breaks up

until the child is 2 years. These breaks are up to 1 hour per day, without reduction of pay, and can be taken in 60, 30 or 20 minute lengths.

Flexible working for carers

- Parents have the right to request flexible or remote working, with the option to adjust normal working hours or patterns, including through remote work, flexible schedules, or reduced hours. Other eligible persons include those acting *in loco parentis* to the child or a carer providing personal care or support to a specified person living in the same household, needing significant care for a serious medical reason. The child must be under 12 years of age, or under 16 years of age in the case of disability or long-term illness. Flexible working can also be requested to care for a spouse or civil partner, cohabitant, parent or grandparent, brother or sister, or a housemate.
- Eligibility requirements include 6 months of continuous service (continuous employment) before the flexible working arrangement can start.
- The employer needs to present the decision as soon as possible, and no later than 4 weeks after receiving the request.[254] If the request is refused, the employer must deliver their decision in writing and explain the reason for the refusal.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- Pregnant employees are entitled to paid leave for antenatal care appointments; they have to give 2 weeks' notice to their employer.
- Mothers and fathers are entitled to pay while attending antenatal classes for a 1st child, mothers for attending all classes, and fathers for attending 2 classes.

Other types of leave

- **Domestic Violence leave**. Employees affected by domestic violence can take up to 5 days leave at full pay; the full wage replacement is unique in the Irish context compared to other leave entitlements, also since no income ceiling applies. There is no waiting period or minimum employment to claim the benefit and usually a needs test does not apply, e.g., providing proof. The domestic violence leave covers time for medical appointments, counselling, victim services, relocation, attend courts, legal advice, police services (*Garda Síochána*) and other related services. Employees are eligible if the person abusing is a spouse, civil partner, cohabitant, current or former intimate partner, or dependent child under 18 years old. Furthermore, supporting relatives and friends can take leave when accompanying an employee taking domestic violence leave.

[254] *Code of Practice for Employers and Employees Right to Request Flexible Working and Right to Request Remote Working,* Workplace Relations Commission. https://www.workplacerelations.ie/en/what_you_should_know/codes_practice/code-of-practice-for-employers-and-employees-right-to-request-flexible-working-and-right-to-request-remote-working/code-of-practice-for-employers-and-employees.pdf

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is 26 months, but this is either unpaid or paid at a low flat rate. All children from 2 years and 8 months old until they transfer to primary school (at around 4 years) can receive 15 hours of free 'early learning and care' per week for 38 weeks a year for a 2-year period under the Early Childhood Care and Education programme (ECCE). However, this is not yet a legal entitlement; the programme is available on a 'universal' basis, i.e., any child who has a place and is of the right age can take part (and enrolment rates are 96 per cent).

Since 2019, all formal childcare places have been subsidised for children from 6 months old through the National Childcare Scheme (NCS). These rates have been increased over time and currently cover €2.14 per hour for all children and a means-tested rate for families earning less than €60,000 (from September 2026, €68,000). While the affordability pressures are addressed by the NCS, there is a continuing shortage of places for under 1 year olds and, to a lesser degree, for under 2 year olds.[255]

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

The level of Maternity, Paternity and Parent's leave benefit was increased from €289 to €299 per week from the beginning of 2025.

The new conservative government coalition proposed several reforms in their Programme for Government of January 2025:

- Introduce paid surrogacy leave (p. 64)
- Encourage employers to publish leave take-up statistics (p. 98)
- Introduce Maternity, Paternity and Adoptive leave for all elected officials (p. 98)
- 'Examine' to extend paid Parental leave and consider 'additional flexibilities' (p. 101)
- Phase out the means-test of the Carer's Allowance and 'examine' the introduction of an earnings-related Carer's Benefit rate (p.100).[256]

While the earnings thresholds for the Carer's Allowance had been increased in Budget 2026 (see 1e above), none of these other reform proposals has been tabled in parliament yet.

In the meantime, the European Commission has referred Ireland to the Court of Justice of the EU for partial (and delayed) transposition of the Work-Life Balance

[255] Curristan, S., McGinnity, F., Russell, H. and Smyth, E. (2023) *Early childhood education and care in Ireland and Northern Ireland,* Dublin: ESRI.
[256] Department of the Taoiseach (2025) *Programme for Government 2025. Securing Ireland's Future*, Dublin: Department of the Taoiseach.

Directive (some of the policies have only been in place since 2024). In August 2025, the Court ordered Ireland to pay the European Commission a €1.54 million fine for the delay.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

According to the social protection statistics, 42,434 maternity benefits were awarded for 2024.[257] The figures are considered to be generally static from year to year and follow changes in the birth rate.[258] In terms of costs, expenditure on the benefit was €285.29 million in 2024 (see footnote 8). While the standard average net replacement rate for the statutory Maternity leave is 35 per cent,[259] the actual net replacement rate is slightly higher at 44 due to the lower earnings of women; but when occupational top-ups are included, the actual average net replacement rate is 90 per cent.[260]

The Irish Central Statistics Office (CSO) had published an annual maternity and paternity rate by 100 employees from 2016 to 2022.[261] Maternity benefit was paid to 5.5 per 100 employees in 2022, which was lower than the pre-pandemic rate of 6.4-6.9 percent. Maternity leave take-up differed depending on the sector: Human Health and Social Work Activities had the highest sectoral rate of maternity benefit take-up at 7.0 percent in 2022, while the lowest rate was in accommodation and food services, at 2.5. The take-up of maternity benefit was highest in large enterprises (that is, with 250 or more employees).

A more recent qualitative study shows the specific challenges of women in television and the media sector to take Maternity leave and achieve a more family friendly work-life balance within the sector.[262] A sector-specific challenge is the long working hours during filming, which pose particular problems for breastfeeding and care arrangements. A further qualitative study among Polish migrants stresses the gaps in government support and affordable childcare services once maternity leave entitlements end and its negative effects on mother's employment.[263] Another qualitative study investigated the relationship of

[257] Department of Social Protection (2025) *Statistical Information on Social Welfare Services, Annual Report 2024*, Dublin: Department of Social Protection.
[258] CSO (2021) *Vital Statistics Yearly Summary*, Dublin: Central Statistical Office. Available at: https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-vsys/vitalstatisticsyearlysummary2020.
[259] Nelson, K., Fredriksson, D., Korpi, T., Korpi, W., Palme, J. and O. Sjöberg. (2020) 'The Social Policy Indicators (SPIN) database', International Journal of Social Welfare, Vol.29, 285-289. doi.org/10.1111/ijsw.12418.
[260] Keane, C., Alamir, A., McGinnity, F., O'Shea, R. and Russell, H. (2025). *Child Related Leave: Usage and Implications for Gender Equality*, Dublin: ESRI and Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC). Available at: https://doi.org/10.26504/jr12, p. 24.
[261] CSO (2023) *EMP01 Maternity and Paternity benefit rate.* Available at: https://data.cso.ie/table/EMP01
[262] O'Brien, A. and Arnold, S. (2024). Combining motherhood and work in the creative industries: Mothers have the problem. *Media, Culture & Society*, Vol.46, No.6: 1200-1215, doi: 10.1177/01634437241229327
[263] Kealy, C. and Devaney, C. (2023) 'Culture and parenting: Polish migrant parents' perspectives on how culture shapes their parenting in a culturally diverse Irish

maternity leave take-up and career progression of academic on tenure track positions at Trinity College Dublin (TCD).[264] Respondents stressed a high "level of confusion and ambiguity surrounding the procedures and their implementation around maternity leave" (p. 169). Also, the tenure track policy is vague how to tenure review would acknowledge periods of maternity or carer's leave (p. 163), contributing to stress and disillusionment with the promotion system at TCD.

b. Paternity leave

Between 2016 and 2020 Paternity leave take-up increased from 34 to 48 percent, measured as the crude rate of the percentage of claimants in relation to births.[265] Since 2023 the crude rate has stabilised at slightly above 50 per cent. When adjusting for the employment rate, the highest recorded take-up is 64 per cent (Q1, 2020). New estimates based on administrative data suggest a stable take-up of 53 per cent between 2019 and 2022.[266] In 2024, 29,751 fathers took leave,[267] which – similar to Maternity leave – corresponds with the birth rate and rather suggests a stable and matured take-up. The income net replacement rate of the statutory benefit is around 35 per cent of average earnings (in 2020 figures)[268]; micro data analysis confirms an average net replacement rate of 36 per cent in 2021/2022.[269]

According to CSO estimates that consider the social insurance entitlements of fathers, take-up has been at 58 and 55 percent in 2017 and 2018, respectively. The sectors with the highest rates of paternity benefit per 100 employees in 2019 were public administration and defence (5.6), industry (4.5) and financial and real estate (4.2).[270] Yet, between 2017 and 2018 the occupational segregation has increased.[25] Micro-enterprises with less than 10 employees had the largest proportion of fathers who did not take paternity benefit to which they were entitled in 2018, at 62.1 per cent. Companies with 250 or more employees had the smallest proportion of fathers not taking Paternity leave and benefit at 36.5 per cent.[28] Moreover, Köppe (2023) shows that older and younger fathers have a lower take-up. Overall, Köppe (2023) argues the relative low take-up is due to the low flat-rate benefit and occupational inequalities.

In comparison to CSO Maternity Benefit data, the paternity benefit take-up across all employees remained relatively stable between 3.3 and 3.9 percent during the

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neighbourhood', *Journal of Family Studies*, Vol.30, 2: 195–213. doi: 10.1080/13229400.2023.2216184

[264] O'Connor, P. and Drew, E. (2024) 'Tenure track policies, procedures and career outcomes in a case study university in Ireland – a gendered critique', in Pekkola, E. and Siekkinen, T. (eds.) *Tenure Tracks in European Universities*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781035302451.00015

[265] Köppe, S. (2023) 'Ireland's Paternity Leave: Sluggish Benefit Take-up and Occupational Inequalities', *Journal of Family Studies,* Vol.29, No.6: 2524-2539. doi: 10.1080/13229400.2023.2179527

[266] See Keane et al. 2025, footnote 11, p. 21.

[267] See DSP 2025, footnote 8.

[268] See Nelson et al. 2020, footnote 10.

[269] See Keane et al. 2025, footnote 11, p. 24.

[270] CSO (2020) *Employment Analysis of Maternity and Paternity Benefits.* CSO statistical release, 2 June 2020. See also Keane et al. 2025.

observation period from 2017 to 2022.[271] For paternity benefit the sectoral differences are similar in 2022, with Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing and Accommodation & Food Service Activities reporting the lowest rate of 1.5 percent and Public Administration and Defence the highest of 5.3 percent. Since this data considers all employees and does not control for eligibility, it is less valid to measure the actual take-up among fathers. None of the CSO datasets had been updated since 2023.

c. Parental and Parent's leave

In the first year when Parent's leave and benefit was fully available, 2020, 16,683 parents were awarded benefits and this increased to 92,820 in 2024.[272] Estimates based on administrative data suggest a take-up of 26 per cent among fathers and 69 per cent among mothers in 2021.[273] As the policy matured and more parents become eligible, we estimate a female take-up rate of almost 100 per cent and a male take-up rate of about 61 per cent by 2023 (crude rate); the gender rate, i.e., male share of female claimants, was 58.7 per cent on average in 2023.[274]

d. Other types of leave and flexible working

Wayte (2024) discusses the successful implementation of domestic violence leave in the workplace.[275] The legal study identifies six pillars for successful implementation (senior-level commitment, training, workplace support, addressing employees who perpetrate DV, policy, and awareness), but does not provide an empirical analysis of take up.

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[271] CSO (2023) *EMP01 Maternity and Paternity benefit rate.* CSO, 05 May 2023. Available at: https://data.cso.ie/table/EMP01

[272] See DSP 2025, footnote 8.

[273] See Keane et al. 2025, footnote 11, p. 21.

[274] Own calculations. Mother's crude rate is lagged by two quarters to account for the maternity leave take-up in the first 6 months. Data is from DSP. (2024). Quarterly Statistical Report. Recipients by Sex. Dublin: Department of Social Protection. https://data.gov.ie/dataset/quarterly-statistical-report-recipients-by-sex?package_type=dataset

[275] Wayte, H. (2024) 'Effective implementation of statutory domestic violence leave in Ireland', *Labour and Industry*, Vol.34, 4: 459–479. https://doi.org/10.1080/10301763.2024.2443272

Israel[276]

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April 2026

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1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (תקופת לידה והורות, *Tekufat Leida VeHorut*, literally 'Birth and Parenthood Period') (responsibility of the National Insurance Institute)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 26 weeks: up to 6 weeks before the birth and the remainder following the birth.
- It is obligatory to take the first 14 weeks.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of the average earnings in the 3 or 6 months prior to birth (the higher of the two) for the first 15 weeks, with an upper limit of 5 times the average salary (ILS 1,752.33 [€503.43][277] per day). The remaining 11 weeks are unpaid.
- Funded by the National Insurance Institute, which is financed by contributions from employers, employees and the state. Employers pay 3.45 per cent of earnings, and employees pay 0.4 per cent, up to 60 per cent of average earnings; above which payment is 6.75 per cent and 7 per cent respectively up to a limit.

Flexibility in use

- Women may use the first 6 weeks of leave before birth. The leave may be shortened to 14 weeks, but no less than that.

[276] Please cite as: Perez-Vaisvidovsky, N. (2026) 'Israel country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A.A., Kaufmann, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2025*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

[277] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://data.ecb.europa.eu/currency-converter.

- Working is not permitted while on leave, and the National Insurance Institute is entitled to revoke benefits for those found to be working when on leave. However, maintaining a connection to the workplace (via email, phone calls and even occasional visits) is considered acceptable for women. Enforcement of this regulation for men sharing their spouses' leave is much more stringent.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All women are entitled to the first 15 weeks of leave (including job protection, if relevant), regardless of employment status.
- Only women who have worked with the same employer for a full year before birth are entitled to a full 26 week leave.
- Entitlement to benefits depends on prior participation in the labour force (and payment of social insurance) for ten out of 14 months or 15 out of 25 months prior to leave. Self-employed women are eligible.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to a person other than the mother

- A mother who has been hospitalised for 2 weeks or more during her leave may extend her paid leave for the hospitalisation period (up to four weeks) or split her leave so that the hospitalisation period will not be included.
- A mother whose baby has been hospitalised for 2 weeks or more during the leave may extend her paid leave for the hospitalisation period (up to 20 weeks) or split her leave so that the hospitalisation period will not be included. Under these circumstances, the mother's spouse can be absent from work for up to 20 days, using his sick leave entitlement or his annual leave entitlement.
- In the case of multiple childbirths, the mother is entitled to an additional 3 weeks of leave (and benefits) for each child beyond the first.
- The mother can transfer part of her leave to her spouse, as long as the following conditions are met:
  - The first 6 weeks after birth cannot be transferred.
  - Both the mother and her spouse must be eligible for leave and for benefits.
  - The minimum period to be transferred is 7 days.
  - The mother must return to work.
  - The mother has to provide written consent to transfer her leave.
  - Mothers in a same-sex relationship cannot transfer their leave to their (female) spouse.
  - One of the transferred weeks may be used by the spouse while the mother is on leave.
- When the mother is unable to care for the newborn because of illness or disability, the full leave can be transferred to her (male) spouse. If both parents pass the eligibility criteria, benefits are then paid to the father, based on his income.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

ii. None

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave (חופשת אבהות, Hufshat Abahut)

No statutory entitlement. However, fathers are entitled to be absent from work from the beginning of their spouse's labour and for 6 calendar days after birth. The 1st day and last 2 days are treated and renumerated as sickness leave: workers receive no pay for the first day, and 50 per cent of their daily pay for the other 2 days, unless covered by collective agreements providing better conditions, and these payments are deducted from each worker's annual allotment of sickness leave days. The 2nd, 3rd and 4th days are treated and renumerated as annual leave, offering full pay. Fathers that have not accumulated enough sickness leave or annual leave days are not entitled to this leave.

c. Parental leave (*Tekufat Leida VeHorut*, literally 'Birth and Parenthood Period') (responsibility of the National Insurance Institute)

Length of leave

- 1 year after childbirth for each parent.
- Leave is an individual, non-transferable entitlement.

Payment, funding and taxation

- None.

Flexibility in use

- Both parents can take up to 2 periods of leave.
- Parents are not entitled to take leave at the same time.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Parents are eligible for a leave period no longer than a quarter of the length of their employment with their current employer: up to 1 year of leave is allowed for 4 years of employment.
- Eligibility is granted to the mother's spouse (and not necessarily to the child's father).
- Same-sex couples are eligible.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- For adoptive parents, the same regulations for Maternity leave apply as for other parents, as long as the adopted child is under 14 years of age.
- Same-sex couples must meet the same eligibility criteria.

Time off for the care of dependents

- In the case of the **sickness of a child** (below 16 years of age), each parent may use up to 8 days each year out of their own allotted sick leave (paid by the employer from the second day at 50 per cent of earnings, and 100 per cent from the fourth day). A single parent may use up to 16 days. In the case of malignant disease, the period of leave increases to 90 days (110 days for a single parent). Parents of a child suffering from a malignant disease are also entitled to renumeration from the first day. Parents of a child with special needs are entitled to 18 days out of their own sick leave (36 days for a single parent).
- In the case of the **sickness of an adult**, workers may use up to 6 days per year out of their allotted sick leave (60 days for malignant disease) to care for a spouse; and 6 days per year of their allotted sick leave to care for a parent over 65 years of age.

Flexible working for carers

- During the first 4 months from the end of the Maternity leave, mothers employed full-time are entitled to 1 paid hour of absence from work per day, in addition to the break times defined by law. The father is eligible for this reduction if the mother is not using it. The employer cannot deny the worker to take this hour, but he can restrict at what part of the workday it is taken. All mothers returning to work after Maternity leave and working full-time are eligible. There is no employment protection for this period.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- During the pregnancy of their spouse, a worker is entitled to use 7 days of their allotted sick leave to attend medical examinations and treatments related to the pregnancy.

Other provisions of leave

- **Bereavement leave**. Bereaved persons are entitled to up to 7 calendar days of paid leave, according to bereavement practices in their religion, in the case of the death of a close family member.
- **Domestic violence leave**. Victims of domestic violence residing at a domestic violence shelter are entitled to an unpaid leave of up to 6 months, including job protection.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is 12 months, but most of this is unpaid; well-paid leave runs for 3.5 months. There is no entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).

Places in government-regulated and subsidised ECEC are hard to come by, the demand for children under three years of age exceeding supply. When the initial birth leave of 26 weeks ends, parents have difficulties finding places in regulated ECEC centres, especially when the leave ends in the middle of the school year. Many parents, therefore, have to use unpaid Parental leave or else rely either on family assistance or expensive, unregulated private services.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

As of August 2025, fathers can now utilise sick leave or annual leave to support a hospitalized newborn baby.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

All eligible women use Maternity leave as it is obligatory: as of 2017, women eligible for paid leave account for 72 per cent of all women giving birth. Only 0.9 per cent per cent of women receiving Maternity leave benefit transfer part of it to their spouse.

b. Paternity leave

No information available.

c. Parental leave

No information available.

Italy[278]

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April 2026

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1. Current Leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*Congedo di Maternità)* (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and, for public employees, Ministry of Economy and Finance)

Length of Leave (before and after birth)

- 5 months: at least 4 weeks can be taken before the birth. However, the pregnant woman also has a choice to work up to childbirth, as long as a specialist doctor certifies that this option does not damage the health of the pregnant woman and the child. Those who choose this option are able to benefit from the 5 months of mandatory Maternity leave after the birth of the child. Absence from work can take place 2 months before the childbirth if pregnancy is certified as 'at risk,' or if the Territorial Department of Labour certifies that the job is incompatible with pregnancy.
- It is obligatory to take all the leave.

Payment, funding and taxation

- Eighty per cent of previous earnings with no upper limit for salaried workers. For home helps, self-employed workers, and temporary agricultural labourers, earnings are 80 per cent of conventional earnings determined each

[278] Please cite as: Addabbo, T., Cannito, M., Cardinali, V., Giovannini, D. and Mazzucchelli, S. (2026) 'Italy country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A.A., Kaufmann, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026.* Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

year by the law.[279] For non-fixed term workers, Maternity leave depends on accredited contributions, though each professional sector has the potential to determine, with approval by the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies, a higher limit, taking into account income and contribution potential of the professional sector and compatibility with financial availability of the professional fund.

- Pension contributions for women taking leave are made by the INPS. Maternity leave periods outside an employment relationship are counted as social security contributions for retirement pensions, provided that the claimant has at least five years of employment and has paid social security contribution at the time of her application.
- Payments are made to the mother either directly by INPS (National Institute for Social Security) or by their employer, who is recompensed by the INPS.
- Payments are taxed.
- Funded by the INPS, which is financed by contributions from employers and employees at a rate that is related to the sector and to the type of employment contract (e.g.,, in manufacturing it is 0.46 per cent of earnings for employers and 0.28 per cent for employees).

Flexibility

- For employees and workers enrolled in the Separate Social Security Fund '*Gestione separata*',[280] the 20 week period is compulsory, but there are two options for taking this Leave: (i) 4 weeks before the birth and 16 weeks after (upon presentation of a medical certificate); or (ii) 8 weeks before the birth and 12 weeks after. The allowance is accorded to autonomous female workers from 8 weeks before the birth to 12 weeks after. Maternity leave, however, is not compulsory for this category. The Jobs Act provides that, in the case of premature birth, which takes place before month 7 of the pregnancy, the amount of leave not used before birth is added to post-natal leave.
- Self-employed may also benefit from the allowance associated with a high-risk pregnancy. They are granted a daily allowance for leave periods within 2 months before childbirth in the event of pregnancy complications, ascertained by the local health authority.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employees and self-employed women with social security membership, including workers enrolled in *Gestione separata*.

[279] Self-employed women are entitled to an allowance of 80 per cent of their average salary for 5 months. Unlike employees, self-employed women are free to continue to work and issue invoices.

[280] By Law 335/1995, workers must contribute to a separate Italian National Institute of Social Security (INPS) fund for co-workers in order to obtain the right to a pension. They work on the basis of 'contracts of continuous and co-ordinated collaboration' or under contract for a project 'co.pro.,' that lay between employed and self-employed individuals' contracts. The Separate Management Fund (Gestione Separata INPS) is a pension fund to which self-employed workers and freelancers without a fund must register. Some professionals (such as lawyers, notaries, doctors) have, in fact, a pension fund dedicated to their activity.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent) or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In the case of multiple or premature births, the length of leave increases by 12 weeks.
- In the case of a premature birth, the mother may take unused pre-natal Leave after the birth; and if the infant is hospitalised, the mother has the right to suspend her Maternity leave, taking up the Leave again once the child is discharged.
- The mother can transfer 1 day of Maternity leave to the father, or a longer period if certain conditions prevent the mother from using the leave.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- Public sector employees receive 100 per cent of earnings.
- In general, national collective agreements guarantee 100 per cent of earnings, with employers paying an additional 20 per cent.

b. Paternity leave (*congedo di paternità*) (Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies)

Length of Leave

- 10 working days.
- The leave is supposed to be compulsory but, differently from the prohibition to work during the Maternity leave, Paternity leave in Italy is a potestative right that can be waived
- A further 1 day of optional Leave is available if the mother transfers part of her Maternity leave.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings with no upper limit; covered by imputed pension contributions.
- Paid, taxed and funded as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility

- Leave can be used from 2 months preceding the expected date of childbirth until 5 months after childbirth.
- Leave can be taken as separate days, but cannot be used on an hourly basis.
- In the case of multiple births, leave can be extended up to 20 working days.
- The employee must give a written notice on the intention to use the leave to the employer, at least 5 days in advance.

Eligibility

- All employees.
- Mandatory paternity/parental leave may also be taken by a female employee who is the intentional mother in female same-sex couples recognised as parents in the civil registry (Constitutional Court, judgment no. 115/2025 of 21 July 2025 and INPS Circular no. 3322 of 5 November 2025).

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- Employed fathers, including those who are self-employed and enrolled in *Gestione separata*, may take 3 months' paid leave after the birth in the following circumstances: (i) the mother's death or severe illness; (ii) the child being left by the mother; or (iii) the child being in the sole care of the father. An important verdict by the Tribunal of Florence extends the possibility of obtaining Paternity leave, paid at 80 per cent of earnings, to 2 months before childbirth. This means that the father can take the whole period of Maternity leave in certain circumstances, i.e., if the mother is a housewife, ill or, alternatively, if she is a self-employed worker who cannot take the leave. The Tribunal is a civil court and its decision acts as an important precedent for other Tribunals, but is not automatically binding. Conditions are the same as for Maternity leave.

c. Parental leave (*Congedo Parentale)* (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies and, for public employees, the Ministry of Economy and Finance)

Length of Leave (before and after child's birth)

- 10 months per parent, but the total leave per family cannot exceed this duration unless the father takes leave for a period in which case the duration of leave can be extended to 11 months.
- Leave is an individual, non-transferable entitlement.

Payment, funding and taxation

- Both the father and the mother may claim Parental leave benefit for a child under 6 years of age, non-transferable to the other parent; 3 months of leave is paid at 80 per cent of earnings, 6 months at 30 per cent, while 2 months are unpaid (this assumes the father takes at least 3 months leave so giving the family 11 months leave). The higher rates of payment can be shared between both parents or taken by only one as long as the period of higher payment falls within the first 3 months of non-transferable leave.
- After 9 months of paid Parental leave, Parental benefit is means-tested, i.e., it is paid only if the worker's individual income is less than 2.5 times the amount of the minimum pension or in cases when parents use extended

Maternity leave for severely disabled children within 12 years of the child's birth.
- Leave is unpaid if taken when a child is 6 to 14 years of age.
- Pension contributions for parents taking leave are made by the INPS.
- Paid, taxed and funded as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be taken at any time until a child is 14 years old.
- Leave can be taken as a single continuous period up to a maximum of 6 months; or as shorter periods, each amounting to a maximum of 6 months.
- Leave can be taken on an hourly basis, up to half of the daily hours worked during the month immediately preceding the start of Parental Leave; but this 'hourly-based leave' cannot be combined with another kind of permitted absence from work on the same day.
- Parents can take leave at the same time.
- Single parents are entitled to 11 months of Parental leave, out of which 9 months are paid.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employed parents, except domestic workers and home helps. Self-employed workers are generally entitled to 3 months, which can be taken only during the 1st year after a child's birth.
- The father is entitled to leave even if the mother is not employed, for example, if she is a housewife. Circular letter B/12-5-2009 from the Department of Labour, Health, and Social Policies extends the right to fathers to make use of the Leave indicated in the act if the mother is a housewife;[281] previously this right was limited to fathers where the mother was self-employed. This change gives equal financial value to domestic work as labour outside of the home.
- Working parents registered with the separate management scheme are entitled to paid Parental leave as employees, under the following eligibility criteria:
  - parents must be enrolled in the separate management scheme as project workers, professionals and assimilated categories and must not be simultaneously receiving a pension or be enrolled in another form of compulsory social security;
  - there must be a valid professional employment relationship during the period of Parental leave;
  - a parent must have paid at least 1 month of contributions in the 12 months preceding the start of the qualifying period.
- Parental leave is also provided for self-employed persons, i.e., entrepreneurs, artisans, freelancers, cooperative members, agents and sales representatives. Since there is no payroll, the 30 per cent allowance in this case is calculated on the conventional daily wage that the law establishes each year for each of these categories. Fathers are also entitled to this period of paid leave from work. For self-employed persons, however, Parental leave is shorter than for employees and subject to more constraints:
  - each parent is entitled to 3 months of leave for each child;

[281] Art. 40c, Act of Law n. 151/2001: right to work reduced hours with full earnings compensation for the first 12 months after childbirth.

    - these 3 months can be requested within the first year of life or entry into the family (and not within the first 14 years);
    - women can take Parental leave after the end of Maternity leave;
    - the parent must have paid contributions in the month preceding the request;
    - only those who do not actually work (and therefore do not invoice) during the leave period can receive Parental benefit.
- Same-sex couples are eligible.
- Unemployed women are eligible for the maternity allowance granted by the National Social Security Institution for five months in place of the unemployment benefit. The maternity benefit payable is 80 per cent of the average daily global remuneration received in the last month of work.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- As the leave is per child, each parent is entitled to additional leave in the case of multiple births (e.g., the length is doubled for twins, and tripled for triplets).
- A single parent may take 10 months of leave.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- *None*

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- Public sector employees receive 100 per cent of earnings during the first 30 days of leave.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- For adoptive and foster parents, the same regulations for Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave apply as for other parents. The period of Maternity leave does not depend on the age of the child adopted and must start within 5 months of them entering the family; in the case of international adoption, the leave can also be taken for overseas visits in connection with adoption. Paternity leave can be taken within five months of a child's entry into the family or into Italy, in the case of national or international adoption. Parental Leave for adoptive and foster parents can be taken within 8 years of the child entering the family but not after their 18th birthday; payment, generally, is 100 per cent of earnings for the first 30 days and 30 per cent of earnings for the subsequent 5 months, if taken within 3 years of the entry of the child into the family.

Time off for the care of dependents

- **Unpaid leave** can be taken with no limit for a child under 3 years, and 10 working days per year per parent for a child aged 3 to 14 years.
- Employees are entitled to 2 years of leave over the course of their entire working life in the case of a **serious need in their family**, e.g., the disability of a child or other relative, even if not co-resident. The order of priority for taking leave is spouse, parents, children, then siblings of the person who needs care. During the period of leave, the applicant is entitled to receive an allowance of 100 per cent of their previous earnings, up to an upper limit of €47,351 per year.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Until a child is 12 months old, female employees are entitled to work reduced hours for breastfeeding, with full earnings compensation (1 hour less per day if working 6 hours per day or less; 2 hours less per day if working longer than 6 hours). Fathers are entitled to use this benefit in certain conditions, e.g., if the mother is self-employed or a freelancer; if the mother opts not to use it; if the mother is not employed; or if the father has sole custody of the child. Home helps, domestic workers, and autonomous workers are not entitled to reduced hours, but in this case too the father can work reduced hours.

Flexible working for carers

- Employees with caring responsibilities for (i) a child up to 12 years, (ii) a child with a disability, or (iii) providing care to cohabiting relatives with severe disabilities have a statutory right to request flexible working arrangements, although there is no general entitlement to obtain them. They may request a reduction of working hours (e.g., transition to part-time work), a change in working time arrangements (e.g., changed schedules) or remote working arrangements (i.e., so-called *lavoro agile* or smart working). Employers are required to consider such requests, and can only refuse or postpone them for justified organisational or business grounds; they are generally expected to provide a reasoned response, in line with EU work–life balance principles.
- Under Legislative Decree No. 81/2015, workers with care responsibilities benefit from priority access to part-time arrangements. Employees who have converted to part-time have a priority right to return to full-time employment. They also have precedence over new hires for equivalent positions

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- Pregnant employees are entitled to paid time off for antenatal examinations, medical check-ups and clinical tests, where these must take place during working hours. The time off is fully paid and considered as working time. Employees are required to provide prior notice and, afterwards, a medical certificate confirming attendance.

Other provisions of leave

- **Bereavement leave**. Employees are entitled to 3 days of paid leave per year in the event of the death or serious illness of a spouse (including cohabiting partner), a close relative (within the second degree), or a member of the same household. Collective agreements may provide more favourable conditions.
- **Leave for female victims of gender-based violence.** Victims of gender-based violence (as certified by municipal social services or anti-violence centres) employed in the public or private sectors, and who have care responsibilities, may request leave from work for 3 months, with a right to full pay. For the same period, they are also entitled to switch from full-time to part-time employment.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is 15 to 16 months (depending on bonus months if the father takes Parental Leave); however, there is only 5 months of well-paid leave entitlement. There is no entitlement to ECEC, though nearly all children attend ECEC from 3 years of age.

Despite being recognised as a social right for children and working mothers by Law 1044/1971, provision of ECEC for children under three years of age is much lower and very variable between different regions.
The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) includes a specific line (Mission 4) on investing in ECEC infrastructure that is bound to increase ECEC availability in Italy.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

Recent policy developments in Italy have focused mainly on enhancing financial incentives and support measures, rather than redesigning the leave system itself. There have been no major changes to the core design of leave policies. The duration of Maternity leave and Paternity leave remains unchanged. The system continues to be characterised by a relatively limited role for fathers and a strong reliance on mothers' leave

The 2026 Italian Budget Law (Law No. 199/2025) changed Parental leave by extending, from January 2026, the age limit of the child during which leave can be taken from 12 to 14 years for employees. Moreover, sick leave for parents of children aged 3 to 14 years increased from 5 to 10 days per year. The budget law confirmed the working mothers' bonus and extended it from €40 to €60 per month for working mothers with at least two children and income up to €40,000.

On 24 February 2026, the Chamber of Deputies rejected the opposition's joint proposal for equal Parental leave. The proposal provided for 5 months (during the

first 18 months of a child's life) of compulsory, non-transferable leave for each parent, paid between 80 and 100 per cent, and the inclusion of self-employed workers and VAT-registered individuals. The estimated cost was approximately €4–4.5 billion. The proposal received a negative opinion from the State General Accounting Office, with funding deemed 'inadequate'.

4. Take-up of Leave

a. Maternity leave

Maternity leave is obligatory for employees. The most recent data (INPS, 2025) on 2024 for the private sector shows there were 171, 698 beneficiaries, of whom 17,563 were fixed-term employees, 1,384 seasonal workers and 152,751 permanent workers.[282]

b. Paternity leave

In 2024 , according to INPS data, 181,777 fathers in the private sector took Paternity leave (i.e., about 1,084 beneficiaries more than the previous year).[283]

c. Parental Leave

The most recent INPS data[284] for the private sector, including agriculture, show that there were 124,140 male beneficiaries for 2,771,988 days and 289,230 women for 15,409,095 days, giving a total of 413,370 benecifiaries and 18,181,083 days. There were 975 beneficiaries among self-employed, for 62,787 days.[285]

[282] INPS Consiglio di indirizzo e vigilanza (2026) *Rendiconto di genere 2025*. https://www.inps.it/
[283] INPS Consiglio di indirizzo e vigilanza (2026) *Rendiconto di genere 2025. https://www.inps.it/*
[284] INPS Consiglio di indirizzo e vigilanza (2026) *Rendiconto di genere 2025*. https://www.inps.it/
[285] https://servizi2.inps.it/servizi/osservatoristatistici/13/41/o/426

Japan[286]

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April 2026

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1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave *(Sanzen-Sango Kyūgyō,* literally 'pre-natal and post-natal leave'*)* (responsibility of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 14 weeks: 6 weeks before the birth, and 8 weeks after the birth.
- It is obligatory to take 6 weeks of leave.

Payment and funding

- Two-thirds of the mother's average daily earnings, which is calculated by dividing her average monthly earnings for the previous 12 months by 30; up to an upper limit that only affects a very small number. If the mother has been employed for fewer than 12 months, the benefit is the lower of the two figures: her monthly earnings for the insured period, or the average monthly earnings of all those insured.
- Payments are not taxed, and the recipients are exempted from social insurance contributions.
- Funded from the Employees' Health Insurance system, which is financed by equal contributions from employees and employers. The system includes a variety of insurers, and, although there is a statutory requirement of (at least) equal contributions from employers and employees, contributions by the employer can be made higher by collective agreements etc. Depending on the type of insurers, the state subsidises a small proportion of payments and/or administrative expenses.

[286] Please cite as: Nakazato, H., Takezawa, J., Saito, S. and Hosomi, N. (2026) 'Japan country note', in Dobrotic, I., Arnalds, Á.A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

Flexibility in use

- A woman can return to work 6 weeks after childbirth if a doctor has confirmed that her job will have no adverse effects on her.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All female employees are eligible for Maternity leave, but only those covered by the Employees' Health Insurance system are eligible for Maternity benefit payment (*Shussan-teate-kin*). This means that women enrolled in the National Health Insurance system (including special national health insurance societies) - such as self-employed women, or part-time or casual employees - are not eligible for Maternity benefit. Instead, women who are not covered by the Employees' Health Insurance system are exempted from the National Pension System contributions for 4 months, counting from the month before childbirth.
- The eligibility criteria listed above are applicable regardless of citizenship or residency.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to a person other than the mother

- In the case of multiple births, Maternity leave can be taken 14 weeks before birth.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave (*Shusshōji Ikuji Kyūgyō*, literally 'Childcare Leave at Birth' also called *Sango Papa Ikukyū*, literally 'Postpartum childcare leave for fathers')

Length of leave

- 4 weeks, i.e., 28 calendar days.

Payment, funding and taxation

- Benefits for Childcare Leave at Birth: 67 per cent of daily earnings, up to an upper limit of JPY16,110 [€86.83][287] per calendar day.

[287]Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://data.ecb.europa.eu/currency-converter.

- Postnatal Leave Support Benefit (*Shusshōgo-Kyūgyo-Shien-Kyūfukin*): Thirteen per cent of daily earnings, up to an upper limit of JPY16,110 [€86.83] per calendar day.
- The benefit payment may be reduced or not provided, depending on the amount of the payment from the employer.
- Payments are not taxed, and the recipients are exempted from social insurance contributions.
- Funded from the Parental leave section of the employment insurance system, which is financed by contributions from employees and employers, and the state: 0.2 per cent of all wages by employers and 0.2 per cent by employees. 12.5 per cent of the benefit payments is subsidised by the state. Leave benefits for employees in the public sector (national or local) are funded by mutual aid associations.

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be taken during the first 8 weeks after the birth.
- A parent can take Paternity leave in two periods.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Employees employed on a day-to-day basis are not eligible for Paternity leave.
- Employees employed on a fixed-term contract are eligible only when it is not obvious that their employment contract will end within 8 weeks, and 6 months after the expected date of birth of a child or the date of the actual birth if it is earlier than the expected date.
- Workers may be excluded through the corrective agreement if they have been employed by the employer for less than one year.
- When the persons covered by employment insurance take Paternity leave, they are eligible for a benefit payment if they have contributed to employment insurance for at least 12 months during the two years preceding the date on which the leave started, and if they have worked for 11 or more days in these months.
- Individuals who meet the following criteria will be eligible to receive the 'Postnatal Leave Support Benefit' in addition to Paternity leave benefit for their Paternity leave: (i) the insured person must have taken at least 14 days of Paternity leave; (ii) following the child's birth, the insured person's spouse must either have taken at least 14 days of Parental leave during the Paternity leave period or is unable to take Childcare leave due to reasons such as being unemployed, self-employed or on maternity leave as of the day following the child's birth.
- Parents are eligible for the benefit payment even when they work for a maximum of 10 working days (or 80 hours if they work more than 10 working days) during the 28 calendar day leave period. This limit decreases proportionally to the length of leave actually taken. The benefit payment, however, is reduced according to the payment by the employers (see *Payment, funding and taxation* for details).
- Self-employed workers are not eligible.
- Same-sex couples are not eligible.
- There are no payments for unemployed parents.
- The eligibility criteria listed above are applicable regardless of citizenship or residency.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to a person other than the parents)

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave (*Ikuji Kyūgyō,* literally 'childcare leave') (responsibility of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare)

Length of leave

- Leave can be taken by each parent until a child is 12 months old.
- Leave is an individual, non-transferable entitlement.
- Leave can, however, be extended until the child is 14 months old if both parents take some of the leave, even though each parent is only entitled to 12 months after birth, including the Maternity leave period. A typical situation might be that a mother takes leave until the baby is 12 months old (including 180 calendar days at 67 per cent of earnings, and the remainder at 50 per cent). In this typical situation, the father either starts leave on the same day that the mother finishes or starts his leave some time before that, then returns to work when the baby turns 14 months old. As another example, the mother could take 6 months' leave after Maternity leave (at 67 per cent of earnings), followed by the father taking another six months (at 67 per cent of earnings), so using the right to take leave up to 14 months after birth if leave is shared.
- A parent who is, or whose spouse is, already on leave can take Parental leave up to the child reaching 18 months of age where (i) admission to a childcare centre had been requested but was not forthcoming; or (ii) the spouse of the employee who was expected to take care of the child was not able to do so for reasons such as death, injury, and illness. A parent can take Parental leave up to the child reaching 24 months of age, if they meet the above condition at the time when the child turns 18 months of age. This extension of leave is an individual entitlement, i.e., both parents can take it for the extent to which they are entitled to usual Parental leave.

Payment, funding and taxation

- Benefits for childcare leave: Sixty-seven per cent of previous earnings[288] for the first 180 calendar days of Parental leave taken by each parent with a

[288] The benefit is calculated based on the earnings in the six months before the leave (bonus is not included in the calculation).

minimum payment of JPY60,581 [€326.51] per month[289] and a maximum payment of JPY323,821 [€1,745.29] per month; then 50 per cent of earnings with a minimum payment of JPY45,210 [€243.67] per month and a maximum payment of JPY241,650 [€1,302.41] per month. The average monthly earnings[290] of permanent, full-time female employees in 2025 were JPY304,900 [€1,643.31], whereas those of their male counterparts were JPY387,400 [€2,087.96].

- The benefit payment is reduced if the monthly payment from the employer exceeds 13 per cent of the individual's previous monthly earnings (for 180 calendar days from the start of the leave, 30 per cent for the rest).
- Postnatal Leave Support Benefit (*Shusshōgo-Kyūgyo-Shien-Kyūfukin*: 13 per cent of daily earnings, up to an upper limit of JPY16,110 [€86.83] per calendar day.
- Payments are not taxed and the recipients are exempted from social insurance contributions.
- Funded from the Parental leave section of the employment insurance system, which is financed by contributions from employees, employers, and the state: 0.2 per cent of all wages by employers and 0.2 per cent by employees. 12.5 per cent of the benefit payments is subsidised by the state. Leave benefits for employees in the public sector (national or local) are funded by mutual aid associations.

Flexibility in use

- A parent can take Parental leave in two periods.
- Both parents can take leave at the same time, with both receiving benefit payments if they are both covered by employment insurance.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Parental leave does not apply to an employee employed on a day-to-day basis.
- Parental leave only applies to an employee employed on a fixed-term contract when it is not obvious that their employment contract will end before the child reaches one year and six months of age.
- Workers may be excluded if (i) they have been employed by the employer for less than 1 year; or (ii) their employment is to be terminated within 1 year (or 6 months if leave continues until the child reaches 18 months of age); or (iii) they work 2 days or less per week.
- When a person covered by employment insurance takes Parental leave, they are eligible for a benefit payment if they have contributed to employment insurance for at least 12 months during the 2 years preceding the date on which the leave started, and if they have worked for 11 or more days in those months.
- A parent is eligible for the benefit payments even when they work for 80 hours or less during each payment period (a month). The payments, however, are reduced according to the extent that the total of the earnings and the benefit payments exceed 80 per cent of the earnings prior to leave.

[289] The minimum payment and maximum payment in this section is calculated as 30-day totals of daily payment.

[290] Basic Survey on Wage Structure (Chingin Kouzou Kihon Tōkei Chōsa, 2023)

- Individuals who meet the following criteria are eligible to receive the Postnatal Leave Support Benefit in addition to Parental leave benefit: (i) the insured person must have taken at least 14 days of Parental leave covered within the 'eligible period' (if the insured person did not take Maternity leave (i.e., the insured person is the father or the child is adopted), the period eligible for Paternity leave; or if the insured person did take Maternity leave (i.e., the insured person is the mother and the child is not adopted), the period eligible for Paternity leave and 8 weeks after that period; or (ii) the insured person's spouse must have either taken at least 14 days of Parental leave (including Paternity leave) within the designated 8 week period after childbirth (or expected due date), or been unable to take leave due to reasons such as being unemployed, self-employed or on maternity leave as of the day following the child's birth. as defined below.
- Adoptive children by 'special adoption' (including those who are being given care by the worker before the completion of the adoption process) are treated in the same way as biological children for the purposes of Parental leave.
- Self-employed workers are not eligible.
- Same-sex couples are not eligible.
- There are no payments for unemployed parents.
- The eligibility criteria listed above are applicable regardless of citizenship or residency.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to a person other than the parents)

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

iii. None

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- The Parental leave scheme for public sector employees (at the national or local level) is governed by separate legislation, and each parent is eligible to take leave until the child reaches 36 months of age.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- Although there are no special leave provisions for adoption, adoptive children by 'special adoption'[291] (including those who are being given care by the

[291] There are two types of adoption in Japan. 'Special adoption' refers to the case of children aged 6 years or younger whose relationship to their biological parents (as recorded on the family register) is ended through adoption. By contrast, children going through

worker before the completion of the adoption process) are treated in the same way as biological children for the purposes of Paternity and Parental leave. In this case, female workers are eligible for these leaves, but not for Maternity leave.

Time off for the care of dependents

- **Short-term family care leave** is available for up to 5 working days (to be taken in daily or hourly units) per parent per year for a child in year 3 of primary school or younger (until the end of March after the child turned 9 years) if the child is injured or ill, needs a health examination, class shutdown due to infection, or entrance or graduation ceremonies; or up to 10 working days per year if there are two or more children of this age. Employers can exclude workers with 2 scheduled working days or less per week by collective labour agreements. No statutory payment. Whether it is paid or unpaid is decided by employers.
- **Long-term family care leave** can be taken for a spouse (including de facto), parents, children, parents-in-law, grandparents, siblings, and grandchildren for each occurrence of a condition where the family member requires constant care for a period of 2 weeks or more due to serious illness or disability. There is a limit of 93 days over the whole lifetime of each family member in need of this care, which can be divided into 3 periods or fewer. This leave is paid at 67 per cent of earnings.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Women with a child under 12 months of age are entitled to unpaid breaks of at least 30 minutes twice a day; breaks are not specifically for breastfeeding, but can be used for other purposes, e.g., leaving early to pick up children from childcare centres.

Flexible working for carers

- Until a child reaches the age of 3 years, the employers must provide the parents with the right to reduce their normal working hours to 6 hours per day. There is no payment for working reduced hours. This does not apply to workers excluded by collective labour agreements (e.g., those with 2 scheduled working days or less per week). Employers are obliged to provide workers excluded by collective labour agreements with the entitlements to other following work-family reconciliation measures: flexible working hours, change in start time and end working time, or teleworking.
- When a worker reduced their normal working hours to care for a child under the age of 2 years and meets certain conditions such as a reduction in wages, they may be eligible to receive the Childcare Shortened Working Hours Benefit. In principle, the benefit amount is calculated as 10 per cent of the wages paid during each month of shortened working hours. However, the payment rate will be adjusted to ensure that the total of the benefit and the monthly wages does not exceed the wage amount at the start of the shortened working hours.

'ordinary adoption' keep their relationship to their biological parents on the family register; this form of adoption is intended to be used to secure and to provide care for children whose biological parents cannot do so.

- Employers may not require an employee with a child below compulsory school age to (1) work more than 24 hours per month or 150 hours per year of overtime; or (2) work night shifts, i.e., between 22:00 and 05:00 – if the employee requests not to work these hours. Workers who are raising children who are under compulsory school age may request to be exempt from overtime work.
- Employers must make efforts to ensure that workers who are raising a child under the age of three without taking childcare leave, or who are providing care to a family member in need of long-term care without taking family care leave, have the option to choose telework.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- Under the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, employers are legally obliged to ensure that pregnant and postpartum female workers can take the time necessary to attend health guidance and health examinations. The minimum required frequency during pregnancy is: once every four weeks up to 23 weeks of pregnancy; once every two weeks from 24 to 35 weeks; and once every week from 36 weeks until delivery. Postnatally (within one year of birth), workers are entitled to time off as directed by their doctor.
- If a worker receives medical guidance following such an examination, the employer must take necessary measures to allow her to follow that guidance. These measures include: adjustments to commuting arrangements (e.g., staggered or shortened working hours); adjustments to rest periods (e.g., extended or more frequent breaks); and other pregnancy- or postpartum-related measures (e.g., restrictions on certain duties, temporary leave).
- The leave entitlement is an individual right for female workers only; there is no statutory entitlement for fathers or partners to take time off for antenatal appointments. Payment during this time is not mandated by law and is determined by the employer's work rules; there is no statutory minimum benefit level.

Other provisions of leave

- **Bereavement leave**. There is no statutory bereavement leave in Japan under national law; neither the Labor Standards Act nor any other national legislation establishes a legal entitlement to bereavement leave. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare's Model Work Rules (updated December 2025) do include a template provision for 'celebratory and bereavement leave', which covers the death of a spouse, child, parent, sibling, grandparent, or parent-in-law. The Model Work Rules explicitly state that such leave is not required by the Labor Standards Act, and that the specific duration is to be determined by each individual employer. Payment is also not mandated by law.
- **Measures to promote leave policies in workplaces**. The Act on the Advancement of Measures to Support Raising the Next Generation of Children (introduced as legislation of specified duration in 2003; revised in 2014 to be effective from 2015 to 2025; revised in 2024 to be effective from 2025 to 2035), obliges employers to establish (or to make an effort to establish) action plans for improving the employment environment, in order to support balancing work and child-rearing. Under the 2003 Act, employers with more than 100 employees are obliged to establish action plans; while

employers with fewer employees are obliged to take steps to establish plans. The government grants certificates to employers whose action plans and achievements meet nine conditions; this allows them to use a certification mark called 'Kurumin' and provides them with preferential tax treatment. These conditions include: at least 1 male employee took Parental leave during the period of the plan, and the Parental leave uptake rate for female employees during the period of the plan is 75 per cent or over. These conditions are relaxed for smaller companies. Under the revised act, the government grants a special certificate with a certification mark called 'Platinum Kurumin' to employers whose achievements meet higher conditions, including a leave uptake rate of 13 per cent or more among male employees whose partner has given birth. The employers with this special certificate are exempted from establishing action plans, and, instead, obliged to announce their achievements more than once a year.

- Employers who employ more than 300 workers on a regular basis are obliged to publicly announce at least once a year the status of the take-up of Parental leave by their employees.
- Employers are prohibited from treating employees disadvantageously for taking Parental or family care leave, and they are obliged to take measures to deter actions by other workers that could harm their working conditions for these reasons.
- When an employee informs the employer that the employee or the employee's spouse is pregnant or has given birth, or other facts equivalent to it, such as adoption, the employer is obliged to inform the employee of the system concerning Parental leave and other related matters, and to take measures such as interviews to confirm the worker's intention with regard to the Parental leave request. The employer is prohibited from dismissing or otherwise treating the employee disadvantageously because the employee has requested these measures.
- Employers are obliged to take any of the following measures to ensure requests for Parental leave are facilitated:
    - Provide instructions about Parental leave for their employees
    - Establish a consultation system for Parental leave
    - Other measures to improve the employment environment related to childcare leave
- Employers are obliged to assess the needs of the workplace and provide workers raising a child of 3 years of age or older who has not yet entered primary school with measures to realise flexible working styles (change of starting time, telework, shorter working hours, granting new leave and other measures to facilitate raising a child while working, of which the employer chooses two), and allow them to use these measures at their choice. In addition, they are obliged to provide individual notification and get confirmation of intention to use such measures.
- In order to prevent employees from leaving their jobs due to family care, when a worker reports that they are facing a caregiving situation, the employer must individually provide information about the family care leave system and related programmes, and confirm the worker’s intention to take family care leave or use other support measures for balancing work and caregiving. Employers must also provide information on family care programs, etc., to employees around the age of 40. Employers must improve the working environment by providing training and establishing consultation services.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of well-paid, post-natal leave is 14 months (including 2 months of bonus leave if parents share the leave period), which is nearly 8 months for mothers and 6 months for fathers. If fathers do not use their leave entitlement, the maximum period of well-paid leave is just under 8 months. Leave can be extended up to the child reaching 24 months of age, where admission to a childcare centre has been requested but denied for the time being. There is no entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).

There is an obligation for local authorities to estimate the demand and supply of ECEC for children from birth to school age (six years of age) and to make a plan to close the gap between demand and supply through the approval process for various types of ECEC providers. They also match the childcare needs of each family to providers and subsidise childcare fees. Fees for ECEC services have been fully subsidized since October 2019 for all children aged three to five years (and the children up to 2 years of age in households exempted from local income tax) who are enrolled in these services.

Parents can apply for a childcare place for their children from 8 weeks after their birth (the end of the Maternity leave period) until they are school age if the child needs care because the parents are working[292] again, seeking employment, studying, in training, etc. However, there is a significant shortage of childcare places, especially in large cities.

A 'Universal Childcare Access Scheme' was started in 2025 for selected municipalities, and expanded to all municipalities from April 2026. A new benefit titled 'Support Benefit for Infants and Toddlers' allows children to attend childcare services flexibly on an hourly basis, up to a fixed number of hours per month, regardless of parents' employment status. Children aged from 6 months to under 3 years old who are not enrolled in licensed childcare centres or employer-led childcare centres are eligible. Children who attend unlicensed childcare facilities are also eligible. Certification of eligibility will be granted by the municipality in which the guardian resides. Use is permitted within a fixed monthly allocation of hours (up to 10 hours). However, depending on the decision of each municipality, the 'Universal Childcare Access Scheme' may be implemented beyond the standard monthly allocation of 10 hours covered by the benefit.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

Under the *Child Care and Family Care Leave Act* [Expansion of measures to realise flexible working styles in accordance with the age of children], from 1 October 2025 employers are obliged to assess the needs of the workplace and provide

[292] The definition of 'working' was expanded to include part-time work or other non-standard working styles under the new scheme that started in April 2015.

workers raising a child of 3 years of age or older who has not yet entered primary school with measures to realize flexible working styles (change of starting time, telework, shorter working hours, granting new leave and other measures to facilitate raising a child while working, of which the employer chooses two), and allow them to use these measures at their choice. In addition, they are obliged to provide individual notification and get confirmation of intention to use such measures.

The 'Universal Childcare Access Scheme' was introduced in 2025 for selected municipalities, and expanded to all municipalities from April 2026. A new benefit titled "Support Benefit for Infants and Toddlers allows children to attend childcare services flexibly on an hourly basis, up to a fixed number of hours per month, regardless of parents' employment status.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

According to the Annual Report on Health Insurance and Seamen's Insurance FY2023, 330,240 mothers working in the private sector took Maternity leave and received Maternity leave benefits. The take-up rate for Maternity leave for mothers working in private companies for 100 live births in 2023 was 52.2.[293]

b. Paternity leave

According to the Report on Employment Insurance (*Koyō Hoken Jigyō Nenpō*) and the Report on Vital Statistics (*Jinkō Dotai Tōkei),* [294] in 2024, 68,177 fathers who worked for private companies took Paternity leave and received leave benefits.

The take-up rate of the benefits was 9.9 per 100 live births in 2024.[295]

c. Parental leave

The figures in this section, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the 2024 Basic Survey of Gender Equality in Employment Management (*Koyō-kinto Kihon Chōsa),*[296] Parental leave figures include paternity leave, as the two are not reported separately.

A large proportion (86.6per cent) of female workers who had given birth between 1 October 2022 and 30 September 2023 had started or applied for Parental leave

[293] Author's calculation using 'Annual Report on Health Insurance and Seamen's Insurance FY2023' (*Kenkō-hoken Senin-hoken Jigyō Jyōukyō Houkoku*) and 'Report on Vital Statistics' (*Jinkō Dōtai Tōkei*) by Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.
[294] Available at: https://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/list/150-1.html https://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/list/81-1.html.
[295] Author's calculation using 'Report on Employment Insurance' (*Koyō Hoken Jigyō Nenpō*) and 'Report on Vital Statistics' (*Jinkō Dōtai Tōkei*) by Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.
[296] Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2025*) 2024 Basic Survey of Gender Equality in Employment Managemen*t: based on a nationally representative sample of 3,383 employees working at private-sector establishments with five or more regular employees. Available at: https://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/list/dl/71-r06/02.pdf

by 1 October 2024. The proportion had increased by 2.5 per cent points from the previous year (84.1 per cent).

The proportion of men was much lower: 40.5 per cent of male workers whose spouse had given birth between 1 October 2022 and 30 September 2023 had started or applied for Parental leave by 1 October 2024. The proportion increased by 10.4 percentage points from the previous year (30.1 per cent).

Nearly a third (32.7 per cent) of female workers who returned to work from leave between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 had taken 12 to 18 months of leave, and 30.9 per cent had taken 10 to 12 months of leave. Among male workers who returned to work after taking leave in the same period, 28.0 per cent took 1 to 3 month of leave, 20.4 per cent took 2 weeks to 1 month, 22.0 per cent took 5 days to 2 weeks, and 15.7 per cent took less than 5 days.

The figures above do not consider the number of female workers who had quit their jobs before the birth of their child. According to the Annual Report on Employment Insurance (Koyō *Hoken Jigyō Nenpō*) and the Annual Report on Vital Statistics(Jinkō *Dotai Tōkei) and other surveys for public officers,*[297] 61.4 mothers, who are employed in private and public, per 100 live births in 2024 received parental leave benefits, 31.8 for fathers[298]

d. Other types of leave and flexible working

The 2023 Basic Survey of Gender Equality in Employment Management (*Koyō-kinto Kihon Chōsa*) shows the following proportion of workplaces providing other employment-related measures: reduced working hours (70.0 per cent); exemption from overtime work (64.0 per cent); flextime for childcare (14.9 per cent); starting/finishing work earlier/later (38.4 per cent); providing on-site childcare centre (4.4 per cent); subsidising childcare costs (8.1 per cent); and telework (13.3 per cent). The practical application of these measures varies between workplaces.

As for the use of these measures in the 2021 survey of Gender Equality in Employment Management (*Koyō-kinto Kihon Chōsa*), there are striking differences between how male and female workers used the options available to them. In 16.1 per cent of workplaces providing the reduced working hour's option, only female workers used this measure, while just 0.6 per cent of both female and male workers used it. In 5.9 per cent of workplaces providing on-site childcare centres,

[297] Author's calculation using Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2024) 2023 Annual Report on Employment Insurance. Available at: https://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/list/150-1.html and Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2024) Annual Report on Vital Statistics. Available at: https://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/list/81-1.html.

[298] Author's calculation using 'Report on Employment Insurance' (*Koyō Hoken Jigyō Nenpō*) by Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and 'Report on Vital Statistics' (*Jinkō Dōtai Tōkei*) by Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 'Survey on working conditions of local public servants' (*Chihō Koumuin no Kinmu Jyouken tou ni Kansuru Chōsa*) by Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications and Statistics on the Use of Parental Leave by National Government Employees, by Cabinet Office. Sources available at:
ttps://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/list/150-1.html
https://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/list/81-1.html
https://www.soumu.go.jp/menu_news/s-news/01gyosei11_02000254.html
https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/gaiyou/jimu/jinjikyoku/jinji_w5_list.html#leave

only female workers used them, while 1.5 per cent of both female and male workers used them. In 7.2 per cent of workplaces providing flextime for childcare, only female workers used this measure, while just 2.0 per cent of both female and male workers used it. In 13.4 per cent of workplaces providing telework, only female workers used them, while 6.6 per cent of both female and male workers used them.

Korea[299]

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For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (출산전후휴가, literally 'leave before and after childbirth') (responsibility of the Ministry of Employment and Labour)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 90 calendar days: a minimum of 45 days must be taken after the birth. In the case of a delayed birth, additional days are provided to guarantee 45 days' leave after the birth; however, any additional days in excess of the 90 days are not paid.
- It is obligatory to take all the leave.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of ordinary earnings (i.e., for contractually agreed working hours, excluding bonuses and/or overtime pay) at the time of taking leave, paid by the employer for the first 60 calendar days (75 calendar days for multiple births); then, 100 per cent of ordinary earnings paid by the Employment Insurance Fund with an upper limit of KRW2,200,000 [€1,299.93][301] for the last 30 calendar days (45 calendar days for multiple births).
- To reduce the financial burden on small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), often called an affirmative support enterprise, the Employment

[299] Please cite as: Shin, E., Kim, J. and Weon, E. (2026) 'Korea country note', in Dobrotic, I., Arnalds, Á.A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2025*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

[300] The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Ministry of Health and Welfare, Korea.

[301] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://data.ecb.europa.eu/currency-converter.

Insurance Fund[302] pays for the first 60 days, up to a limit of KRW2,200,000 [€,299.93]. If an employee's ordinary earnings are higher than the limit for the first 60 days, the employer must pay the difference between the limit and the employee's ordinary earnings for that period. This means that the Employment Insurance Fund pays up to KRW6,600,000 [€3,899.79] (KRW8,800,000 [€5,199.72] for multiple births) on behalf of SMEs, including payment for the last 30 days, which is provided for all types of companies. The definition of an SME varies across sectors: for example, in the manufacturing sector, the enterprise must have no more than 500 employees, and in the construction sector no more than 300 employees to be considered an SME (Employment Insurance Law, Enforcement Decree Article 12).
- The portion of payments paid from the Employment Insurance Fund is not taxed.
- Funded by the employer and by the Employment Insurance Fund for Maternity leave benefit, which is financed mainly by employers' and employees' contributions, with a small amount of government subsidy.

Flexibility in use

- Maternity leave can be taken 45 days before the expected date of delivery. For medical reasons, women who have previously experienced or risk a miscarriage can take the first 45 days at any time.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All female employees, whether permanent or temporary workers, are eligible for Maternity leave; but to be eligible for the Maternity benefit from the Employment Insurance Fund, employees must have been insured for at least 180 days prior to the commencement of Maternity leave. For those not entitled to the benefit, the employer must pay for the first 60 calendar days.
- A woman who gave birth but is not eligible for the Maternity benefit (for example, self-employed workers or workers who were not insured for 180 days) can receive KRW1,500,000 [€886.32] for 90 calendar days (KRW500,000 [€295.44] per every 30 calendar days). This provision does not apply to unemployed or inactive mothers. Self-employed mothers engaged in economic activities at least three months within 18 months including the day giving birth prior to taking maternity leave benefits are eligible.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature birth; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to a person other than the mother

- In the case of multiple births, the length of paid Maternity leave increases to 120 days (a minimum of 60 days must be taken after birth).

[302] Employment insurance (EI) does not cover government officials, teachers (both in public and private schools), part-time workers working fewer than 60 hours per month, or domestic workers. EI also does not cover businesses in the agriculture, forestry, fishery, and hunting sectors with four or fewer employees, nor does it cover small construction firms.

- In the case of a miscarriage or stillbirth, 5 to 90 days of leave are provided, depending on the length of pregnancy.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- A female worker who gives birth but is not eligible for the Maternity benefit (i.e., because self-employed workers or not insured for 180 days) and living in Seoul Metropolitan Government is eligible for additional Maternity benefit of KRW900,000 [€531.79] per birth and KRW1,700,000 [€1,004.49] for multiple birth in addition to the national government's Maternity benefit (KRW1,500,000 [€886.32]).

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave (배우자 출산휴가, literally 'Maternity leave for spouses') (responsibility of the Ministry of Employment and Labour)

Length of leave

- 20 working days.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings.
- Paid by the employer, with the Employment Insurance Fund paying for 20 days for SMEs to reduce the financial burden on them SMEs, up to an upper limit for 20 days of KRW1,684,210 [€995.16]

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be taken from 50 days before the expected date of childbirth to 120 days after the birth
- Leave can be split in three times, i.e., it can be taken in 4 periods.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employees whose spouses are pregnant or give birth.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- A worker who is not eligible for Paternity leave payment (i.e., because self-employed workers or not insured for 180 days) and living in Seoul Metropolitan Government is eligible for Paternity leave benefit of KRW1,200,000 [€709.05] per birth.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave (육아휴직, literally 'Parental leave') (responsibility of the Ministry of Employment and Labour)

Length of leave

- 1 year per parent
- 6 months can be added per parent if both parents take Parental leave of more than 3 months.
- Leave is an individual non-transferable entitlement.

Payment, funding and taxation

- Parental leave payment for the first 3 months (1-3 months) is 100 per cent of normal earnings, with a minimum of KRW700,000 [€413.61] and an upper limit of KRW2,500,000 [€1,477.19] per month. Payment for the next 3 months (4-6 months) is 100 per cent of ordinary earnings, with a minimum of KRW700,000 [€413.61] and an upper limit of KRW2,000,000[€1,181.75]. Payment from the 7th month is 80 per cent of ordinary earnings, with a floor of KRW700,000[€413.61] and an upper limit of KRW1,600,000 [€945.40].
- Using part-time Parental leave, the employee can reduce working hours by 1 to 5 hours a day. For 1 hour reduction, 100 per cent of ordinary earnings is paid with an upper limit of KRW2,200,000 [€1299.93] per month. For 2 to 5 hours reduction, 80 per cent of ordinary earnings with an upper limit of KRW1,500,000 [€886.32] per month is applied for the whole leave period, to encourage employees to use part-time Parental leave.
- Using the '6+6 Parents' Parental Leave Scheme (6+6 부모 육아휴직), if both parents take Parental leave simultaneously or sequentially for a child under 18 months of age (including leave during the pregnancy), then each parent's Parental leave benefit is increased for the first 6 months. That is: (i) if both parents take Parental leave for 1 or 2 months, Parental leave payment will be 100 per cent of ordinary earning with an upper limit of KRW2,500,000 [€1,477.19] and a floor of KRW700,000 [€413.61]; (ii) if both parents take Parental leave for 3 months, the upper limit is KRW2,500,000 [€1,477.19] for the 1st and 2nd month, and KRW3,000,000 [€1,772.63] for the 3rd month; (iii) if both parents take Parental leave for 6 months, the upper limit is KRW2,500,000 [€1,477.19] for the 1st and 2nd month, KRW3,000,000 [€1,772.63] for the 3rd month, KRW3,500,000 [€2,068.07] for the 4th month, KRW4,000,000 [€2,363.51] for the 5th month, and KRW4,500,000 [€2,658.95].
- For single-parent families, a higher payment is applied: Parental leave benefit for the first 3 months increases to 100 per cent of ordinary earnings with an upper limit of KRW3,000,000 [€1,772.63] per month; for next three months increased to 100 per cent of ordinary earnings with an upper limit of KRW2,000,000 [€1,181.75] per month; for the remaining months increased to 80 per cent with an upper limit of KRW1,600,000 [€945.40] and a floor of KRW700,000 [€413.61] per month.
- Payments are not taxed.

- Funded by the Employment Insurance Fund.

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be taken until the child reaches 8 years (or 2nd year in primary school).
- Full-time Parental leave can be split three times, i.e., it can be taken in four periods. Part-time Parental leave can be split into three-month periods.
- Pregnant workers can also take Parental leave, and this is not included three times split.
- If necessary, workers can take 1 week or 2 weeks Parental leave. This weekly Parental leave is allowed only once a year.
- Employees can take part-time Parental leave by reducing their working hours instead of taking Parental leave on a full-time basis.[303] In this case, the employee is entitled to take part-time parental leave for twice length of unused full-time Parental leave. (See 1e.)
- Both parents can take Parental leave at the same time.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Employers can refuse to grant Parental leave to employees who have not worked continuously for their firm for 1 year.
- In order to receive the Parental leave payment, employees must have been insured for at least 180 days prior to the commencement of Parental leave and take at least 30 days' leave consecutively.
- Self-employed workers are not eligible.
- Same-sex couples are not eligible, as same-sex marriage is not legal.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature birth; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to a person other than the mother

- Single parents or parents of a child with a severe disability, according to 'The Welfare Law for Persons with Disability', are entitled to 18 months of Parental leave.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- Several regional or local governments have financial subsidies for fathers who take Parental Leave.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

[303] This part-time Parental leave is called 'Reduced Working Hours during Childcare Period'.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- The same Parental leave regulations apply in the case of adoption.

Time off for the care of dependants

- Employees are entitled to 90 days of unpaid family care leave per year when they need to take **care of a family member on account of illness, accident, old age**, etc. Although family care leave should be taken in blocks of at least 30 days, employees can take family care leave of up to 10 days per year on a daily basis to take care of family members on account of illness, accidents, old age and childcare; grandparents and grandchildren are covered by this 10 days' leave. These 10 days of family care leave are temporarily paid in order to lessen the family care burden caused by COVID-19.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- If a female worker with an infant under 1 year of age requests, paid (breast)feeding time of at least 30 minutes must be given twice a day.

Flexible working for carers

- All female workers within the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, or after 32 weeks of gestation, can reduce their working hours by 2 hours per day, without a reduction in pay.
- Parents with a child under 12 years (or 6th year in primary school) can reduce working hours from 5 hours to 25 hours per week. The 'childcare working time reduction benefit' is paid by the Employment Insurance Fund in proportion to the number of working hours. For instance, 100 per cent of average wage, with ceiling of KRW2,500,000 [€1,363.03] per month, is paid for the first 10 hours a week, then, 80 per cent of average wage, with ceiling of KRW1,600,00 [€929.34] per month, for the rest of the reduced hours.
- Employees can use the Shortened Work Hours Programme, working 15 to 30 hours per week, for reasons such as family care, personal health issues, retirement preparation, and personal education. The initial shortened period should be up to 1 year, but it can be extended once up to a total of 3 years; however, the total shortened period for educational reasons cannot exceed 1 year. Wages are paid in proportion to the reduced working hours; so unlike part-time Parental leave, there is no financial support provided for loss of earnings resulting from this Shortened Work Hours Programme.

  The employer may refuse a reduction in working hours for the following reasons: (i) if the worker has been employed for less than 6 months in the current business and applies for the reduction; (ii) if it is difficult to hire substitute workers; (iii) if it is difficult to perform the job with split working hours due to the nature of the work; (iv) if there is a significant impediment to the normal operation of the business; (v) if less than 2 years have passed since the previous reduction in working hours was implemented. After the reduction in working hours ends, the employer must reinstate the employee to the same position or a position with comparable level of wages as before.

Family care is limited to care related to illness, accident, or old age of family members. Family members include the employee's grandparents, parents, spouse, spouse's parents, children, and grandchildren. For retirement preparation, employees should be aged 55 and above.

- Employees with a child (there is no age limit) can use flexible working programmes including:
  - adjusting weekly or daily working hours within the limit of 40 hours of regular working hours per week.
  - working from their place of residence using mobile communication devices.
  - working in a remote work office adjacent to their place of residence or business travel location using mobile communication devices.

  In order to promote the utilization of flexible working programs, the Ministry of Employment and Labour provides support to small and medium-sized enterprises for labour management costs or expenses related to the installation of mobile devices.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- If a pregnant female worker requests, paid time off to attend antenatal appointments and care time must be given.

Other provisions of leave

- **Reproductive leaves (난임치료휴가)**. If a worker requests leave to receive infertility treatment, such as artificial insemination or in vitro fertilization, the employer must grant leave up to 6 days per year, and in this case, the first 2 days are paid by the employers. For the SMEs, the Employment Insurance Fund subsidies those 2 days up to an upper limit of KRW84,210 [€49.76] per day.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of paid post-natal leave is 27 months. Well-paid leave runs for 27 months. There is no entitlement to ECEC, because of the very low birth rate (TFR 0.75 in 2024), there are enough places in ECEC services to meet demand; recently, many ECEC service providers, especially small-scale, have closed down, due to difficulties in recruiting enough number of children.

A childcare subsidy is available for all children aged five years or younger to attend any type of formal ECEC facilities, regardless of family income level.

For ECEC attendance levels, see ‘relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements’ in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

Following the expansion of Paternity leave from 10 to 20 days in 2025, the Korean leave system is moving forward to engage more fathers in childbirth and childcare in 2026. Paternity leave for miscarriage and stillbirth - 5 working days, 3 paid and 2 unpaid – will be introduced in September 2026. Fathers are also now allowed to take Paternity leave not only after childbirth but also during their spouse's pregnancy.

4. Uptake of leave[304]

a. Maternity leave

In 2025, a total of 94,247 employees took Maternity leave; the number of Maternity leave beneficiaries increased compared to that in 2024 (79,368). The provisional number of births in 2025 is 254,457.

b. Paternity leave

There is no available official data for Paternity leave take-up, as Paternity leave benefits are paid by employers. However, the Employment Insurance is financing Paternity leave benefits for employees in SMEs; the first five days of Paternity leave benefits for employees in SMEs since October 2019 which has been expanded to the whole period of Paternity leave (20 days) in February 2025. The number of employees taking Paternity leave benefits from the Employment Insurance Fund was 18,270 in 2021 and 15,797 in 2023, and 24,412 in 2025.

c. Parental leave

In 2025, the number of Parental leave takers reached the highest number and the proportion of male takers exceeded 36 per cent for the first time since records began. To be more specific, 184,329 employees took Parental leave, an increase of 39 per cent (+51,794) compared to 2024 (132,535), and about 1 out of 3 Parental leave takers, 36.5 per cent (67,200), were male employees. The proportion of male Parental leave takers has been rising in recent years; it was 8.5 per cent in 2016, 21.2 per cent in 2019, and 31.6 per cent in 2024.

The number of employees taking part-time Parental leave was 39,400 in 2025, showing significant increase of 47 per cent (+12,773). Male employees represented 12.5 per cent of all part-time Parental leave takers

[304] The number in this section is related to the number of employees taking leave, which are covered by Employment Insurance. Therefore, the number of persons taking leave who are teachers (public and private), civil servants, part-time workers, etc. is not included. Please refer to footnote 4, which explains the coverage of Employment Insurance.

Annex: A new consolidated approach by Statistics Korea

From 2021, the Statistics Office in Korea announced provisional data on Parental leave take-up in 2020 using new data collection methods. While the data collected by the employment insurance only included private sector employees covered by the employment insurance scheme, the newly produced data by Statistics Korea includes both private sector employees covered by the employment insurance scheme and public sector employees (including teachers). In other words, the new data set has more accuracy in terms of coverage – only military officials and civil employees in the military covered by the military pension are excluded - compared to the data produced by the employment insurance.

A brief summary of the Parental leave system in Korea (2025):

	Private sector	Civil servants
Law	Act on gender equality in employment and support for work-family reconciliation	National Civil Servant Law; Local Civil Servant Law
Eligibility	Employee who has been employed more than six months at the same workplace one day before taking Parental leave	Civil servant
Entitlement	Employees who have a child not exceeding the age of eight (or in the second year of primary school) Pregnant female employees An employee who has worked the same workplace continuously for more than six months as of one day before taking Parental leave	Employees who have a child not exceeding the age of eight (or in the second year of primary school) *or w*hen a female civil servant gets pregnant or gives birth
Leave duration	One year per a child / Paid	Three years per a child (one year paid, two years unpaid)
Flexibility in use	As of June 2008, Parental leave can be split once; as of December 2020, Parental leave can be split twice; as of February 2025, Parental leave can be spilt three times.	It can be used very flexible, as the employee wishes

Data collection method:

- Statistics Korea used data from the employment insurance and the national health insurance in order to provide these statistics

- The major change, compared to earlier data, is in how the number of parents who take Parental leave is counted. To be specific, Statistics Korea counts the number of parents taking Parental leave per 100 births or per the number of parents who are entitled to take Parental leave. Statistics Korea counts only parents who take Parental leave for the child born in the same year, which does not fully reflect the status of Parental leave take-up. Therefore, with this new method, Statistics Korea includes in the data both the number of parents who have a newborn baby and take Parental leave and the number of parents who have a newborn baby and take Parental leave for its elder siblings. In other words, if a mother gave birth in 2018 and 2020 and took Parental leave in 2020 for the reason of the baby being born in 2018, the previous method would not count her as a Parental leave beneficiary, while the new method counts her as a Parental leave beneficiary.
- The number of Parental leave beneficiaries reflects the number of parents who took Parental leave in one year period. Therefore, if a parent took Parental leave in 2019 and is still on Parental leave in 2020, Statistics Korea will not include this parent in the number of leave beneficiaries in 2020.

	The period when Parental leave was taken	Inclusion in data in 2020
A	December 2019 ~ November 2020	Not included
B	January 2020~March 2020, September 2020~January 2021	Included as one take-up case
C	December 2019~March 2020, September 2020~January 2021	Included as one take-up case

Following the method described above, Statistics Korea produced a new data set ranging from 2010:

The number of Parental leave beneficiaries (unit: person, per cent, p)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total	72,967	93,895	104,996	111,083	124,317	136,560	140,403
Father	1,967	3,053	3,691	4,498	6,219	8,220	11,965
percent	2.7	3.3	3.5	4.0	5.0	8.5	8.5
Mother	71,000	90,842	101,305	106,585	118,098	128,340	128,438
percent	97.3	96.7	96.5	96.0	95.0	94.0	91.5

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024 P
Total	142,038	153,741	163,256	171,959	175,110	202,093	198,218	206,226

Father	18,160 12.8	25,062 16.3	32,051 19.6	38,813 22.6	42,197 24. 1	54,565 27.0	50,815 25.7	60,117 29.2
Mother	123,878	128,679	131,205	133,146	132,913	147,528 73.0	147,403 74.3	
percent	87.2	83.7	80.4	77.4	75.9			146,109 70.8

* p = provisional value

Index	Formula and implication	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1	**The number of Parental leave beneficiaries**	171.959	175,110	202,093	195,986	206,226
	The number of parents who started taking Parental leave for a child under the age of nine (or the second year in primary school) / only includes the number of parents who take Parental leave in 2020/2021/2022/2023/2024.					
2-1	**The number of parents taking Parental leave among parents giving birth per 100 births in the year** $\frac{\text{the number of parents who gave b}\ \text{took parental leave in}}{\textit{the number of births i}} \times 100$	27.3	29.7	35.4	37.9	40.6
	Estimates the number of parents taking Parental leave compared to the number of births					
2-2	**The number of parents entitled to take Parental leave among the parents who gave birth per 100 births in the year** $\frac{\text{the number of parents entitled to}\ \text{parents who gave birth}}{\textit{the number of births}} \times 100$	107.0	110.1	113.2	116.2	116.9
	Estimates the number of parents entitled to Parental leave among those who gave births in the year					
2-3	**The percentage of parents taking Parental leave among parents entitled to Parental leave and who gave birth in the year** $\frac{\textit{the number of parents taking p}\ \textit{among parents entitled to take}\ \textit{and giving birth in the}}{\textit{the number of parents entitled to ta}\ \textit{among parents who gave birt}} 100$	25.5 %	27 %	31.3 %	32.8 %	34.7 %

	Estimates the percentage of parents taking Parental leave among parents entitled to Parental leave and who gave birth in the year					
3	**For one child-parent, Parental leave take-up behaviour from t year to t+9 year (for those who are eligible to take Parental leave during the same period)**					
	Understands the parents' behaviour on Parental leave, for instance, the age of the child when Parental leave is taken and whether Parental leave is used in several blocks.					
	Parents who gave birth in 2011 and have only one child - *74.4 per cent of parents took Parental leave when the child was one year old.* - *10.8 per cent of parents took Parental leave when the child was six years old.* - *About one in five parents (18.5 per cent) took their Parental leave in blocks (at least two blocks), and mothers (19.7 per cent) are more likely to use their Parental leave with more than two blocks than fathers (9.3 per cent).* *Parents who gave birth in 2012 and have only one child:* - *73.5 per cent of parents took Parental leave when the child was one year old.* - *11.5 per cent of parents took Parental leave when the child was six years old.* - *About one in five parents (18 per cent) took their Parental leave in blocks (at least two blocks), and mothers (19.2 per cent) are more likely*					

	to use their Parental leave with more than two blocks than fathers (9.1 per cent). *Parents who gave birth in 2013 and have only one child:* - *72.8 per cent of parents took Parental leave when the child was one year old.* - *12.7 per cent of parents took Parental leave when the child was six years old.* - *About one in five parents (18 per cent) took their Parental leave in blocks (at least two blocks), and mothers (20 per cent) are more likely to use their Parental leave with more than two blocks than fathers (9.0 per cent).* *Parents who gave birth in 2014 and have only one child:* - *71.3 per cent of parents took Parental leave when the child was one year old.* - *12.8 per cent of parents took Parental leave when the child was six years old.* - *About one in five parents (19.0 per cent) took their Parental leave in blocks (at least two blocks), and mothers (20.8 per cent) are more likely to use their Parental leave with more than two blocks than fathers (10.1 per cent).* *Parents who gave birth in 2015 and have only one child:* - *7o.1 per cent of parents took Parental*					

	leave when the child was one year old. - *13.5 per cent of parents took Parental leave when the child was six years old.* *About one in five parents (19.2 per cent) took their Parental leave in blocks (at least two blocks), and mothers (21.2 per cent) are more likely to use their Parental leave with more than two blocks than fathers (10.5 per cent).*					
4	**The mother's employment status before and after giving birth**					
	Mothers was employed on the date of giving birth	48.2%	51.3%	53.7%	56.8%	59.9%
	Mothers who were employed on 360 days before giving birth	58%	60.2%	62.2%	64.9%	67.2%
	2020 were: - *48.2 per cent were employed on the date of giving birth* - *The number decreased by 9.8 percentage points compared to the same number 360 days before giving birth.* *Mothers who gave birth in 2021 were:* - *51.3 per cent were employed on the date of giving birth* - *The number decreased by 8.9 percentage points compared to the same number 360 days before giving birth.* *Mothers who gave birth in 2022 were:* - *53.7 per cent were employed on the date of giving birth* - *The number decreased by 8.5 percentage points compared to the same number 360 days before giving birth.*					

	Mothers who gave birth in 2023 were: - *56.8 per cent were employed on the date of giving birth* - *The number decreased by 8.1 percentage points compared to the same number 360 days before giving birth.* - *Mothers who gave birth in 2024 were:* - *59.9 per cent were employed on the date of giving birth* - *The number decreased by 7.3 percentage points compared to the same number 360 days before giving birth.*					

Kosovo[305]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*pushimi i lehonisë*) (responsibility of the Employment Agency and the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- Employed mothers. 12 months: up to 45 calendar days before the expected date of birth (upon the employee's request and medical evidence) or up to 28 calendar days before the expected date of birth (upon the employer's request because the woman is unable to perform her job and with the employee's consent).[306]
- Unemployed mothers. 6 months, starting from the date of birth.

Payment, funding and taxation

- Employed mothers. 70 per cent of previous earnings for the first 6 months of Maternity leave; 50 per cent of the average national wage for 3 months; unpaid for the final 3 months. Mothers also receive three additional top-ups during Maternity leave, each equivalent to the net minimum wage in the country in 2025 (worth €325.9 a month[307]).
- During the first 6 months, taxes and pension saving contributions are paid as normal. Payments from the government (second period of payment) are not taxed.
- Funded by employers for the first 6 months and by the government from general taxation for the next 3 months

[305] Please cite as: Mustafa, A. (2026) 'Kosovo country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2025*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

[306] See: Law No.03/L-212 on Labour, https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2735

[307] *Notice regarding the guidelines on the implementation of child and maternity allowances*. Available at: https://zck-kpz-platform.rks-gov.net/en/notice-regarding-the-guidelines-on-the-implementation-of-child-and-maternity-allowances/

- Unemployed mothers: Maternity allowance paid at the level of the net national minimum wage per month in 2025 (€325.9 a month). The payment is not taxed, and is paid from the state budget (from taxes).

Flexibility in use

- None.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employed women are eligible.
- If self-employed, mothers have to provide evidence of approved leave and compensation received during the first 6 months of leave in order to qualify for the additional three months of government-paid leave.[308]
- Non-standard workers, although in principle covered by the same rights applicable to all employees, are in practice not covered: this happens, e.g, due to the difficulty in defining who the employer is (in the case of domestic workers and related workers who conduct work for several employers/households); or lack of clarlity in tax/contribution arrangements; and to the fact that most such work takes place in the informal system.[309]
- Unemployed women must be unemployed for at least 9 months during the 12 months before the birth of the child to be eligible for the Maternity allowance.[310]

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In the case of the death of the newborn child, the minimum mandatory length of Maternity leave for employed mothers is 45 days.
- Maternity leave can be transferred to the father in the case of the biological mother's death, or to a foster parent in cases where the parents have died or abandoned the child.
- After the end of the first 6 months of employer-paid Maternity leave, mothers can transfer the remaining Maternity leave (months 7 to 12) to the father.[311]

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective ageements, employer exclusion, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

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[308] *Administrative Instruction No. 01/2018* (Article 5). Available at: https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2735 .
[309] Haxhikadrija, A. and Mustafa, A. (2024) 'Access for domestic workers to labour and social protection : the case of Kosovo', *SEER : Journal for labour and social affairs in Eastern Europe,* Vol. 27, 2: 181-206. Available at: https://hdl.handle.net/1814/78037
[310] https://mfpt.rks-gov.net/NewsDetails/8/1123
[311] *Law No.03/L-212 on Labour* (Article 49, paragraph 8). Available at: https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2735

b. Paternity leave (*të drejtat e të atit të fëmijës*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 12 working days.[312]

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of previous earnings for 2 days, unpaid for the remaining leave period.
- Funded and paid by employers.

Flexibility in use

- 2 days of paid leave should be taken at the time of childbirth, but the remaining 2 weeks of unpaid leave can be used until the child turns 6 months of age. The employee must inform the employer of their intention to take leave at least 10 days in advance.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Employed fathers are eligible.
- Since same-sex marriage is not recognised by law, it is legally unclear if/how rights are applied.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- Paternity leave can be transferred to a foster parent only in case of the death of both biological parents.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusion, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave.

No statutory entitlement.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

[312] *Law No.03/L-212 on Labour* (Article 50).Available at: https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2735

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- Adoptive parents have the same right to Maternity and Paternity leave, as in the case of the birth of a biological child.[313] There are no other provisions for adoptive parents.

Time off for the care of dependants

- Employed persons have the right, upon request, to take unpaid leave of unspecified duration. During this period, they still have to pay their mandatory social contributions.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- None. Breastfeeding women are prohibited from working night shifts or performing physically demanding or hazardous tasks

Flexible working for carers

- One of the parents of a child with disabilities has the right to work part-time after the end of Maternity leave, and until the child turns 2 years. In the cases of the death of both or one of the parents, this right can be transferred to the other guardian.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- None.

Other provisions of leave

- Marriage and death leave. An employed person has the right to fully paid leave of 5 days per year for their own marriage and an additional 5 days in the event of the death of a family member. These leaves are paid by the employer at the level of 100 per cent of previous earnings. Additional entitlements may be regulated by specific employment contracts.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave per family is 12 months with 6 months well paid and the final 3 months being unpaid. All children aged between 5 and 6 years must attend a one year preparatory pre-school programme, which, in principle, lasts 2.5 hours per weekday (in practice, it usually lasts about 1.5 hours). There is, therefore, a significant gap of approximately 54 months between the end of well-paid leave and an entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in the form of compulsory attendance.

[313] Law No.03/L-212 on Labour (Article 50, paragraph 3). Available at: https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2735

This preparatory pre-school programme generally takes place in public elementary schools (and is, thus, tax-funded), but it can also take place in licensed private elementary schools or ECEC facilities if children are enrolled in such schools/facilities. Enrolment in regular ECEC facilities for children under the age of 6 years is very low, about 10.6 per cent of the child population of this cohort.[314] There are about 80 public ECEC facilities in the country; the rest are private, for-profit facilities. Both public and private facilities charge user fees. This structure of leaves and ECEC services is strongly familialistic and contributes to a low female employment rate, which stood at 21.2 per cent in 2024 (compared to 55.9 male employment rate)[315]; it also contributes to maintaining ECEC enrolment and wider long-term social inequality, such as based on income, area of living, ethnicity backgrounds, etc.[316]

Since June 2022, the policy of prioritising enrolment for vulnerable or disadvantaged groups in public ECEC facilities was discontinued. Given the very limited availability of public ECEC facilities, this policy change was a step back since it risks worsening access for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Although the number of public ECEC facilities is gradually increasing, they cannot meet the demand. Since October 2023, the municipality of Prishtina (Kosovo's capital city) began a modest programme (covering children from 120 families) of subsidies for the enrolment of children under 6 years in private ECEC facilities. This policy of subsidising enrolment is also being tested at the national level by targeting children in families on the minimum income (proverty protection programme). In December 2024, the government of Kosovo and the World Bank launched a €1.8 million national pilot voucher programme to finance the enrolment of 3 to 5-year-old children of these families in ECEC facilities as well as transportation to the facility.[317]

Given that most of the existing ECEC services are market-based, the recent introduction (September 2021) of universal cash child benefits, as well as their increased amount, is a positive development in supporting family budgets. Since November 2025, families receive a monthly benefit of €30 per child under the age of 16; for families with more than two children in this age group, the benefit increases to €45 per child. In February 2025, 406,799 children were covered by the benefit.[318] Between September 2021 and August 2024, children under 2 received €20 per month, while children aged 2 and above received €10 per month.

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[314] Enrolment figure (13,995) from *Annual statistical report with educational indicators*, p.29. Available at: https://mash.rks-gov.net/alldocuments/raport-vjetor-statistikor-me-tregues-arsimor/ ; Population base figure (131,255) from Census data. Available at: https://askdata.rks-gov.net/pxweb/en/ASKdata/ASKdata__Census%20population__1_Demographic_Characteristics/census2024_00.px/

[315] *Labour market statistics-2024*, https://askapi.rks-gov.net/Custom/085719f6-0ef0-4365-afa7-9a02c8d10cf5.pdf

[316] Mustafa, A. (2021) 'Early Childhood Education and Care in Kosovo: A Targeted Educational Approach Producing and Maintaining Social and Gender Inequalities', *Revija za socijalnu politiku*, Vol.28, 3: 367-389.

[317] https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/en/blog/launching-of-the-pilot-voucher-program-for-kindergartens-part-of-the-world-bank-project-early-childhood-education-and-care-for-kosovos-human-capital/

[318] *Social welfare statistics*. Available at: https://ask.rks-gov.net/Releases/Details/9989

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

The Labour Law, which regulates leave entitlements, has not been amended since 2010 despite various government pledges and initiatives to do so. These pledges included a commitment to introduce Parental leave. On the other hand, in June 2025, the Maternity allowance for unemployed women, as well as the top-ups for employed women on Maternity leave, increased to €325.90 per month (from €170), following the first rise in the net minimum wage since 2011.[319] Although the minimum wage increased to €425 (gross) during the first 6 months of 2026,[320] Maternity leave benefits were not increased at the same time. The Prime Minister has pledged to increase maternity leave benefits from July 2026 to €500,[321] probably in anticipation of the increase of the minimum wage to €500.

Regarding ECEC services, the 1 year preparatory programme for children aged 5 to 6 years became mandatory (previously optional) starting from the 2024/25 school year. In the previous (2024/25) year, the enrolment rate in the programme was approximately 87 per cent.[322]

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

In December 2025, a total of 1,947 employed women and 8,117 unemployed women received state-funded Maternity benefits.[323] According to the Kosovo Statistics Agency, there were 14,251 births registered during the second hald of the same year.[324] This implies that the take-up rate of state-funded part of Maternity benefits may have been below 100 per cent (around 70 per cent). A partial reason may be the fact that the state-funded Maternity benefits for employed women (provided during months 6 to 9 of leave) are too low and financially unattractive. Furthermore, many women in self-employment and non-standard employment may be, in practice, uncovered.

According to data issued by the Employment Agency for 2024, 66.5 per cent of employed women on Maternity leave had been working in the private sector.[325] Since the last three months of leave for employed persons (months 9 to 12) are

[319] 261st government meeting. Available at: https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/en/news/mbledhja-e-261-te-e-qeverise/

[320] 273rd Meeting of the Government. Available at: https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/en/news/mbledhja-e-273-te-e-qeverise/

[321] Min 17:15 of his speech. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oGNDHnhjR8)

[322] Source base: Annual statistical report with educational indicators. Available at@ https://mash.rks-gov.net/alldocuments/raport-vjetor-statistikor-me-tregues-arsimor/

[323] Data issued by the Ministry of Labour, Family, and Values of the War of Liberation to the author on 22.4.2026 upon an access to public information request.

[324] Live births, https://ask.rks-gov.net/Themes/Population

[325] Data issued by the Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo to the author on 21.5.2025 upon an access to public information request.

voluntary and unpaid, take-up of this part of Maternity leave could also be lower than 100 per cent.

b. Paternity leave

No information available. As these leaves are employer-paid and not administered by a public authority (e.g., a social insurance agency or similar), the respective data is neither collected nor reported.

c. Parental leave

No statutory entitlement.

Latvia[326]

Inese Upite (Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia)

April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*grūtniecības un dzemdību atvaļinājums*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Welfare)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 112 calendar days: 56 days before the birth and 56 days after.
- It is prohibited to employ a pregnant woman 2 weeks prior to the expected birth and a woman 2 weeks after the childbirth. The time of the expected birth and the fact of birth must be certified by a doctor.

Payment, funding and taxation

- For employed women: 80 per cent of earnings calculated based on the average salary on which insurance contributions have been paid for a period of 12 calendar months, ending 2 months before the month in which the leave begins.
- For self-employed women: 80 per cent of the gross insurance contributions made during the period of the 12 calendar months ending one quarter before the quarter in which the leave begins. The benefit is paid in 2 parts: the first part is calculated for the 56 calendar days (or 70 calendar days) before the due date, and the second part is calculated for the 56 calendar days (or 70 calendar days) after the actual birth date.
- The average amount of the maternity benefit (in total) in 2025 was €3,403.51 for the first part of the leave and €3,005.15 for the second part of the leave. The number of recipients during the year was €10,785 (around 899 per month).
- Payments are not taxed.
- Funded from social insurance, which is financed by contributions from employees (9.25 per cent of earnings) and employers (20.77 per cent).

[326] Please cite as: Upite, I. (2025) 'Latvia country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A.A., Dobrotić, I., Kaufmann, G., Koslowski, A., and Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2025*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

Flexibility in use

- If women have given birth before the prenatal leave, she is entitled to paid prenatal and postnatal leaves after the childbirth. Similarly, where the child was born before the prescribed date of birth, the period of Maternity leave and benefit will be extended accordingly.
- Flexibility regarding the start of the prenatal and the end of postnatal leave is agreed with the doctor and the employer.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All women who have paid social insurance contributions in Latvia for at least 3 months in the period of the last 6 months before the first day of Maternity leave or for at least 6 months in the last 24 months.
- All women who are spouses of a self-employed man and who have joined the social insurance system voluntarily.
- In a case where employment has ended due to the company's liquidation, the benefit is provided if the leave has started no later than 210 days after the end of employment.
- All women who have lost the status of an employee or self-employed no later than 60 days before the first day of Maternity leave.
- For the period after childbirth, the father of a child or any other person who takes care of a new-born at home and fulfils the social insurance criteria is entitled to paid Maternity leave of 56 or 70 days if:
  - the mother is unable to take care of the child until the 42nd post-natal day due to sickness;
  - the mother has refused to take care of the child;
  - the mother has died during childbirth or before the 42nd post-natal day;
  - the child is a foundling (the child has been abandoned, and the mother is unknown).
- The right to the Maternity benefit ends 6 months from the firstt day of the first part of the leave (if the eligible person fails to apply until the end of that period, the right cannot be exercised).

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to a person other than the mother

- If the mother has required medical supervision due to the pregnancy (no later than at the 12th week of the pregnancy), 14 extra days of leave before the birth of a child are provided.
- In the case of multiple births or complications during pregnancy, childbirth, or the postpartum period, 14 extra calendar days of leave after the birth are provided.
- In the case of premature birth, the maternity benefit is paid in the same amount as it would be if the birth would take place at the due date.
- If a person is entitled to the unemployment allowance and Maternity benefit for the same time period, the unemployment allowance is suspended for that particular period, that is, only the Maternity benefit is paid.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave (*atvaļinājums bērna tēvam*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Welfare)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 10 working days.
- The leave has to be requested no later than 6 months after childbirth; the benefit has to be requested no later than 6 months after the first day of the leave.

Payment, funding and taxation

- For employed men: 80 per cent of previous earnings, calculated based on the average salary on which insurance contributions have been paid for a period of 12 calendar months, ending two months before the month in which the leave begins.
- For self-employed men: 80 per cent of the gross insurance contributions made during the period of 12 calendar months, ending one quarter before the quarter in which the leave begins.
- Payments are not taxed.
- Funded from social insurance, which is financed by contributions from employees (9.25 per cent of earnings) and employers (20.77 per cent).

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be used within 6 months after childbirth.
- The leave can be divided into parts as agreed with the employer.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- The father of a child if the Paternity leave is granted no later than 6 months after the birth. If the paternity of the child has not been acknowledged (determined) or the child's father has died, or the father's custody right has been terminated, another person who is not the child's mother has the right to a leave of 10 working days upon request of the child's mother.
- The same insurance period eligibility criteria needed as for Maternity leave.
- One of the adoptive parents until the child reaches eighteen years of age.
- The right to the Paternity benefit ends six months from the first day of the Paternity leave.
- No specific regulation regarding same-sex couples (i.e., the right to the leave and thus the benefit is attached to any person who falls under the eligibility criteria mentioned above).

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to a person other than the father

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave (*bērna kopšanas atvaļinājums*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Welfare)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 18 months per parent.
- Leave is an individual, non-transferable entitlement, but only one parent may receive payment, for a maximum period of 17 months.

Payment,funding and taxation

Parental benefit

- Only parents who are participating in the social insurance system are eligible.
- Parents are entitled to choose the total period of receiving the Parental benefit, which consists of the Parental benefit and the non-transferable part of the Parental benefit. It is possible to choose one of the following benefit periods:
  i. 19 months, of which 15 months can be used until the child is 1.5 years old, with benefit at 43.75 per cent of previous earnings. The non-transferable part can be used by each parent until the child reaches 8 years of age;
  ii. 13 months, of which 9 months can be used until the child is 1 year old, with benefit at 60 per cent of previous earnings. The non-transferable part can be used by each parent until the child reaches 8 years of age.
- The amount of Parental benefit is reduced to 75 per cent of the normal benefit granted if the beneficiary discontinues Parental leave in order to resume working.
- The period of payment of the postnatal leave, if the Maternity benefit has been granted to one of the parents, is included in the total Parental benefit period.
- Only one parent is able to use the whole period of Parental benefit, including the 2 non-transferable months: (i) if the child's paternity has not been determined; or (ii) the other parent has died; or (iii) custody rights have been revoked or discontinued for the other parent, or the

Orphan's Court has ruled that one parent is actually not raising or caring for the child.
  - Parental benefit is not taxable
  - Funded in the same way as Maternity and Paternity leave.
  - The average amount of the Parental benefit in 2025 was €1,044.67 per month for parents who chose to receive the benefit 13 months (number of recipients: around 1,260 per month, 51.15 per cent of whom were women), and €787.70. for parents who chose to receive the benefit 19 months (number of recipients: around 10,900 per month, 81.34 per cent of whom women).
  - Parental benefit payment period is extended by the period of the specified pregnancy leave if the child was born before the determined start of the pregnancy leave.

Child care allowance

  - Paid to one of the parents or the legal guardian of a child if the child has been taken under guardianship, or one of the adoptive parents, or a foster parent.
  - The benefit is €298 per month for each child until a child reaches 18 months of age and then €42.69 per month for each child until a child reaches 24 months of age if a child is born up to 2 November, 2026.
  - The application for the child care allowance should be submitted within 6 months from the 1st day of the child's life or the day the guardianship has been granted.
  - If the parent is not a socially insured person (non-working), the benefit is granted from the date of the child's birthday, provided that no maternity benefit, parental benefit or child care benefit for the same period has been granted to the other parent due to the birth and care of this child.
  - If the parent is a socially insured person (working), parental benefit and child care allowance are granted simultaneously for the care of the same child. Both benefits can be received at the same time, unless a maternity benefit for the same period has been granted due to the birth of this child. Parental benefit and childcare allowance for caring for the same child, for the same period of time, are granted to one person. Therefore, the parents in the family must agree on who receives child care benefits, as both benefits are given to one parent at the same time.

Flexibility in use

- Both parents are entitled to 18 months of leave until a child reaches 8 years of age. Parental leave, upon the request of an employee, shall be granted as a single continuous period or in several periods (a period cannot be shorter than 1 calendar week without interruption).
- The employee has an obligation to notify the employer in writing one month before the beginning of the leave about the intention to use the leave, including the length of the Parental leave they plan to use (as a single period or in blocks).
- Employee has the right to request to use the Parental leave flexibly. An employer has the obligation to assess such a request and, not later than within 1 month from the receipt of the request of the employee, to notify the employee of the possibility of using the Parental leave in a flexible manner.
- The leave can be used simultaneously by both parents, but only one parent

can receive the benefit. The recipient is allowed to transfer the right to benefit to the other parent, if needed. Also, it is allowed to work and receive the benefit, however, in those cases, the amount of the benefit is reduced (see above).
- Parents are entitled to transfer the benefits right to one another, except for 2 non-transferable months.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- One of the parents (adoptive or biological) and who are participants of the social insurance system (see Maternity leave).
- Child's foster family member.
- Child's guardian or any other person who takes care of a child according to the decision of an orphans' court.
- Women who are not (self-)employed at the date when the benefit is requested but were (self-)employed no later than 60 days before the first day of the Maternity leave, or 210 days before the first day of the Maternity leave in case of company's liquidation, or have lost the (self-)employment status during the Maternity leave.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to a person other than mother

- A guardian, foster parent or adoptive parent has the right to request a change in the length of parental benefit if the biological parent has had already used the right to parental benefit (only a remaining leave can be used).
- If the next child is born before the previous has reached 3 years of age, the parental benefit cannot be smaller than the benefit a parent received for the previous child.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- Adoptive parents are entitled to Paternity and Parental leave. Payment and funding are provided on the same grounds as for biological parents.
- In addition, for a family that has adopted a child up to 18 years of age, one

of the adopters can take 10 calendar days of leave.

Time off for the care of dependants

- Parents who have joined the social insurance system (employed, self-employed, or parents whose spouse is self-employed) are entitled to **sick leave and benefit for a child** up to 14 years of age: 14 days per sickness episode if a child has been taken care of at home, or up to 21 days if a child has been admitted to hospital, or up to 30 days if a child has an injury caused by bone fracture.
- Parents who have a child up to 18 years of age are entitled to **temporary absence** in the case of the sickness of a child or an accident or for a doctor's appointment when it is not possible to undergo this examination outside working time.
- Parents whose **child has been diagnosed with a severe illness** and for whom the consilium has issued a respective decision; or parents who receive the allowance for the care of a disabled child if long-term hospital treatment is needed are entitled to sickness benefit for a period up to 26 weeks in case of a continuous sickness or for no longer than 3 years in a 5 years period in case of various sickness episodes. Grandparents, foster parents, guardians, or any other person who takes care of a child according to the decision of an orphans' court are also entitled to this benefit. The sickness benefit is calculated in the same way as the Maternity and Paternity benefit and is taxable.
- An employer must grant **caretaker's leave** if it is requested by an employee who has to personally care for a spouse, parent, child, or another close family member or the person who lives with the employee in the same household and who requires substantial care or support due to a serious medical reason. This unpaid leave is granted for a period not exceeding 5 working days per year. The employee has the right to use such leave in parts.

Specific provision for (breast-)feeding

- Parents (both mothers and fathers) with a child up to 18 months of age are entitled to a paid additional break for feeding their child – at least 30 minutes every 3 hours (or at least 60 minutes every three hours, if a parent has more than one child up to 18 months of age). Upon request, parents are entitled to combine these breaks, thus prolonging a lunch break or shortening their working day.

Flexible working for carers

- An employer shall provide part-time work if it is requested by (i) a pregnant woman; (ii) a woman during the period following childbirth up to 1 year or for the whole period of breastfeeding; (iii) an employee with a disability; (iv) an employee who has a child up to 14 years of age or a child with a disability up to 18 years; or (v) an employee who is a parent caring for an adult with a disability from childhood requiring special care. Upon the request the employer should transfer the employee from regular working time to part-time or vice versa if such possibility exists in the undertaking.
- An employee who has a child under 8 years of age or who has to personally care for a spouse, parent, child, or another close family member or the

person who lives with the employee in the same household and who requires substantial care or support due to a serious medical reason has the right to request the employer to set an adaptation to the organisation of the working hours.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- A pregnant woman is entitled to leave the workplace to undergo a health examination in the prenatal period if it is impossible to undergo it outside of working time.

Other proviions of leave

- **Bereavement leaves.** An employee is entitled to be absent from work for 2 working days due to the death of their spouse, parent, child, or another close family member. The employer is obliged to pay remuneration for such absence.
- **Supplementary leave.** Parents who have a child up to 3 years of age (or 18 years of age if a child has a disability) are entitled to annual leave during the summer months as a priority group or at any other time of their choice. Parents who have 1 or 2 children up to 14 years of age are entitled to annual paid supplementary leave of at least 1 working day. Parents who have 3 or more children up to 16 years of age (or up to 18 years of age if a child has a disability) are entitled to annual paid supplementary leave of 3 working days.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is 38 months, but only just over half of this is paid and only 1.9 months is well paid. According to the Law on Education, Article 17, municipalities are responsible for ensuring that all children from 18 months of age registered in their area receive Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in an institution that is closest to the child's home; a child can also attend an ECEC institution in another municipality and receive the same financial support as those children who attend an institution in the municipality of their place of residence. In principle, therefore, there is no gap between the end of leave and entitlement to ECEC and a gap of around 16 months between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement. However, in practice, there are no municipalities that can offer a place in a municipal ECEC institution for all children: for instance, in October 2025, there were around 2,405 children from the ages of 1½ to 6 years who did not receive a place in a municipal ECEC institution. The most difficult situation is in Mārupe municipality, with 587 children waiting for a place in a municipal ECEC, and Ķekava municipality – 470 children.

Since the uptake of Parental leave is mostly until a child reaches 18 months of age, municipalities provide financial support for fees in private ECEC institutions if no place is available in a municipal service when a child reaches 18 months of age. The amount of allowance is decided by calculating the average expenses for one child per month in a municipal ECEC institution and is thus different in each municipality. In 2026, the average support of municipalities for children from one and a half to four years of age is €484.35, and the local municipalities' support for

children who are undergoing mandatory preparation for primary education is €294.38.

In some municipalities, parents who choose to employ a childminder are entitled to a municipal allowance: the allowance is usually provided for children who are at least 18 months of age, until a place in a municipal ECEC institution is available. The allowance amount offered differs in each municipality. In 2026, 14 municipalities provid such support. Average support is €225.66, and the amounts vary from €125 per month in Liepāja municipality to €375.81 per month in Valmiera municipality. The allowance in Riga municipality is €242.66.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

On 3 December 2025, the Law on Maternity and Sickness Insurance was amended so that from 1 January to 31 December 2026 parental benefit will be paid at 75 per cent of the granted benefit if the beneficiary discontinues Parental leave in order to resume working

On 27 November 2025, Parliament adopted amendments to the Law 'On Maternity and Sickness Insurance', which provide for:

- additional support from 1 January 2026 to parents of preterm children. For parents whose child is born after 1 January 2026, only the period of postnatal leave—i.e., 56 or 70 days—are included in the parental benefit payment period, thereby extending the duration of parental benefit payments by the period corresponding to how much earlier than the expected date of delivery the child was born.
- an additional criterion for granting parental benefits, so that from 1 July 2026 parental benefits will be granted for a child who has been assigned a personal identification number, whose status in the Register of Natural Persons is active, and who permanently resides in the territory of Latvia. If the child of a person insured in Latvia, for whom parental benefit is granted, resides in another Member State of the European Union, the Swiss Confederation, or a Member State of the European Economic Area, the parental benefit shall be granted in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004. The provision will enter into force on 1 July 2026.

4. Uptake of leave

Data on the uptake are from the State Social Insurance Agency, and the data on the average salaries are from the Central Statistical Bureau.

a. Maternity leave

In 2025, 10,785 persons received the maternity benefit, which is around 6.3 per cent less than in 2024.

b. Paternity leave

In 2025, 7,475 persons received the paternity benefit, which is around 7.3 in 2024. The average amount of the paternity benefit in 2025 was €865.93.

c. Parental leave

Most of the parents taking this leave in 2025 were women (76.7 per cent of the total number in 2025). However, most of the working parents who received parental benefits were men (83 per cent in 2025).

d. Other types of leave and flexible working

No information available.

Lithuania[327]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*nėštumo ir gimdymo, motinystės atostogos*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 18 weeks: 70 working days before the birth and 56 working days afterwards.
- It is not obligatory to take Maternity leave.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 77.58 per cent of net earnings, based on the individual's earnings in the last 12 months, with no upper limit on payment. The minimum benefit cannot be less than €592 per month.
- Payments are taxed.
- Funded from the Social Insurance Fund (SODRA), which is financed by contributions from employers and employees. Self-employed people are obliged to pay social insurance contributions. Women taking Maternity leave receive pension credits to maintain their pension rights.

Flexibility in use

- None.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employed mothers who have paid at least 12 months of social insurance contributions during the last 24 months are eligible for Maternity leave. Self-

[327] Please cite as Braziene, R. and Vysniauskiene, S. (2026) 'Lithuania country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A.A., Dobrotić, I., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2025*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

employed women qualify for maternity benefit under the same conditions as employees.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to a person other than the mother

- In the case of multiple or premature births or complicated deliveries, 14 extra paid days are provided.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave (*tėvystės atostogos*) (responsibility of Ministry of Social Security and Labour)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 1 month, i.e., 30 calendar days.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 77.58 per cent of previous net earnings, with an upper limit of the country's average wage as calculated quarterly. The minimum benefit cannot be smaller than €592 per month.
- Taxed and funded as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be taken within the 3 months immediately following childbirth.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Fathers who have paid at least 6 months of social insurance during the last 24 months.
- Same-sex couples are not eligible.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave (*vaiko priežiūros atostogos*) (responsibility of Ministry of Social Security and Labour)

Length of leave

- Until the child is 3 years of age.
- Leave is mainly a family entitlement, but each parent has an individual, non-transferable entitlement of 2 months.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent for the 2 non-transferable months per parent.
- For part of the remaining period, parents can choose between two options:
  - 77.34 per cent of net earnings until the child is 18 months of age, with an upper limit of the country's average wage as calculated quarterly[328]. The minimum benefit cannot be smaller than €592 per month. Two non-transferable months per each parent are paid 100 per cent net earnings.
  - 58 per cent of net earnings until the child is 12 months of age, with an upper limit of €2,174.13; and then 38.67 per cent of net earnings until the child is 24 months of age, with an upper limit of €1,449.42.
- The remaining period of leave until the child is 3 years of age is unpaid.
- Taxed and funded as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- Non-transferable months of Parental leave can be taken in one continuous period or several periods, alternating with the other parent.
- Parents can work whilst on leave/collecting parental benefit. But, if parents choose to receive 77.34 per cent of net earnings until the child is 18 months of age and start to work, the benefit is reduced by the amount of income they have received. If parents choose to receive 58 per cent of net earnings until the child is 12 months of age and 38.67 per cent of net earnings until the child is 24 months of age and they start to work during the first year, the benefit is reduced by the amount of income they have received; during the second year, the benefit is not reduced.
- Parents cannot take leave at the same time.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Parents are eligible for the parental benefit if they have paid social insurance taxes for at least 12 months during the last 24 months; as social insurance is compulsory for all workers, self-employed workers are eligible.
- Grandparents are eligible for the parental benefit if they have paid social insurance taxes for at least 12 months during the last 24 months (grandparents cannot use two non-transferable months)

[328] State Data Agency: https://vda.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/pristatyti-pagrindiniai-darbo-uzmokescio-rodikliai/

- Same-sex couples are not eligible.
- Unemployed parents are not eligible.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to a person other than the mother

- In the case of multiple births, parental benefit increases according to the number of children, but it cannot exceed a ceiling of 2 average wages in the national economy.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- If a person adopts or takes a new-born baby into foster care, they are entitled to Maternity leave from the moment of adoption up to the child reaching 70 days of age. Maternity benefit is paid on the same grounds as it is to biological mothers. Adoptive parents or foster caregivers have the same rights to Parental leave and benefit as biological parents.

Time off for the care of dependants

- An **employee with a child under 14 years** can take 2 weeks of unpaid leave per year.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- According to the Law on Safety and Health at Work, in addition to the general breaks to rest and eat at least every 3 hours, breastfeeding employees can be given a half-hour break for breastfeeding. At the mother's request, the breaks for breastfeeding may be joined together and used to shorten the working day. Breaks for breastfeeding are covered by the worker's average wage.

Flexible working for carers

- The right to work part-time is granted to employees raising children up to 8 years. There are also opportunities to work part-time for an employee caring

for a family member and for an employee caring for a relative living with him.

- Parents raising children under 3 years of age have the right to a reduced working time of 32 hours per week if they are employees of budgetary institutions, e.g., employees of state and municipal institutions that are supported by state or municipal budgets, the Social Insurance Fund Board (*SODRA*), state and municipal enterprises, public institutions whose owner is the state or a municipality, and the Bank of Lithuania. For part of the working time they are not working, the fixed salary is retained. This reduced working time will be applied to one of the parents (including adoptive parents) or guardians based on their choice until the child reaches the age of 3 years. The shortening of working hours not only applies to those who work full time (e.g., 40 hours per week), but also to employees with shorter working hours and employees who work longer due to an agreement on additional work.
- An employee who is pregnant, giving birth or breastfeeding, raising a child up to 14 years of age or a disabled child up to 18 years of age alone can request to work remotely and have flexible working hours; the employee's request must be based on a health care institution's conclusion about her/his health condition or the need to take care of a family member or a person living with them. If the employer does not prove that this would cause excessive costs they must comply with the employee's request to work remotely and these employees will also be allowed to work during their preferred working hours.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- None

Other provisions of leave

- **Mother's Day (*mamadienis*) and Father's Day (*tėvadienis*)**. mothers and fathers raising one child under the age of 12 years are entitled to additional rest time ('Mother's Day and Father's Day') once every 3 months, and those raising two children under the age of 12 year, when one or both children have a disability, 2 days per a month.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is 3 years, but only the 1st year is paid at a high rate; if the option for the 2nd year of paid leave is taken, the 2nd year is paid at a low earnings-related rate. There is no entitlement to ECEC at any age.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

From 1 January 2026, the system of benefits for families with children in Lithuania has been further increased. The universal child allowance amounts to €129.50 per

month per child, reflecting the rise in the base social benefit. In addition, for large families, low-income households, or families raising a child with a disability, an extra benefit is provided, bringing the total child allowance to approximately €205.70 per month per child. The one-off payment upon the birth of a child also continues to be indexed to the base social benefit and has been increased to €814 from January 2026, and further to €1,036 from June 2026, ensuring a gradual strengthening of financial support for families with newborns.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

According to the information provided by the Social Insurance Fund Board (SODRA), 100 per cent of employed women take their full entitlement to Maternity leave.

b. Paternity leave

No information available.

c. Parental leave

According to the information provided by SODRA[329], in 2025 mothers accounted for 85 per cent of all users of Parental leave benefit and fathers 15 per cent.

d. Other types of leave and flexible working

No information available.

[329] Statistinių duomenų portalas

Luxembourg[330]

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April 2026

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1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*congé de maternité*) (responsibility of the Ministry overseeing Social Security matters and the Ministry overseeing Labour matters)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 20 weeks: 8 weeks before the birth and 12 weeks after the birth.
- It is obligatory to take all this leave.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings with an upper limit of €13,518.70 per month, equal to five times the minimum social wage of an unqualified worker in Luxembourg. An implicit minimum exists, as the minimum social wage provides a floor for the earnings of the mother.
- For private sector employees, payments are made to the mother by the National Health Fund (*Caisse Nationale de Santé*). For civil servants and public employees, payments are made to the mother by the employer (e.g., the state).
- Payments are taxed and subject to social insurance contributions.
- Pension contributions are made during Maternity leave.
- The Maternity leave scheme is fully integrated into the National Health Fund and is funded in the same way as all sickness benefits, with funding shared between employers (30 per cent), employees (30 per cent), and the state (40 per cent). More specifically, Maternity leave payments are funded from contributions intended to cover benefits for sick leave. The state contributed 40 per cent of the cost of these benefits; the non-state contributions

[330] Please cite as: Berger, F., Salagean, I. and Valentova, M. (2026) 'Luxembourg country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A., Kaufmann, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

(amounting to 60 per cent of the cost) were 0.5 per cent of earnings, equally divided between employers and employees (i.e. 0.25 per cent of earnings each), although the proportion going towards maternity pay cannot be differentiated.

Flexibility in use

- None.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- In order to be granted maternity benefits during Maternity leave, the employee or self-employed worker must have been affiliated with the mandatory sickness and maternity insurance fund for at least six months during the 12 months prior to the Maternity leave.
- No difference is made between workers on long-term or short-term contracts.
- Unemployed people are not eligible.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to a person other than the mother

- If the birth takes place before the expected delivery date, the part of the pre-natal period not taken is added to the post-natal period. If the birth takes place after the expected delivery date, the post-natal period is still 12 weeks.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- If the health or security of a pregnant woman is endangered because of specific working conditions (listed in an annex to the labour code), or because in her work the pregnant woman is exposed to physical, biological or chemical products or procedures (also listed in the labour code annex), then the employer must inform the pregnant woman of this exposure, and must adjust her working conditions or her working time or temporarily exempt her from working so as to avoid putting her health or security at risk. There is no loss of earnings for the pregnant woman as a consequence of such adjustments. These adjustments are made by the employer upon the recommendation of an occupational health physician. The period of exemption from work for pregnant women is assimilated to sick leave.

b. Paternity leave *("Pappecongé") (responsibility of the Ministry overseeing Labour matters)*

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- Paternity leave is expressed in the law by 'leave due to extraordinary circumstances' (*congé extraordinaire*). It gives the right to take 10 working

days off per child in the case of the birth or adoption of a child aged less than 16 years. The duration of ten working days (80 hours) is reduced proportionally for workers who work less than 40 hours per week.

Payment, funding and taxation

- The first two days (16 hours) of leave are paid by the employer and cover 100 per cent of earnings; from the 3rd day (17th hour) onwards, the leave paid by the employer is reimbursed to the employer by the state (the Ministry overseeing Labour matters) with a ceiling equal to five times the social minimum wage of an unqualified worker (€13,518.70per month). An implicit minimum exists, as the minimum social wage provides a floor for the earnings.
- The employer loses the right to reimbursement if the reimbursement application is not submitted within 5 months of the date of birth or adoption of the child.
- Payments are taxed and subject to social insurance contributions.

Flexibility in use

- Paternity leave may be split, rather than taken as one continuous period. If the leave is split, it must be taken within two months of the birth or adoption.[331]
- Employers must be informed about the expected dates of the Paternity leave at the latest 2 months before the start of the leave. However, if the birth occurs more than 2 months earlier than the expected delivery date, then the obligation to notify the employer does not apply and the leave must be taken in full immediately after the birth of the child, unless the employer and employee agree on a flexible solution, i.e., that the employee will take all or parts of the leave at a later date.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Employed and self-employed fathers, as well as any person recognised as a second parent on the occasion of the birth of a child, are entitled to Paternity leave.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to a person other than the mother

- In case of multiple births, the Paternity leave is due for each child.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

[331] The details of the policy can be found here: https://guichet.public.lu/en/citoyens/travail-emploi/conges-jours-feries/situation-personnelle/conge-paternite.html

- None reported.

c. Parental leave ("*congé parental*") (responsibility of the Ministry overseeing Family Affairs)

Length of leave

- Between 4 and 20 months per parent, depending on their employment hours and the leave option they choose; see 'Flexibility in use' below for more detail.
- Leave is an individual, non-transferable entitlement.

Payment, funding and taxation

- The benefit paid during Parental leave (replacement wage) is calculated on the basis of income and hours worked on average during the 12 month period preceding the start of the leave and the leave option chosen, e.g., full-time workers taking the full-time leave option (4 months or 6 months) receive between €2,703.74 per month (the minimum social wage) and €4,506.23 (the minimum social wage increased by two-thirds). An implicit minimum exists, as the minimum social wage provides a floor for the earnings of the parent during the 12 month period preceding the start of the leave.
- More detailed information on the level of compensation for the range of different leave options is available at: https://cae.public.lu/en/conge-parental.html.
- Payments are made to parents by the *Zukunftskeess/Caisse pour l'Avenir des enfants*, a national fund which is placed under the responsibility of the ministry overseeing Family matters.
- Payments are taxed and subject to social contributions; pension contributions, therefore, accrue during the leave period.
- Funded from general taxation.

Flexibility in use

- Parents may choose between different length and payment options, depending on their employment situation:
  Parents working 40 hours per week:
  - Full-time leave of four or six months
  - Part-time leave of 8 or 12 months
  - Fractioned leave: 4 months within a period of 20 months
  - Fractioned leave: 1 day per week for up to 20 months.

  Parents working 20 hours or more per week:
  - Full-time leave of 4 or 6 months
  - Part-time leave of 8 or 12 months.

  Parents working ten hours per week or on apprenticeship contracts:
  - Full-time leave of four or six months.

- Both parents can take leave at the same time.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Parents must have been affiliated to the Luxembourg social security system and must have been employed without interruption for at least 12 continuous months immediately preceding the beginning of the Parental leave. The same conditions apply for self-employed workers, who also belong to the Luxembourg social security system.
- Parents must be working for a minimum of 10 hours per week.
- In the case of a change of employer during the 12 month period preceding or during Parental leave, the leave may be granted subject to the agreement of the new employer.
- For parents on permanent contracts with a probationary period, the right to Parental leave cannot take effect and the leave may be requested only after the end of the probationary period.
- Parents whose spouse does not work can take leave, but it must start within 3 weeks of the birth/adoption of the child.
- Same-sex parents are eligible.
- Workers on short-term contracts are eligible, provided that the end of the short-term contract is subsequent to the end of the Parental leave.
- Unemployed parents are not eligible.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to a person other than the mother

- In the case that multiple children are born or adopted, parents are eligible to Parental leave for each child. Different Parental leave options may be chosen for each child.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- Adoption leave (*congé d'accueil*) is for 12 weeks, paid at 100 per cent of earnings up to a limit (€13,518.70per month) equal to five times the minimum social wage of an unqualified worker in Luxembourg, and is available to all working persons who have belonged to a social security scheme at least for the six months preceding the commencement of the leave. This leave applies for adopting a child who has not yet turned 12 years old. In the case of adoption by both spouses, only one has the right to take this leave.

- Eligibility and funding for adoption leave is the same as for Maternity leave.
- If the adoptive parent is not eligible for the adoption leave described above, the adoptive parent's benefits (or adoptive parents' benefits) form a ten day leave if they are adopting a child under 16 years of age.
- Payment rules are the same as for Paternity leave.
- The adoptive parent's benefit is paid by the National Health Fund.

Time off for the care of dependants

- In the case of the sickness of a child, employees, self-employed and apprentices with dependent children younger than 18 years of age may take **leave for family reasons** (*congé pour raisons familiales*). The duration of this leave depends on the age of the child:
  - 12 working days per child if the child is under 4 years
  - 18 working days per child if the child is aged from 4 to 13 years
  - 5 working days per child if the child is aged between 13 and 18 years and the child is in hospital.

  For children who receive the special additional allowance and who have a disability of a certain severity (other than an illness or health disadvantage of exceptional severity):
  - the duration of the leave is doubled
  - the hospitalization condition does not apply
  - the age limit of 18 years does not apply.

  The duration of leave for family reasons can be extended for children with an illness or health disadvantage of exceptional severity, namely:
  - evolving cancer
  - conditions that requires hospitalization for more than 2 consecutive weeks.

  The duration of the extension is determined individually on a case-by-case basis and is limited to a total of 52 weeks for a reference period of 104 weeks.

  The leave for family reasons can be fractionated, meaning it does not have to be taken all at once; a fraction that does not exceed four hours is considered a half-day. A medical certificate must be presented to the employer as soon as possible following the worker's absence, and within three days to the competent health insurance fund. The leave is paid and funded by the National Health Fund (*La Caisse nationale de santé*).

  Employees on short-term contracts are eligible for this leave. Unemployed people are not eligible for this leave. A dependent child means a child born in or out of wedlock and adopted children. The child does not need to reside in Luxembourg. Same-sex parents are eligible for this leave.

  The employer pays the family leave to the parent, then reclaims the payments made (gross earnings plus employers' social contributions) from the Employers' Mutual Insurance Scheme (*Mutualité des employeurs*). The Employers' Mutual Insurance Scheme protects employers against the financial risk they may face when complying with their obligation to continue to pay wages to workers on sick or family leave (*Lohnfortzahlung*). The

Employers' Mutual Insurance Scheme further reclaims the benefit from the National Health Fund.

- The **carer's leave** (*congé d'aidant*)[332] is a special leave (*congé extraordinaire*) granted to employees for providing personal care or assistance either to a family member or to a person living in the same household who requires considerable care or assistance for a serious medical condition; family members include sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, spouses and partners. Employees working full time may benefit from a maximum of five working days (40 hours) of carer's leave during a reference period of 12 months of employment. In case an employee works part-time or works simultaneously for multiple employers, the duration of leave is pro-rated. Should periods of inactivity interrupt employment, then the 12 months reference period is prolonged by a duration equivalent to that of the inactivity. The leave may be split into hours and taken up in fragments.

  Employees and apprentices become eligible for this leave at the start of their employment contract. The employer of the carer must receive as soon as possible, and no later than three days after the start of an absence, a medical certificate showing that the person in need of care is unable to cope independently with physical, cognitive or psychological impairments or health-related constraints. Proof of a family relationship or of identical legal address for the carer and the person in need of care must also be provided.

  The carer's leave is paid at 100 per cent of earnings up to a ceiling (€13,518.70 per month) equal to five times the minimum social wage of an unqualified worker in Luxembourg. The benefit is taxed and social insurance contributions are due. The leave benefit is paid to the carer by their employer. The employer subsequently reclaims half of the amount paid as gross earnings (up to the ceiling) and employers' social contributions to the Ministry overseeing Labor matters. The leave is thus funded 50 per cent by the employer and 50 per cent by general taxation. The employer who has not asked reimbursement of the leave benefit within six months of the leave's end loses the right to be reimbursed.
- Employees are entitled to **leave for reasons of force majeure** (*congé pour raisons de force majeure*)[333] for urgent circumstances such as an accident or the illness of a family member requiring the immediate presence of the employee. Employees working full time may benefit from a maximum of 1 day (8 hours) of leave over a reference period of 12 months of employment. In the case that an employee works part-time or simultaneously for multiple employers, the duration of leave is pro rata. Should periods of inactivity interrupt employment, then the 12 months reference period is prolonged by a duration equivalent to that of the inactivity. The leave may be split into hours and taken up in fragments. The eligibility rules, payment and reclaiming rules and funding are the same as for the carer's leave.

[332] The policy is described in detail here: https://guichet.public.lu/fr/citoyens/travail/conges-jours-feries/situation-personnelle/conge-aidant.html
[333] The policy is described in detail here: https://guichet.public.lu/fr/citoyens/travail/conges-jours-feries/situation-personnelle/conge-force-majeure.html

- **Family hospice leave** for nursing a terminally ill person (*congé d'accompagnement d'une personne en fin de vie*) is paid leave to care for a person at the end of life and can be requested by any employee when a relative is suffering from a serious terminal illness. The leave duration is of maximum 5 days per year and per sick person. An employee is entitled who has a first-degree relative in ascending or descending line (mother/father, mother/father-in-law, daughter/son or daughter/son-in-law); or a second-degree relative in the collateral line (sister/brother, sister/brother-in-law); or a spouse or (legally recognised) partner, who is terminally ill.[334] The family hospice leave is assimilated to sick leave. Thus during the family hospice leave the employer[335] pays the employee then reclaims the payments from the Employers' Mutual Insurance Scheme (*Mutualité des employeurs*). The Employers' Mutual Insurance Scheme then further reclaims the benefit from the National Health Fund.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Breastfeeding mothers are entitled to breastfeeding breaks, either two breaks of 45 minutes or one break of 90 minutes. These breaks do not lead to any loss of pay.

Flexible working for carers

- At the end of statutory Parental leave**,** the Luxembourg Labour Code (Article L.234-47(11)) allows employees returning to work to adjust their working hours. These employees are entitled to request a meeting with their employer in order to request an adjustment of their working hours for a maximum period of 1 year. The employer can refuse the employee's request, but must provide a reason for the refusal.The lack of the employer's motivation to adjust the working hours or an abusive motivation entitles the employee to claim damages and interest.
- The legislation further establishes the possibility for any employee with at least 6 months' continuous service to request a meeting with his or her employer for the purpose of seeking the introduction of flexible working arrangements. The employees concerned are (i) parents of a child under the age of 9 years; or (ii) persons who provide personal care or assistance to a family member (son, daughter, mother, father, spouse, or partner), or to an individual living in the same household, who requires substantial care or assistance for serious medical reasons.

  Flexible working arrangements may include, *inter alia*, teleworking, flexible working hours, or a reduction in working time. Such measures may be granted for a period not exceeding 1 year. The employer is required to respond to the employee within 1 month, taking into account the needs of

[334] The details of the policy can be found here: https://guichet.public.lu/en/entreprises/ressources-humaines/ conges/ situation-perso/conge-accompagnement-fin-de-vie.html.

[335] In some cases this does not apply and the employee receives the benefit directly from the National Health Fund. Detailed rules about how cash benefits are provided to employees in case of sick leave are explained here: https://cns.public.lu/en/employeur/arret-maladie-conges/arret-travail/maladie/duree-indemnite-pecuniaire.html

both parties. Any decision to refuse or defer the request must be duly justified in writing and communicated by registered letter with acknowledgement of receipt. At the end of the agreed period, the employee has the right to return to the original working arrangement. The employee may also request an earlier return in the event of a change in circumstances; in such cases, the employer must respond within 1 month, again taking into account the respective needs of both parties.[336]

- Civil servants have the right to part-time leave immediately after Maternity leave, Adoption leave or Parental leave, or to unpaid leave. Part-time leave is considered consecutive to Maternity, adoption or Parental leave even if a recreational leave period occurs between the two leaves. The part-time leave is granted for the purpose of raising 1 or more children who have not yet been admitted to the 1st year of primary education (starting at the age of 4 years). If pregnancy or adoption occurs during this part-time leave, the part-time leave ends and the civil servant is entitled to Maternity or Adoption leave, Parental leave, unpaid leave or part-time leave. However, the Maternity or Adoption leave granted in this way is fully remunerated only if it occurs during the first 2 years following the beginning of the part-time leave. The part-time leave is considered as a period of full-service activity for the application of advancement in rank, increases in wage index, advancements in salary, promotions as well as for the right to admission to the promotion examination. Part-time leave may also be granted to civil servants upon request in the following cases: (i) for raising one or more dependent children under the age of 15 years; or (ii) for duly motivated personal, family, or professional reasons.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- If antenatal appointments must take place during a pregnant woman's working time, then she is exempted from work, without any earnings loss, in order to attend her appointments.

Other provision of leave

- **Bereavement leave.** A special leave (*congé extraordinaire*) is granted to employees and apprentices in the event of the death of a child aged less than 18 years. The child may be born in or out of wedlock or adopted. The length of the bereavement leave is 5 working days. The leave must be taken immediately following the death of the child. Bereavement leave is paid at 100 per cent of earnings up to an upper limit of €13,518.70 per month, equal to five times the minimum social wage of an unqualified worker in Luxembourg.The benefit is taxed and social insurance contributions are due.

[336] https://www.bsp.lu/lu/publications/newsletters-newsflashes/newsflash-employment-law-new-rights-favour-work-life-balance
The reference to the law:
https://legilux.public.lu/eli/etat/leg/loi/2023/08/15/a512/jo
https://legilux.public.lu/eli/etat/leg/loi/2023/07/29/a524/jo

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The total duration of well-paid leave is up to 14.8 months, provided that both parents in the same family use their right to full-time Parental leave. The period could be longer if they opt for a part-time Parental leave arrangement. A legal entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) begins at birth, but, in practice, only children who attend daycare or are cared for by a childminder may benefit from this entitlement.

With residents speaking a range of languages apart from the national language (Luxembourgish) and the two official ones (French, and German), Luxembourg has introduced a multilingualism education programme in ECEC services. The multilingual education programme gives the right to children aged from one to four years to attend 20 hours per week free of charge (46 weeks per year); only children attending centres may benefit from this education (those attended by childminders are excluded). Daycare may charge fees for children who attend more than 20 hours per week. Children aged three to four, who are in a part-time early education school (*éducation précoce*) are entitled to ten hours of multilingual education free of charge, and those who attend full-time early education school are not eligible for the free multilingual education programme.

A shortage of affordable daycare places means that in practice entitlement to ECEC is at three years of age, when children have the option to attend free early education school, or at four years of age when enrolment in ECEC is compulsory.

There is thus no gap between the end of well-paid leave and the start of the part-time entitlement to multilingual education, but there is a gap of 21 months before the start of the general operational ECEC entitlement (i.e. the free early education school) at three years.

ECEC provision has developed significantly in the last 15 years, including registered childminders and an important increase in places in centre-based services (both subsidised and private). Public funding for parents using these ECEC services depends on family income, the number of siblings, and the number of hours children attend.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

The minimum social wage has increased, which affects the minimum and maximum level of some benefits.[337]

[337] Inspection générale de la sécurité sociale (2026) *Le gouvernement luxembourgeois Paramètres sociaux valables au 1er janvier 2026*. Available at: https://igss.gouvernement.lu/dam-assets/publications/param%C3%A8tres-sociaux/2026/par-soc-202601.pdf

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

As Maternity leave is obligatory, all employed women should take up the whole period of leave.

b. Paternity leave

The 2018 activity report of the Ministry overseeing Labour matters provides some numbers on the beneficiaries of the Paternity leave for whom the employer has asked the reimbursement from the State starting from the third day of the Paternity leave onwards (2018 data): 3,255 applications were filed of which 50 incomplete applications and 223 ineligible applications (applications must be sent within five months after the birth or the adoption). The 2019 annual activity report of the Ministry overseeing Labour[338] matters reported that in the year 2019, 5,333 Paternity leave applications were submitted and 4,351 applications were approved and funded. The 2020 annual activity report of the Ministry overseeing Labour[339] matters reported that in the year 2020, 5,899 Paternity leave applications were submitted and 6,177 applications were approved and funded (some of them were submitted the year before). The 2021 annual activity report of the Ministry overseeing Labour matters revealed that in the year 2021, 5,468 Paternity leave applications were submitted, out of which 5,219 were eligible for funding.[340] The Ministry overseeing Labour matters has provided, for the purposes of this report, the following statistics for the years since 2022:

	Calendar year		
	2022	2023	2024
Number of Paternity leave reclaim applications filed by employers	6,787	6,455	6,499
Number of Paternity leave reclaim applications deemed eligible	6,539	6,227	6,172
Number of Paternity leave reclaim applications that have been refunded[341]	7,915	3,760	6,216

[338] Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de l'Économie sociale et solidaire (2019) *Rapport d'activité 2019.* Available at : https://gouvernement.lu/dam-assets/fr/publications/rapport-activite/minist-travail-emploi/2019-rapport-activite/2019-rapport-activite-mteess.pdf

[339] Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de l'Économie sociale et solidaire (2020) *Rapport d'activité 2020*. Available at : https://gouvernement.lu/dam-assets/fr/publications/rapport-activite/minist-travail-emploi/2020-rapport-activite/2020-rapport-activite-mteess.pdf

[340] Ministère du Travail (2025) *Rapport d'activité 2024*. Available at : https://gouvernement.lu/fr/publications/rapport-activite/minist-travail-emploi/mteess/2024-rapport-activite-mt.html

[341] Some of the applications refunded in a given year may have been submitted in preceding years.

c. Parental leave

The first available source of uptake rates is the evaluation of Parental leave in Luxembourg completed by KPMG in November 2002.[342] In December 2013, a report for the Luxembourg Ministry of Family and Integration was completed by the Luxembourg Institute for Socio-Economic Research (LISER).[343] In February 2020, a report financed by the Luxembourg Ministry of Family, Integration and the Great Region was realized by LISER.[344] Between 2021 and 2025, scientific publications from the projects financed by the Luxembourg Research Fund (FNR) were published.[345] In 2023 two peer-rewiewed contributions produced in the framework of a COST Action project Parental Leave Policies and Social Sustainability have been published.[346]

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[342] KPMG Assurance Advisory Luxembourg (2002) *Etude d'évaluation de l'impact du congé parental au Grand-Duché de Luxembourg [Evaluation study of the impact of Parental leave in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg]*. Available at: http://www.gouvernement.lu/salle_presse/actualite/2002/12/23biltgen/dossier.pdf

[343] Valentova, M. and Bia, M. (2013) *Le congé parental chez les parents d'enfant unique. Analyse du recours au congé parental par les mères et les pères d'enfant unique, et de son impact sur l'engagement des mères sur le marché du travail. Rapport rédige pour le compte du ministère de la Famille at de l'Intégration* [Parental leave use by parents of one child], Luxembourg: Liser.

[344] Valentova, M., Amjahad, A., Genevois, A-S., Leduc, K. and Maas, R. (2020) *Évaluation intermédiaire des résultats de la réforme du congé parental de 2016: Projet financé par le Ministère de la Famille, de l'Intégration et à la Grande Région* [*Intermediate evaluation of the Parental leave reform of 2016. Project financed by the Ministry of Family, Integration and the Great Region*], Esch-sur-Alzette: LISER. Available at : https://mfamigr.gouvernement.lu/dam-assets/publications/rapport-etude-analyse/conge-parental/Rapport-LISER-Evaluation-intermediaire-des-resultats-de-la-reforme-du-conge-parental-de-2016.pdf

[345] Valentova, M., Amjahad, A. and Genevois, A. S. (2022) 'Parental Leave Take-up and its Intensity. Do Partners' Workplace Characteristics Matter?', *Journal of Social Policy*, DOI:10.1017/S0047279422000885;

Uzunalioglu, M., Valentova, M., O'Brien, M. and Genevois, A. S. (2021) 'When does expanded eligibility translate into increased take-up? An examination of Parental leave policy in Luxembourg', *Social Inclusion*, Vol.9, 2: 350-363.

Amjahad, A., Valentova, M. and Maas, R. (2022) 'How Do Employers Respond to a Policy Reform of Parental Leave? A Focus on Fathers and Companies From Economy Sectors With Traditionally Lower Take-Up Rates', *Journal of Family Issues*, Vol.44, 12: 3089-3116;

Amjahad, A., Valentova, M. and Maas, R. (2023) 'How Do Employers Respond to a Policy Reform of Parental Leave? A Focus on Fathers and Companies From Economy Sectors With Traditionally Lower Take-Up Rates', *Journal of Family Issues*. Vol.44, 12: 3089-3116.

Valentova, M., Maas, R., Koslowski, A., (2025) Parental leave challenges from the perspective of employers: understanding sectors with low take-up by fathers. *Gender, Work and Organization.* https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.13259;

Valentova, M. (2025) ‚How do parents care together? Dyadic parental leave take-up strategies, wages and workplace characteristics', *Work, Employment and Society*, *39*(1), 91-114. https://doi.org/10.1177/09500170241229281;

Bia, M., Blanco, G. and Valentova, M. (December 2024) ‚The heterogeneous impact of parental leave take up on the wage distribution: Evidence from Luxembourg', *Econometric Reviews*, 1–28. https://doi.org/10.1080/07474938.2024.2417167.

[346] Dobrotić, I. (ed.), Son, K., Engeman, C., Valentova, M. and Aksoy, T. (2023) 'Comparative leave policy databases: which leave policy design elements are monitored through comparative leave policy indicators?' In I.Dobrotić and Á.A.Arnalds (eds.) *Parenting leave policy data gaps: a comparative critical analysis: COST Action Parental*

Time series showing the evolution of the number of beneficiaries of Parental leave as well as evolutions according to several characteristics of beneficiaries are published by the Inspection Générale de la Sécurité Sociale on its website[347] and in its annual report on social security, the Rapport Général sur la sécurité sociale.[348] In December 2024, 13,671 Parental leave benefits have been paid.

Following the reform of Parental leave enforced in December 2016, the share of men being on Parental leave on the 31December of the year has jumped[349] from 24.6 per cent in 2016 to 44.5 per cent in 2017, then steadily increased up to 58.9 per cent in 2023. The trend indicates a growing attractiveness of the new Parental leave for fathers (5,625 females and 8,046 males on leave in 2024 compared to 3,557 females and 1,163 males in 2016). In 2024, the share of Parental leaves held by fathers remains stable at 58.9 per cent. The type of Parental leave used by male and female beneficiaries shows however very different (and stable) patterns: in December 2024, 69.2 per cent of female beneficiaries took the full-time version of leave, 18.8 per cent opted for the part-time version, and only 12.0 per cent took the fractioned form of leave. Among male beneficiaries, 29.3 per cent took the full-time version of Parental leave, 19.3 per cent used the part-time leave, and 51.4 per cent opted for the fractioned type of leave. When expressed in full-time equivalents, the share of Parental leaves held by males on the last day of the year jumped from 22.0 per cent in 2016 to 37.5 per cent in 2017 and increased gradually to approximatively 47 per cent in 2023 and in 2024. Despite substantial progress, women thus still hold a larger share of ongoing Parental leave at the end of the year 2024 than men.

As of 2025, the Inspéction générale de la sécurité sociale (IGSS) relies on administrative records to estimate the take-up rate of Parental leave by mothers and fathers of a yearly cohort of children. The take-up rate is calculated as the ratio of the number of parents of children born in a given year who start a parental leave within the six[350] subsequent years (numerator), to the number of parents eligible[351] for Parental leave at any point during the same time period (denominator). IGSS published two documents in 2025 to describe the take-up

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Leave Policies and Social Sustainability. COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology), pp.32-49. Available at: available at: https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/8g25k Dobrotić, I., Dimitrova, E., Valentova, M., Mercan, M., Ilieva, K., Makay, Z., Reimer, T. and Aðalbjörg Arnalds, Á. and Bártova, A. (2023) 'European comparative surveys: what can we learn (or not) about parenting leave policy?', in I.Dobrotić and Á.A.Arnalds (eds.) *Parenting leave policy data gaps: a comparative critical analysis: COST Action Parental Leave Policies and Social Sustainability*. COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology), pp.11-32. Available at: https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/8g25k

[347] https://igss.gouvernement.lu/fr/statistiques/prestations-familiales.html

[348] IGSS (2023) *Rapport general sur la sécurité sociale*. Available at https://igss.gouvernement.lu/fr/publications.html

[349] The statistics presented in this paragraph stem from data available at https://igss.gouvernement.lu/fr/statistiques/prestations-familiales.html

[350] The Parental leave reform of December 2016 rules that all Parental leave accruing to a child must begin before the childs' 6th birthday, except in case of adoptions, where the Parental leave may be taken up until the childs' 12th birthday. Adoptions are not considered here.

[351] Eligibility is determined by modelling the legal provisions concerning Parental leave on the data available in the IGSS datawarehouse.

rates for parents of two cohorts, i.e. parents of children born in 2017 and 2018[352]. The resuls reveal that, for children born in the year 2017, the take-up rate of Parental leave is estimated to be 64.8 per cent, but marked gender differences are observed: 83.1 per cent of mothers and 53.0 per cent of fathers have taken up Parental leave for this cohort. The most recent data available for children born in the year 2018 reveal that the overwhole take-up rate of Parental leave is 69.4 per cent. About 86.1 per cent of mothers and 58.3 per cent of fathers have taken up Parental leave for this cohort[353]. Take-up rates of both mothers and fathers vary by (i) personal characteristics such as age or country of residence, (ii) by employment characteristics such as the employment sector, employer size, or hourly wage level, as well as (iii) the Parental leave take-up behavior of the other parent.

d. Other employment-related measures

No information available.

[352] IGSS (mars 2025) 'Le recours au congé parental des parents des enfants nés en 2017 [The use of Parental leave by parents of children born in 2017], Aperçu n° 27', Inspection Générale de la Sécurité Sociale. Available at: https://igss.gouvernement.lu/fr/publications/apercus-et-cahiers/apercus/apercu27.html; IGSS (novembre 2025) 'Le recours au congé parental des parents des enfants nés en 2018' [The use of Parental leave by parents of children born in 2018], Aperçu n° 32, Inspection Générale de la Sécurité Sociale. Available at: https://igss.gouvernement.lu/fr/publications/apercus-et-cahiers/apercus/apercu32.html

[353] As of 1 January 2023, the condition that the parent should have been affiliated to Luxembourg's social security system at the time of the child's birth is removed. This resulted in an expansion of the number of eligible parents and thus in lower take-up rates. In the absence of this change, for the cohort of children born in 2017, the take-up rates would have been 92.8 per cent for mothers, 59.9 per cent for fathers and 74.1 per cent overall.

Malta[354]

Frances Camilleri-Cassar (University of Malta)

April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents[355]

a. Maternity leave and Special Maternity leave (responsibility of the Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights)

Length of leave

- 18 weeks: 6 weeks must be taken following the birth, while a further 8 weeks can be taken before or after birth. A further period of up to 4 weeks may be taken immediately after these 14 weeks.
- It is obligatory to take 6 weeks following the birth.
- Special Maternity leave is granted when suitable alternative work and/or work hours (in terms of health and safety during pregnancy or during the 26 weeks starting from the date of confinement) are not possible. In such instances, the mother is granted leave, up to the time limit stipulated by the statutory Maternity leave.

Payment, funding and taxation

- For Maternity leave, 100 per cent of earnings for 14 weeks with no upper limit on payment, followed by a flat-rate payment equivalent to the statutory minimum wage (€213.54 per week) for the final four weeks. During Special Maternity leave, an allowance is paid, equivalent to the rate of the sickness benefit payable under the terms of the Social Security Act.
- Women on Maternity leave or Special Maternity leave are entitled to the same rights and benefits which may accrue for other employees of the same class

[354] Please cite as: Camilleri-Cassar, F. (2026) 'Malta country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A.A., Dobrotić, I., Kaufmann, G., Koslowski, A. and Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026.* Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

[355] There is a distinction between policies in the public administration - which comprises government ministries, government departments and government entities - and those pertaining to the private sector and which do not fall under the Wages Council Wage Regulation Orders (WRO). Policies under the WRO include employees engaged in a contract of service in the private sector and are outside the scope of this report.

or category of employment at the same place of work, including the right to apply for promotion. Furthermore, the mother is entitled to return to the same job. If, for a valid reason, the position is no longer available, she is entitled to equivalent or similar work and conditions of employment.
- Except for bonuses or allowances related to performance or production, all automatic or fixed allowances specifically incorporated into the pay package should not be deducted during such leave.
- Payments are taxed.
- Funded by employers (public or private), except for the final 4 weeks paid at minimum wage level, which is funded by the government, via the relevant benefit under the Social Security Act. Private employers receive a refund from the Maternity Leave Trust Fund for wages paid to women during their 14 weeks' Maternity leave.[356]

Flexibility in use

- 8 weeks of leave can be taken before or after birth.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employees and self-employed women.[357]

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent) or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In those cases where, owing to a pathological condition arising out of confinement, an employee is unable to resume duties at the end of her Maternity leave, she will be entitled to a further period of absence of up to 5 weeks, which are deducted from her paid sick leave. Any period of absence in excess of the paid sick leave entitlement is considered sick leave without pay.

[356] The Maternity Leave Trust Fund addresses discrimination against the employment of women in the private sector. Although employment law prohibits gender discrimination at the stage of recruitment, employers in the private sector are often wary of employing women, due to the possibility of pregnancy and payment for Maternity leave. The fund is financed through contributions by private companies. The premium contribution is calculated at 0.3 per cent of the basic wage of all employees, and the amount collected goes into the fund. This policy does not change the system of payment to women on Maternity leave (i.e., full wage for the first 14 weeks paid by the employer, and a flat-rate benefit paid by the government for the remaining four weeks of Maternity leave). The calculation of the 0.3 per cent is based on the number of employed women, the annual basic wage, the probability of maternity, the probability of women who exit the labour market before/during/after pregnancy, and the number of women working in the private sector. The fund is calculated on a 3, 6 or 12 months reimbursement system (yet to be established) by the government to employers after their payment for Maternity leave.

[357] A self-employed woman who has recently given birth is eligible for a Maternity leave benefit; this benefit is paid for four weeks, in addition to the first 14 weeks, as maternity benefit entitlement.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave[358] (public sector)[359] (responsibility of the Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights)

Length of leave

- 10 working days.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of previous earnings with no upper limit on payment.
- Payments are taxed.
- Funded by the government as the employer.

Flexibility in use

- Must be taken up in one continuous period within 15 days following the birth or adoption of a child.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Fathers or equivalent second parents from the date of commencement of employment.
- Same-sex couples are also eligible.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent) or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

[358] OPM Circular No. 11/2022.
[359] *Manual on Work-Life Balance Measures, March 202*6. Available at: https://publicservice.gov.mt/Media/PSMC%20Documents/Manual_on_Work-Life_Balance_Measures_6.pdf?v=202603131625.

b. Paternity leave (private sector)

Length of leave

- 10 working days.

Payment and funding

- 100 per cent of previous earnings with no upper limit on payment.
- Funded by the employer who claims a refund from the State Trust Fund according to the applicable rate established for the scheme.

Flexibility in use

- None. Must be taken up in one continuous period within 15 days following the birth or adoption of a child.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Fathers or equivalent second parents, on the birth or adoption of a child.
- Granted irrespective of the marital status or the family status of the worker.
- Eligibility not conditional on length of service.
- Eligible also in case of still births, as provided under the maternity leave policy.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent) or delegation of leave to person other than the father

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave[360] (public administration) (responsibility of the Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 12 months.
- Leave is a family entitlement.

[360] OPM Circular No 117/92, MPO Circular No BI/6/94, MPO Circular No 28/96, OPM Circular No 15/1998, OPM Circular No 29/1998, MPO Circular No 108/2005 and MPO Circular No 3/2008, OPM Circular No 11/2022.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 2 months[361] paid at the same rate established by the sickness benefit entitlement under the Social Security Act.
- Individual right of each parent, for a period of 4 months until the child has attained the age of 8 years.
- However, child credits are awarded to parents who take a career break or terminate employment to care for their child/children under 6 years of age. Credits are due for the first three children, even if the parent does not return to employment. Any credits for the 4th child (and onwards if required) will be awarded on the condition that the parent returns to employment for the same number of years of credits to be awarded.

Flexibility in use

- Parental leave may be taken in one continuous period of 12 months or in several continuous periods of 4, 6 or 9 months.
- 4 months may be broken down into periods of 1 month at a time and taken until the child is 10 years old – they may be granted on a full-time or a part-time basis, in a piecemeal way, or a time-credit system.
- Leave may be shared between the parents if both are public administration employees.
- Parents cannot be on leave together.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Every parent in employment, whether full-time or part-time, on an indefinite or fixed-term contract.
- Completion of 12 months of probationary period.
- Same-sex couples, legal guardians, adoptees and foster carers of children under 10 years of age are eligible[362].

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent) or delegation of leave to person other than the father

- Public officers in the positions of head, director, or assistant-director are eligible for 4 months unpaid Parental leave instead of 12 months, and this leave may be taken up to the child's tenth birthday. Any period taken as unpaid Parental leave is calculated as part of the 6 years creditable performance required as an officer in the respective grade.
- None

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

[361] Subsidiary legislation 452.125 The Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers Regulation, Legal Notice 201 of 2022.
[362] OPM Circular No 117/92, MPO Circular No BI/6/94, MPO Circular No 28/96, OPM Circular No 15/1998, OPM Circular No 29/1998, MPO Circular No 108/2005 and MPO Circular No 3/2008.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave[363] (private sector unless covered by Wage Regulation Orders)[364]

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 4 months per parent.
- The first 2 months are an individual, non-transferable entitlement; the second 2 months are an individual but transferable entitlement.

Payment, funding and taxation

- The first 2 months for each parent are paid; the remaining period is unpaid. The payment rate is the Married rate established for the
- sickness benefit entitlement, i.e., 50 per cent of previous earnings for children under 4 years of age; or 25 per cent of previous earnings for children 4 to 8 years of age.[365]
- Payments are made to parents by the employer who claims a refund from the State up to a maximum of 2 months leave per parent.

Flexibility in use

- Leave may be taken in periods of 1 month, up to the child's 8th birthday.
- The 4 months can be taken on one continuous period if the child is between 0 and 4 years, in which case only 4 weeks of the entitlement will be paid at the applicable rate and the remainder is unpaid; if the child is between 4 and 6 years, only 2 weeks of the entitlement will be paid at the applicable rate and the remainder is unpaid; if the child is between 6 and 8 years, only 2 weeks of the entitlement will be paid at the applicable rate and the remainder is unpaid.
- Parents cannot be on leave together.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Each parent on the grounds of birth, adoption, child fostering or legal custody of a child.
- At least 12 months of continuous service.
- Self-employed workers and same-sex couples are not eligible.

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[363] L.N. 201 of 2022, Employment and Industrial Relations Act (Cap.452) The Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers Regulations, 2022.

[364] Thirty-one sectors in the private sector fall under WROs, including hospitals and clinics, construction, private cleaning services, printing and publishing seamen, hotels and clubs, etc. Workers covered by Wage Regulation Orders have their own legal entitlements, which are amended regularly (e.g. hours of work). The reference to the 'private sector' benefits in this report covers only non-WRO workers. For more information, see: https://dier.gov.mt/en/Legislation/Pages/Wage-Regualtion-Orders.aspx.

[365] L.N. 201 of 2022. Employment and Industrial Relations Act (Cap. 452) The Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers Regulations, 2022.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent) or delegation of leave to person other than the father

- None

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks (public sector)

- A 5 year career break can be taken until a child is 10 years old by employees in the public administration; in the case of female employees, they must undertake 6 months employment either after Maternity or Parental leave, or else immediately after the career break. The 5 years must be taken in one continuous period and may be reduced to multiples of 3 months; if the five years are not fully used, the outstanding leave may be taken for the care of another child/children. The career break may be shared by both parents once if both are public administration employees.
  There is no payment; however, child credits are awarded to parents and legal guardians who take a career break or terminate employment to care for their child/children under 6 years of age. Credits are due for the first 3 children, even if the parent does not return to employment; any credits for the 4th child (and onwards if required) will be awarded on the condition that the parent returns to employment for the same number of years of credits to be awarded.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks (private sector)

- No statutory entitlement. Any career break is at the discretion of the employer.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working (public sector)

Adoption leave and pay

- The same as Maternity leave.
- International adoptees (i.e., persons who adopt a child from outside Malta) are entitled to additional separate periods of unpaid leave that do not exceed three months in total.

Time off for the care of dependants

- Public administration workers who have completed their respective probationary period may apply for up to 1 year of unpaid **responsibility leave**, to care for dependent elderly parents, children, spouse or partner in a civil union (renewable every year).

- Public sector employees are entitled to unpaid **carer's leave** to provide personal care or support to a relative, or to a person who lives in the same household as the public employee, and who needs care or support for a medical reason.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Women may take a maximum reduction for breastfeeding of 1 hour per working day without loss of payment, taken as 1 60 minute break, 2 30 minute breaks, or 3 20 minute intervals per day.

Flexible working for carers

- Parents are not obliged to work overtime for a period of 12 months from the birth of their child.
- Employees with 3 months of service may apply to work flexi-time for 12 months, renewable every year, with a full-time salary and other benefits. Employees may work different time schedules in winter and summer.
- Employees may apply to work reduced hours (i.e., between 20 and 35 hours per week) until their children are 16 years old, with pro-rata payment. Alternative work arrangement 'closer to home' is limited to a maximum of 26 weeks from birth confinement.
- All employees in public administration who have held their current position for at least 3 months, may apply to work: (i) a 40-hour week over 4 or 6 days for 12 months (renewable every year); or (ii) up to 20 per cent of weekly working hours remotely during usual office hours, subject to approval, and without providing justification. The approved arrangement is valid for 12 months, which may be renewed yearly.
- All employees in public administration who have held their current position for at least 3 months are eligible for 'extended remote working', if their job is suitable for remote working. Eligibility may include, but is not limited to, the following reasons: (i) public officers who have children up to sixteen years that need to be taken care of; (ii) public officers who have dependent elderly parents, sons and daughters, or spouse/partner in a civil union; (iii) public officers who have valid medical/humanitarian reasons. In any of these cases the public officer is required to produce a medical specialist's certificate certifying that for medical or serious humanitarian and/or family reasons, they may not attend their duties fully from the office.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- Pregnant women are entitled to attend ante-natal examinations during working hours, with no loss of pay or any other benefit.

Other provisions of leave

- **Marriage and civil union leave.** 3 consecutive working days no later than the first working day following the marriage or civil union.
- **Miscarriage Leave**. This leave supports parents and prospective parents who experience the loss of a pregnancy before the 22nd week, whether this occurs naturally, due to medical complications, or through a necessary medical procedure. If the pregnancy ends later, the entitlement shifts to Maternity leave. All employees, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, or

type of contract are entitled to this leave, including part-time and probationary workers. Miscarriage Leave provides 7 working days of full paid leave, to be taken immediately following the miscarriage. Both the person who experienced the miscarriage and the other expectant parent may take this leave, and no minimum service period is required.

- **Neo-natal care leave.** State-funded leave for parents whose newborns require intensive medical care immediately after birth.
- **Bereavement leave.** All employees are entitled to bereavement leave on the death of a wife, husband, mother, father, son, daughter, brother or sister of the employee. The entitlement may vary depending on the Wage Regulation Order. Employees in work which not regulated by any Work Regulated Order are entitled to 1 working day as stipulated in L.N. 432 of 2007 – Minimum Special Leave Entitlement Regulations.
- **Special parental beareavement leave.** This lea**ve is** granted to working parents who experience the loss of a child under the age of eighteen years, who can take 7 working days away from work to grieve and manage personal matters following such a loss. This entitlement is being introduced as a separate form of leave under the law, ensuring that parents have specific protection and support in such difficult circumstances. Like other forms of statutory leave, Special Parental Bereavement Leave will be paid, with payment based on the employee's basic wage. The cost will be shared between employers and the government. Depending on the sector, the employer will cover the first 1 or 2 days, while the remaining days, up to the full 7 days will be funded by the Department for Social Security. Part-time employees or those working reduced hours will also be entitled to this leave, calculated on a pro-rata basis according to their working hours.
- **Medically assisted reproduction (IVF) leave.** Fully paid leave for 60 hours to the receiving person and 60 hours to the other may be taken for every assisted reproductive procedure, up to three times. Leave may be taken by both parents concurrently. The entitlement to 60 hours of paid leave is granted one time for the human oocyte process, who is not a prospective parent, irrespective of the entitlements to the receiving person. Eligibility is for a prospective parent, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, who have attained the age of majority and is a receiver or user of the medically assisted procreation techniques regulated under the Embryo Protection Act.
- **Special leave***.* Unpaid 3 months leave in any period of 12 months for a special reason, including work-life balance reasons.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working (private sector)

Adoption leave

- An employee who is the parent of an adopted child is entitled to an uninterrupted period of 18 weeks' leave when the child is adopted and such leave commences from the date on which the child passes into the care and custody of the adoptive parent or parents by a court judgment in the country of origin. An employee on adoption leave is entitled to the first 14 weeks of adoption leave on full pay but if the employee elects to avail themselves of any additional adoption leave in excess of 14 weeks, the employer is not be obliged to pay for those weeks of adoption leave in excess of the 14 weeks,
- In the case of a single parent, adoption leave is taken by that parent. In the case of more than one parent: if one parent is employed on the date of the child's adoption, the leave is taken by that parent; and if both parents are

employed, whether with different employers or with the same employer, on the day of the child's adoption, each parent is entitled to a portion of the adoption leave as agreed between them by written agreement.

Time off for the care of dependants

- **Unpaid carer's leave** of 5 working days per year, to provide personal care or support to a relative or person in the same household for a serious medical reason.
- **Urgent family leave.** The employer is bound by law to grant every employee a minimum total of 32 hours with pay per year as time off for urgent family reasons. Such urgent leave has to be related to cases of sickness or accident to members of the immediate family of the employee. Out of the 32 hours urgent family leave to which a full-time employee is entitled, the first 16 hours taken as urgent family leave are deducted from the annual vacation leave entitlement of the employee. The second 16 hours taken as urgent family leave are deducted from the annual paid sick leave entitlement of the employee.

Specific provision for breastfeeding

- None.

Flexible working for carers

- Carers and employees with children up to the age of 8 years are entitled to request flexible working arrangements.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- None.

Other provisions of leave

- **Miscarriage Leave; Neo-natal care leave; Bereavement leave; Special parental beareavement leave; Medically assisted reproduction (IVF) leave.** As for public sector above.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is just under 76 months for public administration workers who use Parental leave and career breaks; or just over 11 months for private sector workers. In both cases, most of the leave period is unpaid, with leave paid at a high rate for just over three months. There is an entitlement to free attendance at Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) for children from 3 months of age who have a parent in full-time education or employment. There is, therefore, no gap between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement for children with parents in employment or studying. However, all children are entitled to attend ECEC from 3 years, irrespective of whether the parent is economically active or a stay-at-home parent.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

The following new policies were introduced for public and private sectors:

- Miscarriage Leave. As from 1 January 2026, Miscarriage Leave is a new legal entitlement that supports parents and prospective parents who experience the loss of a pregnancy before the 22nd week, whether this occurs naturally, due to medical complications, or through a necessary medical procedure. If the pregnancy ends after the 22nd week, the entitlement shifts to Maternity leave.
- Special parental beareavement leave. As from 1st January 2026, Special Parental Bereavement Leave is a new type of entitlement granted to working parents who experience the loss of a child under the age of 18 years. This leave allows parents to take 7 working days, away from work to grieve and manage personal matters following such a loss. Previously, parents were entitled to only 1 or 2 days of leave depending on the sector, but this new measure significantly extends the period to 7 days.
- Neo-natal care leave. In 2026, a new, fully state-funded leave was introduced for parents whose newborns require intensive medical care immediately after birth.

4. Uptake of leave (public sector)[366]

There has been no update to the Family Friendly Report since 2020.

a. Maternity leave

In 2020, a total of 769 women took their entitlement of the first statutory 14 weeks Maternity leave on full pay; 597 took the remaining low-paid 4 weeks.

b. Paternity leave

In 2020, 196 men took up their entitlement to Paternity leave, an increase of almost 50 per cent over the leave uptake in 2019.

c. Parental leave

There is a clear gender gap in the uptake of unpaid Parental leave. In 2020, women's share of the uptake was 98 per cent.

d. Childcare leave and career breaks

In 2020, women were predominantly the largest number of takers of the career break with a total of 229 (98 per cent) women compared with 4 men.

[366] *Family Friendly Measures Research Report 2020*. Malta: People and Standards Division, Office of the Prime Minister. Available at: https://publicservice.gov.mt/en/people/Documents/People-Support-Wellbeing/Reports/FFM - 2020.pdf

A study of social policy in Malta finds that unpaid family leave is synonymous with career regression, and interruption in national insurance contributions. This, in turn, perpetuates women's financial dependence on men and increases the feminisation of poverty in old age (see Camilleri-Cassar, 2005).[367] Until leave-to-care policies can offer financial compensation for loss of earnings and are modified to allow time for the equal sharing of care between women and men, gender inequality will persist, both in the workplace and domestic sphere in Malta (Camilleri-Cassar, 2005).[368] The findings from this 2005 study seem to persist today.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working[369]

In 2018, out of the total number of employees who used the IVF leave, 65 per cent were women and 35 per cent were men. Data on same-sex couples who took up the leave is unavailable.

In 2020, a total of 1,317 public officers chose to work Reduced working hours, 94 per cent of whom were women. Teleworking is a popular measure for both women and men. In 2020 and 2021, in the fifteen months of the pandemic, workers were strongly encouraged to telework to contain the spread of the virus. Others worked on a rota basis. No data is available as to the increase in the number of teleworkers over this time.

Flexitime seems to be the most preferred measure by both women and men. In 2020, of a total number of 1,418 public officers working flexitime, 816 (58 per cent) were women, compared with 602 men.

4. Uptake of leave (private sector)[370]

No information available.

[367] Camilleri-Cassar, F. (2005) *Gender Equality in Maltese Social Policy? Graduate Women and the Male Breadwinner Model*, Malta: Agenda Publishing.
[368] Ibid.
[369] *Family Friendly Measures Research Report 2020*. Malta: People and Standards Division, Office of the Prime Minister. Available at: https://publicservice.gov.mt/en/people/Documents/People-Support-Wellbeing/Reports/FFM - 2020.pdf
[370] Based on personal communication with the Department of Industrial and Employment Relations, Malta: http://dier.gov.mt/en/Pages/home.aspx

Mexico[371]

Cándido Pérez (Early Institute[372])

April 2026

Mexico is a federal state, with 31 federal states and Mexico City.

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*licencia de maternidad, seguro de maternidad*) (responsibility of the Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social [private sector]; the Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales de los Trabajadores del Estado, the Secretaría de Marina (Semar), the Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional (Sedena) and Petróleos Mexicanos (Pemex) [at federal level], state governments [at state level] [public sector])

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 12 weeks: 2 to 6 weeks before the birth and 6 to 10 weeks after the birth.
- It is obligatory to take all the leave.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings, with no upper limit on payment for the standard period; 50 per cent of earnings for a period not exceeding 60 days if Maternity leave is extended.
- Payments are made to the mother by the social security fund.
- Payments are not taxed.
- Maternity leave periods are taken into account in the calculation of old age and other pension benefits.

[371] Please cite as: Pérez, C. (2025) 'Mexico country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, Á. A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2025*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

[372] 'Early Institute' is a Mexican think tank constituted by a group of social scientists and lawyers who develop applied research and consultancy, mainly to analyse and inform public policies on childhood. In particular, they contributed to the preparatory work for the introduction of Paternity leave in Mexico (2012).

- Payments are funded by the social security fund, which is financed by contributions from employers (around 20 per cent), employees (5 per cent) and the federal government (75 per cent).

Flexibility in use

- In the private sector, at the request of an employee, up to 4 of the 6 weeks of Maternity leave before birth can be transferred to after the birth: this requires a formal statement from a doctor, and takes into consideration the employer's view, and the type of work that the employee performs.
- In the public sector, some State laws and some agency regulations provide the flexibility to transfer up to 2 weeks of the prenatal period to after the birth. For other public sector employees, the judicial route is available to enforce this right by claiming discrimination.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- In the private sector, employees must have contributed to social security for at least 30 weeks in the 12 months before the date on which the Maternity leave starts. When the employed woman does not meet this requirement, it is the statutory responsibility of the employer to pay 100 per cent of the earnings. Employees must not perform any paid work during pre- and post-natal periods.
- Only female employees in the formal economy are eligible for Maternity leave. More than 60 per cent of all employed women have no access to social security since they work in the informal economy. Women who are self-employed have a special and voluntary social security regime (*régimen voluntario*), which does not include Maternity leave insurance.
- In the public sector, there are no specific eligibility requirements.
- Unemployed mothers do not have any Maternity leave benefit.
- Same-sex parents are eligible for Maternity leave.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- If the child is born with any kind of disability or requires hospital care, leave can be extended up to 8 weeks after birth; however, the mother must show a medical certificate to claim this extension.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- Some state governments have extended Maternity leave for public sector employees, from 12 to 14 weeks (Chihuahua, Puebla), from 12 to 18 weeks (Michoacán), from 3 to 4 months (Yucatán), and from 3 until 7.5 months, 40 per cent of earnings (Ciudad de México).

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave (permiso de paternidad) (responsibility of the Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social and the Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social [private sector]; the Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales de los Trabajadores del Estado, the Secretaría de Marina (Semar), the Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional (Sedena) and Petróleos Mexicanos (Pemex) [at federal level], state governments [at state level] [public sector])

Length of leave

- 5 working days.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings with no upper limit on payment.
- Payments are taxed.
- Paternity leave periods are taken into account in the calculation of old age and other pension benefits.
- Funded by the employer.

Flexibility in use

- None.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- As with Maternity leave, Paternity leave only applies to parents in the formal economy, so does not apply to about 50 per cent of male employees, who have no access to social security.
- Unemployed fathers do not have any Paternity leave benefit.
- Same-sex parents are eligible for Paternity leave.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- Paternity leave can be extended in cases of serious illness of the child or death of the mother.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- See 'Additional note' below.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- Many government and other public agencies and academic institutions grant longer periods of paid Paternity leave than the legal minimum, usually between 10 and 15 days paid at full earnings, including: the *Secretaría de Bienestar*, the *Secretaría de Gobernación*, the *Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores*, the Tribunal Electoral from the *Poder Judicial de la Federación*, the *Guardia Nacional*, the *Instituto del Fondo Nacional de la Vivienda para*

los Trabajadores, the *Secretaría de las Mujeres, the Instituto Nacional Electoral*, the *Comisión de Derechos Humanos de la Ciudad de México*, *El Colegio de la Frontera Sur*, the *Instituto Politécnico Nacional*, and the State governments of Campeche, Coahuila, Colima, Hidalgo, Jalisco, Mexico City, Michoacán, Morelos, Nayarit, Puebla and Yucatán. Public employees from the States of Michoacán, Tamaulipas and Querétaro are entitled to 20 days, those from the state of Chiapas are entitled to 30 days, those from the States of México, Tlaxcala and Zacatecas are entitled to 45 days, while public employees from the States of Nuevo León, Hidalgo and Quintana Roo are entitled to 60 days. Public employees in the *Consejo de la Judicatura Federal* and the State government of Baja California Sur public are entitled to 90 days, which is the longest Paternity leave in the country.

c. Parental leave

No statutory entitlement.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- In the case of adoption, the mother is entitled to 6 weeks of paid leave, from the day that she receives the child; the father is entitled to 5 working days.

Time off for the care of dependants

- Parents are entitled to full-time **leave to care for a child under 16 years of age diagnosed with cancer**, during the period the child is in hospital or in need of continuous treatment (with certification by the public health service). The length of leave is up to 25 days, but the employee can demand as many periods of leave as are needed, up to 364 days during a three-year period. The scheme is paid at 60 per cent of earnings. The employee must have contributed to social security for at least 30 weeks in the 12 months before the date of diagnosis. When the employee does not meet this requirement, they must have contributed to social security at least 52 weeks before the date this leave starts. The leave is an individual right, but only one of the parents is entitled to use it. Any working parent with legal custody has the right to take it, both public and private employees.

Specific provision for (breast) feeding

- Mothers can have 2 fully paid breaks per day, up to 30 minutes each, to (breast) feed their child (*periodo de lactancia*), until the child is 6 months old. These breaks should be in a proper and hygienic place designated by the employer, or, if this is not possible, the mother's working day should be reduced by 1 hour.

Flexible working for carers

- None. The Federal Labor Law does provide protection for workers who spend more than 40 per cent of their work time at home or at an address of their choosing. It requires that the terms and conditions of teleworking be established in a written agreement between the employer and employee; it also includes a principle of reversibility, which allows for a return to face-to-face work if requested.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- Although the Federal Labour Law does not explicitly establish the right to take time off work for antenatal appointments, various regulations - such as the General Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents - recognize that pregnant women are entitled to timely, effective, comprehensive and safe medical care. This includes attendance at antenatal appointments or any other medically necessary care. Consequently, attending antenatal appointments is considered a justified and remunerated form of work leave.

Other provisions of leave

- None reported.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

As a national policy, for most employees, the maximum period of paid post-natal leave is 10 weeks in the private sector and eight weeks in the public sector, paid at a high rate (maternity leave). Since 2019, attendance at Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is both an entitlement and compulsory for children under 6 years old (*educación inicial* and *educación preescolar*), though there is not enough provision to ensure places for the youngest age group (0 to 3-years-old). There is, therefore, in practice a substantial gap of nearly three years between the end of leave and the start of an ECEC entitlement for most children.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

Currently there are around 6 proposals concerning leave policy in Congress (both the House of Deputies and the Senate). Mainly, they propose to extend Maternity leave from 12 to between 14 and 20 weeks, and Paternity leave from 5 days to between 10 days and 8 weeks. These proposals should be discussed or dropped without discussion during 2026.

In recent years, various legislative proposals, such as these, have been introduced at the national level to reform Maternity and Paternity leave, as well as to introduce other types of Parental leave. However, none of these initiatives have been approved. Progress continues to take place at the state level, where an increasing

number of states are expanding or improving leave entitlements. Nevertheless, these changes only apply to public sector employees, as the regulation of leave in the private sector falls under federal jurisdiction.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

Maternity leave benefit covered about 13 per cent of the 1,820,888 births in 2023.[373] This percentage is low because only approximately 45 per cent of mothers are employed and only 40 per cent of this minority have formal employment, and are therefore entitled to Maternity leave

b. Paternity leave

No information available.

c. Parental leave and parental benefit

No statutory entitlement.

[373] Author's calculations based on data provided by the *Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social*, the *Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales de los Trabajadores del Estado*, and the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografia*.

The Netherlands[374]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave *(zwangerschaps-en bevallingsverlof)* (responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 16 weeks: 4 to 6 weeks before the birth and 10 to 12 weeks after the birth. If the birth is later than the expected date of delivery, the longer benefit period preceding childbirth is not deducted from the benefit period after childbirth, resulting in a longer period of leave.
- It is obligatory to take 4 weeks before and 6 weeks after the birth.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings up to an upper limit of 70 per cent of the 'daily maximum wage', which is set annually by the government, and is €304.25 in 2026.
- Payments are made to the mother by her employer, who claims back from the Employee Insurance Agency.
- Payments are taxed.
- Pension rights continue to accrue during leave.
- Funded from the Employee Insurance Agency, which is financed by employers contributing between 2.6 and 7.64 per cent of employees' earnings.

[374] Please cite as: den Dulk, L. and Yerkes, M.A. (2026) 'Netherlands country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, Á.A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2025*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be started between 6 and 4 weeks before the expected date of delivery, but pregnant workers are not allowed to work between 4 weeks before the expected date, and 6 weeks after the actual date of delivery.
- After the 6 weeks' obligatory leave following delivery, mothers are entitled to use the remaining part of their leave in a flexible way, spread over a maximum of 30 weeks.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All female employees.
- Self-employed women who have worked at least 1,225 hours in the calendar year in which they give birth are entitled to 16 weeks payment up to a maximum of 100 per cent of the statutory minimum wage, depending on the number of hours worked (€14.71 per hour before taxes for those aged 21 years and older in 2026).[375]
- Women in same-sex relationships who give birth are eligible.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- Additional leave of up to 10 weeks, if the child needs to stay at the hospital for more than 1 week after the birth.
- Delegation of 10 weeks of leave to the partner if the mother dies, even if the mother was self-employed or was not eligible for leave (e.g., because of not being in paid employment).
- In the case of multiple births, mothers are entitled to 20 weeks of Maternity leave (8 to 10 weeks before the due date and the remaining leave after the birth).
- In the case of miscarriage or stillbirth after 24 weeks, mothers are entitled to the full 16 weeks of leave.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- Collective agreements may supplement Maternity leave payments. According to a 2024 study of a sample of 108 collective agreements, 43 of these agreements supplement payments up to 100 per cent of earnings.[376]

[375] Previous country notes for the Netherlands reported this amount as a maximum montly salary. Since the introduction of a Statutory Minimum Wage in 2024, the Dutch government and the Employee Insurance Agency rely solely on a minimum hourly wage. See: https://www.uwv.nl/nl/premies-bedragen/referentiemaandloon for more information.

[376] Mol, H. and Domen, I. (2024) *Gezinsvriendelijk Personeelsbeleid* [Family-friendly personnel policy], The Hague: Ministry of Social Affairs.

b. Paternity leave (*geboorteverlof - 'birth leave'*) (responsibility of Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment)

Length of leave

- The length of leave is equivalent to the number of working hours per week per partner/father, e.g., a full-time job of 38 hours per week gives a leave entitlement of 38 hours (i.e., 1 week).
- Supplemental birth leave (*Aanvullend geboorteverlof*) is also available. The length of supplemental birth leave is 5 times the number of working hours per week, up to a maximum of 5 weeks, e.g., a full-time job of 40 hours per week gives a supplemental leave entitlement of 5 weeks.

Payment, funding and taxation

- The first week is paid at 100 per cent of earnings, with no upper limit on payment.
- The weeks of supplemental leave are paid at 100 per cent of earnings up to an upper limit of 70 per cent of the daily wage, which is set annually by the government (€304.25 in 2026).
- Payments are made to the partner/father by his/her employer, who claims back from the Employee Insurance Agency.
- Payments are taxed.
- The first week is paid by the employer. The weeks of supplemental leave are funded from the Employee Insurance Agency, which is financed by employers contributing between 2.6 and 7.64 per cent of employees' earnings.

Flexibility in use

- The 1st week of leave must be taken within 4 weeks after the birth of the child.
- The weeks of supplemental leave can be taken flexibly over a longer period, e.g., 1 week of leave can be taken 1 day a week for 5 weeks. The supplemental leave must be taken within 6 months following the birth of the child.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Male and female employees who are the partner (by marriage, civil union or co-habitation of a woman giving birth) or who acknowledge the child.
- Self-employed partners/fathers are not entitled to birth leave.
- Employees in same-sex relationships are eligible if they have a relationship with the birth mother (by marriage, civil union or co-habitation) and legally recognize the child.
- Fathers or partners are eligible for the supplemental weeks of leave as long as they have taken the 1st week of birth leave.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the father

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- Collective agreements may contain supplementary arrangements with respect to the duration of paid birth leave and/or top-up payments for supplemental birth leave beyond the 70 per cent payment. Collective agreements may not deviate from the legislation if it disadvantages the employee. A 2022 evaluation of the supplemental leave found that 79 per cent of employers topped up the leave payment, 63 per cent to full earnings and 19 per cent to the maximum daily wage of €274.44.[377] However, a 2024 study of a sample of 108 collective agreements suggests this percentage may be lower, with just 29 of the 108 collective agreements providing payments beyond 70 per cent of earnings, including 24 topping up to 100 per cent.[378]
- Employers can temporarily refuse or change the take-up of supplemental birth leave up to 2 weeks before the leave is scheduled to begin. This can only occur if there are serious business reasons for doing so. For example, employers can change the days or weeks in which leave are taken, but this can only happen in consultation with the employee.

c. Parental leave (*ouderschapsverlof*) (responsibility of Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment)

Length of leave

- 26 times the number of working hours per week per parent per child, e.g., a full-time job of 38 hours per week gives a leave entitlement of 988 hours (i.e., 26 weeks).
- Leave is an individual, non-transferable entitlement.

Payment, funding and taxation

- The first 9 weeks of leave, if taken during the first year of the child's life, are paid at 70 per cent of earnings up to an upper limit of 70 per cent of the 'daily maximum wage', which is set annually by the government (€304.25 in 2026).
- Payments are taxed.
- Taking unpaid Parental leave has no consequences for unemployment benefits. However, when an employee falls ill during the leave period, they cannot make claims for sickness payment; this insurance entitlement is restored once the leave period ends. The impact on pensions depends on the specific pension agreement and collective agreement.

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[377] Based on the maximum daily wage for 2022. Rossing, H. and Vissee, H. (2022) *Evaluatie WIEG Eindrapport*, Amsterdam: Regioplan. Available at: https://open.overheid.nl/documenten/ronl-0692237f7cac997ca0d9fed7bb8e28b55b97c904/pdf

[378] Mol, H. and Domen, I. (2024) *Gezinsvriendelijk Personeelsbeleid* [Family-friendly personnel policy, The Hague: Ministry of Social Affairs.

- Funded from the Employee Insurance Agency, which is financed by employers contributing between 2.6 and 7.64 per cent of employees' earnings.

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be taken until a child is 8 years.
- Parents are granted full flexibility in use unless uptake conflicts with serious business needs.
- Parents can take leave at the same time, if they choose.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employees are entitled to Parental leave, including same-sex couples, parents of foster children, step-children, adopted children (as long as they live in the same household), and employees with temporary contracts.
- Self-employed parents are not entitled to Parental leave.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- Each parent is entitled to additional leave in the case of a multiple birth.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- Since paid leave was introduced in 2022, collective agreements continue to supplement legislation, for example topping up leave payments. A 2024 study of a sample of 108 collective agreements found that 21 collective agreements augment legislation in favour of the employee. For 11 of these 21 agreements, employees receive a top up payment (ranging from 75 per cent to 100 per cent of earnings); others pay over a longer period (i.e., 12 agreements provide partial payment for a period of 13 weeks) or enable leave to be taken beyond a child's 8th birthday (3 agreements).[379]

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

[379] Mol, H. and Domen, I. (2024). *Gezinsvriendelijk Personeelsbeleid* [Family-friendly personnel policy], The Hague: Ministry of Social Affairs.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- Each parent is entitled to 6 weeks of leave when a child is placed for adoption (or long-term fostering), with payment equivalent to Maternity leave.
- Leave can be used flexibly over a period of 26 weeks (four weeks before the child is placed and 22 weeks after), as long as it does not conflict with serious business needs. This leave does not have to be taken in one block.
- For adoptive parents, the same regulations for Parental leave (both paid and unpaid) apply as for other parents. But while employed parents of adopted children are entitled to the full 9 weeks of paid Parental leave per child, employed parents of foster children and step-children are not entitled to a separate period of 9 weeks paid Parental leave per child; they are only eligible for a total of 9 weeks of leave, no matter how many foster or step-children they have.
- Collective agreements can also supplement adoption leave and pay. A total of 29 of 108 sampled agreements in 2024 offer a top up to 100 per cent of employees' earnings for adoption leave.[380]

Time off for the care of dependants

- **Short-term leave** (*Kortdurend zorgverlof*) up to a maximum of two times the number of working hours per week can be taken annually to care for a sick child living at home, a sick partner, or parent, other household members, family members, or friends. The employer is required to pay 70 per cent of the employee's earnings. All employees are eligible, subject to three conditions: (i) an employer can refuse to grant the leave if the interests of the organisation might be seriously harmed; (ii) care must be necessary because of illness; and (iii) the employee must be the only person capable of providing care.
- **Long-term leave** (*Langdurend zorgverlof),* of up to six times working hours per week per year, to be taken part-time (i.e., 12 weeks at half of the working hours), can be taken in all cases where long-term care is needed. It is unpaid. With the agreement of the employer, long-term care leave can also be taken full-time or with reduced hours per week over a longer period, up to a maximum of 18 weeks. The right is conditional: the employee must be the only person capable of providing care and an employer can refuse the leave if the organisation's interests are seriously harmed.
- A reasonable amount of time off work can be taken by an employee with very exceptional personal circumstances (e.g., a broken water pipe, a death in the family, or a child suddenly taken ill). This so-called '**emergency leave**' can last from a few hours to a few days, but terminates after 1 day if short-term leave (see above) is subsequently taken. The employer is required to pay 100 per cent of the employee's earnings.
- Collective agreements can also supplement these forms of leave. A total of 24 of 108 sampled collective agreements provide 100 per cent payment during short-term leave. Fewer agreements offer payment for long-term

[380] Mol, H. and I. Domen. (2024) *Gezinsvriendelijk Personeelsbeleid* [Family-friendly personnel policy]. The Hague: Ministry of Social Affairs.

leave: 7 provide 100 per cent of earnings and eight provide some payment during the leave.[381]
- Collective agreements can also offer a specific form of carer's support, including leave. The 2024 study suggests 39 of the 108 sampled agreements includes arrangements for informal carers; five of these agreements include carer's leave.[382]

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Mothers returning to work after Maternity leave are entitled to breastfeed or pump breast milk during working hours until their child is 9 months old, and are entitled to take breaks of up to 25 per cent of their working hours. Employers are required to offer a suitable room and pay for these hours.

Flexible working for carers

- All employees who have completed 6 months' continuous employment with their present employer have the right to increase, decrease, or adjust their working hours and the right to work from home. These rights are, however, conditional: the employer can refuse to grant the request if the interests of the business or service might be seriously harmed; and the law does not apply to employers with fewer than 10 employees.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- Under the Working Hours Act, pregnant employees are entitled to attend antenatal appointments during working hours without loss of earnings. During pregnancy, employees are also entitled to regular working hours and resting times, a suitable room to rest, additional breaks (maximum of one-eighth of daily working hours), exemption from overtime and night shifts (unless the employer can prove necessity), or to work not more than a maximum of 10 hours per shift.

Other provisions of leave

- None reported.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave per family is just over 16 months, 8.1 months of which is well paid. There is an entitlement for children to start school, on a voluntary basis, from 4 years of age, prior to compulsory schooling at 5 years of age. There is, therefore, a significant gap of nearly 40 months between the end of well-paid leave and an entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in the form of early admission to elementary school.

[381] Mol, H. and Domen, I. (2024) *Gezinsvriendelijk Personeelsbeleid* [Family-friendly personnel policy], The Hague: Ministry of Social Affairs.
[382] Ibid.

ECEC (VVE, or *voor- en vroegschoolse educatie* in Dutch) is partially subsidized by municipalities and offered to children aged 2½ to 4 years old. In many municipalities, ECEC is offered to children at risk of language or learning deficiencies; in some municipalities, all children aged 2½ to 4 years old are eligible. In short, considerable differentiation exists regarding eligibility and provision across municipalities.

Parents can also make use of market-based formal childcare services, and working parents may be entitled to childcare allowances.[383] The Netherlands experienced a government crisis in 2021 related to the provision of these childcare allowances, in which parents were falsely accused of fraudulently receiving allowances. In these cases, the allowance was rescinded and parents were required to pay back thousands of Euros retrospectively, with far-reaching social and economic consequences for the affected families.[384] Ongoing attempts to financially compensate the tens of thousands of parents affected have been relatively unsuccessful. An emergency commission convened in 2025 concluded that the government promised more than it can deliver, hampered in part by the more than 70,000 applications received requesting compensation. It is estimated that approximately 44,000 families have a right to compensation, and even if simplified compensation procedures are followed, it will take until at least 2027 before all families will be compensated.[385] A 2025 report suggests, however, that there has been no decline in childcare attendance levels since the childcare allowances crisis; childcare attendance has actually grown since 2017, with an increase in both the total number of hours of childcare provided as well as the number of hours of childcare attendance per child.[386]

The National Childcare Quality Monitor (LKK) monitors the quality of childcare facilities in the Netherlands. Trend analysis shows a steady increase in the quality of childcare between 2017 and 2023. In 2024, there are indications of declining quality, in particular regarding after-school care. Future measurements are needed to establish whether this is a start of a downward trend or a fluctuation.Nevertheless, in comparison to other countries, and based on international measures such as ITER-S/ECER-R and CLASS, the Netherlands is still considered to have high quality childcare.[387] Trend analysis also shows that the

[383] Yerkes, M.A. and Javornik, J. (2018) 'Creating capabilities: childcare policies in comparative perspective', *Journal of European Social Policy*, Vol.29, 4: 529-544.

[384] Van Dam, C. J. L., Van Aalst, R. R., Leijten, R. M., Belhaj, S., Kuiken, A. H., Van der Lee, T. M., Van Wijngaarden, J. and Van Kooten-Arissen, F. M. (2020) *Ongekend onrecht. Parlementaire ondervraging Kinderopvangtoeslag* [Unprecedented injustice. Parliamentary inquiry into childcare benefits]. Available at: www.tweedekamer.nl/sites/default/files/atoms/files/20201217_eindverslag_parlementaire_ondervragingscommissie_kinderopvangtoeslag.pdf

[385] Van Dam, C., Dortmans, C. and Sibma, S. (2025) *Minder Beloven, Meer Doen. Een eerlijk en uitvoerbaar plan om toeslagenouders verder te helpen* [*Promise Less, Do More. An honest and viable plan to help childcare subsidy parents move forward*]. Available at: *https://open.overheid.nl/documenten/5f5e7ae7-7c9c-4db0-94f9-841d70a2f83c/file*

[386] Statistics Netherlands (2025) *Aanbod kinderopvang in Nederland, 2017-2023* [Childcare supply in the Netherlands, 2017-2023], The Hague: CBS. Available at: https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/longread/aanvullende-statistische-diensten/2024/aanbod-kinderopvang-in-nederland-2017-2023.

[387] Romijn, B., Slot, P., Jepma, IJ. et al. (2025) *Kwaliteitsmonitor Kinderopvang. De kinderdagopvang, peuteropvang, buitenschoolse opvang, gastouderopvang in beeld. Analyses op basis van gecombineerde metigen 2017-2024* [Childcare quality monitor. Developments in de the quality of the Dutch day care, toddler care, after school care,

demand for childcare continues to grow in the Netherlands, while at the same time, staff shortages are also growing.[388]

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

Elections were held in November 2025 and a new government was installed in February 2026. The newly-formed political coalition under Prime Minister Jetten planned to reduce the maximum daily wage, which would have effectively reduced the payment provided for Maternity, Paternity (supplemental birth leave) and Parental leaves. Following critiques of these plans and the expected effect on leave uptake, the cabinet has revised them and is no longer planning to adjust this rate.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

Statistics from 2023 show that 96.7 per cent of women who work and have a child younger than 1 year old took up Maternity leave.[389] A total of 5.5 per cent of women took supplemental Maternity leave for the birth of multiple children. Moreover, statistics from the same biennial report on the use of the flexible part of Maternity leave shows that although a majority of women (52.3 per cent) are aware that the last part of leave can be taken flexibly (i.e., after the first 6 weeks following delivery, the flexible uptake of leave remains limited (9.3 per cent in 2023). A report from 2025 suggests that Maternity leave uptake among self-employed mothers may be declining, with 7 per cent less uptake in the first 8 months of 2025 compared to the first 8 months of 2024.[390]

b. Paternity (Birth) leave

Research shows that in 2023, 89 per cent of eligible fathers took birth leave directly after the birth of the child, compared to 90 per cent in 2021.[391] The percentage of

childminder care based on the combined measuremnets 2017-2024], Utrecht: Universiteit Utrecht and SARDES.

[388] Slot, P., Bodine, R., Jepma, I., Muller, P., Breedeveld, M. and Leseman. P. (2023) *Knelpunten, werkbeleving en de gevolgen van COVID-19 in de kinderopvangsector* [Bottlenecks, work perceptions and the impact of COVID-19 in the childcare sector], Utrecht: Universiteit Utrecht and SARDES. See also: Statistics Netherlands (2025) *Aanbod kinderopvang in Nederland, 2017-2023* [Childcare supply in the Netherlands, 2017-2023], The Hague: CBS. Available at: https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/longread/aanvullende-statistische-diensten/2024/aanbod-kinderopvang-in-nederland-2017-2023.

[389] Statistics Netherlands (2024) *Monitor Arbeid, Zorg en Kinderopvang 2023 [Work, Care and Childcare Monitor 2023*], The Hague: CBS. Available at: https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/maatwerk/2024/15/monitor-arbeid-zorg-en-kinderopvang-2023.

[390] UWV (2025) *UWV Achtmaandenverslag 2025* [UWV 8-month report 2025], Amsterdam: UWV. Available at: https://www.uwv.nl/assets-kai/files/b2a4a37a-d60c-4e43-b302-4b1c45bf41eb/uwv-achtmaandenverslag-2025.pdf.

[391] Statistics Netherlands (2024) *Emancipatiemonitor 2024*, The Hague: CBS; Statistics Netherlands (2022) *Emancipatiemonitor 2022*, *The Hague: CBS.*

fathers taking the full 6 weeks of leave is growing. Whereas one-third of fathers took 5 weeks of leave or more in 2021, more than half (53 per cent) of fathers took all 6 weeks of leave in 2023 and a further 14 per cent took 5 weeks[392] An initial evaluation of the new law suggests that the majority of fathers take this leave concurrently with mothers.[393] Fathers not taking leave (11 per cent) cited financial difficulties, difficulties taking leave at work, or believing it was bad for their career as reasons for not taking leave. Although more recent statistics are not available, information from the Employees Insurance Agency suggests Paternity leave uptake increased between 3 and 5 percentage points between 2024 and 2025.

c. Parental leave

Statistics on the uptake of paid Parental leave, introduced in 2022, remain limited. According to news reports, a total of 124,000 parents claimed paid Parental leave in the first year of its implementation, which is approximately 36 per cent of parents in a given year.[394] General statistics on the uptake of Parental leave (paid or unpaid) suggest that uptake has grown since the introduction of paid Parental leave but that gender differences in the use of Parental leave have increased. In 2021, 18 per cent of female employees with children up to 8 years old took Parental leave. For male employees, this was 17 per cent.[395] In 2023, 32 per cent of female employees and 27 per cent of male employees took Parental leave.[396] This marks a shift in leave uptake in the Netherlands, where differences in uptake between men and women had declined between 2015 and 2021. Biennial statistics on the duration of Parental leave are no longer being collected.

The biennial *Emancipatiemonitor* study indicates that both mothers and fathers not taking Parental leave are influenced by financial constraints, a belief that it is not possible to take leave from their job, that it would have a negative effect on their career or being unaware of the leave.[397] Studies of Parental leave before it was paid suggested uptake of Parental leave is higher among more formally educated and high-income parents, parents with a Western ethnic background and native Dutch parents, those working more hours per week, working in a large organisation, and working in either the education sector or a governmental organisation. The latter is related to the fact that collective agreements in those sectors offered partial pay to employees taking Parental leave.[398]

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[392] *Statistics Netherlands (2024) Emancipatiemonitor* 2024, The Hague: CBS; and Alejandro Perez, S. and Souren, M. (2022) *Module Arbeid, Zorg en Kinderopvang 2021* [*Module Labour, Care and Childcare 2021*], Den Haag: CBS. Available at: https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/longread/rapportages/2022/module-arbeid-zorg-en-kinderopvang-2021

[393] Rossing, H. and Vissee, H. (2022) *Evaluatie WIEG Eindrapport* [Evaluation WIEG Final report], Amsterdam: Regioplan. Available at: https://open.overheid.nl/documenten/ronl-0692237f7cac997ca0d9fed7bb8e28b55b97c904/pdf

[394] www.parool.nl/nederland/ruim-120-000-ouders-maken-gebruik-van-nieuw-betaald-ouderschapsverlof~bb0da8c2/.

[395] Statistics Netherlands (2022) *Emancipatiemonitor 2022*, The Hague: CBS.

[396] Statistics Netherlands (2024) *Emancipatiemonitor 2024*, The Hague: CBS.

[397] Statistics Netherlands (2024) *Emancipatiemonitor 2024*, The Hague: CBS.

[398] Zwinkels, W. (2018) *Verlofregelingen arbeid en zorg naar type arbeidsrelatie* [*Work and care leave according to type of employment relation*], The Hague: Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

d. Other types of leave and flexible working

Care leave: percentages of informal carers range between 7 and 12 per cent depending on the source. According to Statistics Netherlands, a total of 9 per cent of female employees and 7 per cent of male employees provided long-term informal care (for more than 2 weeks) in 2023.[399] A 2024 study from the Ministry of Health suggests these percentages may be higher, with 10 per cent of men and 15 per cent of women providing an average of 11 hours care per week.[400] Workers with informal care responsibilities report that emotional support from their supervisor and colleagues plus flexible working hours are most beneficial when combining paid work and informal care.[401]

Relatively few employees with informal care responsibilities use short or long-term care leave. In 2023, 4 per cent of women providing long-term care (i.e. more than 2 weeks) and 6 per cent of men made use of short-term care leave. Less than 1 per cent of employees providing long-term care made use of unpaid long-term care leave.[402] The majority of employees do not take any form of leave when providing short- or long-term care.[403]

Flexible working: the Flexible Working Act 2016 entitles employees to adjust their working hours and working times, and entitles employees to work from home. With respect to the right to adjust working hours, it is well known that many workers in the Netherlands work part-time. The Netherlands Institute of Social Research has published several reports on part-time work in the Netherlands.[404] [405] [406] [407] It is clear that part-time work is very popular (and for women even almost regarded as 'natural'). Most Dutch employees are satisfied with their amount of working hours, suggesting that part-time work is, in most cases, voluntary.[408] However, research suggests that women who are young, working in white- and blue-collar

[399] Statistics Netherlands (2024) *Emancipatiemonitor 2024*, The Hague: CBS.
[400] See: https://www.vzinfo.nl/participatie/mantelzorg.
[401] Boer, A. de, Plaisier, I. and Klerk, M. de (2019) *Werk en* mantelzorg [*Work and informal care*], The Hague: Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau.
[402] Perez, A.A. and Souren, M. (2024) *Monitor Arbeid, Zorg en Kinderopvang 2023* [Monitor Work, Care and Childcare 2023], CBS/SZW. https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/longread/aanvullende-statistische-diensten/2024/monitor-arbeid-zorg-en-kinderopvang-2023
[403] Statistics Netherlands (2024) *Emancipatiemonitor 2024*, The Hague: CBS.
[404] Portegijs, W. and Keuzenkamp, S. (eds.) (2008) *Nederland deeltijdland. Vrouwen en deeltijdwerk* [Part-time working in the Netherlands], Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau.
[405] Portegijs, W. (ed.) (2008) *Verdeelde tijd. Waarom vrouwen in deeltijd werken* [A picture of part-time working], Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau.
[406] Keuzenkamp, S. (ed.) (2009) *Deeltijd (g)een probleem. Mogelijkheden om de arbeidsduur van vrouwen met een kleine deeltijdbaan te vergroten* [Working part-time: (not) a problem?], Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau.
[407] Portegijs, W. (2022) *Eens deeltijd, altijd deeltijd. Waarom vrouwen in deeltijd blijven werken als ze 'uit' de kleine kinderen zijn* [Once part-time, always part-time. Why women keep on working part-time when they no longer have small children], Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau.
[408] Vlasblom, J.D., van Echtelt, P. and de Voogd-Hamelink M. (2015) *Aanbod van arbeid 2014, Arbeidsdeelname, flexibilisering en duurzame inzetbaarheid* [Supply of labour 2014, labour participation, flexibility and sustainable work], Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau.

occupations, and/or married/co-habiting are more likely to be in precarious, part-time jobs with short hours.[409]

Labour market shortages have led to a debate on part-time work again in recent years, directed at part-time working women. In 2023, the government launched a campaign to entice these women to work more hours by asking them to discuss this option at home and at work. In addition, the government commissioned research on incentives that may encourage men and women who work part-time to increase their hours.[410] This study suggests that a combination of incentives - financial, alignment between work and personal life, and free childcare - is the most promising. In 2024, a grant scheme 'More hours Works!' (*Meer uren werkt!*) has been introduced to facilitate the development and testing of interventions that aim to increase working hours among part-timers. So far, this scheme focuses on sectors that have both a high rate of part-time workers and struggle with labour shortages (i.e., health care, primary education and childcare).[411]

In 2020, the Flexible Working Act was evaluated. The evaluation shows that the introduction of the law did not lead to a major increase in flexible working requests or a substantial increase of collective agreements on flexible working. The evaluation shows that most employees are not aware of their entitlements. Hence, employees who submitted a request during 2016-2020 did not always refer to the law. Of the employees who participated in the evaluation, 16 percent submitted a request between 2016-2020. Most requests were related either to a decrease (27 per cent) or increase of working hours (44 per cent). Requests to adjust working times or place were less common (27 per cent and 15 per cent respectively). Requests to work fewer hours are granted (59 per cent), while requests to adapt the place of work were most often denied (only 25 per cent granted). However, the evaluation concludes that since the COVID-19 pandemic, working from home has become more common.[412]

Similar to 2023, 45 per cent of employees worked part of their working hours from home in 2024, although the average number of hours decreased somewhat from 12.3 to 10.4 hours per week.[413] Previously, in 2021, 47 per cent of employees worked part of their working hours from home, for an average of 17 hours per week.[414] [415] The main reasons to work from home are being able to combine paid

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[409] Yerkes, Mara A. and Hewitt, B. (2019) 'Part-Time Work Strategies of Women and Men of Childbearing Age in the Netherlands and Australia', in Nicolaisen, H., Kavli, H.C. and Steen Jensen, R. (eds.) *Dualization of Part-Time Work – the New Normal?* Bristol: Policy Press.

[410] ResearchNed (2023) Meer uren werken in het onderwijs na (financiele) prikkels *[Working more hours in education after (finacial) incentives]*, Den Haag: OCW.

[411] https://open.overheid.nl/documenten/a1350b70-543d-478e-bec3-b62bf773c13b/file

[412] Ten Hoeve, Y., Talman, J., van Mierlo, J. and Engelen, M. (2021*) Evaluatie Wet flexibel werken. Onderzoek voor het ministerie van SZW* [Evaluation of the Flexible Working Act. Research for the ministry of SZW], Den Haag: De Beleidsonderzoekers.

[413] TNO (2025) *Nationale Enquete Arbeidsomstandigheden 2024, resultaten in vogelvlucht* [National Survey Working Condition 2024, an overview of findings]. Den Haag: TNO/CBS. Available at: NEA 2024 Resultaten in Vogelvlucht - TNO Monitor arbeid

[414] TNO (2024) *Nationale Enquete Arbeidsomstandigheden 2023, resultaten in vogelvlucht [National Survey Working Condition 2023, an overview of findings]*, Den Haag: TNO/CBS. Available at: https://publications.tno.nl/publication/34642410/oTgRGy/TNO-2024-nea.pdf

[415] TNO (2022) *Nationale Enquete Arbeidsomstandigheden resultaten in vogelvlucht* [National Survey Working Condition an overview of findings], Den Haag: TNO/CBS.

work and personal life, to get more work done, and to reduce commuting time and travel costs.[416]

[416] TNO (2024) *Nationale Enquete Arbeidsomstandigheden 2023, resultaten in vogelvlucht* [National Survey Working Condition 2023, an overview of findings], Den Haag: TNO/CBS. Available at: https://publications.tno.nl/publication/34642410/oTgRGy/TNO-2024-nea.pdf

New Zealand[417]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

Note on terminology: In the New Zealand country note, 'parental leave' is used as a generic term to cover 'primary carer,' 'partner' and 'extended' leaves, as well as related payments for new parents and eligible carers.

a. Primary carer leave (paid parental leave, replaced 'maternity leave': see 'note on terminology') (responsibility of the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment, with the Inland Revenue as delivery agent for payment)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 26 weeks: an employee can start their Primary carer leave up to six weeks before the expected date of delivery or the date on which the employee will become the primary carer of the child. Primary carer leave must be taken in a continuous period but there is no requirement to start the leave before the birth.
- It is not obligatory to take leave.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings, up to an upper limit of NZD$788.66 [€402.21][418] per week before tax; this is referred to as 'Parental leave payments', even though paid for 'Primary carer leave'. The maximum payment is lower than

[417] Please cite as: Morrissey, S. and Masselot, A. (2026) 'New Zealand country note', in Dobrotić, I., Blum, S., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *22nd International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

[418] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://data.ecb.europa.eu/currency-converter.

the minimum wage and is indexed annually by any percentage movement upwards in average ordinary time weekly earnings.
- Self-employed parents who make a loss or earn less than the equivalent of 10 hours' pay at the highest rate of the minimum wage, receive a minimum rate of NZD$235.00 [€119.85] before tax per week. Payment is indexed annually by any percentage movement upwards in average ordinary time weekly earnings.
- Payments are taxed.
- No pension credits are accrued during the leave period. During paid leave period, KiwiSaver contributions (occupational pension) are not automatically deducted from government payments, which means that all contributions to KiwiSaver will cease unless the employee decides to continue contributing; in this case, rather than the employer making matching contributions, the government will do so instead. Individuals always have the option to make direct payments to their KiwiSaver provider.
- Funded from general taxation.

Flexibility in use

- Usually, Primary carer leave commences 6 weeks before the due date for the woman who gives birth and who will take care of the child. If another person takes care of the child, Primary carer leave starts on the date that the employee becomes the primary carer in respect of the child. However, an employer and an employee can agree for Primary carer leave to start at any other time before the baby is due.
- In addition, Primary carer leave can start earlier if it is necessary for the health of the mother or baby, or where a mother cannot continue to perform her job safely or adequately. Where a mother is directed by her doctor or her employer to start Primary carer leave early, she retains the right to take 20 weeks' leave after the expected date of birth, with the overall leave period being extended accordingly (i.e., in such cases, more than 26 weeks of Primary carer leave can be taken).
- While the leave may be extended, the payment is only extended where the child is pre-term. This means that a mother may have access to longer Primary carer leave, e.g., 28 weeks, but will only receive 26 weeks' payment (unless pre-term payment applies). Any additional leave is deducted from the total period of Extended leave.
- The 'primary carer' is the birth mother who is pregnant or has given birth, but she may transfer any or all of the leave period and payment to her partner/spouse (including *de facto* and same-sex partners), or to another person who takes permanent primary responsibility for the care, development, and upbringing of a child who is under 6 years of age; in that case, Parental leave payments are available to eligible permanent primary carers other than the biological parents and formal adoptive parents.
- An employee is able to perform up to 64 hours of paid work, during the period they receive benefit payment, if that work is performed on 'Keeping in Touch' days. These are agreed between employer and employee and are able to be used from 28 days after the date on which the child is born.
- Where an employee does not qualify for Primary carer's leave, but is entitled to Parental leave (primary carer) payments (e.g., they may have multiple employers, work casually, or on a seasonal basis), they may request a period of 'Negotiated carer leave.' For example, a full-time permanent employee who has changed jobs in the last 5 months does not meet the criteria to take

Primary carer's leave as the criteria requires continuous employment for the same employer for 6 months. However, that employee meets the criteria for 'Parental leave payment' which do not require work to be with the same employer, but will only be able to obtain this payment if they can take Negotiated carer leave (and is the primary carer).

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Eligibility criteria for Primary carer leave are distinct from eligibility criteria for the payment made for the Primary carer leave (entitled 'Parental leave payment').
- The person who is the child's primary carer and who has worked for the same employer for at least an average of 10 hours a week in the 6 or 12 months immediately before the expected date of delivery is eligible for Primary carer leave (There are different Extended leave entitlements available to parents depending on whether they are an employee who meets the 6 or 12 month eligibility criteria; see 1c). The mother (i.e., the woman who has given birth) determines who is the 'primary carer', as she is allocated the leave and signs the documents to transfer it; the 'primary carer' can be someone who is not a biological parent to the child (e.g., same-sex partner or relative of either biological parent).
- An employee meets the eligibility for Parental leave payment if they have been employed for at least an average of 10 hours a week for any 26 of the 52 weeks preceding the expected date of delivery.
- Self-employed people similarly meet the eligibility for Parental leave payment where they have been self-employed for at least 10 hours a week for any 26 of the 52 weeks preceding the expected date of delivery.
- If the birth mother transfers leave and payment to another 'primary carer', the person to whom it is transferred must meet the eligibility conditions for payment (i.e., have the required continuity of employment).

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- A person eligible for Parental leave payments is also entitled to an additional payment – the pre-term baby payment – of up to 13 weeks where their child is born alive before the end of the 36th week of gestation (depending on the number of weeks that it is born prior to the 36th week).
- An employee who receives a pre-term baby payment may also work up to a total of three hours multiplied by the number of weeks in the payment period, in addition to the 'keeping in touch' days available during the parental leave payment period.
- Where an eligible mother has a child who is subsequently adopted, both the adoptive parent/s and the birth mother may access the leave and payment.
- In certain circumstances (e.g., death of the mother), the spouse/partner may receive the payment.
- Special (unpaid) leave of up to ten days can be taken by a mother before Primary carer's leave, for reasons connected with the pregnancy (e.g., for ante-natal checks).

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- Primary Carer leave can be supplemented by collective agreements, usually higher payment rate and longer leave periods, and these are most commonly found in the public sector. These agreements are in addition to, and cannot override, the minimum statutory provisions.

b. Partner's leave (previously termed Paternity/partner leave: see 'note on terminology') (responsibility of the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment)

Length of leave

- 1 or 2 weeks depending on eligibility.

Payment, funding and taxation

- None.

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be taken at any time in the period between 21 days before the expected date of delivery and 21 days after the actual date of birth.
- If agreed between an employee and employer, leave can start at any other time.

Eligibility

- Employees may take Partner's leave if they are the spouse or partner of the primary carer of a child, and they have worked for the same employer continuously for at least an average of 10 hours a week in the 6 or 12 months immediately before the expected date of delivery. If they have met the hours test, in the 6 months immediately before the baby's expected due date, they are eligible for one week of leave. A spouse/partner who meets the hours requirement and has worked for the same employer for 12 or more months continuously, is entitled to two weeks' leave.
- Self-employed workers, who have been self-employed for a minimum of 10 hours per week, in the 6 or 12 months immediately before the expected date of delivery, are eligible.
- Same-sex parents are eligible.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- Partner leave can be supplemented by collective agreements, usually payments and longer leave periods, and these are most commonly found in the public sector. These agreements are in addition to, and cannot override, the minimum statutory provisions.

c. Extended leave (see 'note on terminology') (responsibility of the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment)

Length of leave

- Until 6 or 12 months after birth, depending on eligibility and including any Primary carer leave (previously referred to as Maternity leave); Partner's leave (previously referred to as Paternity/partner leave) is additional.
- Leave is a family entitlement.

Payment, funding and taxation

- None, including no pension credits.

Flexibility in use

- Leave may be shared by both the eligible primary carer and their eligible partner/spouse. They can take their leave at the same time or consecutively.
- Leave can be taken as one continuous period of leave or several periods and can be started following Primary carer leave, Partner's leave, or after a period of return to work.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Extended leave up to 6 months (26 weeks) after birth is available to employees who have worked for the same employer for an average of at least 10 hours per week, in the 6 months immediately before the baby's expected due date, or the date a parent assumes the care of a child under 6 years of age that they intend to adopt.
- Extended leave up to 12 months (52 weeks) after birth is available to those employees who have worked for the same employer for 12 months. Where one partner is only eligible up to 26 weeks, they are not able to use more than that length of the extended leave entitlement, but when combined with a partner eligible for 52 weeks, the longer leave period is available to that partner.
- Self-employed workers are eligible.
- Same-sex parents are eligible.

Variation in extended leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- Some collective agreements allow parents to access additional provisions, usually payments and longer leave periods, and these are most commonly found in the public sector. These agreements are in addition to, and cannot override, the minimum statutory provisions.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- Spouses/partners intending to adopt have the same leave entitlement as other parents. Eligible spouses/partners who are jointly adopting a child under the age of 6 years can nominate which parent will receive the payment.

Time off for the care of dependents

- After the first 6 months of continuous employment, an employee may take up to 10 days of **sick leave** per year, at 100 per cent of earnings from their employer, with no payment limit. This leave can be used in the case of the illness of the employee/spouse/partner/dependant.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Employees are entitled to request breaks to breastfeed. Employer can refuse the request on the grounds that the break would disturb the operation of the business. There is no requirement that these breaks should be paid.[419]

Flexible working for carers

- All employees have the statutory right to request a variation to their hours of work, days of work, or place of work. A request can be made at any time, for any purpose or reason, and there are no limits on how many requests can be made in any period. Furthermore, there is no requirement for an employee to tell an employer the reason for the request. Employers have a duty to consider a request and are able to refuse a request on one or more of the recognised business grounds, or if it conflicts with a collective employment agreement. An employee can make a formal complaint only where they consider an employer has made a wrong decision about their eligibility to apply for flexibility, or where the employer has not complied with the statutory, described process for considering a request.

[419] Section 69Y from the Employment Relations Act 2000. Available at: http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2000/0024/latest/DLM1940663.html.

Time off for antenatal appointment and care

- A female employee who is pregnant is entitled, before taking Primary carer leave, to a total of up to 10 days' special leave without pay for reasons connected with her pregnancy. This can be used for attending antenatal appointments.

Other provisions of leave

- **Family violence leave**. Employees who are affected by family violence or who care for someone affected by family violence have the right to take up to 10 days of fully paid leave each year. They also have the right to request short-term flexible working arrangement for up to 2 months, covering change to duties, work location or daily start and finish work times. To be eligible, the employee must have been continuously working for 6 months with the same employer or working for the employer for 6 months for an average of 10 hours per week, and at least 1 hour in every week or 40 hours in every month; the employer can request that the employee provide evidence that they are affected by family violence or that they care some someone who is affected by family violence.
- **Bereavement leave for miscarriage or stillbirth.** Employees are entitled to a minimum of 3 days of fully paid leave in the case of a miscarriage or stillbirth. The leave is flexible and does not have to be taken straight away or in one continuous period. To be eligible, the employee must have been working for 6 months for the same employer. The partner of the employee or the other parent are also entitled to fully paid leave for a minimum of 3 days.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is 12 months, but leave is paid for only 26 weeks, at a low rate (due to a low ceiling on earnings-related pay). Three to 5 year-olds are eligible for free early childhood education, though only for part-time nursery education (for a maximum of six hours' attendance per day and 20 hours per week); this is not, therefore, an entitlement but dependent on accessing a place offering free attendance.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

Clarifications have been made that:

- certain absences from work will count as hours worked when assessing whether an employer or self-employed person meets the required work hours to qualify for Parental leave payments. These include hours for which the employee was receiving ACC payments (ACC provides partial wage replacement after an injury). It is not possible to receive both ACC and Parental leave payments for the period of time.

- any week for which preterm baby payments are made are in addition to, and must not be counted as part of, the maximum period of Primary carer leave, the maximum period of Extended leave, or the duration of the Parental leave payment.
- a person who is a primary carer but not the birth mother or their spouse/partner (for example, through adoption, surrogacy, or *whāngai*) is entitled to a Parental leave payment if the person stops working as an eligible employee or an eligible self-employed person within a reasonable period after becoming the primary carer.

There have been two relevant policy announcements that have not yet been made into law. There will be a significant change to the way in which annual leave payments are calculated for those who have returned from Primary carer leave within the last 12 months. In future, new parents will receive their full pay for annual leave, rather than an amount calculated based on average earnings, as currently, which is complicated and financially disadvantageous to the parent. There will also be a change to allow people to access Family violence and bereavement leave from their first day of employment, rather than after six months, as currently applies.

4. Uptake of leave

The government does not currently routinely collect data regarding uptake of leave. An (unpublished) survey of public sector employees regarding uptake of leave by partners was conducted in 2017.

a. Maternity leave/primary carer's leave

No information available.

b. Paternity leave/partner's leave

No information available.

c. Parental leave/extended leave

No information available.

d. Domestic violence leave

No information available.

Norway[420]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Mother's quota (*mødrekvoten*) (policy responsibility: Ministry of Children and Families; administration: Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration, NAV[421])

- There is no fully separate Maternity leave scheme; maternity-specific periods are integrated within the Parental leave system (see 1c). It is obligatory for women to take 6 weeks leave after delivery for health reasons, and 3 weeks may be taken before the expected birth date. These weeks are taken as part of Parental leave reserved for women before and after birth, and for which the term *mødrekvoten or* mother's quota is now used
- In addition, pregnancy leave (*svangerskapspenger*) is available for pregnant women who must stop work because of chemical, biological, or physical hazards, and if the employer is unable to offer alternative work. This benefit may be received from the point at which the mother must cease working due to risk and until 3 weeks before the expected due date. It is paid at a level equivalent to sickness benefit (i.e., 100 per cent of income up to a ceiling).

[420] Please cite as: Halrynjo, S., Olsson, M.I.T. and Bungum, B. (2026) 'Norway country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, Á. A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2025*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

[421] NAV (the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration) is the public agency responsible for administering the National Insurance Scheme and most welfare and employment-related benefits in Norway, including parental benefit, sickness benefit, unemployment benefit, pensions, and various care-related benefits.

b. Paternity leave (*omsorgspermisjon*) (regulated under labour law; policy responsibility shared across relevant ministries)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 2 weeks in connection with the birth (distinct from the 'father's quota', see 1c).

Payment

- No statutory payment (though compensation may be provided by employers).

Flexibility in use

- Paternity leave is flexible in a number of ways. Firstly, it can be used by another caregiver who will assist the mother (e.g., a grandparent) if the parents do not live together. Secondly, the law does not specify when the leave must be taken other than 'in connection with the birth.' This is generally interpreted as a short period before or after the birth. There is, however, some flexibility to adjust the timing if needed. Thirdly, the leave may be taken in parts. The father may, for instance, use one or two days to be present at birth, go back to work, and then take the rest when the mother and child come home from the hospital. Fourthly, it can be used by foster or adoptive parents when taking over care of the child.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Employed fathers have the right to leave.
- Leave can also be taken by a co-mother (*medmor*).

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent) or delegation of leave to person other than the father.

- Leave can be taken by another caregiver if the father does not live with the mother, as the purpose of the leave is to assist the mother (see 'flexibility in use' above).

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- Payment depends on individual or collective agreements, and most employed fathers are covered by such agreements. Where such employer-paid leave is not available, fathers or co-mothers may instead use parental benefit (*foreldrepenger*) for this period. In this case, the days are deducted from their Parental leave entitlement and are paid according to the chosen compensation level (100 per cent or 80 per cent) for the overall Parental leave period.

c. Parental leave (*Foreldrepengeperioden*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Children and Families)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- Parents can choose between 49 weeks or 61 weeks and 1 day, depending on payment level (see 'payment and funding' below). The choice of benefit rate made in the mother's application applies to both parents and cannot be changed subsequently.
- Of the post-natal period, 15 or 19 weeks are for mothers (*mødrekvoten* or mother's quota, see 1a) and 15 or 19 weeks are for fathers (*fedrekvoten* or father's quota); these are individual, non-transferable entitlements. The remaining 16 weeks (100 per cent option) or 20 weeks and 1 day (80 per cent option) constitute the family entitlement (*fellesperioden* or shared period) and may be taken by either parent. See 'flexibility' below for options available to parents.

Payment and funding

- Parental benefit may either be taken for 49 weeks at 100 per cent of earnings or for 61 weeks and 1 day at 80 per cent of earnings, up to an upper limit of six times the National Insurance basic amount (*grunnbeløpet*), i.e., NOK780,960 [€70,726.32][422] per year. The total amount paid over the leave period is approximately the same whether the 100 per cent or 80 per cent option is chosen.
- The minimum qualifying income is NOK65,080 (€5,893.86) per year, earned during at least 6 of the 10 months prior to the start of the leave period. Parents who do not meet this criterion receive a lump-sum benefit (*engangsstønad*) of NOK92,648 [€8,390.51] per child.
- Payments are made to parents by the National Insurance Scheme. Employers only pay directly to parents if they provide compensation above the upper limit of the parental benefit.
- Payments are taxed.
- Pension rights continue to accrue during leave.
- Funded from general taxation.

Flexibility in use

- For all the different parts of leave (e.g., mother's quota, father's quota), it is possible to choose a longer period of leave paid at 80 per cent of earnings, or a shorter period of leave paid at 100 per cent of earnings.
- After the first 6 weeks, it is possible for the mother to postpone parts of the parental benefit period, as long as it is taken during the first 3 years after the birth of the child, and the parent receiving the benefit is employed full-time during the postponement period. Hospitalisation, illness, and vacation may also qualify for postponement.
- After the first 6 weeks, it is also possible for one or both parents to combine all or part of the parental benefit period with part-time work. If parents take less than the full benefit payment, this will prolong the period of parental benefit. Both parents may choose to combine the parental benefit period

[422] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://data.ecb.europa.eu/currency-converter.

with part-time work (for instance, each working part-time) at the same time. A written agreement from the employer is required in both cases. There is also an activity requirement (*aktivitetskrav*) in some cases for the father or co-mother to use the shared part of the leave (see below).

- Father's quota and mother's quota: this period of leave (15/19 weeks) is not transferable to the other parent, except in certain circumstances, i.e., if the parent is ill or otherwise unable to care for the child, or if the parents do not live together.
- Part of the father's quota may be taken around the time of birth, while the first 6 weeks after birth are reserved for the mother for medical reasons. Otherwise, fathers are free to choose at what time to use it during the first 3 years after the child's birth. They can also choose whether to take the quota as part-time leave, as well as whether to take it as one continuous period or divided into several periods. This flexible use requires agreement with the employer.
- The family entitlement part may be taken as one continuous period or split into shorter periods within the three-year period.
- Both parents may take leave at the same time, except during the medically protected period immediately after birth (i.e., 6 weeks reserved for the mother) and during the period of shared leave, when mothers are required to return to work or studies for the father to take it. During the period of the father's quota, there is no requirement regarding the mother's activities (i.e., both parents may be on leave together). Taking leave simultaneously uses up the available benefit period more quickly.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- The main eligibility rules are the same for fathers and mothers. They must be employed for six of the last ten months prior to the birth and earn at least half the basic national insurance amount (grunnbeløpet) over the previous year. Self-employed workers are eligible for the same leave benefits as employees.
- The eligibility rules for the family entitlement and father's quota are somewhat different. The father may use the shared period even if the mother does not qualify, provided that she returns to approved activity such as work or study. By contrast, for the father's quota, the mother must have qualified for parental benefits but is not required to be in work or study while the father takes it. In cases where only the father has accrued parental benefit rights, he may take 10 weeks of parental benefit without any activity requirement for the mother. For additional weeks beyond those 10, the mother must be engaged in approved activity (e.g., work or education).
- Same-sex parents are eligible. When two women become mothers, the non-biological mother must be legally recognised as co-mother in order to have rights to leave benefits. Her rights are the same as a father's rights to leave. If two men have a child together through surrogacy, the biological father normally receives the whole leave entitlement if he is legally recognised as the father. The other father may receive paid Parental leave if he adopts the child (as a step-parent) and if there are leave days left. The 3 year period within which leave must be taken may present a challenge, as the step-parent adoption process cannot begin before the child is born and the adoption process may take a long time. If the second father does not use the leave entitlement, the biological father may in some cases use more of

the available leave. If both fathers are adoptive parents, they may choose which of them starts the leave period at the time of the transfer of care.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- For multiple births or adoptions, the Parental leave period is prolonged. Parents of twins receive 66 weeks at 100 per cent compensation or 82 weeks and 2 days at 80 per cent compensation; parents of 3 or more children receive 95 weeks at 100 per cent compensation or 118 weeks and 4 days at 80 per cent compensation.
- If the child dies during the Parental leave period, parents may receive parental benefits for up to 30 benefit days after the child's death, or for the remaining benefit period if fewer than 30 days is left.
- Mothers with sole custody who are eligible for Parental leave receive the full parental entitlement, including the father's quota. However, if the parents agree, they may apply for the father who does not live with the child to use the father's quota.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- Many collective agreements and individual contracts provide that employers top up parental benefits to 100 per cent of earnings.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks (*Ulønnet permisjon*)

- Each parent has the right to 1 year of unpaid leave after the parental benefit period.
- Parents can receive a cash-for-care benefit (kontantstøtte) for children from the month they turn 13 months up to and including the month they turn 19 months. The full benefit is NOK7,500 [€679.22] per month for parents who do not use a full-time place in a publicly funded Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) service. Children who use ECEC on a part-time basis receive a reduced benefit (e.g., if parents do not use a place, they receive 100 per cent of the benefit; if they use a place for up to 20 hours per week, they receive 50 per cent of the full benefit). The main criteria for eligibility, therefore, is that parents do not use a publicly funded ECEC place full-time.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- The same regulations apply as for parents having their own children, except for the 3 weeks of leave reserved for mothers before birth. The period is divided into non-transferable mother's and father's quotas and a shared family entitlement. Parents adopting children may decide when to start the Parental leave period from the date of care transfer (omsorgsovertakelse).

Parents adopting children who are not eligible for Parental leave may receive a lump-sum benefit (engangsstønad) of NOK92,648 [€8,390.51].

Time off for the care of dependants

- Each parent of 1 or 2 children under 12 years of age has the right to ten working days' leave per year when the **child is sick** (or when the childminder or grandparent who normally provide care is ill and the child cannot attend kindergarten); parents with more than two children have the right to 15 working days' leave per year each. Single parents have the right to 20/30 days' leave per year. For severely or chronically sick children, extended rights to leave apply until the child turns 18 years old. The leave is compensated at the sickness benefit rate (*sykepengegrunnlag*), which is normally 100 per cent of earnings up to the sickness benefit ceiling of six times the basic national insurance benefit i.e., NOK780,960 [€70,726.32] per year. It is normally paid by the employer, who covers the first 10 days before reimbursement from NAV applies for subsequent days.
- A **care benefit** (*pleiepenger*) is available for parents whose child requires continuous supervision and care due to illness, injury, or congenital conditions, including both somatic and mental health conditions; no specific diagnosis is required. It is both a leave entitlement and a cash benefit, securing income when parents cannot work because their child is hospitalised or under the care of specialist health services. The need for continuous supervision must be directly linked to the child's condition and exceed what is normally expected for a child of that age, such that the child cannot be left without supervision. The benefit is paid by NAV at the sickness benefit rate.
- Employees who care for **terminally ill family members at home** have the right to care leave for up to 60 days. There is also a right to 10 days' leave per year to provide necessary **care for sick parents, spouses, or partners**. Leave is compensated at the sickness benefit rate.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- The Working Environment Act grants breastfeeding mothers the right to breastfeeding breaks of up to 1 hour per working day for children under 1 year of age. These breaks are paid by the employer when the agreed working hours are 7 hours or more per day; otherwise, the breaks are unpaid.

Flexible working for carers

- Parents have the right to reduced working hours to care for children until they are 10 years old. Working hours may, for example, be reduced through shorter working days, fewer working days per week, or work-free periods during the year. Reduced working hours mean reduced pay, but employees also have the right to return to their original working hours after the agreed period.
- The Working Environment Act (*arbeidsmiljøloven* § 10-2(4)) gives employees the right to reduced working hours for a period if the arrangement does not cause significant inconvenience to the employer. The scheme primarily aims to meet parents' wishes for more time with young children or needs arising from difficulties obtaining childcare during working hours. Parents with children under 10 years of age and single parents are

generally considered to have valid grounds for requesting reduced working hours.
- Regulations governing home office work in Norway mainly concern the rights and obligations of employees and employers. Caring for young children is not explicitly recognised as a legal basis for home office arrangements. This is likely connected to Norway's extensive kindergarten coverage and parents' right to paid leave when children are ill and require care at home.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- Pregnant employees are entitled to paid time off to attend antenatal check-ups.

Other provisions of leave

- None reported.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is just over three years. Earnings-related parental benefits are paid for approximately 14 months. There is an entitlement to ECEC from 1 year of age, available on a full-time basis at kindergartens (though if the child is born later than 1 September, there may not be a place available until the next main intake in August). There is, therefore, in theory no gap between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement, though in practice many children experience a short waiting period until the main admission date in August, and children born in December may face a longer gap until the following year, since under current law, children born in December are entitled to a kindergarten place only from the following August. A parliamentary decision has been adopted to extend this entitlement so that these children will also have the right to a place from the month they turn 1 year old; however, the necessary legislative changes have not yet entered into force.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

No major policy changes have been introduced since April 2025. The National Insurance basic amount increased on 1 May 2025 to NOK130,160 (€11,787.72), raising the annual parental benefit ceiling to NOK780,960 (€70,726.32). In the ECEC area, Parliament has requested legislative changes to extend the right to a kindergarten place to children born in December, so that they would be entitled to a place from the month they turn 1 year old. However, the necessary legislative amendments have not yet entered into force.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

Norwegian administrative statistics show that a high and increasing share of mothers receive earnings-related parental benefits at birth. Recent figures[423] indicate that the proportion of mothers receiving parental benefits increased from about 70 per cent in 2000 to 83 per cent in 2023, while the proportion receiving the lump-sum grant declined from 24 per cent to 13 per cent. Together, these developments indicate that the vast majority of mothers are now covered by either parental benefits or the lump-sum grant, with only a very small share receiving neither.

This development reflects both increased labour market participation among mothers and reduced reliance on the lump-sum grant, meaning that most mothers are now covered by earnings-related parental benefits.

Among Norwegian-born mothers, the share receiving parental benefits is higher (around 93 per cent), indicating stronger labour market attachment. The gap between all mothers and Norwegian-born mothers suggests that immigrant mothers are more likely to lack entitlement to earnings-related parental benefits and therefore more often rely on the lump-sum grant.

b. Paternity leave

There is no separate official registration of short leave periods taken by fathers at the time of birth. This leave (*omsorgspermisjon*) is typically taken either as employer-paid leave or, where such coverage is not available, through the use of parental benefit days, and is therefore not recorded as a distinct category in administrative statistics. As a result, systematic data on the uptake of this short leave is limited, while fathers' use of Parental leave is well documented.

c. Parental leave

In the years prior to the introduction of the father's quota, fewer than 4 per cent of fathers took any Parental leave. Only a few years later, uptake had risen to over 70 per cent. More recent evidence indicates that leave-taking is now close to universal: the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development reports that around 90 per cent of Norwegian fathers take Parental leave (based on cohort data from 2022).[424]

[423] NOU 2026: 2 *Politikk for nye generasjoner: Årsaker, konsekvenser og tiltak knyttet til lave fødselstall* [Policy for new generations: Causes, consequences, and measures related to low birth rates]. Barne- og familiedepartementet. Available at: https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/a931edce166d4f5fb0dd282e5149784b/no/pdfs/nou202620260002000dddpdfs.pdf

[424] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2025) *Paid leave for fathers*. OECD Publishing. Available at: https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/paid-leave-for-fathers_07442bed-en/full-report.html

National statistics provide more detailed insight into how this leave is used.[425] According to Statistics Norway, 67.5 per cent of fathers took the full father's quota or more of the parental benefit period before the child reached 3 years of age, based on the 2020–2021 cohorts, an increase from 59.1 per cent in 2013.

More recent data from NAV show that, in 2025, 68,300 fathers received parental benefits, an increase of 6.4 per cent from 2024. In the same year, 37.4 per cent of fathers receiving benefits at the 100 per cent rate and 25.3 per cent of those receiving benefits at the 80 per cent rate took the full father's quota or more, both representing a decline from 2024. This may be related to the increase in the share of parents choosing the 80 per cent compensation option following the extension of the benefit period in 2024. Uptake varies by region, with fathers in Oslo and Akershus taking the most leave and fathers in Agder taking the least.[426,427]

Beyond these descriptive patterns, Kvande and Bungum (2025) highlight the role of the father's quota in shaping fathers' leave-taking behaviour and contributing to greater gender equality in the care of young children.[428] By granting fathers an individual, earmarked and non-transferable right, the welfare state has helped establish leave-taking as a norm of modern fathering, while the relatively high level of compensation has strengthened it as an accepted right in working life. This pattern is also observed among Polish migrant fathers' use of the Norwegian Parental leave system.[429] Among this group, the father's quota is understood as a statutory and employer-accepted right, and earmarked leave is experienced as an important opportunity to care for their children. Compared with leave arrangements in their countries of origin, these provisions are seen as enabling greater involvement in childcare and closer father–child relationships.

Despite the widespread uptake of the father's quota, important gender inequalities remain in the overall distribution of leave.[430] Results from the Parental Benefit Survey 2021 show that parents largely follow the statutory quota structure, with fathers taking approximately one third of the total parental benefit period (the father's quota) and mothers taking two thirds (the mother's quota plus most of the shared period). Mothers also take unpaid leave more often and for longer periods: 48 per cent of mothers and 11 per cent of fathers took unpaid leave after

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[425] Statistics Norway (2024) *How many fathers take paternity leave?* Available at: https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/likestilling/statistikk/indikatorer-for-kjonnslikestilling-i-kommunene/Articles%20for%20Indicators%20for%20gender%20equality%20in%20municipalities/how-many-fathers-take-paternity-leave

[426] NAV (2025) *Quarterly parental benefit statistics*. Available at: https://www.nav.no/no/nav-og-samfunn/statistikk/familie-statistikk/foreldrepenger-engangsstonad-og-svangerskapspenger

[427] These annual figures should be interpreted with caution, as fathers often take leave across multiple years.

[428] Kvande, E. and Bungum, B. (2025) 'Leave policies in Norway', in Duvander, A.-Z., Arnalds, Á. A, and Lammi-Taskula, J. (eds.) *Paid Parental leave and social sustainability in the Nordic countries* (TemaNord 2025:547). Nordic Information on Gender.

[429] Bungum, B. and Kvande, E. (2022) 'Polish migrant fathers using Parental leave in Norway', *Journal of Family Research,* Vol.34, 4*:* 912–931. https://doi.org/10.20377/jfr-753

[430] Bakken, F. (2022) *Ulønnet og lønnet foreldrepermisjon — mødre og fedres bruk og vurderinger* [Unpaid and paid Parental leave — use and assessments by mothers and fathers]. *Arbeid og velferd*, (1). NAV.

the paid parental benefit period, with mothers averaging 16 weeks and fathers 11 weeks. The imbalance between mothers and fathers in overall leave-taking is therefore greater than figures for paid leave alone suggest.

This pattern is closely linked to the design of the Parental leave system itself. Bakken (2023) shows how the Norwegian parental benefit scheme, with its mother's quota, father's quota and shared period, functions as a normative framework shaping how parents allocate time at home.[431] The number of paid days taken by mothers and fathers shows little association with their stated satisfaction with the distribution, suggesting that policy design and quota structures exert a strong influence on how leave is divided.

At a broader level, cross-national evidence further indicates that Parental leave policies are associated with social norms regarding the division of childcare. A study across 48 countries finds that the availability of Parental leave is linked to more egalitarian norms, particularly regarding what individuals believe parents should do, while changes in perceptions of actual behaviour appear to emerge more gradually over time.[432]

At the same time, cross-national research on leave intentions shows that gender differences persist.[433] A study of 13,942 young adults across 37 countries finds that women intend to take longer leave than men in every country surveyed, including those with generous, non-transferable father's quota systems such as Norway. The gender gap in leave intentions is larger in more gender-egalitarian policy contexts, driven primarily by women intending to take more leave rather than men intending to take less.

Taken together, these findings suggest that while Parental leave policies are associated with more egalitarian normative contexts, gender differences persist in both leave intentions and actual leave-taking.

Annex: The Importance of Studying Registered Uptake vs. Actual Use: Implications for Gender Equality

High rates of fathers' leave uptake are often cited as evidence of progress towards gender equality in the distribution of care. Recent research from Norway suggests that uptake rates alone are insufficient indicators. The ways in which leave is taken, including its timing, flexibility, and conditions of use, are also consequential for gender equality outcomes.

Evidence from Norwegian register data supports this point. Andresen and Nix (2026) find that Parental leave reforms, despite very high uptake among fathers, do not reduce the child penalty for women.[434] Fathers who take leave under a non-transferable quota are more likely to take leave during summer holidays, when children are already in formal care, and to take part of their leave on a part-time

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[431] Bakken, F. (2023) *Tatt av kvinnen — eller hvem bestemmer egentlig mest i fordelingen av foreldrepengeperioden?* [Taken by the woman — or who really decides the most in the distribution of the parental allowance period]. *Arbeid og velferd*, (1–2023). NAV.

[432] Schindler, S., Schuster, C., Olsson, M.I.T., Froehlich, L., Hübner, A.-K., Block, K., et al. (2024) 'Policy as normative influence? On the relationship between Parental leave policy and social norms in gender division of childcare across 48 countries', *British Journal of Social Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12806

[433] Olsson, M.I.T., van Grootel, S., Block, K., Schuster, C., Meeussen, L., Van Laar, C., et al. (2023) 'Gender gap in Parental leave intentions: Evidence from 37 countries', *Political Psychology,* Vol. 44, 6: 1163–1192. https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12880

[434] Andresen, M. E., and Nix, E. (2026) 'You cannot force me into caregiving: Paternity leave and the child penalty', *The Economic Journal, Vol.136*(674): 780–797. https://doi.org/10.1093/ej/ueaf057

basis. These patterns may reflect efforts to reduce career disruption. Descriptive evidence further indicates that mothers' child penalties are almost 10 percentage points smaller in families where fathers voluntarily take leave than in families where fathers are induced to take leave through Parental leave quotas. This suggests that the conditions under which leave is taken may shape its consequences for gender inequality.

One important condition shaping Parental leave use is the work setting. Halrynjo and Kitterød (2025) explore how different workplace dynamics, especially the degree of individual competition, interact with fatherhood ideals and fathers' actual leave practices.[435] They find strong adherence to the ideals of 'involved fatherhood' and the father's quota across educational levels and workplace contexts, but substantial variation in actual practices. Their analyses show how *childcare responsibility* and *absence from work responsibilities* do not necessarily correspond, and how *formal leave uptake* and *actual leave practices* may differ. The findings indicate that non-transferable fathers' leave may dissolve former attitude-based divisions, as fathers across educational levels in collectively organised jobs support and practice child-centred leave. Still, fathers in competitive jobs may continue to practice 'work-centred fatherhood' despite strong gender-egalitarian beliefs and formal leave uptake. Hence, workplace dynamics—especially the degree of *individualized competition* and the *fear of becoming replaceable*—may be more relevant than fatherhood ideals for understanding and enhancing fathers' actual leave use and involved fatherhood practices.

The role of workplace context is further illustrated in a qualitative study of parents in the Norwegian finance and banking sector (Halrynjo and Mangset, 2022).[436] The study documents systematic differences in leave use between mothers and fathers in a sector characterised by individual client portfolios and continuous competition. Fathers typically postpone, split, or compress leave to maintain client relationships, while mothers take longer uninterrupted leave periods and often return having lost clients to colleagues who substituted for them during their leave. As a result, gendered wage and career trajectories persist alongside supportive leave policies, reflecting the structural logic of client-based work.

Halrynjo and Mangset (2025)[437] introduce the concept of substitutability structures to explain variation in career penalties, distinguishing between more individualised and more collective forms of organising responsibility and rewards. In roles based on individual client relationships or characterised by low substitutability, absence during leave may have lasting asymmetric consequences for women and men, given differences in leave duration and flexibility. This perspective highlights how structural features of labour markets may sustain the motherhood penalty, even

[435] Halrynjo, S. and Kitterød, R. H. (2025)'Child-centered versus work-centered fathers' leave: Changing fatherhood ideals versus persisting workplace dynamics', *Social Sciences,* Vol. 14, 2, Article 113. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci14020113

[436] Halrynjo, S. and Mangset, M. (2022) 'Parental leave vs. competition for clients: Motherhood penalty in competitive work environments'. *Journal of Family Research,* Vol. 34, 3: 932-957. Available at: https://doi.org/10.20377/jfr-751

[437] Halrynjo, S. and Mangset, M. (2025) 'Motherhood penalty—beyond bias? From stereotypes to substitutability structures', *Social Politics,* Vol.32, No.4: 729–755. https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxae027

in contexts with high levels of family-friendly policies and relatively low levels of discrimination.

Empirical studies across Norwegian professional sectors, particularly finance, provide further support for this perspective. In finance, Halrynjo and Myklebust (2025) explore how care responsibilities, particularly Parental leave, may create risks of being replaced and thereby losing clients, responsibilities, and rewards in portfolio-based careers.[438] They identify three strategies used to manage the individual cost of substitutability and minimise career and pay setbacks while utilising Parental leave. The strategies show a clear gendered pattern*:*
1) Fathers often adapt their leave to less work-intensive periods and maintain partial availability for clients while on leave, thereby avoiding bonus reduction and client loss.
2) Mothers, constrained by pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, and caregiving norms, take longer and less adjustable leave and therefore typically either accept the costs of substitutability, including loss of bonuses and clients, or transition to employee-based careers where the individual costs of substitutability are lower.
3) An emerging strategy for taking Parental leave with reduced substitutability costs is to share client relationships, responsibilities, and bonuses with selected colleagues before, during, and after leave. Strengthening collaboration and reducing dependence on individualised responsibility and bonuses may lower the personal costs of being replaced during Parental leave, sick leave, and other care-related absences. However, for this to become a sustainable and gender-equal strategy, it would need to be more widely adopted and involve men as well as women.
Finally, Moen (2026) highlights variation among fathers themselves.[439] A qualitative study of two male-dominated organisations finds that leave uptake varies across institutional contexts. For fathers in temporary positions, continuous leave may be perceived as risky, as absence can reduce the likelihood of securing permanent employment. In such cases, flexibility may become important for enabling leave use.
Taken together, these studies indicate that uptake statistics alone do not capture how leave is used or its implications for gender equality. The effects of Parental leave depend on how leave is organised in practice, how it interacts with gender norms, and how workplace structures shape opportunities and constraints. Assessing the impact of leave policy therefore requires attention to both the quantity of leave use and the conditions under which leave is taken and experienced.

[438] Halrynjo, S. and Myklebust, R. B. (2025) *Availability and substitutability in finance: Gender equality challenges when the dynamics of the global financial market meet the Norwegian work–family model*, Oslo: CORE/Institute for Social Research. Available at: https://hdl.handle.net/11250/5328118
[439] Moen, L.V. (2026) *Fedrekvoten i grenseløst arbeid og i løsarbeid: Betydningen av ulike arbeidskontekster for bruk av fedrekvote* [The father's quota in borderless work and gig work: The significance of different work contexts for using the father's quota] (Doctoral dissertation, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Faculty of Social and Educational Sciences, Department of Sociology and Political Science), Trondheim: NTNU.

Poland[440]

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For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave *(urlop macierzyński)* (responsibility of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 20 calendar weeks: no more than 6 calendar weeks can be taken before the birth.
- It is obligatory to take 14 calendar weeks after birth.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 20 weeks at either 100 per cent or 81.5 per cent of the mother's average earnings for the 3 months (or 12 months if the level of remuneration varies significantly from month to month) before the birth (in the form of maternity benefit, *zasiłek macierzyński*), with no upper limit. If the mother chooses to take the 100 per cent option, Parental leave (if taken afterwards) is paid at 70 per cent of average earnings (for details on Parental leave see 1c). Mothers, however, can opt for a combined Maternity and Parental leave (52 weeks) and then the 81.5 per cent payment option is used.
- If the maternity benefit in a given month is lower than PLN1,000 [€230.84],[441] the difference is paid to the parents. Female farmers are not covered by this system; they are paid the benefit of PLN1,000 [€230.84] during the first year after their child is born, regardless of income.
- If an employer has more than 20 employees, payments are made to the eligible mother by the employer who claims back from the Social Insurance

[440] Please cite as: Kurowska A. and Godlewska-Bujok, B. (2025) 'Poland country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, Á.A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2025*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

[441] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://data.ecb.europa.eu/currency-converter.

Institution. Otherwise, payments are made to the parent by the Social Insurance Institution.
- Payments are taxed.
- Maternity leave is considered a fully contributory period under the social insurance system for retirement or pension scheme.
- Funded from the Social Insurance Fund, financed by contributions by employees (2.45 per cent of earnings), self-employed workers, and other insured persons (i.e., working in atypical forms of employment), with some additional finance from the state to cover pension contributions. There is no contribution from employers.

Flexibility in use

- No later than 21 days after the birth, the insured mother may declare if she wants to take the 81.5 per cent option, i.e., an option of combined Maternity and Parental leave, for the total of 52 weeks of leave.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Insured workers, including all employees and self-employed men covered by social security insurance at the start of the leave.
- There is no explicit ruling about eligibility for same-sex couples, though the way that the provision is worded might lead to such a possibility: in some parts the legislation refers to the 'mother', but in others it refers to the 'other parent'. even if certain provisions governing parental leave could be interpreted more broadly, other elements of the legal framework render such interpretations ineffective in practice. However, even if certain provisions governing leave could be interpreted more broadly, other elements of the legal framework render such interpretations ineffective in practice.
- There are no eligibility criteria related to citizenship or additional residency requirements beyond those necessary for legal employment in Poland. Entitlement to maternity leave is based solely on coverage under the Polish social insurance system (ZUS).

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In the case of multiple births, Maternity leave is extended to 31 weeks for twins, 33 weeks for triplets, 35 weeks for quadruplets, and 37 weeks for quintuplets and more.
- As mentioned above, the mother may share this leave with other members of her family, if they are employed or insured and if the mother is not able to take care of a child.
- In the case of the death of a baby before the end of the 8th week, the mother has the right to 8 weeks of leave in total, and to at least 7 days after the death of a child who was older than 8 weeks of age.
- In the event of the birth of a premature child, an employee-mother or an employee-father raising a child (in some cases also other members of the closest family as mentioned above) is entitled to a supplementary Maternity leave, immediately after using Maternity leave. The supplementary leave is:
  - 1 week for each week of the child's stay in hospital until the end of the 15th week after delivery if the child was born before the completion of the

28th week of pregnancy or with a birth weight of no more than 1000 g;
    - 1 week for each week of the child's stay in hospital until the end of the 8th week after delivery if the child was born after the completion of the 28th week of pregnancy and before the completion of the 37th week of pregnancy and with a birth weight of more than 1000 g;
    - 1 week for each week of the child's stay in hospital from the 5th day until the end of the 8th week after delivery if the child was born after completion of the 37th week of pregnancy and child's stay in hospital after delivery was at least 2 consecutive days.
- The mother can transfer non-obligatory periods of Maternity leave, i.e., 6 weeks, to the father.
- In rare cases, when the mother is unable to live independently, is in hospital due to illness, has died or abandoned the child, maternity leave can be taken by another insured family member;- this may be the father of the child, or another person, whether related or not.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- Individuals who are not eligible to receive maternity benefit (thus also parental allowance, see 1d) are eligible for parental benefit of PLN1,000 [€230.84] per month. The benefit is addressed particularly to unemployed people, students, and people working on some types of civil law contracts (uninsured); but economically inactive mothers and fathers (those not officially registered as unemployed) are also eligible. The benefit is not means-tested and is paid for 52 weeks for one child; 65 weeks for twins; 67 weeks for triplets; 69 weeks for quadruplets; and 71 weeks if five or more children were born. The first 14 weeks of benefit are available only for mothers.

b. Paternity leave *(urlop ojcowski)* (responsibility of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy)

Length of leave

- 2 calendar weeks.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 2 weeks at 100 per cent of the average 3 months (or 12 months if the level of remuneration varies significantly from month to month) pay before the birth, with no upper limit (also called '*zasiłek macierzyński*').
- If an employer has more than 20 employees, payments are made to fathers by the employer who claims back from the Social Insurance Institution. Otherwise, payments are made to the parent by the Social Insurance Institution.
- Payments are taxed.
- Paternity leave is considered a fully contributory period for retirement or pension schemes.

- Funded by the Social Insurance Institution.

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be taken any time during the 12 months after the birth of a child.
- Leave can be taken in two separate parts, i.e., each part must be at least 1 calendar week.
- Leave can be taken if the mother is on Maternity or Parental leave.
- Non-transferable to mothers or other members of family

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- The same as for Maternity leave, i.e., insured workers, including all employees and self-employed men covered by social security insurance at the start of the leave.
- Same-sex couple eligibility remains unclear: there have not yet been cases in Poland where two men have had the legal status of being the father of the same child.
- There are no eligibility criteria related to citizenship or additional residency requirements beyond those necessary for legal employment in Poland. Entitlement to paternity leave is based solely on coverage under the Polish social insurance system (ZUS).

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the father

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave *(urlop rodzicielski)* (responsibility of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy)

Length of leave

- 41 calendar weeks.
- 23 weeks of leave is a family entitlement; the remaining period of 18 weeks is an individual, non-transferable entitlement with 9 weeks for mothers and 9 weeks for fathers.

Payment, funding and taxation

- Payment for the mother depends on the payment option chosen by the mother taking Maternity leave. If, during Maternity leave, the mother opts to be paid at 100 per cent of earnings, Parental leave is paid at 70 per cent of

average earnings for 12 months preceding the birth, with no upper limit on payment; if the mother opts for the combined maternity and parental leave, she is paid at 81.5 per cent of earnings for the entire combined period of leave.
- Payment for the father is 70 per cent of earnings.
- If the average monthly benefit on Parental leave would be lower than PLN1,000 [€230.84], the difference is paid to the parent. Female farmers are not covered by this system; they are paid the benefit of PLN1,000 [€230.84] during the first year after their child is born, regardless of income (see point a).
- If an employer has more than 20 employees, payments are made to parents by the employer who claims back from the Social Insurance Institution. Otherwise, payments are made to the parents by the Social Insurance Institution.
- Payments are taxed.
- Parental leave is considered a fully contributory period for pension and retirement scheme.
- Funding is the same as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- The 41 calendar week period can be taken as one continuous period of leave (up to 32 calendar weeks for the mother and up to 9 calendar weeks for the father), or as up to five separate periods. Parents can use the leave until the end of the calendar year in which the child turns 6 years.
- Parental leave may be combined with part-time working, with a maximum of working half-time hours. In this case, payment is proportional to the working time, and leave is also extended proportionately, up to 82 weeks.
- Both parents can take leave at the same time, though the overall length of leave must not exceed 41 weeks in the case of a single birth.
- Parental leave can be taken by the other parent (father) when the mother is still on Maternity leave.
- In some cases, when the mother or the other parent is unable to live independently, is in hospital due to illness, has died or abandoned the child, leave can be taken by another insured family member.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- The same as for Maternity leave: i.e., insured persons, including all employees and self-employed people covered by social security insurance at the start of leave.
- Parental leave must be taken before the end of the year when a child turns 6 years. A mother's non-eligibility for Parental leave does not cause the loss of the eligibility of an employed or insured other parent or employed or insured other member of the family (i.e., grandmother, uncle, brother, child etc.).
- If the employment contract expires during the Parental leave, the parent loses a right to the remaining part. However, s/he does not lose the right to maternity allowance, which s/he will receive until the end of the original period of this leave.
- Same-sex parenthood is not recognized in Polish law, making it impossible for same-sex parents whose child is born in Poland to share Parental leave.
- There are no eligibility criteria related to citizenship or additional residency

requirements beyond those necessary for legal employment in Poland. Entitlement to parental leave is based solely on coverage under the Polish social insurance system (ZUS).

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parent

- In the case of multiple births, Parental leave is extended to 43 weeks, regardless of the number of children born.
- Parents of a child holding a '*Za życiem*' ('For Life') certificate have the right to take Parental leave in order to take care of the child for up to 65 weeks, in the case of one child, or 67 weeks, in case of multiple births. The certificate is issued in cases where a child has an incurable or life-threatening illness.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

d. Childcare leave *(urlop wychowawczy)* (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy)

Length of leave

- Up to 36 months can be taken as Childcare leave. It is not dependent on the Parental or Maternity leave, but the parent must have worked for over 6 months with any employer. Thirty-four months are a family entitlement, with 1 month as an individual entitlement for the mother and another month for the father.
- A further 36 months can be taken for a disabled child. The same rules as for regular childcare leave applies, except for the age of eligibility, which is extended until the child turns 18 years old.

Payment and funding

- A parental allowance (*Dodatek z tytułu opieki nad dzieckiem w okresie korzystania z urlopu wychowawczego*) of PLN400 [€92.34] per month is paid for 24 months to parents taking leave as a supplement to family benefit if monthly household income per capita does not exceed PLN674 [€155.59] or PLN764 [€176.36] in the case of a family with a child with a disability.
- Funded from general taxation.

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be taken until the end of the calendar year in which the child turns 6 years old.
- Parents can take leave in one continuous period or in a maximum of five separate periods (up to four parts for one parent).

- Parents can reduce their working time up to half of full-time hours during the period in which they take the leave (with the proportional reduction of remuneration, non-refundable).
- Parents can take leave at the same time.
- Both parents have an individual, non-transferable right to one month of leave. However, it could be transferable due to certain legal circumstances, such as the father being unknown, the other parent dies, the other parent hasn't acquired or is deprived fully or partially of parental rights.
- During the leave period, parents may be employed and claim parental allowance (if they are eligible due to social assistance scheme), if working does not prevent them from caring for their children. A working parent can switch employment while on leave.
- Persons on leave are obligatory subject to retirement and disability insurance from the date they meet the conditions for being subject to such insurance until the date they cease to meet these conditions.
- Non-transferable to other members of the family

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Employees with a work record of at least 6 months.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- The basic payment can be extended to 36 months where there is more than one child.
- Leave may be extended for another 36 months if a child is disabled or chronically ill and requires care, but can be taken no later than the child's 18th birthday. A means-tested payment of PLN400 [€92.34] per month is made in these cases, and the payment period can be extended up to 72 months.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- The same regulations apply as for parents having biological children.
- Parental allowance is paid if the adopted child is seven years old or younger (and in some cases up to 14 years because Poland has two different schemes for adoption).

Time off for the care of dependants

- An employee can take leave of up to 14 calendar days per year to provide **personal care for a family member** (child or adult) living in the same household, paid at 80 per cent of earnings. The care benefit (*zasiłek opiekuńczy*) is paid by the employer and refunded by the Social Insurance Institution when the employer has over 20 employees (insured); in the case of an employer with less than 20 employees, the Social Insurance Institution pays the employee directly.
- An employee can take leave to care for **a child up to eight years of age** (14 years of age if the child is disabled or chronically ill) in the case of an

unforeseen closure of a nursery school, kindergarten, or school; or the illness or childbirth of the spouse caring permanently for the child. This leave is paid at 80 per cent of earnings for up to 60 calendar days.
- An employee with a **child under 14 years** is entitled to 2 working days (or 16 hours) of fully paid leave per year.
- An employee is entitled to two working days or 16 hours off work during a calendar year due to *force majeure* arising from **urgent family matters** caused by illness or accident, if the employee's immediate presence is necessary. This leave is paid at half of earnings.
- An employee is entitled to **carers' leave** of 5 working days during a calendar year to provide personal care or support to a person who is a family member or lives in the same household and who requires care or support for serious medical reasons. This leave is unpaid.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Mothers who work at least 4 hours per day and breastfeed are entitled to breastfeeding breaks at work, which are included in their working time. The number of breaks depends on the number of hours at work, and the length of the break depends on the number of children being breastfed (i.e., children not necessarily born at the same delivery and with no limit for the age of child breastfed). A mother of 1 child working full-time would be allowed 2 breaks per day of 30 minutes each. Breaks could be combined and granted at the beginning or end of the working day.

Flexible working for carers

- An employee has the right to apply for flexible forms of work or remote work in certain conditions, such as: a pregnant employee or a pregnant employee's spouse in the case of a complicated pregnancy; an employee who is the parent of a child who has a *'For Life'* certificate (see 1c) or other certificate for a disability. The right to apply for flexible forms of working time is also available to employees whose children have already turned 18 years of age.
- The employer has the right to refuse the application submitted by the employee if it is not possible due to the organisation of work, or the type of work performed by the employee. In which case, the employer must inform the employee about the reason for refusal.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- The employer is obliged to grant a pregnant employee time off from work for medical examinations recommended by a doctor, conducted in connection with the pregnancy, if these examinations cannot be conducted outside working hours. The employee retains the right to remuneration for the period of absence from work for this reason.

Other provisions of leave

- None reported.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is 4 years, but most of this is means-tested and low paid; leave paid at a high rate runs for maximum of 14 months. There is an entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) from 3 years of age. There is, therefore, no gap between the end of leave and an ECEC entitlement, but there is a nearly 2 year gap between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

None reported.

4. Uptake of leave

The Social Insurance Institution (*Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych, ZUS*) collects limited data on the amount and average level of benefits received by parents on Maternity, Parental and Paternity leave.

a. Maternity leave

As 14 weeks of Maternity leave is obligatory, it is likely that all women take some period of this leave. In 2023, 66,900 women took Maternity leave with an average benefit of PLN111.52 [€25.74] per day.

b. Paternity leave

According to recent reports published by ZUS and Share the Care foundation,[442] the share of fathers using Paternity leave increased from 60 per cent in 2022 to 67 per cent in 2023. In 2025 this share dropped to 58 per cent, probably due to a 'crowding-out effect' of the higher use of earmarked Parental leave by fathers (see below). The average benefit for fathers on Paternity leave in 2024 was PLN228.19 [€52.68] per day, nearly twice as high as the benefits received by mothers on Maternity leave.

[442] *Równi w domu, równi w pracy – równość rodzicielska w Polsce trzy lata po wdrożeniu dyrektywy unijnej Work-Life Balance* [Equal at home, equal at work – parental equality three years after the implementation of the EU Work-Life Balance Directive], Warszawa: Share the Care, ZUS, March 2026. Available at: https://rowni.sharethecare.pl/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Rownosc-rodzicielska-w-Polsce-2026_raport.pdf; *Tata na rodzicielskim. Co mówią liczby o ojcostwie w Polsce* [What do the numbers say about fatherhood in Poland], Warszawa: Share the Care, ZUS, April 2024. Available at: https://sharethecare.pl/tata-na-rodzicielskim/; ; *Mama i tata w domu i w pracy. Równość rodzicielska w Polsce w szerszym kontekście społeczno-gospodarczym* [Mom and Dad at Home and at Work: Parental Equality in Poland in the Broader Socio-Economic Context], Warszawa: Share the Care, ZUS, May 2025. Available at: https://sharethecare.pl/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/05_25-Raport_mama-i-tata-w-domu-i-pracy.pdf

c. Parental leave

The data indicate that the transferable part of Parental leave is mostly taken by women.

As a result of the introduction of 9 weeks of paid Parental leave reserved for each parent in April 2023, more fathers make use of their Parental leave rights, up from 3,700 in 2022 to 19,000 in 2023. In 2024 this number rose further, to 41,900. Nevertheless, still only a limited share of eligible fathers - about 24 per cent in 2025 - use their rights. The average time fathers took Parental leave in 2025 was 43 days, compared to 143 days for mothers.[443] The benefit on Parental leave in 2025 when taken by mothers was, on average, PLN175 [€40.40] per day, while for fathers it was PLN255 [€58.86] per day.

[443] https://sharethecare.pl/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/05_25-Raport_mama-i-tata-w-domu-i-pracy.pdf; https://rowni.sharethecare.pl/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Rownosc-rodzicielska-w-Polsce-2026_raport.pdf

Portugal[444]

Mafalda Leitão, Susana Atalaia and **Karin Wall** (University of Lisbon)[445]

April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on Leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

Note on terminology: a new labour law came into effect in May 2009 and major changes were introduced in leave policy (see details in 2009 review). 'Maternity leave' was replaced by the 'Initial Parental leave'; 'Paternity leave' and optional Parental leave for fathers was replaced by 'Fathers-only Parental leave'; and a 'sharing bonus' was introduced (see below).

a. Initial Parental leave (*Licença Parental Inicial* – formerly 'Maternity Leave', see note on terminology) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 120 or 150 calendar days, depending on payment level (see 'Payment, funding and taxation' below).
- It is obligatory for the mother to take 42 calendar days (6 weeks) following the birth – 'Mothers-only Initial Parental leave' (*'Licença Parental Inicial Exclusiva da mãe'*). The remaining period (78 or 108 days, respectively) may be divided by mutual agreement between the parents.
- An extra 30 days ('sharing bonus') is available if parents share the leave. The Leave is then extended to 150 days or 180 days (see 'Flexibility' below for the options available to parents).

[444] Please cite as: Leitão, M., Atalaia, S. and Wall, K. (2026) 'Portugal country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, Á.A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

[445] The preparation of this country note has been funded by OSeM - Observatory of Changing Society, the interdisciplinary observatory of ICS-ULisboa, and FCT - Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P. (UID/50013/2025, UID/PRR/50013/2025, LA/P/0051/2020).

Payment, funding and taxation

- Initial Parental leave: 120 days (including the obligatory 42 days of 'Mothers-only Initial Parental Leave') at 100 per cent of earnings or 150 days (including the obligatory 42 days of 'Mothers-only Initial Parental Leave') at 80 per cent of earnings, with no upper limit on payments.
- A sharing bonus is allocated if each parent takes at least 30 consecutive days of leave or 2 periods of 15 consecutive days once the other parent returns to work:150 days are paid at 100 per cent of earnings or 180 days at 83 per cent of earnings, with no upper limit on payments.
- If the father takes at least 60 consecutive days, or 2 periods of 30 consecutive days, after the mother returns to work, the payment level increases to 90 per cent of earnings.
- If the parents decide to share the fifth month of Initial Parental leave in order to stay home at the same time (each parent a maximum of 15 days), the payment level remains at 80 per cent of earnings for each parent. The total length of leave remains the same but ends earlier if a portion is taken at the same time (see 'Flexibility in use' below).
- The monthly payment of 'parental benefit' is based on the average of all gross earnings in the first 6 of the last 8 months immediately preceding the Leave (excluding Christmas and holiday subsidies and other work bonuses).
- If income is very low (see 'Eligibility' below), there is an entitlement to 'Social Initial Parental leave', with a minimum payment of €14.32 per day (120 days or 120+30 days of shared leave), €11.46 per day (150 days of non-shared leave), or €11.82 per day (150+30 days of shared leave). These days of Social Initial Parental leave include the 42 days mandatory for mothers ('Mothers-only Social Parental leave')
- Non-employed parents receiving either social parental benefits or unemployment benefits may apply for pension credits for their child-rearing leave.
- Payments are made to the parent by the social security system.
- Payments are not taxed. Most parents taking leave receive a higher net income than during employment since the leave benefit is exempt from payment of social security and income tax.
- Parents continue to accrue pension credits and other entitlements while taking leave. However, holiday and Christmas bonuses from the employer are not automatically paid during the leave period, but beneficiaries can apply for them as a 'compensation benefit' provided by the social security system (except for self-employed parents).
- Funded by the social security system, which is financed by contributions from employers, employees, self-employed persons and voluntary forms of social security. In general, employers contribute 23.75 per cent (22.3 per cent in the case of non-profit organizations) and employees 11 per cent; self-employed persons contribute 21.4 per cent.

Flexibility in use

- Mothers have the option to take up to 30 days of Initial Parental Leave before giving birth.
- Initial Parental Leave of 120 or 150 days can be divided between the parents but cannot be taken by both parents at the same time, except in the cases mentioned below, i.e., during the 5th month parents can stay at home together for 15 days making a total of 30 days of leave; and in the option of

taking leave simultaneously with part-time work after the 120 days, in which case benefit will be paid accordingly with a maximum of 15 full days per month (30 half-days per parent). If parents want to take their leave at the same time and both work for the same employer in a small business, the employer's consent is required.

- Initial Parental Leave may be taken in the following ways:
  - A parent may take (after the mother's obligatory period of 42 days) the remaining days of the 120 days leave, paid at 100 per cent of earnings or the remaining days of the 150 days leave, paid at 80 per cent of earnings, i.e., when there is no sharing of leave.
  - Parents may take 150 days at 100 per cent of earnings, provided the father takes at least 30 consecutive days or two periods of 15 consecutive days of leave alone, without the mother, or vice versa.
  - Parents may take 180 days at 83 per cent of earnings, provided the father takes at least 30 consecutive days or two periods of 15 consecutive days of leave alone, without the mother, or *vice versa*. If the father takes at least 60 consecutive days, or two periods of 30 consecutive days, after the mother returns to work, payment is increased to 90 per cent of earnings.
  - In the fifth month, parents can stay home together, but each parent can only stay home for a maximum of 15 days. Therefore, this option reduces the total amount of leave from 5 months to 4½ months, or from 6 months to 5½ months.
  - Initial Parental leave can be combined with part-time work after the first 120 days of leave, i.e., either the 5th or the 6th months *or* both the 5th and the 6th months of Initial Parental leave can be taken on a part-time basis by each parent. With this option the 30 days of full-time leave becomes 60 days of part-time leave and total Initial Parental leave can be extended up to a maximum of 240 days, i.e., 120 days on a full-time basis plus 120 half-days (part-time basis) paid at 50 per cent of earnings; parents can combine part-time leave with part-time work, either simultaneously or sequentially.
- Single parents cannot claim the entitlements of the other parent. For that reason, fully paid Parental leave (100 per cent) for these parents is available for 4 months only, and the maximum of initial Parental leave time is 5 months, paid at 80 per cent.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All female workers who have paid social security contributions for 6 months, continuously or intermittently; however, if contributions are not consecutive, there cannot be a period equal to or greater than 6 months without contributions, otherwise a new guarantee period must be fulfilled starting from the month in which there is a new salary record. This includes: domestic workers; cultural sector employees under a very short-term employment contract, when registered in the register of professionals in the cultural sector; self-employed persons; beneficiaries of the voluntary social security system (scientific research scholarship holders and workers on ships owned by foreign companies); unemployed persons with unemployment benefits (suspended while receiving parental benefits); and workers receiving a partial disability pension, old-age pension or survivor's pension (also making contributions to Social Security). Contributions made

to other national or international compulsory social security systems may be considered under certain conditions.

- Eligibility for paid obligatory leave, i.e., 42 calendar days of 'Mothers-only Initial Parental leave', only requires that the mother has worked and made social security contributions for at least one of the 6 months preceding birth. If necessary, the month of birth will be considered, provided there is at least 1 day of work with deductions in that same month.
- Mothers with no or insufficient contributions are entitled to 'Mothers-only Social Initial Parental leave' for the mandatory 42 days and to 'Social Initial Parental leave' for the remaining days up to 120 or 150 days of leave. The 120 or150 days leave can be taken either by the mother or the father under the same terms as Initial Parental leave. However, it only applies if they meet the low-income/flat-rate criteria, meaning that the gross monthly family income must be below 80 per cent of the Social Support Index (IAS) (€537.13 per month in 2026). In addition to this gross family income limit, the household's movable assets (bank deposits, shares, bonds, savings certificates, participation certificates, and units of participation in collective investment institutions) cannot exceed €128,911.20 (240 x €537.13). The monthly amount and duration of Social Initial Parental leave are:
  - for non-shared leave, €429,70 for 120 consecutive days (80 per cent of the IAS) and €343.76 for 150 consecutive days (64 per cent of the IAS).
  - for shared leaves, €429,70 for 150 consecutive days (80 per cent of IAS) and €354,51 for 180 consecutive days (66 per cent of IAS).
- The father's entitlement to take or share Initial Parental leave, or Social Initial Parental leave, is the same as the mother's, but depends on the mother's working status or entitlement for other reasons (e.g., low family income, receiving unemployment benefits). If the mother is not entitled, the working father can only take the Fathers-only Parental leave (see 1b).
- The sharing bonus applies only if both parents work or are eligible for other reasons (e.g., low family income, receiving unemployment benefits).
- Parents in same-sex relationships are eligible, as are migrant families that meet eligibility conditions.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of Leave to a person other than the mother

- In the case of multiple births, the leave period is extended by one month for each additional child, and the entire leave period is paid at 100 per cent, regardless of the number of days and whether or not parents share the leave.
- In case of death, mental illness or physical incapacity of a parent who is entitled to use the leave, the other parent is entitled to the remaining time (this is called 'Initial Parental Leave in the event of impediment of a parent to take Leave'). The father will always be entitled to a minimum of 30 days of leave if the mother dies, becomes mentally ill, or has a physical incapacity within the 120 days after birth.
- A working grandparent is entitled to 30 consecutive days of leave after the birth of a grandchild if the parent is a teenager (i.e., under 16 years old) still living at home.
- In the event of poor health or work-related health risks to the mother and foetus, the pregnant mother is entitled to pre-natal maternity benefits for as long as the risk exists (this leave is referred to as 'Health risk

Leave/benefit during pregnancy'). This Leave does not count toward the 120, 150, or 180 days of Initial Parental leave, requires a medical certificate, and is paid at 100 per cent of earnings.

- In the event of premature birth or hospitalisation of the child or of the parent taking the leave after birth, the leave period is extended by the duration of the hospitalisation, up to a maximum of 30 days, without prejudice to the duration of the Initial Parental leave. If the hospitalisation lasts longer than 30 days, the Initial Parental leave may be suspended for the duration of the hospitalisation, allowing the parent to request paid leave to care for a sick child (see 1e).
- If the birth occurs before the 33rd week of pregnancy (inclusive), the Initial Parental leave period is extended by as long as the child's hospitalisation lasts, and by 30 days after discharge from the hospital. A statement from the hospital confirming the duration of the hospitalisation is required, to add the additional time to the leave period.
- In the case of 'special risks' (i.e., 'night work' from 10pm to 7am and 'exposure to special agents, processes or working conditions', both defined by law) during pregnancy, after childbirth and during breastfeeding, women may interrupt their work and are entitled to 'Leave/benefit for special risks', which is compensated at 100 per cent of earnings. This interruption requires a medical certificate confirming the risk to the health or safety of the mother and/or the development of the child, as well as a statement from the employer that it is not possible to assign the working mother/pregnant woman to another schedule or other duties. This Leave does not reduce the 120, 150 or 180 days of the Initial Parental Leave.
- Civil godparents[446] are entitled to Initial Parental leave, Social Initial Parental leave and Additional Parental leave. However, they are not entitled to Mothers and Fathers' Only leave nor to the 30 optional days of Initial Parental leave to be taken before birth.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- Parents living in the Portuguese autonomous regions (Madeira and Azores) are entitled to a 2 per cent increase in Parental leave benefits compared to the mainland to compensate for the higher cost of living.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Fathers-only Parental leave (*'Licença Parental Exclusiva do Pai'* – formerly Paternity leave, see note on terminology) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security)

Length of leave

- 35 calendar days, 28 days of which are obligatory.

[446] Civil godparents assume parental responsibilities for children under 18 years of age who are institutionalized and for whom adoption has become unfeasible. They do not replace parents, although they are given long-term parental responsibilities for children.

Payment and funding

- 100 per cent of gross income with no upper limit (mandatory and optional days).
- Non-working parents receiving either social parental benefits or unemployment benefits may claim pension credits for the period of leave.
- Paid, taxed and funded as for Initial Parental leave.

Flexibility in use

- 7 of the 28 mandatory calendar days must be taken immediately after birth; the remaining 21 days must be taken consecutively or in periods of at least seven days each, within the 42 days of the Mothers-only Initial Parental leave. The remaining seven optional calendar days must be taken while the mother is on Initial Parental leave (120 or 150 days).
- The law states that 28 calendar days are obligatory. The ACT (Authority for Working Conditions) conducts workplace inspections and has established new protocols and training for inspectors, who must inspect all forms of Parental leave uptake.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- The same as Initial Parental Leave.
- Eligibility for the paid obligatory leave period (28 calendar days) only requires that the father has worked and made social contributions for at least 1 of the 6 months preceding birth. If necessary, the month of birth will be considered, provided there is at least 1 day of work with contributions in that same month.
- Fathers who have no contribution record or with insufficient contributions are entitled to 'Fathers-only Social Parental leave', which includes the mandatory paid leave of 28 calendar days, as well as the 7 optional calendar days, but only if they meet the low-income/flat-rate criteria which means that the gross monthly family income must be below €429,70 (80 per cent of the Social Support Index (IAS): €537.13 in 2026). In addition to this gross family income limit, the household's movable assets (bank deposits, shares, bonds, savings certificates, participation certificates and units of participation in collective investment institutions) cannot exceed €128,911.20 (240 x €537.13). The daily payment is €14.32, which is 80 per cent of 1/30th of the IAS.

Variation in Leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of Leave to person other than the father

- The 28 mandatory calendar days of Leave are increased by 2 days for each additional child in the case of multiple births. The same applies to the seven optional calendar days that the father may take while the mother is on Initial Parental leave.
- In case of hospitalisation of the child during the period after childbirth, Fathers-only Parental leave is suspended, at the father's request, for the duration of hospitalisation.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- Fathers living in the Portuguese autonomous regions (Madeira and Azores) are entitled to a 2 per cent increase in Fathers-only Parental leave benefits compared to the mainland to compensate for the higher cost of living.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Additional Parental leave (‘*Licença Parental Comple-mentar’* – formerly Parental Leave, see note on terminology) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security)

Length of Leave

- 3 months per parent. Additional Parental Leave is an individual, non-transferable entitlement.

Payment and funding

- Payment varies according to different take up options:
  - *Full-time leave*: up to a maximum of 3 months per parent, paid at 30 per cent of earnings or 40 per cent if both parents take up all the available 3 months on a full-time basis
  - *Complementary part-time leave*: up to a maximum of 3 months part-time leave for each parent, paid at 20 per cent of parental benefit.
  - *Complementary interpolated leave*: each parent can take all the available 3 months leave in three blocks interpolating full-time leave with part-time leave and combining the latter with part-time work. Leave is paid at 30 per cent of earnings or at 40 per cent if both parents take up all the available leave time (3 months each parent). For example, ‘complementary interpolated leave’ can be extended up to 4 or 5 months, e.g., months of total leave time = 30 days + 60 half-time days (30 days) + 30 days (payment for 90 days paid at 30 per cent of earnings); 5 months of total leave time = 60 half-days (30 days) + 30 days + 60 half days (30 days) (payment for 90 days at 30 per cent of earnings).
  - There is a minimum daily payment of €7.16, i.e., 40 per cent of 1/30th of the IAS (€537,13 in 2026).
- Pension credits can be claimed by those on Additional Parental Leave (except for self-employed parents)
- Paid, taxed and funded as for Initial Parental leave.

Flexibility in use

- Paid Additional Parental leave may be taken until the child is 6 years, i.e., it does not have to be taken immediately after the Initial Parental leave. It can be taken by both parents at the same time or consecutively.
- Parents can be on leave together, for part of the period or for the whole period.

- Unpaid leave can be taken on a part-time basis for 12 months per parent.
- When both parents work for the same employer, the employer has the right to postpone the leave of one of the parents.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- As Initial Parental leave. However, paid Additional Parental Leave is not available to parents receiving social parental benefits, nor to parents receiving unemployment benefits.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to a person other than the parents

- Civil godparents are entitled to Initial Parental leave, Social Initial Parental leave and Additional Parental leave. However, they are not entitled to Mothers-only and Fathers-only leave nor to the 30 optional days of Initial Parental leave to be taken before birth (civil godparents assume parental responsibilities for children under 18 years of age who are institutionalized and for whom adoption has become unfeasible. They do not replace parents, although they are given long-term parental responsibilities for children).

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- Parents living in the Portuguese autonomous regions (Madeira and Azores) are entitled to a 2 per cent increase in Additional Parental leave benefits compared to the mainland to compensate for the higher cost of living.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks *(Licença para assistência a filho – formerly Special Parental leave)*

- After Additional Parental leave, and only if this leave has been taken, one of the parents may take up to 2 years of Childcare leave on a full-time basis, extended to 3 years when there is a 3rd or subsequent child. Childcare leave is unpaid. However, unlike Additional Parental leave, which is an individual entitlement, this special leave can only be taken by one parent who must prove that the other partner is employed or incapable of working. Moreover, while parents on Additional Parental leave continue to be considered as employees with full rights and guarantees, as if they were working (for example, they continue to be entitled to holidays which they can take at the end of the leave period), in the case of Childcare leave (and in the case of leave to care for disabled, chronically ill or oncological ill children, see 1e), there is a suspension of the work contract. This means that all the employee's rights and guarantees are suspended, and only the right to return to their job is safeguarded. The period of Childcare leave is also considered in the calculation of old age and disability pensions. Non-employed parents are not eligible to leave, payment, or pension credits.

e. Other employment-related measures

Adoption leave and pay

- When a child under 15 years old is adopted or fostered, the adopting or fostering parents are entitled to Initial Parental leave on the same conditions and payment as described for Initial Parental leave (see 1a), including the sharing bonus. In the case of multiple adoptions, leave will be extended by 30 days for every subsequent child adopted and paid at 100 per cent of earnings, regardless of the number of days and the sharing between parents. In case of the death of the adopting parent, leave may be transferred to the spouse, who can take, as an alternative, a minimum of 14 days' leave.
- In the event of hospitalisation of the child, the leave period is extended by the duration of the hospitalisation, without prejudice to the duration of the Initial Parental Leave.
- Adopting or fostering parents can take up to 30 days of the 120/150 days of Initial Parental Leave during the process of the child's transition/delivery to their care. Adoptive and foster fathers are entitled to the Fathers-only Parental Leave (see 1b). In case of multiple adoptions, Fathers-only Parental Leave will be extended by 2 days for every subsequent child adopted.
- Adopting or fostering parents also benefit from time off to care for a dependent child (see below).

Time off for the care of dependants

- Up to 30 days per parent and per year can be taken to **care for sick children** under the age of 12 years, with no age limit in the case of a child who is chronically ill or disabled. Leave is increased by 1 day for each additional child. If a child under the age of 12 years is in hospital care, this entitlement lasts for as long as the child is in hospital. An additional 15 days per parent and per year can be used to take care of sick children above the age of 12 years (when older than 18 years of age, the child must belong to the same household). Leave is increased by 1 day for each additional child.

  Paid at 100 per cent of net earnings up to a maximum of 65 per cent of gross earnings. Parents living in Portuguese autonomous regions (Madeira and Azores) are entitled to a 2 per cent increase. Entitlement to payment implies that the other parent works and does not take the same leave at the same time; therefore, if the father is not working or prevented from taking care of the child, and the mother takes leave, she will not be entitled to payment from Social Security. Both leaves are an individual entitlement and cannot be taken at the same time by both parents.

  Grandparents are also entitled to take leave from work in order to care for their sick grandchildren: they may take the same number of days parents are entitled to or take the remaining days that parents have not taken from their leave entitlement. Paid at 100 per cent of net earnings up to a maximum of 65 per cent of gross earnings.

- When there is a disabled or chronically ill child, including an adopted child or step-child in the household, one of the parents is entitled to 6 months' leave (referred to as '**Benefit to care for a child with disability, chronical or oncological illness'**), which may be extended up to 4 years or 6 years if the

need is supported by a medical statement (no limit in case of a terminal illness) This leave can only be taken by one of the parents and it is paid at 80 per cent of earnings (100 per cent if cancer disease); the maximum payment per month is equivalent to three times the amount of IAS (€537.13 x 3). Parents living in Portuguese autonomous regions (Madeira and Azores) are entitled to a 2 per cent increase.

- Up to 15 working days per year of unpaid **leave to care for a spouse or a close relative** (parents, grandparents, siblings – even if they are not living in the same household). Employees in the public sector are entitled to a benefit of 65 per cent of their earnings per day. An extra 15 days of unpaid leave per year is available to care for a disabled or chronically ill spouse.
- '**Non-primary informal care workers'**[447] are entitled to the 15 working days of unpaid leave per year (consecutive or not) plus 5 working days (consecutive) of unpaid leave per year. They are also entitled to part-time work for a maximum period of four years, flexible hours, teleworking, exemption from overtime and protection in the event of dismissal.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Parents are entitled to 2 hours of 'breastfeeding or nursing leave' (*Dispensa para Amamentação e Aleitação)* per day during the 1st year after the birth, with no reduction of earnings. When mothers are breastfeeding, the 2-hour reduction can last for as long as the child is breastfed. The 2 hours of nursing/ breastfeeding can be divided into two periods up to a maximum of 1 hour each, unless another arrangement is agreed upon with the employer.
- It is referred to as 'breastfeeding or nursing leave' to make it more gender-neutral, since the work time reduction may be used by mothers, fathers or both of them. This absence from work to nurse is financially supported by the employer, since there is no benefit/compensation from the social security system. Parents must apply for it, and employers are obligated to comply. These 2 hours of nursing leave can be a family entitlement if mothers do not breastfeed their child. In this case, leave may be taken by either parent, usually in two different periods: 1 hour in the morning and 1 hour in the afternoon (unless negotiated otherwise with the employer).
- In cases of multiple births, leave is increased by 30 minutes for every additional child.

Flexible working for carers

- Parents of children under 12 years of age (no age limit applies to a child who is chronically ill or disabled and lives in the same household) are entitled to flexible work arrangements, which allow the employee to choose, within certain limits, when to start and finish daily work. Employees may work up

[447] The informal non-primary care worker is not permanently present and does not need to live with the person being cared for: may be a husband/wife, married or in a stable union (situation equivalent to married couples) and relatives up to the 4th degree of the direct line or collateral line of the person being cared for (Includes: parents, stepparents, grandparents, great-grandparents, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, siblings, nephews, uncles, great-uncles and cousins). An informal caregiver may also be someone who, although they do not have family ties with the person being cared for, lives in the same household. Parents who have shared custody of the person being cared for may also be informal caregivers.

to 6 consecutive hours and up to 10 hours per day, provided the normal weekly hours of work are met. Both parents are entitled to this flexible work schedule for an employee with family responsibilities.

- Where there are children below 12 years of age (no age limit in the case of a child who is chronically ill or disabled, living in the same household), one of the parents (or both for alternative periods of time) is entitled to part-time work after taking Additional Parental leave ('part-time work for an employee with family responsibilities'). Part-time work can be taken in the following ways: working part-time for 5 days per week or working 3 full days per week. Employers and employees can agree on other arrangements. Part-time work may be extended to up to 2 years (3 years in the case of 3rd and subsequent children, four years in the case of chronically ill or disabled children).
- Parents working part-time or in a flexible working regime, cannot be penalised in their evaluation and career progression.
- If there is a disabled or chronically ill child below one year of age, one of the parents may apply for a 5 hour reduction in their weekly working hours if the other parent is still employed.
- Parents are entitled to 4 hours of absence (per school term) to attend school meetings, until children reach 18 years of age, with no reduction in their earnings.
- Adopting and fostering families are entitled to be absent from work to attend meetings and proceedings related to the process of adoption or fostering.
- Co-parents are entitled to leave work to be present in prenatal appointments or medical-assisted procreation (PMA) appointments.
- When resident in autonomous regions, co-parents are both entitled to time off work if they need to attend a medical facility outside their island, for medical appointments or birth. Parents with children below three years of age (no limit of age in case of chronically ill, oncological ill or disabled child) are entitled to teleworking (working from home). If their job fits this working regime and the company has the resources, employers cannot oppose to this option. Possibility to extend until the child's 8th birthday in case of families where both parents share telework (if this is exercised by both in successive periods of equal duration within a maximum reference period of 12 months); or single parent families or families where only one parent meets telework conditions. This measure excludes micro companies, i.e. fewer than 10 employees.
- Parents with children between 3 and 6 years old must give their written consent to do 'time banks' (extra unpaid working hours that can be compensated in time off) as well as to adaptability regimes (up to 12 hours a day, maximum 60 hours per week).

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- Pregnant workers are entitled to time off work for antenatal appointments, for as long and as often as necessary. Whenever possible, they must attend prenatal appointments outside of working hours. The father is entitled to 3 days off work to accompany his pregnant wife to antenatal appointments.

Other provisions of leave

- **Gestational mourning** *(Licença por luto gestacional).* In the case of the death of an unborn child, both the mother and father are entitled to 3

consecutive days of mourning, without prejudice to any rights or reduction of earnings. A medical certificate is required for the employer.

- **Leave for voluntary termination of pregnancy** (*Licença por interrupção de gravidez*). Working women (or women receiving unemployment benefit as well as women beneficiaries of disability pension and survivor's pension) who voluntarily choose to terminate their pregnancy (only possible during the first 0 weeks plus 6 days of gestation) are entitled to paid Leave. This leave is paid at 100 per cent of earnings and can last between 14 and 30 days, depending on medical prescription. In case of low income, a minimum of €13.58 is paid per day.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is 3 years (including two years of unpaid childcare leave). Well-paid leave lasts for up to 6 months, depending on the sharing options. Since 2015 (Lei nº 65/ 2015), there has been an entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) from 4 years of age, in public pre-school education, available for 8 hours per day. Ten years later, Law nº 22/ 2025 extended the entitlement to 3-year-olds. However, it has not yet been able to guarantee places for all children aged 3 years, which has been recently recognised by the government. A gap, therefore, still exists of around 1 year between the end of total paid post-natal leave and an ECEC entitlement, and of 3½ years between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement.

Creche Feliz (free ECEC attendance for children aged 0-3) is Portugal’s flagship free childcare programme, covering all children born on or after 1 September 2021, irrespective of family income. The programme has become a central instrument for improving early childcare access and reducing costs for families and has been extended to private for-profit crèches since January 2023; before this, it was limited to non-profit private organizations (IPSS). However, free attendance at a private for-profit crèche is only possible if there are no places in the non-profit sector in the same Parish Council (since 2024, eligibility came to depend on the availability of places within the parish of residence rather than the wider municipality).

Admission of children prioritizes: children who attended childcare in the previous year; children with disabilities; children of minor student parents who benefit from assistance under the Independent Living Support programme, or are recognized as primary informal caregivers, or are in foster care or shelter; children with siblings who belong to the same household and attend the same childcare; children who are entitled to the social benefit Childhood Guarantee and/or Family Allowance for Children and Young People (1st and 2nd levels) whose guardians demonstrably live and work in the childcare's catchment area; children in households with only one person responsible for the children and young people or large families whose guardians demonstrably live and work in the childcare's catchment area; children whose guardians demonstrably live and work in the childcare's catchment area.

According to data from the Social Security Institute, the number of places in the *Creche Feliz* Programme has been increasing: 79,468 in 2023, 106,110 in 2024, and 112,655 in 2025. According to data released by the Ministry of Labor, Solidarity

and Social Security (MTSSS), by June 2025, the Programme had guaranteed free childcare places for 126,105 children.

A recent study found that the coverage rate for ECEC has increased in recent years, but only 48 per cent of children under the age of 3 years were enrolled in 2023.[448]

According to Carta Social data, in 2023, there were about 130,787 places in crèches (profit and non-profit organizations), while according to *Statistics Portugal* (INE, I.P.), there were about 252,342 children between 0-2 years old.

In April 2026, the government announced an increase of 6.9 per cent in the monthly contribution (from €515.90 to €551.50) per child in a crèche, for the period 2025-2026. With regard to preschool (3-5), the monthly financial support from the government will be 217.82 per child.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

Since April 2025, there have been no changes to leave policy. A reform proposal was presented by the recently elected (June 2025) right-wing government in July 2025 and approved by the Council of Ministers in May 2026. Portugal's current parental protection regime under the Labour Law is complex and would benefit from simplification. However, the reform proposal presented by the Government appears to simplify the framework at the cost of weakening equality-oriented design features.

Following 9 months of unsuccessful negotiations with the social partners, the proposed Labour Package introduces changes that could reduce fathers' autonomous take-up of leave and reshape how families distribute care in the first months after birth. A central concern is the removal of the sharing bonus introduced in 2009 within Initial Parental leave, which promotes fathers' solo caring, and the stronger incentive for both parents to use the 60 optional days simultaneously. In practice, this may discourage paternal autonomy in caregiving and reduce the total length of time a child remains at home with parental care. The proposal also introduces a mandatory Initial parental leave period of 120 days that may be shared between parents, while leaving limited provision for single-parent households, including solo mothers, who may remain capped at maximum 5 months of leave.

Other proposed amendments may also narrow protections for working parents. Changes to Article 56 indicate that parents requesting flexible working hours to care for a child under 12 years may still be required to work weekends and shifts, reducing the practical value of flexibility rights. In addition, breastfeeding leave would become subject to stricter medical certification requirements, with proof

[448] Figueiredo, H. (Coord.), Sá, C., Sarrico, C., Aguiar, J., Araújo, M. and Machado, I. (2025) *Balanço Anual da Educação 2025*. EDULOG - Fundação Belmiro de Azevedo.

required initially and then every 6 months until the child reaches 2 years of age. Previously, there was no age limit.

At the same time, debate continues around a Citizens' Initiative to extend well-paid Initial Parental leave. A proposal to extend the Initial Parental leave from 120/150 days to 180 days paid at 100 per cent of earnings without the need of a sharing bonus, was initially submitted to Parliament by a group of citizens ('Citizens' Legislative Initiative') in July 2023 (although not voted on due to the dissolution of Parliament in November 2023), and again in April 2025, and was finally approved by Parliament in January 2026 (Bill No.176/XVII/1.ª).

Therefore, alongside the Government's proposed reform, the Citizens' Initiative has reopened the debate on extending well-paid Parental leave and is awaiting discussion in the specialist Committee on Labour, Social Security and Inclusion. The Initiative is opposed by the Minister of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security, Maria do Rosário Palma Ramalho, who argues that 6 months of leave without a sharing requirement, as proposed in the Citizens' Initiative, may reinforce gender inequality and penalize women. By contrast, the supporters of the Citizens' Initiative argue that children's well-being would be better protected by extending well-paid Parental leave to 180 days without compulsory sharing. They also propose alternative models of 210 or 240 days with different payment rates and stronger incentives for shared take-up, alongside an extension of exclusive leave entitlements for both mothers and fathers to 56 days. The initiative, therefore, frames longer leave primarily as a child well-being and breastfeeding policy issue.

Creche Feliz programme (free childcare for children aged 0–3 years) has expanded financially and institutionally. Private childcare centres offering extended opening hours became eligible for supplementary Social Security funding, and in 2026 the programme was extended to additional providers, including municipal childcare centres, childcare centres in public higher education, and other public institutions. Despite this expansion, implementation challenges remain. From April 2026, the enrolment process moved fully online through the Social Security website, but platform-related difficulties prompted criticism from participating private childcare centres, some of which threatened to withdraw from the scheme. Further monitoring is needed on enrolment, territorial coverage, provider participation, and the programme's effects on equality of access. Updated evidence from enrolment data and the Child Guarantee reporting framework would help assess whether recent reforms are improving availability and affordability in practice.

4. Uptake of leave[449]

a. Initial Parental leave (formerly Maternity leave)

In the last year, the number of births in Portugal increased by 3.7 per cent, from 84,642 in 2024 to 87,764 in 2025. In general, the number of Parental leaves granted follows the annual number of live births: in 2025, Initial Parental leaves increased to 70,353, compared to 69,155 in 2024. Nevertheless, the percentage of total Initial Parental leave granted has been slightly decreasing, as discussed below.

[449] The authors of the country note comment that 'the Portuguese parental leave system has become complex and, at times, difficult to understand, particularly regarding Additional Parental leave and the possibility of taking initial part-time parental leave.'

Despite fluctuations in the number of births, the slight increases seen in recent years do not reverse the global downward trend in births, nor have these increases recovered the numbers recorded before the 2011-2014 crisis (in the order of 100.000 births). In fact, fertility rate remains very low at 1.40 in 2024. Even so, it is important to consider the relative importance of births to foreign mothers over the last years, representing 13.6 in 2021, 16.7 in 2022, 21.9 in 2023, 26.2 in 2024, and 28.8 in 2025 (source: Pordata).

These births now play a significant role in Portugal's overall birth rate, accounting for more than a quarter of births in 2025. However, available data do not indicate whether immigrant parents, particularly women, are eligible for parental leave. This limits the interpretation of the 2025 data on Initial Parental Leave, which stood at 80.2, compared with 81.7 in 2024, 83.2 in 2023, and 84.1 in 2022. Further research is therefore needed on how precarious work and traditional gender-role representations among immigrant families affect the parental leave uptake.

The 2025 figures include parents with sufficient social security contributions records, who are entitled to 80 to 100 per cent of earnings compensation (63,955), and parents with no or insufficient contributions records, who are only entitled to a flat-rate benefit (6,398; see 1a for benefit eligibility). The latter group represented 9.1 per cent of all paid Initial Parental leaves in 2025. Since it was first introduced in 2008, the share of recipients with insufficient contribution records has increased and reached 21 per cent of Initial Parental leaves in 2010. However, due to changes in eligibility criteria introduced in 2011, which made access more restricted, and the improvement of the country's economic situation from 2016 onwards, with a lower unemployment rate, there has been a decrease in the number of beneficiaries of this flat-rate benefit targeted at very low-income families.

In 2025, Parental leave benefits taken by parents with sufficient social security contribution records represented 72.8 per cent of all live births and 90.9 per cent of all Initial Parental leaves. By contrast, the flat-rate Parental benefit for parents with no or insufficient contribution records represented 7.3 per cent of all live births and 9.1 per cent of all Initial Parental leaves.

b. Initial Parental Leave and sharing bonus

The number of shared Initial Parental leaves with bonus was 34,858 in 2025, corresponding to 49.5 per cent of total Initial Parental leaves granted (54.5 per cent if excluding flat-rate benefit).

Initial Parental Leave taken with the sharing bonus must be divided between both parents (see 1a). Although only the first six weeks (42 days) must be taken by the mother, available evidence suggests that most couples who share leave allocate four or five months to the mother and one month – usually the final month - to the father, when the mother returns to work. Exploratory research also indicates that fathers' solo leave taking depends on mothers' professional status (profession, working schedule, type of contract, eligibility for parental leave benefits, and expected benefit amount). For example, fathers tend to share more leave time when mothers are self-employed, entitled to a lower parental benefit, or have atypical working schedules. Therefore, further research is needed on how parents divide Initial Parental leave as well as on their qualifications, professional activity,

company size, and activity sector (public/private), given the lack of quantitative data on beneficiaries.

Among couples who took the sharing bonus in 2025, 76.9 per cent (26,753) chose the longer leave period of six months paid at 83 per cent of earnings, while 23.1 per cent preferred the five-month option paid at 100 per cent of earnings. Overall, the 6 month option remains the preferred choice despite the lower replacement rate.

Initial Parental leave taken without the sharing bonus, which represented 50.5 per cent of total Initial Parental leaves, is almost always taken by mothers. In 2025, the most common leave-taking pattern was the five months paid at 80 per cent of earnings (67.4 per cent), while 32.6 per cent of mothers chose the four months paid at 100 per cent of earnings. However, mothers receiving the social parental benefit (see 1a) differed from those receiving the standard parental benefit: 82.5 per cent of the former chose the four-month option.

c. Fathers-only Parental leave (formerly Paternity leave)

In line with the increase in births, the number of fathers taking mandatory Fathers-only Parental leave rose from 64,310 in 2024 to 66,913 in 2025. However, relative to the number of births, the percentage of leaves granted remains unchanged at 77 per cent. This indicates that take-up of this leave is still below full coverage, with approximately 25 per cent of fathers either ineligible or not claiming their exclusive mandatory leave benefit.

Relative to the total number of Initial Parental leaves granted, take-up rose from 83.9 per cent in 2015 to 93.1 per cent in 2024 and 95.1 per cent in 2025, which means that most fathers whose spouses/partners take Initial Parental leave also take their mandatory fathers-only leave.

When flat-rate benefits are excluded and only well-paid leaves are considered (i.e., paid at 80-100 per cent of earnings based on sufficient social security contribution record), take-up of Fathers-only mandatory leave, calculated in relation to the total number of well-paid Initial Parental leaves, reaches almost 100 per cent in 2025.

This means that among mothers who are on well-paid leave (paid at 80-100 per cent of earnings due to sufficient social security contribution records) almost all fathers take up mandatory and well-paid Fathers-only leave. On the other hand, when focusing on flat-rate benefits (social parental benefits targeted to very low-income families), we see that in the majority of Social Initial Parental leaves (taken by mothers), there might not be a Fathers-only Social Initial Parental leave. In 2025, Fathers-only Social Initial Parental leave was only taken by 41.3 per cent of fathers whose spouses took leave.

The same trend is observed for the optional additional leave days. In 2025, 57,333 fathers took their fathers-only optional leave, up from 54,381 in 2024; this represents 65.3 and 64.2 per cent of births, respectively. As a share of all Initial Parental leaves granted, take-up rates increased from 78 per cent in 2024 to 81.5 per cent in 2025. When considering well-paid Initial Parental leave, Fathers-only Optional well-paid leave reaches 83.9 per cent in 2024 and 86.7 per cent in 2025.

d. Additional Parental Leave (formerly Parental Leave)

Take-up of Additional Parental leave remains comparatively low, primarily due to the limited level of earnings compensation. Data on the new options introduced one year ago are not yet available (see 1c). Nevertheless, the available figures indicate an increase in take-up from 17,845 in 2024 to 23,364 in 2025, suggesting a general upward trajectory despite observed fluctuations. Additional Parental leave is mainly taken by mothers (84.8 per cent) and represents approximately 36.5 per cent of all well-paid Initial Parental leaves.

Romania[450]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity and maternal risk leave (*concediul de maternitate* and *concediul de risc maternal*) (responsibility of the National Social Health Insurance House)

Length of leave

- 18 weeks, made up of pre-natal birth leave (*concediul de sarcină*) and post-natal confinement leave (*concediul de lăuzie*): a maximum of 63 days can be taken before the birth and the remaining 63 days after the birth, or the entire period of 126 days can be taken after the birth.
- It is obligatory to take at least 6 weeks of post-natal leave.
- Pregnant women and mothers can take 'maternal risk leave' (*concediul de risc maternal*) for the protection of their own and their child's health and safety; this is granted to pregnant women who are not on Maternity leave and whose employers cannot provide safe working conditions for the health of the women or of their children. This leave lasts for up to 120 calendar days, and is additional to Maternity leave (the mother can take both of them, but not at the same time). Usually, mothers take this leave before birth, in the last trimester of pregnancy, after which they take Maternity leave, followed by Parental leave.

Payment and funding

- 'Maternity leave' is paid at 85 per cent of the mean monthly gross income over the preceding 6 months, up to an upper limit of 12 times the national minimum gross salary per month. The calculation of the payment takes into account the mother's previous breaks from employment, including:

[450] Please cite as: Popescu, R. and Radogna, R.M (2026) 'Romania country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds Á. A, Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

unemployment, medical leave, the most recent educational certificates issued by a national institution, and any other Maternity leave and benefit payments made in the past.
- 'Maternal risk leave' is paid at 75 per cent of mean monthly gross income over the preceding 6 months, up to an upper limit of 12 times the national minimum gross salary per month.
- Both leave payments are made to the parent by the employer, who claims back from the Social Health Insurance House. Self-employed persons must submit their application for Maternity leave and allowance to the Health Insurance House to which they belong, and which will pay the maternity allowance.
- Payments are not taxed.
- Pension rights continue to accrue during leave.
- Both leave payments are funded by the National Budget for Social Health Insurance *(Fondul naţional unic de asigurări sociale de sănătate*), which is financed by contributions from employers and employees.

Flexibility in use

- Mothers are required by law to take 6 weeks (42 days) of post-natal leave, out of the available 18 weeks of Maternity leave. The remaining 12 weeks (84 days) is optional.
- If the mother dies during childbirth or during her post-natal leave, the remainder of the leave is transferable to the father of the child.
- 'Maternal risk leave' can be taken in one continuous period or in instalments before and after birth.

Eligibility

- In the case of employees, Maternity leave is granted by the employer on the recommendation of a specialist or family doctor; the pregnant employee must inform her employer in writing and attach the document issued by the doctor. The same applies for 'maternal risk leave'.
- Maternity leave is conditional on social insurance contributions made for 6 months out of the last 12 months prior to the month for which the leave is granted, whether the work was full-time or part-time.
- Maternity leave is also given to pregnant women who have stopped their social insurance contributions for reasons beyond their control, but who have a minimum contribution period of 6 months out of the last 12 months prior to the month for which the leave is granted.
- Maternity leave is for women who are: Romanian or EU citizens, resident in Romania, and contribute to the social security system; and is granted irrespective of occupational status (i.e., for employees; self-employed; unemployed; workers on short-term contracts).
- 'Maternal risk leave' is not conditional on a minimum contribution period as in the case of Maternity leave; mothers employed at the time the risk situation occurs are eligible for this leave.
- Since LGBTQ+ marriages or adoptions are not legally recognised in Romania, there is no provision for same-sex parents. Even if sexual orientation rights have been technically recognised by law since 2000, same-sex relationships do not have equal legal status.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- If the child is stillborn or dies during the confinement leave, the maternity benefit is paid for the entire duration of the leave.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- Birth grants (*stimulentul pentru nou născut*) of RON2,500 [€477.03][451] introduced in 2017 by the municipality of Bucharest continue with their amount unchanged; most other cities and communes have developed similar programmes since then.
- Vouchers for pregnant women (*vouchere materna*) who are resident in Bucharest, which were introduced in 2018, continue with their amount unchanged at RON2,000 [€381.62]; these vouchers are designed to reduce the costs of ante-natal care, and can be used in both the public and the private health system.
- Financial support (*trusoul pentru nou născut*) of RON2,000 [€381.62] is granted for mothers from disadvantaged categories: beneficiaries of social aid or family support allowance, mothers with disabilities; mothers who are temporarily in critical life situations (victims of calamities, domestic violence, drugs) and/or who are in particularly vulnerable situations (no longer having a home or evicted from their own home); mothers who do not have identity documents and who, for this reason, cannot benefit from civil rights; teenage mothers; refugee mothers from Ukraine. The support is given as a voucher, which cannot be exchanged for cash but can be used to purchase products for the care of the newborn (e.g., nappies, clothing, sanitary and medical articles for mother and newborn). The voucher can be requested no later than 3 months after the child's birth and is granted only once. It is supported by OAD - Operational Programme 'Helping Disadvantaged Persons', financed from the European Aid Fund intended for the most disadvantaged persons in Romania.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave (*concediul paternal*) (responsibility of the National Social Health Insurance House)

Length of leave

- 10 working days.
- There is the possibility of extending the leave by a further 5 days if the father attends an infant care course (*curs de puericultură*). This extension is granted for every child. If the father is a medical professional with prior

[451] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://data.ecb.europa.eu/currency-converter

knowledge of childcare, he can submit an application for leave extension, rather than attend the full course.

Payment and funding

- 100 per cent of earnings, with no upper limit on payment.
- Paid, taxed and funded as for Maternity and Maternity risk leaves.

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be taken at any time after the birth until the baby is 8 weeks old.

Eligibility

- Paternity leave is the right of the father, and it is granted irrespective of whether or not the father is married to the mother.
- Paternity leave is granted upon request, during the first 8 weeks from the child's birth, and after the beneficiary obtains the child's birth certificate, which stipulates his role as the child's father.
- Paternity leave is for men who are: Romanian or EU citizens, are resident in Romania, and contribute to the social security system, irrespective of their occupational status (i.e., employees; self-employed; unemployed; workers on short-term contracts).
- If the father has gained a certificate of completion for an infant care course, demonstrating basic knowledge, the length of the Paternity leave is increased by 5 days to a total of 15 days. Courses and certificates are prepared by the family doctor, in maternity wards, by other health state services, or private consultancies that are recognised by the state. The purpose of these courses is to increase fathers' knowledge and involvement in caring for their child, since fathers are expected by policy-makers to be less skilled in infant care. However, the usual practice is for couples to take these courses together, even if men's participation is increasing, especially in urban areas.
- Since LGBTQ+ marriages or adoptions are not legally recognised in Romania, there is no provision for same-sex parents. Even if sexual orientation rights have been technically recognised by law since 2000, same-sex relationships do not have equal legal status.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave (*concediul pentru creșterea copiilor*[452]) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour)[453]

Length of leave

- Until the child is 2 years of age.
- Leave is a family entitlement.
- If both parents are eligible for the leave, 2 months must be taken by the parent not making the original claim for leave. If not, the total amount of paid leave is reduced to 22 months. This strategy is meant to foster more gender equal arrangements.

Payment and funding

- 85 per cent of earnings over the last 12 months. Monthly benefit cannot be less than 2.5xISR[454], currently RON1,650 [€314.84] per month, nor more than RON8,500 [€1,621.89] per month.
- Payments are made to parents by local authorities.
- Payments are not taxed, but a health contribution of 10 per cent is compulsory.
- Pension rights continue to accrue during leave.
- Funded by local authorities from their budgets.
- *Insertion incentive* is given to the parent taking Parental leave and who returns to work. The insertion incentive is RON1500 [€286.22] per month if the parent returns to work before their child is 6 months (or 1 year in the case of children with a disability) and RON650 [€124.03] per month if the parent returns to work when the child is 2 years (3 years in the case of children with a disability) and is given until the child is 3 years (or 4 years in the case of children with a disability). It is forbidden to dismiss an employee who is receiving the insertion incentive for up to 6 months after the return to work; but the law no longer expressly protects from dismissal for the entire duration of the payment of the insertion incentive, i.e., until the child reaches the age of 3 years, or 4 years in the case of a child with disabilities.
- Where parents apply for another benefit because of another birth or adoption or foster care within a period of 12 months from the completion of Parental leave for the previous child, this second benefit is calculated according to either earnings from the parent's interim job (between the two births) or income from the initial benefit, whichever is higher. The period during which the insured person was on paid leave for raising the first child constitutes the period assimilated to the contribution period necessary to be able to benefit from leave and allowance for raising the second child. During any overlapping

[452] The name in Romanian translated literally as 'leave for rearing of the child', placing more emphasis on the child than the parent. For consistency across the review, we have referred to this leave throughout as 'Parental leave'.

[453] Because of the frequent changes in names of Ministries, the term 'Ministry of Labour' is used; currently, the full name is the 'Ministry of Labour, Family, Youth and Social Solidarity'.

[454] 'ISR' stands for the 'Social Reference Indicator' (*Indicatorul Social de Referință*) and describes the reference point established by the state in relation to which benefits are calculated. ISR used to be annually adjusted, with new rates starting from 1 March. As a result of high inflation and a large budget deficit, the government adopted an austerity policy and decided to freeze public employee salaries and social benefits. ISR in 2025 and 2026 has remained frozen at its March 2024 level of RON660 [€125.93] per month.

period, in which the insured person has the right to paid leave both for raising the first and second child, the payment is raised by 50 per cent, to ensure the parent receives at least the same financial support for their second period of leave.

Flexibility in use

- At least 2 months from the total Parental leave available can be granted to the parent who is eligible for leave but has not requested the right to leave. For example, if the mother is the parent who has requested Parental leave, 2 months out of the leave period will be given to the father (this being deducted from the mother's leave) or vice versa. In the time during which one partner is on the 'compulsory' month of Parental leave, the other partner can either return to work or can opt for unpaid leave.
- The same amount will be received by those who have not contributed to the social security fund before birth, but have been enrolled in the labour force when the child reaches 2 years of age.
- Parents can take leave in one continuous period or in several periods of time.
- Parents cannot take leave at the same time.
- Parents who return to work from Parental leave cannot be dismissed in the first 6 months (this is also known as 'the grace period'); the 'grace period' can only be revoked if the mother engages in illegal behaviours (i.e., fraud).

Eligibility

- Both parents are eligible for leave if they have paid national insurance contributions in the last 12 months; this also applies to those who are currently unemployed, due to the employment history from which contributions are calculated.
- Parental leave benefit is for parents who are: Romanian or EU citizens, resident in Romania, living together with the child/ren, and contribute to the social security system, irrespective of their occupational status (i.e., employees; self-employed; unemployed; workers on short-term contracts).
- Parental leave and Parental leave benefit are given for each birth, on a case-by-case basis, for each of the situations mentioned (adoption, placement, guardianship, etc). This can be taken by both parents, so either the mother or the father. The only leave exclusively given to the mother is Maternity leave.
- Since LGBTQ+ marriages or adoptions are not legally recognised in Romania, there is no provision for same-sex parents. Even if sexual orientation rights have been technically recognised by law since 2000, same-sex relationships do not have equal legal status.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- In the case of multiple births, or if there is more than 1 child under 3 years of age, benefit is increased by 50 per cent
- Parental leave is extended until the child is 3 years in the case of a disability.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay (concediul de acomodare)

- The maximum length of this leave is up to 2 years.[455] Adoption leave has the same features as Parental leave
- The adoptive parents must be employed and be insured in the state system of social benefits.
- The adoptive parent taking leave receives a payment equivalent to 85 per cent of average net income in the last 12 months of the preceding 2 years. The benefit begins from the day when the adoption is legally approved in the Court of Law. As for Parental leave, there is a10 per cent health contribution.

Time off for the care of dependants

- **Sick childcare leave** (*Concediul medical pentru îngrijirea copilului bolnav*) gives each parent an entitlement to 45 days leave per year to care for a sick child up to the age of 12 years, or 18 years if a child is disabled. Leave is paid at 85 per cent of earnings. The benefit is awarded based on a certificate from the family doctor, alongside the child's birth certificate. If there are surgical complications or additional health problems, leave can be extended at the discretion of the child's doctor. Each parent is entitled and parents can choose which one will take the leave, if the parent who chooses to care for the child fulfils all of the eligibility criteria. Adoptive parents, foster parents, and legally named guardians can also apply for leave and receive the leave benefit.
- **Leave for the care of cancer patients** (*Concediul medical pentru îngrijirea pacientului cu afecțiuni oncologice*) gives an insured worker nominated by a person with cancer over 18 years of age an entitlement to 45 days leave per year to accompany the person with cancer to treatments prescribed by specialist doctors. Leave is paid at 85 per cent of earnings from health insurance.
- **Caregiver leave** (*Concediul de îngrijitor*) of 5 working days per year, fully paid, with the possibility of extending it under special laws or collective

[455] This includes the legal period of entrusting the child to the adoptive parents, which is currently set at 90 days. Adoption can be approved by the court only if the child has already been entrusted for a period of 90 days to the person or family who wishes to adopt them, so that the court can reasonably judge the family relationships which could be developed going forwards.

working agreements, in order to provide care to a relative or a person who lives in the same household as the employee and who needs support as a result of a serious medical condition. This covers a wide range of medical conditions such as ophthalmology, psychiatric, nephrology, endocrinology, diabetes, nutrition and metabolic diseases, ORL conditions and so on. The employee must prove the existence of the serious medical problem through the hospital discharge fiche or through the medical certificate issued by the physician or the family doctor of the person with the medical problems.

- **Leave for supervising children when schools are closed** (*Concediu pentru supravegherea copiilor în situația închiderii temporare a unităților de învățământ*). Law 19/2020, implemented during the Covid pandemic but based on previous legislation regarding the closure of schools due to weather conditions or other extreme situations so decreed by the authorities, gives parents of children up to 12 years-old (or up to 18 years-old for the children with disabilities) the right to take leave in case of the temporary closure of ECEC services or schools. Leave is paid at 75 per cent of earnings up to an upper limit of 75 per cent of national average gross earnings; the state reimburses the employers for the payment of the leave from the Wage Claims Guarantee Fund. This leave is available to every employed and self-employed parent. This law also grants leave to carers of adult persons with disabilities who are enrolled in day-care services which are temporary closed.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Mothers can take two 1-hour breastfeeding breaks per day until their child is 12 months old or reduce their working hours by 2 hours per day (see 'Flexible working' below). These breaks are fully paid by the employer.

Flexible working for carers

- Until a child reaches the age of 12 months, mothers have the right to reduce their normal working time by 2 hours per day; reduced hours are fully paid by the employer.
- Those taking care of a dependent elderly person can work half time (4 hours per day); reduced hours are fully paid from public funds. The time employed under these conditions is considered as being in full-time work for the purposes of pension contributions and other insured benefits.
- Any adaptation of the work schedule can be requested by the employee to the employer or vice versa. The employer is not obliged to accept this request, but he is obliged to give reasons, in writing, for his refusal.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- Pregnant employees are entitled to attend antenatal appointments during working hours without loss of earnings.

Other provisions of leave

- **Death in the family**. The Labour Code stipulates that employees who experience a death in the family receive paid days off from the state or the company they work for. The number of days depends on the relationship of the employee to the deceased person: it is 3 days for first degree relatives

(i.e., spouses, children, parents or in-laws) and 1 day for second degree relatives (i.e., brothers, sisters and grandparents). Some employers grant additional days.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is up to the age of two years (or three years if the child has a disability), and this is paid at a high rate. There is an entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) from any age; however, there has previously been a shortage of places for very young children (under 3 years) due to the closure of most public nurseries in the 2000s. New nurseries are now being opened and, in September 2020, an amendment to the Education Law entitled children between 2 and 3 years of age to a place in a public kindergarten (originally intended for children over 3 years of age). This has largely, but not completely, closed the gap that existed between the end of well-paid Parental leave and the start of an ECEC entitlement, which has meant that some parents have had to rely on paying private providers or on informal support provided by grandparents and other relatives.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

The government continued the economic austerity program introduced in early 2025, which includes freezing of pensions, salaries and social benefits, the suspension of state employment and reductions in political party subsidies, as part of a strict fiscal strategy. The fiscal measures were taken to maintain medium and long-term budgetary stability, to reduce the budget deficit, in accordance with the commitments made to the European Union (EU), and to comply with the requirements of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR). As a result, the value of the Social Reference Indicator (SRI) remains at the same level of RON660 [€125.93] in 2026, meaning all social benefits calculated based on the SRI (e.g., Parental leave, adoption leave, Insertion incentive) have also remained unchanged.

Starting from 1 August 2025, according to the Law 141/2025 beneficiaries of Parental leave (including adoption leave) pay a 10 per cent contribution to the Social Health Insurance House (CASS); they were previously exempt. However, Maternity and Paternity leaves are still paid in full, remaining exempt from paying CASS.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

Since the first 42 days (post-birth) of Maternity leave are compulsory, all employed women should take up this portion of leave.

b. Paternity leave

Currently, there is no official data on the number of fathers taken Paternity leave (15 working days) or Parental leave (the 2 months non-transferable quota). Also, there is no gender disaggregated data on Parental leave beneficiaries or on the length of time parents take.

According to statistical data that used to be released by the Ministry of Labour, the proportion of fathers taking up paid Parental leave and the benefit incentive for work varied between 15 and 21 per cent in the period 2012-2016. Unfortunately, starting with 2017, the data provided are no longer disaggregated by gender. But more recent data provided by the Ministry directly to the authors shows that fathers represented 14.1 per cent of parents who took Parental leave and work incentive in 2022 and 14.3 per cent in 2023.

c. Parental leave

According to the latest information,[456] in the first semester of 2025, 154.607 people received a child-rearing benefit while taking Parental leave, continuing a steady decrease since 2020 (178,912). A slightly decreasing trend is also observed in the number of those receiving an insertion incentive: 80,109 in the first semester of 2025 compared to 88,520 in 2020. The decrease in the number of leave beneficiaries must be seen in a wider context, which has its origins in the 1990s, when Romania recorded dramatic decreases in the birth and fertility rates. The decreasing number of beneficiaries is the result of the continuing decrease in the number of parents.

The law encourages both parents to share 2 months out of the 24 months allowed, so that they will not lose the full period of leave (i.e., if this 2 months is not taken up by the other parent, Parental leave is shortened). Moreover, the parent who takes this shared leave period and goes back to work receives a continuity of payment while on leave, so there is no economic penalty. However, there is no data on how many parents actually use these shared months.

d. Other employment-related measures

No information available.

[456] The National Agency for Benefits and Social Inspection Report. Available at: https://old.mmuncii.gov.ro/j33/images/Documente/Familie/Incluziune_statistici/Raport_sem1_2025.pdf

Russian Federation[457]

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April 2026

The Russian Federation is a federal state.

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*отпуск по беременности и родам*) (responsibility of Ministry of Labour and Social Protection)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 140 calendar days: 70 calendar days before birth and 70 calendar days after birth.
- It is not obligatory to take leave.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of average earnings, calculated on basis of employment during the 24 months before taking leave, up to an upper limit of RUB955,836 [€8,155.53][458] in case of a single pregnancy and RUB1,324,516 [€11,301.23] in case of a multiple pregnancy. The minimum maternity benefit is RUB124,702 [€1064.00] in case of a singleton pregnancy and RUB172,802 [€1474.41] in case of a multiple pregnancy.
- Unemployed women who have lost their jobs due to the closure of their workplace in the preceding 12 months, and who are registered at the unemployment office, can receive a Maternity benefit equaled to 100 per cent of the subsistence level for the working-age population in the region of residence. Depending on the region of residence, the maximum amount of the payment is RUB53,880 [€459.72] and the minimum is RUB17,134 [€146.19] per month. The payment is provided monthly during the whole period of maternity leave.

[457] Please cite as: Bagirova, A. (2026) 'Russia country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, Á.A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2025*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

[458] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://data.ecb.europa.eu/currency-converter

- Full-time students are entitled to Maternity leave and monthly Maternity benefit set at the subsistence level of the working-age population in the region where the mother lives. For example, in the Lipetsk Region, the benefit amount for 140 days of vacation is RUB79,958 [€682.23], and in the Chukotka Autonomous District - RUB251,440 [€2,145.37].
- Payments are paid directly to the parent by the local office of the Social Fund of Russia,[459] except for those women discharged from their work as a result of business closure; in their case, the benefit is provided by the social security office at the place of residence.
- Payment is not taxed.
- Pension contributions are paid during leave.
- Funded from the Social Fund of Russia, which is primarily financed from contributions made by employers of 22 per cent of employees' wages. It has other sources of funding, including voluntary contributions made by self-employed citizens without the official income or those who have not yet earned a pension qualifying period; fines and penalties; investment income.

Flexibility in use

- None.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All insured women who have an employment contract; women who do not have an employment contract with an employer but have the status of self-employed and individual entrepreneurs and are payers of professional income tax; military women with a contract; women who work in law enforcement agencies and the customs office; unemployed women discharged as a result of business closure during the 12 months before registration at the unemployment office; and full-time students.
- Women who have adopted a child, if they belong to any of the categories listed above.
- Same-sex parents are not eligible.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In the case of multiple births, the length of leave increases to 194 days: 84 days before the birth and 110 days after.
- In the case of a complicated delivery, the length of leave increases to 156 days: 70 days before the birth and 86 days after birth.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- If a woman receives the minimum amount of maternity benefit (minimum wage per month), it is multiplied by the regional coefficient, which varies from 1.1 to 2 according to the region.
- Regional authorities can introduce additional payments during the period of Maternity leave. For instance, the Moscow government increases benefits for

[459] The Social Fund of Russia was established on 1 January 2023 after merging the Pension Fund and Social Security Fund of Russia.

officially registered unemployed mothers discharged from their work as a result of business closure during the 12 months before they registered at the unemployment office.
- The regional authorities of some regions have introduced additional one-off payments in the form of student maternity capital. To receive it, both parents must be full-time students studying for the first time at institutions of secondary vocational education or at a university in the region of the payment, and the mother's age should not exceed 23-25 years. The amount of the payment is determined by regional legislation, for example, in the Ivanovo Region, the payment to young mothers is RUB1,063,000 [€9,069.89]; in the Chelyabinsk Region RUB1,081,600 [€9,228.59]; in the Leningrad Region RUB300,000 [€2559.71], in the Orel, Khabarovsk, and Karelia regions RUB100,000 [€853.24].
- Russian regions with a lower-than-average birth rate, currently 41, receive subsidies for regional demographic measures, which they can introduce in addition to existing ones. In addition, the list of possible support measures is supplemented with a lump-sum payment of at least RUB200,000 [€1,706.47] for the birth of a child in a student family.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave

- No statutory entitlement. The father, if his spouse is on Maternity leave, can take annual paid leave at any time, either before or after childbirth; additionally, an employee has the right to take up to 5 days of unpaid annual leave at the birth of a child.

c. Parental leave (*отпуск по уходу за ребенком*) (responsibility of Ministry of Labour and Social Protection)

Length of leave

- Until the child reaches 3 years.
- Leave is a family entitlement.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 40 per cent of average earnings during the 2 years preceding the birth, paid until a child is 18 months of age. The government sets minimum and maximum payments, the former being RUB10, 837 [€92.47] per month for every child, and the latter RUB83,022 [€708.37] per month for every child. Payments are tax-free, as they are social benefits and do not depend on the needs of the family. An applicant who has official employment or is an individual entrepreneur can receive a unified child allowance along with this benefit, with the average per capita income and property being taken into consideration.
- The second part of leave - from 18th to 36th month - is paid only if the income of the family meets the criteria for the unified child allowance, which is

granted to families with children below the age of 17 years, where the average per capita income does not exceed the regional subsistence level. Payment is made at 50 per cent of the subsistence level after applying; it is then increased to 75 per cent or 100 per cent if the monthly per capita income in the family still does not exceed the subsistence level. To qualify for the allowance, every working-age family member above 18 years of age should have an income of at least 8 minimum monthly wages, which is RUB216,744 [€1,849.34]. To determine the right to payment, the income of all family members for the billing period is divided by 12 months and the number of family members. If the result of calculations is less than the minimum subsistence level in the region, the allowance will be paid; if it is higher, it will not be. The list of income included includes salary, pension, scholarship, and income from self-employment or individual entrepreneur.

- Women or other relatives of the child who became unemployed while on Parental leave because their employer closes the business are also entitled to receive the payment. Parental leave benefit is calculated on the basis of their earnings during the 12 months before their unemployment. The maximum payment for unemployed leave-takers who have lost their jobs due to the closure of their workplace during the preceding 12 months, is RUB21,674 [€184.93] per month.
- Unemployed citizens (excluding those who lost their job because their employer closed the business while they were on parental leave) receive a minimum childcare benefit (RUB10,670 [€91.04] per month for every child) only provided that the average per capita income of their family does not exceed the regional subsistence level.[460] Full-time students are granted the benefit regardless of their income, amounting to RUB10,670 [€91.04] per month for every child.
- Unemployed parents have the right to choose between unemployment or Parental leave benefit: the former is for a shorter period but may be paid at a higher rate, depending on various conditions.
- There is an additional allowance of RUB19,309 [€164.75] per month for the children of conscripts drafted into the Russian Army. It is paid to the conscript's wife from the moment the father begins military service. The allowance is terminated when the father completes his service or the child turns 3 years old.
- If a woman has a right to both paid Parental leave benefits and Maternity leave benefits (e.g., if she is pregnant with a 2nd child), she must choose which benefit to receive.
- Payments are not taxed.
- Pension contributions are not paid, though the leave period is included in determining pensions.
- Funded and paid by the Social Fund of Russia, except for those who are not insured (e.g., students, unemployed people), in which case funded from the federal budget.

Flexibility in use

- A right for a monthly childcare benefit remains if the leave-taker returns to work from leave (to a full-, part-time, or remote job) before the child

[460] Subsistence level is established once a year and is 44.2 per cent of the median income in Russia for the previous year (considering the differentiation coefficient for each region). 'Children's subsistence level' equals to 97 per cent of the per capita subsistence level.

reaches the age of 18 months, or works for some other employer. The benefit is paid to only one parent. If full-time students keep studying on leave, they also receive the monthly childcare benefit.

- Different periods of leave may be taken by different carers provided that only one person is on leave during each period. A father can use his right for leave only after the expiration of mother's Maternity leave; however, if a mother was not officially employed before giving birth, the father can take leave from the time of the child's birth.
- Those eligible for leave can terminate it and later resume leave an unlimited number of times until the child is three years old. Thus, leave-takers can take the place of each other alternating their leave indefinitely or suspend it until the child is three years old.
- Two leave-takers cannot use their right for leave to take care of the same child simultaneously.
- Non-working parents or parents working part-time are eligible for a monthly allowance of RUB11,563 [€98.66] to care for children with disabilities.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Any insured caregiver.
- Self-employed workers have the right to take Parental leave, and are paid a monthly allowance for 18 months, provided that the average per capita income of their family does not exceed the regional subsistence level. In this case, the monthly allowance for caring for a child up to 18 months old is 50 per cent of the subsistence level. If the income level remains low, the amount of the allowance is recalculated and can be increased to 75 per cent or 100 per cent of the subsistence minimum.
- Same-sex couples are not eligible, as same-sex marriage is not legal.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births, poor health or disability of child or mother, single parent), or delegation of leave to person other than the parent

- Leave can be delegated to grandparents or any other guardian caring for the child.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- The amount of monthly childcare benefit paid to parents taking Parental leave until children are 18 months of age is increased by the regional coefficient which varies from 1.1 to 2 according to regional climate conditions. Additional monthly childcare payments for the first and second child of low-income families are also regionally variable, which is related to the regional subsistence level. Due to the fact that thresholds for categorizing families as low-income are different, the amount of the benefit varies as well.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- Employers may provide additional paid leave via collective agreements or other local regulations

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- The same regulations as for other parents, without pre-birth paid leave.
- An additional one-time allowance for the transfer of a child to a family is paid to the child's guardians in the amount of RUB28,450 [€242.75]. When adopting siblings, children over 7 years or with disabilities, the allowance is paid to the guardians on a one-time basis in the amount of RUB217,385 [€1,854.80]. When adopting a child under 3 months of age, maternity benefit paid.

Time off for the care of dependants

- One of the parents is entitled to take fully paid **leave to care for a sick child**. For a child under 7 years, a parent can take leave for the entire period of the child's illness, but no more than 60 days per year; for a child over seven years of age, no more than 45 days per year. The amount of the sick leave benefit depends on earnings and length of service, but it cannot be less than RUB891 [€7.60] and more than RUB6,827 [€58.25] per day.
- One parent is granted four paid non-working days per month to take **care of a child with a disability** (after the child is three years of age). If these days are not taken, they cannot be transferred to any other month. In the case of several children with disability in the family, the number of non-working days is not increased.
- All employees with 2 or more children under the age of 14 years or with a child with a disability under the age of 18 years or single parents taking care of a child under the age of 14 years may apply for an additional period of 14 calendar days of **unpaid leave** per year at a convenient time for an employee.

Specific provision for (breast) feeding

- Mothers of children younger than 18 months are entitled to take breaks during work to rest and feed their children, with no reduction in earnings. These should be taken no less than once every 3 hours, and for no less than 30 minutes.

Flexible working for carers

- Every employee can apply to their employer for a flexible schedule, for example, an earlier start and an earlier end of the working day. However, the employer is not obliged to agree to the request.
- Pregnant women and parents with a child under 14 years (or a disabled child under 18 years) can ask for shorter working hours, with a proportionate reduction in earnings, and the employer cannot refuse. Working on a part-time basis does not entail any restrictions on the duration of the annual basic paid leave, the calculation of the length of service, and other labour rights for employees.

- The written agreement of an employee with children below 3 years (or below 5 years in the case of single parents) should be obtained in order for them to work overtime, during weekends, or for business trips.
- All regulations are established in the Labour Code and costs are met by employers.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- Employers are required to let pregnant women attend medical appointments without loss of earnings.
- If there is a medical certificate, a pregnant woman can transfer to light labour or reduce production rates. If there are no suitable transfer options, the employer must release her from work. In all these situations, the average earnings are maintained.

Other provisions of leave

- Mothers of children under 18 years and working in rural areas can have 1 unpaid day off per month.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is three years, but payments for the last 18 months are limited for low-income families. There is a right to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) from two months of age, which should mean there is no gap between the end of well-paid leave and the right to ECEC; however, in practice, this right is not enforced, as most parents are unaware of its existence.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

As part of the Family national project, new measures to support families have been introduced since 1 January 2025, aimed at improving the demographic situation and creating comfortable conditions for combining parental responsibilities with professional activities. These include:

- Parents in families with 2 or more children with an average per capita income of less than 1.5 times the regional subsistence minimum per month will be compensated for part of paid personal income tax (tax cashback) from 1 June 2026. The tax is refunded in the form of an annual family payment to parents (adoptive parents, guardians, guardians) who have 2 or more children. To receive this payment, personal income tax must be paid during the year preceding the year of applying for a payment, usually at the rate of 13 per cent. The refund will be 7 per cent, so reducing the effective tax rate to 6 per cent. Both parents are eligible to receive the payment.
- Starting in 2026, large families will be able to receive a single benefit even if their income exceeds the established income limit: if their income exceeds the subsistence minimum by no more than 10 per cent, the benefit will be retained

for another 12 months. The payment amount will be 50 per cent of the regional subsistence minimum for each child.

- From 1 January 2026, lump-sum payments made by employers to employees (parents, adoptive parents, guardians) for the birth or adoption of each child and the establishment of guardianship over them, paid during the first year of up to RUB1,000,000 [€8,532.35] (including in the form of material assistance), are not subject to taxation. Above RUB1,000,000 [€8,532.35] personal income tax is still paid. Previously, the tax exemption was limited to financial assistance of no more than RUB50,000 [€426.62] per child.
- In 2025, the Russian Federation introduced a national standard – Support Measures 'Corporate Demographic Standard'. Its purpose is to assist employers in choosing measures to support employees with family responsibilities; form a loyalty system for their customers, primarily with children; and contribute to the socio-demographic development of regions and the country.
- From 30 October 2025, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation approved recommendations for supporting student families at universities. Russian universities are actively implementing various assistance measures for such students, for example: Ural Federal University provides students with family rooms in dormitories, lump-sum payments to full-time students (both on a budget and on a contract basis), as well as places in a kindergarten at the university with a payment of RUB3,800 [€32.42] per month. Ivanovo State University provides financial assistance to students with children from 6 months to 7 years; payment of financial assistance to students at the birth of a child; and free psychological assistance to parents.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

Although it is not obligatory, it is assumed that almost all eligible women take Maternity leave. According to the Social Fund of Russia, from January to October 2025, the Social Fund paid maternity insurance benefits to 603,000 women on maternity leave.[461]

b. Paternity leave

No statutory entitlement.

c. Parental leave

Since benefits for caring for a child from birth to 18 months of age are available for both insured and uninsured persons, it can be assumed that the uptake is 100 per cent. According to the Federal State Statistics Service, in the fourth quarter of 2025, there were 526,793 women with a child below the age of 18 months who received leave payments, and 463,694 women with a child between the age of 18 and 36 months.

There is no publicly available national data on the number of fathers that use Parental leave in Russia, but some regions do provide this information; this shows that men in Russia are beginning to take Parental leave more often. For example,

[461] https://sfr.gov.ru/press_center/news~2025/11/05/276799

in St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region in 2025, the number of fathers who took leave to care for a baby doubled compared to 2024 and amounted to more than 10,000 men. In the Sverdlovsk Region in 2025, 4,504 working men received a monthly allowance while on Parental leave up to 18 months after the birth of their child, 32 per cent more than in 2024.

Serbia[462]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*porodiljsko odsustvo*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans' and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 4 months: 28 calendar days before the birth and 3 months after the birth.
- It is obligatory to take 28 calendar days before the expected date of delivery.
- After Maternity leave, mothers can access a supplemental leave (*odsustvo sa rada radi nege deteta*, 'child care leave') of 8.2 months per family for the first- and second-born child (see 'variation in leave' section below for multiple births and third or higher-order births); this leave starts immediately after the end of Maternity leave and lasts until the expiration of 365 calendar days from the day the Maternity leave has started. Maternity leave and Child care leave must be taken one after the other, continuously.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of average earnings for employees, calculated based on the average earnings on which compulsory social security contributions were paid during the 18 months prior to the leave, with the upper limit set at five average salaries in the Republic of Serbia, according to the last data published by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia on the day of the beginning of exercising the right to Maternity benefit.
- Mothers cannot receive Maternity leave benefit lower than the national minimum wage (on average, RSD64,554.00 [€549.75][463] net per month), though there is no minimum for the supplemental leave period.

[462] Please cite as: Pantelić, M. (2026) 'Serbia country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A.A., Kaufmann, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

[463] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://www.xe.com/ .

- Maternity benefit for 'other' categories of employees (e.g., self-employed, farmers and owners of agricultural farmsteads, casual employees) is calculated based on a different basis: by dividing the gross base of earnings in the previous 18 months by 1.5. This provision has created discriminatory practice between 'standard' employees and `other` categories of employees who previously had the same salary as the latter will receive lower Maternity benefit due to the difference in the calculation of the benefit.
- There are no leave benefits for unemployed or inactive mothers.
- Pension rights: 'standard' employees, that is, mothers in 'standard' employment having either permanent or fixed-term contract maintain their pension insurance during Maternity leave, with contributions being paid by the state on the level of Maternity benefit. 'Other' categories of employees (e.g., self-employed, farmers and owners of agricultural farmsteads, casual employees) have to pay contributions and taxes for themselves; otherwise, they will not maintain their pension insurance.
- Payments are made to the parent by the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans' and Social Affairs.
- Payments are taxed.
- Funded from general taxation.

Flexibility in use

- None.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employed and self-employed mothers, as well as mothers in casual employment, farmers and owners of agricultural farmsteads paying social contributions are eligible.
- Same-sex couples are not eligible.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to a person other than the mother

- In exceptional circumstances, based on a medical assessment, Maternity leave can start 45 days before the expected date of delivery. In other cases of poor health or health risks for the mother and child, the pregnant mother is entitled to sick leave before birth for the duration of the risk (referred to as 'sick leave due to illness or complications related to pregnancy'), in addition to Maternity leave. The pregnant woman is entitled to a compensation of 100 per cent of average earnings on which compulsory social security contributions were paid during the last 12 months before the month the sick leave began, with a floor set at the national minimum wage for the month when the payment is made.
- Supplemental 'child care leave': 20.2 months per family in the case of multiple births and the third and every subsequent child for all categories of employees (e.g., 'standard' employees, self-employed, occasional employees and farmers).
- The supplemental 'child care leave' is defined as the primary right of the mother, but can be fully transferred to the father with her consent. For children of different birth orders, both parents cannot use their entitlements for leave at the same time.

- The father of the child may exercise the right to Maternity or supplemental 'child care leave' if the mother leaves the child, dies or is prevented from using that right for other justified reasons (e.g., serving a prison sentence, serious illness). The child's father has the right to Maternity leave also when the mother is not employed.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave

No statutory entitlement.

c. Parental leave

No statutory entitlement.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

- One of the parents (including adoptive or foster parents), i.e., legal guardians, has the right not to work until the child turns 3 years. During that time, the parent's rights and obligations regarding their employment are suspended, and the right to compulsory health insurance is maintained. This period of leave is unpaid, so contributions for pension insurance are not paid, but the employer has an obligation to pay healthcare contributions for the employee.
- After the expiration of Maternity and supplemental 'child care leave', one of the parents of a child in need of special care due to a serious degree of developmental difficulties has the right not to work or work part-time (half of the full working hours) until the child turns 5 years of age; this is 'leave for special care of a child' (odsustvo sa rada radi posebne nege deteta). During this period, the employed parent is entitled to wage compensation, which is calculated in the same way as Maternity benefit. If an employed parent decides to reduce working hours and work part-time, he/she is entitled to a salary for the time spent at work and for wage compensation for the hours not working. For children of different birth orders, parents can be entitled to Maternity/'Child care leave' and 'Leave for special care of a child' simultaneously.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- Employed/self-employed foster and adoptive parents have the right not to work for eight months continuously from the day the child is placed in a foster or adoptive family, and for a maximum until the child turns 5 years of age (that is, foster and adoptive parents are not entitled to any leave for an older

child). If the placement in a foster or adoptive family occurred before the child reached 3 months, the foster or adoptive parent of the child has the right not to work until the child reaches 11 months of age.
- Foster and adoptive parents are entitled to wage compensation during the exemption from work due to childcare, which is calculated in the same way as for Maternity leave. They have the same benefit as employed or self-employed parents, depending on their employment status.

Time off for the care of dependants

- There is an entitlement to **leave to care for a sick or injured immediate family member,** with the length depending on the age of family member: for the care of a sick or injured family member younger than 7 years of age or a family member older than seven years with severe developmental difficulties up to 15 days per illness episode, which may be extended up to a maximum of 30 days for justified reasons; for the care of sick or injured family member older than 7 years of age up to seven days per illness episode with the possibility of extension for up to 14 days; in the case of a family member with severe health conditions (severe damage to brain structures, malignant diseases or other severe deterioration of the health condition) up to 18 years of age. The leave is paid at the level of 100 per cent of the average earnings, calculated based on the average earnings on which health care contributions were paid during the 12 months before the month when the leave started.
- A worker has the right to 5 working days per year of fully **paid leave for important personal needs**, including those related to marriage, childbirth, or the serious illness of a member of the immediate family.

Specific provision for (breast) feeding

- The employed woman, who returns to work before the child is 1 year old, has the right to one or more daily breaks for breastfeeding in a total duration of 90 minutes per day, or the right to shorten the daily working hours for 90 minutes due to breastfeeding - if the working hours of an employed woman are 6 hours or more. The time used for daily breaks or shortening the working hours due to breastfeeding is counted in the regular working hours and is paid at 100 per cent of earnings.

Flexible working for carers

- See 'leave for special care of a child' (1d).
- A pregnant worker and a breastfeeding worker cannot work overtime and at night if such work would be harmful to her health and the child's health.
- One of the parents with a child up to 3 years of age, a single parent with a child up to 7 years of age or a parent with a child with severe developmental difficulties can work overtime or at night only with his written consent.
- A parent or legal guardian, i.e., a person who takes care of the person suffering from cerebral palsy, polio, some kind of plegia or muscular dystrophy or other serious illnesses, may, upon their request, work part-time, but not less than half of the full working hours. If an employed parent or legal guardian decides to work part-time, they are receiving only their salary for hours worked, i.e., a salary that is commensurate with the time spent at work.

- Regardless of parental status (i.e., in the case of all employees), an employee and employer can agree that the employee works from home for part of the contracted working hours. Also, if the nature of work and the organization of work permit it, the beginning and the end of the working hours may be determined, i.e., contracted in a special time interval (flexible working hours). Flexible working arrangements are not common practice.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- A pregnant worker has a right to paid leave – equivalent to 1 working day – to attend pre-natal examinations and other health examinations related to pregnancy. Pregnant workers are obliged to announce their intention to use this right to the employer in a timely manner.

Other provisions of leave

- **Leave for a death in the family.** A worker has a right to 5 working days of fully paid leave per year in the case of a death of an immediate family member.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is 11.2 months (including 'Child care leave') for the first or second child, or 23.2 months for the third and every subsequent child as well as for multiple births. This is well-paid leave, paid at 100 per cent of previous average earnings up to an upper limit of 5 average salaries. It is obligatory for children to attend a preparatory preschool programme (PPP) from 5½ years old (4 hours per day for at least 9 months); before that, there is no entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). There is, therefore, a gap of more than 4½ years between the end of well-paid leave and entitlement to ECEC.

National statistics report that in the school year 2025/2026 25.5 per cent of children aged 6 months to 3 years attended ECEC, and 74.5 per cent of children over 3 years, with near universal attendance for PPP (96.2 per cent).[464]

No information for ECEC attendance levels in 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

No changes reported.

[464] RZS (2026) *Saopštenje – Predškolsko vaspitanje i obrazovanje, 2026* [Announcement – Preschool Education and Training, 2025]. Saopštenje broj: 104, oznaka: DD20. Republika Srbija: Republički zavod za statistiku.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

Maternity leave is the exclusive right of the employed mother in Serbia, except in exceptional cases, i.e., the father of the child can exercise the right to Maternity leave if the mother leaves the child, dies, or is prevented from using that right for other justified reasons. There is no official information on uptake rates. Fathers can also use Maternity leave if the mother is not in employment; however, that is not a widespread practice. According to the latest available data from the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans’ and Social Affairs, in 2019, 14 fathers have used the right to Maternity benefit.

The supplemental 'child care leave' is defined as the primary right of the mother, but can be fully transferred to the father with her consent. The father of the child may exercise the right to supplemental 'child care leave' also if the mother leaves the child, dies or is prevented from using that right for other justified reasons. The child's father has the right to 'child care leave' also when the mother is not employed. There is no official information on uptake rates, although according to the latest available data from the Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography, in 2022, only 373 fathers used supplemental 'child care' benefit.

b. Paternity leave

No statutory entitlement.

c. Parental leave

No statutory entitlement.

Slovak Republic[465]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*materská dovolenka*) (responsibility of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 34 weeks: 6 to 8 weeks before the birth and 26 to 28 weeks following the birth.
- It is obligatory to take a period of Maternity leave, which cannot be less than 14 weeks and cannot end earlier than 6 weeks after giving birth.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 75 per cent of average earnings in the previous calendar year, when the employee had earnings and thus paid sickness insurance. The benefit has an upper limit of €2,330, i.e., 75 per cent of twice the national average wage from 2 years before and is adjusted automatically on an annual basis. If the maternity benefit is lower than parental allowance (see 1c), an additional payment is made to cover the difference.
- Payments are not taxed.
- During Maternity leave, pension contributions and health insurance contributions are paid by the state.
- Funded by the Social Insurance Agency, and financed by sickness insurance contributions. Employees contribute 1.4 per cent of their earnings, employers pay an additional 1.4 per cent of their employees' earnings. Self-employed workers pay 4.4 per cent of their declared earnings. Sickness insurance can also be paid on a voluntary basis.

Flexibility in use

[465] Please cite as: Dančíková, Z. (2026) 'Slovak Republic country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, Á., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/

- Leave typically starts 6 weeks before the expected date of birth, but can start as early as 8 weeks; in such cases the post-natal period of leave is shortened accordingly.
- If the mother gives birth before the expected date, she can use the remainder of her pre-natal entitlement after giving birth.
- If the mother dies, the leave and benefit can be claimed by the father.
- Employed mothers are not allowed to continue their previous employment while on maternity benefits, neither full-time nor part-time. However, they can start new employment, either with a different employer or in a new position with the same employer.[466] The self-employed can continue working while on maternity benefits.
- Fathers can be on Parental leave at the same time, but not draw on benefits, unless they are drawing on benefits in connection to a different child than the mother.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- To be eligible for the maternity benefit, a mother must have paid sickness insurance contributions for at least 270 days of the two years before giving birth. Time spent in secondary or tertiary education is also counted towards the 270 days, as long as the mother has already graduated and started paying sickness insurance contributions following her graduation.
- All employees pay sickness insurance contributions. The same conditions apply to the self-employed and voluntarily insured.
- There is no provision for same-sex couples to share leave. Under Slovak legislation same-sex couples do not have the right to marriage, civil partnership, or adoption of children.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- Maternity leave is extended to 37 weeks for single mothers and 43 weeks in the case of multiple births.
- In the case of a stillbirth, the mother is granted a maximum of 14 weeks of Maternity leave.
- If the child dies while the mother is on Maternity leave, the mother has the right to 2 more weeks of leave following the death of the child.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

[466] The Social Insurance Agency had been turning down fathers' applications for maternity benefits when they did not meet the condition of taking care of their child, due to paid work (pravnenoviny.sk (2019) *Ako dopadli žaloby otcov proti nepriznaniu dávky materské* [How did the fathers' lawsuits against the denial of maternity benefits turn out]. Available at: https://www.pravnenoviny.sk/ako-dopadli-zaloby-otcov-proti-nepriznaniu-davky-materske). However, new legislation has discontinued an obligation for mothers to formally transfer the care of their children into fathers' hands and should prevent the Agency from declining fathers' requests due to continuing paid work while in receipt of the maternity benefit (see also 3 below).

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None.

b. Paternity leave *(otcovská dovolenka)* (responsibility of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 28 weeks from the day of birth.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 2 weeks of paternity benefit, to be taken within the first 6 weeks after a child is born, worth 75 per cent of average earnings in the previous calendar year, when the employee had earnings and thus paid sickness insurance. The benefit has an upper limit of €2,330, i.e., 75 per cent of twice the national average wage from 2 years before and is adjusted automatically on an annual basis.[467]
- While the father is on Paternity leave, the mother may be in or out of paid work, including on Parental leave; however, she is not entitled to the parental allowance. Both parents cannot receive maternity benefits for the same child at the same time. However, both parents may be on maternity benefits at the same time with different children, typically the mother with a new-born and the father with an older child.
- Taxed and funded as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- The start of the paternity benefit entitlement can be postponed if the child is hospitalized within the first 6 weeks after it was born.
- Employed fathers are not allowed to continue their previous employment while on maternity benefits, neither full-time nor part-time. However, they can start new employment, either with a different employer or in a new position with the same employer.[2] Self-employed can continue working while on maternity benefits.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- To be eligible for the maternity benefit, a father must have paid contributions at least 270 days of the 2 years before starting leave as well as be insured when starting leave. If the father fulfils these conditions and takes leave within the first 6 weeks since the birth of his child, the conditions are already considered fulfilled for the remainder of his paternity leave, too. All employees pay sickness insurance contributions.

[467] The legislation, Law on Social Insurance (*Zákon o sociálnom poistení*), does not explicitly establish a paternity benefit. Rather, it specifies that a father is entitled to a maternity benefit of two weeks within the first six weeks following the birth of his child. However, the Social Insurance Agency refers to this benefit as a paternity benefit, clarifying that the paternity benefit forms a part of the already available maternity benefit: https://www.socpoist.sk/zivotne-situacie/tehotenstvo-materstvo/otcovske.

- The same conditions apply to the self-employed and voluntarily insured.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- Leave is extended to 31 weeks for single fathers and 37 weeks if taking care of 2 or more children. Single fathers are fathers living alone; unmarried, widowed or divorced.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave (*rodičovská dovolenka*) (responsibility of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family)

Length of leave

- Until the child reaches 3 years of age.
- Leave is an individual, non-transferable entitlement.

Payment, funding and taxation

- Parental allowance (rodičovský príspevok) of €500 per month is available to all parents who meet the eligibility conditions, whether they take Parental leave or not. It can only be claimed by one parent at a time and by a parent who previously received the maternity benefit. Parents who did not receive the maternity benefit are entitled to a parental allowance of €365 a month.
- Fathers are entitled to 28 weeks non-transferable maternity benefit[468] (i.e., 75 per cent of average earnings in the previous calendar year, when the employee had earnings and thus paid sickness insurance and with an upper limit of €2,330). However, mothers and fathers cannot draw on their respective maternity benefits at the same time for the same child, except for the 2 weeks of Paternity leave in the 6 weeks after the child is born; this means the remaining 26 weeks of 'maternity benefit' can only be used by fathers in the Parental leave period after the end of Maternity leave.
- If the paternity benefit is lower than parental allowance (see 1c), an additional payment is made to cover the difference.
- Payments are not taxed.
- The state pays pension and health insurance contributions for 1 stay-at-home parent taking care of a child until the age of 6 years, when compulsory primary education begins.
- Funded by general taxation.

[468] In legal terms, fathers in Slovakia are entitled to maternity benefits, rather than paternity benefits, see also footnote 3.

Flexibility in use

- Parents can agree with their employer on an extension of parental leave until their child reaches the age of 5 years.
- Parents can work full-time or part-time while receiving the parental allowance.
- While both parents can take Parental leave at the same time, only one parent is entitled to the parental allowance at the same time, even with multiple young children present in the family. Parents are also not entitled to the parental allowance when one of them receives the maternity benefit, unless the maternity benefit is lower than the parental allowance. In that case, a lower parental benefit is paid, so that the total sum received by the parent is equal to the parental allowance.
- Parental leave can be repeatedly interrupted and restarted.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Parents must be permanent or temporary residents of the Slovak Republic when claiming the parental allowance in order to be eligible.
- Parents' spouses are also eligible, if living in the same household.
- To be eligible for Parental leave, parents must be employed.
- Parental allowance is provided from the birth of the child, if parents are not eligible for the maternity benefit.
- Parental allowance is not provided to parents if another child of theirs has been removed from their personal care.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- Parental leave and parental allowance can be extended until the child reaches the age of 6 years if the child has a long-term health problem or disability, upon agreement with the employer, this can be extended until the child reaches the age of eight.
- Parental allowance is increased by 25 per cent per child in the case of multiple births.
- Parental allowance is reduced by 50 per cent for at least three months if any older child under parental responsibility is absent from compulsory education for at least three months.
- If the child dies while either parent is on Parental leave, the parent has the right to 2 more weeks of leave following the death of the child, though not beyond the day the child would have reached the age of 1 year.
- If the parents separate, only one of them has the right to the parental allowance, even if both take care of the child.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- Adoptive and foster parents are entitled to 28 weeks of Maternity leave and benefits (31 weeks for single parents, and 37 weeks for parents taking over care of at least two children). The leave can be used until the child reaches the age of 3 years.
- Adoptive and foster parents also have the right to three years of Parental leave starting from the end of Maternity leave or the day when they take the child into their care, if the child is already older than three years of age. The leave can be used only until the child reaches the age of 6 years. If the child is suffering from long-term health problems, Parental leave can last up to 6 years, but only until the child reaches the age of 6 years. Parental allowance for adoptive and foster parents can be paid for a maximum of 3 years.

Time off for the care of dependants

- Employees can take **leave to take care of a sick relative** at home *(ošetrovanie člena rodiny),* including a sick child, or to take care of a child under the age of 11 years (or 18 years if the child is suffering from long-term health problems) for other reasons (e.g., if the child's school is closed). The length of leave is not limited. However, insured parents only receive an earnings-related benefit (*ošetrovné*) paid at 55 per cent of their previous daily earnings for a maximum of 14 calendar days. The maximum daily benefit is €55. There is no limit to the number of episodes per year, if these do not exceed 14 days each.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Mothers of children under the age of 6 months are entitled to two 30-minute breaks for breastfeeding per child per full working day. Mothers of children aged between 6 and 12 months are entitled to one 30-minute breastfeeding break a day. Mothers working at least 4 hours a day have the right to one break a day per child until their child reaches 6 months. The break time is paid.

Flexible working for carers

- Pregnant women, as well as women and men taking care of children below the age of 15 may ask their employer for shorter working hours. Employers may decline the request due to serious operational reasons.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- None.

Other provisions of leave

- None reported

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is three years, 13 months paid at a high rate, the remainder at a low flat rate. Children are entitled to a place in kindergarten starting from the September after they reached the age of 3 years. Attending kindergarten becomes compulsory from the September after they reached the age of 5 years. Children start school from the September after they reach the age of six years.

There is a shortage of kindergarten places, and with priority being given to 5 year olds, many parents of younger children struggle to obtain a place, though availability varies with region.[469,470] To address the shortage, construction of new kindergartens is underway, supported by €82.5 million set aside by the EU-funded Recovery and Resilience Plan.[471] Inadequate numbers of teachers pose an additional obstacle. Significant progress has been made in extending the capacities in select municipalities, but the overall implementation of ECEC expansion is still insufficient.[472]

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

Maternity benefit caps and parental allowance increased automatically from January 2026. The maternity benefit cap was raised in line with wage growth from €2,186 to €2,329.9.[473] The maximum daily value of the benefit to take care of a

[469] Varsik, S. (2019) *Držím ti miesto. Komentár 2/2019 [*I'm saving you a spot. Comment 2/2019], Inštitút vzdelávacej politiky. Ministerstvo školstva, vedy, výskumu a športu, Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic. Available at: https://www.minedu.sk/komentar-022019-drzim-ti-miesto/

[470] Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic. Index dostupnosti materských škôl. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/4usw8nw8.

[471] Mogilevskaia, A. (2024) 'O miesta v škôlkach je bitka, obce nové nestavajú'. [There is a battle for places in kindergartens, municipalities are not building new ones]. *Pravda,* 28 January 2024. Available at: https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/697447-nechcu-obce-stavat-skolky-podla-druckera-ich-musi-rezort-presviedcat-potrebujeme-financie-a-menej-byrokracie-odkazuju-samospravy/.

[472] RTVS (2023) 'Miesta v škôlkach budú zrejme naďalej chýbať. Najťažšie ich hľadajú rodičia v Bratislavskom kraji' [Places in kindergartens will probably continue to be lacking. Parents in the Bratislava region are looking for them the hardest]. *RTVS*, 23 October 2023. Available at: https://spravy.rtvs.sk/2023/10/miesta-v-skolkach-budu-zrejme-nadalej-chybat-najtazsie-ich-hladaju-rodicia-v-bratislavskom-kraji/.

[473] Sociálna poisťovňa [Social Insurance Agency] (n.d.). *ZMENA 2026: Sociálna poisťovňa bude vyplácať vyššie maximálne sumy dávok nemocenské, materské, tehotenské a ošetrovné* [CHANGE 2026: The Social Insurance Agency will pay higher maximum amounts of sickness, maternity, pregnancy and nursing benefits]. Available at:

sick relative was raised from €52 to €55 and the maximum value of the benefit for long-term care was raised to €1,708.[474] The parental allowance was also raised from January 2026, from €482 to €500 for parents who previously received the maternity benefit, and from €352 to €365 for those who did not.[475]

As of January 2026, the minimum income from which the self-employed were obligated to pay illness insurance contributions has been discontinued. All self-employed now pay illness insurance contributions, increasing the likelihood they will be eligible for maternity benefits.[476]

In 2025, compulsory kindergarten for 4 year-olds was passed, to come into effect from September 2027. The same legislation lowers the age for the start of compulsory kindergarten to three years of age, effective from September 2028. Parents may opt out, however, only if they have concluded secondary education.[477]

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

Nearly all eligible mothers take Maternity leave as it is obligatory. The number of fathers accessing maternity benefits has also been growing fast. A 2020 analysis of administrative data showed quickly rising uptake of maternity benefits by fathers. While in 2018 fathers of 10,000 children took leave, amounting to 17 per cent compared to the number of children born during this period, in the first half of 2019 already fathers of 6,500 children took leave, amounting to 24 per cent. Fathers took leave more often when they had higher income, when one or both parents had completed education or when they were self-employed.[478] A 2022 report from the Ministry of Finance showed a fall in the number of fathers making

https://www.socpoist.sk/news/zmena-2026-socialna-poistovna-bude-vyplacat-vyssie-maximalne-sumy-davok-nemocenske-materske.

[474] Ibid.

[475] *Opatrenie č. 366/2025 Z. z.Opatrenie Ministerstva práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny Slovenskej republiky o ustanovení súm rodičovského príspevku* [Measure No. 366/2025 of the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic on the establishment of the amounts of parental allowance]. Available at: https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/2025-366.

476 Sociálna poisťovňa [Social Insurance Agency] (n.d.). *ZMENA 2026: SZČO pozor, tieto dôležité novinky na vás čakajú v sociálnom poistení od 1. januára 2026* [Change 2026: Unemployed, attention, these important updates in social insurance await you from 1 January 2026]. Available at: https://www.socpoist.sk/news/zmena-2026-szco-pozor-tieto-dolezite-novinky-na-vas-cakaju-v-socialnom-poisteni-od-1-januara.

[477] *Zákon č. 323/2025 Z. z.Zákon, ktorým sa mení a dopĺňa zákon č. 245/2008 Z. z. o výchove a vzdelávaní (školský zákon) a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov v znení neskorších predpisov a ktorým sa menia a dopĺňajú niektoré zákony* [Act No. 323/2025 which Amends Act No. 245/2008 on Education (School Act) and on Amendments to Certain Acts, as Amended]. Available at: https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/2025-323.

[478] Dančíková, Z. (2020) Ani muži nemôžu mať všetko [Not even men can have everything]. *Komentár IFP 2020/06*. Available at: https://www.mfsr.sk/sk/financie/institut-financnej-politiky/publikacie-ifp/komentare/komentare-z-roku-2020/6-ani-muzi-nemozu-mat-vsetko-materska-otcov-nastup-matiek-do-prace-jun-2020.html.

use of their benefits by a third compared to 2019.[479] However, the drop may have been linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministry of Finance anticipated the number of fathers taking leave will start growing again and reach 2019 levels by 2025.

A 2024 news report claimed 32,000 fathers had taken leave in 2023.[480] This suggests an increase in the proportion of fathers taking leave to 53-64 per cent compared to 50,000 to 60,000 mothers who take leave annually.

b. Paternity leave

While fathers are entitled to 28 weeks of Paternity leave following the birth of their child, in practice, they are likely to only use 2 weeks, combined with 2 weeks of paternity benefits and to be used within the first 6 weeks following the birth of their child.

Fathers are likely to combine their remaining 26 weeks of dedicated benefits with Parental leave (see 1b and 1c), as the timing of Paternity leave overlaps with Maternity leave, and with the exception of the two initial weeks, both parents cannot draw on dedicated benefits at the same time. No data is available on fathers' use of Paternity leave (for fathers' use of associated benefits, see 4a).

c. Parental leave

No information available on Parental leave use.

Parental allowance is paid to most families unless they opt for the childcare allowance (see 1c). Data on the number of recipients of the Parental leave allowance is only available on a monthly basis. In February 2026, the most recent month for which data was available at the time of writing, the allowance was paid to 119,166 parents; 113,545 of whom were women (i.e., 95 per cent, similar to the figure reported the year before).[481]

[479] Horváthová, V. and Salamonová, A. (2022) *Zima stale pod vplyvom pandémie* [Winter still under the influence of the pandemic*].* Available at: https://www.mfsr.sk/files/archiv/4/Zima-stale-pod-vplyvom-pandemie.pdf.
[480] RTVS (2024) 'Pribúda otcov na materskej dovolenke. Na čo by si mali dávať pozor?' [More dads are taking paternity leave. What should they watch out for?], *RTVS,* 30 June 2024. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/yc4mmyh2.
[481] Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny (UPSVaR) [Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family] (2026) *Mesačná štatistika o počte poberateľov sociálnych dávok a dotácií a čerpaných finančných prostriedkoch* [Monthly statistics on the number of recipients of social benefits and subsidies and funds drawn]. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/tud7bydd.

Slovenia[482]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*materinski dopust*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 15 weeks: 4 weeks before the birth and 11 weeks following the birth.
- It is obligatory to take 15 calendar days of leave.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of average monthly earnings (or other base on which Parental leave contributions were paid) during the 12 months prior to the leave. The last of these 12 months is defined as the penultimate one before the month of the 1st application for leave. Not all income on which the contributions were paid is counted into the basic income (e.g., in-work benefits and other income received in addition to basic earnings). If the contributions were paid during a period shorter than 12 months, €685.48 (gross) a month is factored in for the missing period. There is no upper limit, and the minimum is €685.48.
- Women who are not insured at the time when the leave starts, but who have been insured for at least 12 months in the last 3 years before the start of Maternity leave, receive the (hypothetical gross) amount of basic minimum income (€685.48) that is increased by €20 (gross) per each month of insurance, but by no more than €340 (gross).
- Payments are taxed.

[482] Please cite as: Rakar, T. (2026) 'Slovenia country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, Á., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/.

- The parent (or adoptive parent or foster parent) who was taking care of a child in its first year (i.e., the person who was receiving parental earnings compensation) receives pension credits for child-rearing.[483]
- Funded partly from Parental Protection Insurance, which forms part of Social Security Insurance, and financed by contributions of 0.1 per cent of gross earnings for employees and the same for employers. However, over 90 per cent of the financing of payments is from the central government budget.[484]

Flexibility in use

- The part unused before the birth may be claimed after childbirth if the birth took place before the expected date.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- The person must be covered by Parental Protection Insurance (which is part of social security) just prior to the 1st day of the leave. This insurance covers persons on employment contracts (both permanent and fixed-term, either full-time or part-time); the self-employed (including persons performing agricultural activities); and temporary agency workers. For the unemployed, see the 'payment and funding' section.
- The person who is not insured at the time of exercising the right to salary compensation, but who has been insured for at least 12 months during the last three years, is eligible for earnings compensation (and not for the leave).

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- Maternity leave (77 days or less) can be transferable to the father or another person in special circumstances, e.g., in cases where the mother dies, abandons the child, is permanently or temporarily unable to care for the child on the basis of a doctor's opinion, or in agreement with the mother in cases where the mother gives birth to a child and is under 18 years of age and has the status of an apprentice, pupil, or student. [485]

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

[483] For the impact of these pension credits on the gender pension gap, see: Kump, N. and Stropnik, N. (2020) *Results of the standard simulations for Slovenia, Project MIGAPE* (Mind the gap in pensions), Ljubljana: Institute for Economic Research. Available at: http://www.migape.eu/pubs/WP2_SIE_Report_20200422.pdf

[484] 92 per cent, according to MISSOC – Mutual Information System on Social Protection (update as of 1 July 2019). Available at: https://www.missoc.org/.

[485] In the latter, maternity leave lasts 77 days and is reduced by the number of days the child is old when the father starts his Maternity leave.

b. Paternity leave (*očetovski dopust*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities)

Length of leave

- 15 calendar days.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of average earnings (or other base on which Parental Protection Insurance contributions were paid) during the 12 months prior to the leave, to an upper limit of 2.5 times the average gross salary in Slovenia, per month, in the previous calendar year (€6,340.08 per month).[486] Not all income on which Parental leave contributions were paid is counted towards the basic earnings (e.g., in-work benefits and other income received in addition to basic earnings). If the contributions were paid during a period shorter than 12 months, €685.48 (gross) per month is factored in for the missing period.
- Taxed and funded as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- Paternity leave may be taken as full-time or part-time continuous leave until the child's age of 3 months. The duration of leave does not change, if taken part-time.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- As for Maternity leave.
- The father is not entitled to Paternity leave if: there was a stillbirth; he was legally deprived of his parental right or prohibited from contacting the child; if, according to the Centre for Social Work's opinion, he has evidently shown no intention to care for the child or is otherwise neglecting his parental responsibilities; or if he is not able to nurse and care for the child (medical certificate is needed).

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the father

- Paternity leave is extended by an additional 10 days for each additional child in the case of (i) multiple live births, or (ii) adoption or placement with the person for the purpose of adoption or granting parental care to the relative of multiple live born children or multiple children of different age up to age 8 years. The father may take these additional days until the child's age of 3 months. The adoptive parent or the person with whom the child is placed for the purpose of adoption, or the child's relative who is granted parental care, may take the additional days in 3 months following the placement of the child with the (future) adoptive parent or the granting of parental care to the relative, but at the latest until the child is 8 years old.

[486] Or in the year before the previous one if the information for the previous year is not yet available.

- If the father does not use Paternity leave, the following persons are entitled to it: mother's husband or co-habiting partner; partner of either sex in the registered same-sex partnership; and other persons who are nursing and taking care of the child. The same applies to the spouse, co-habiting partner, or partner in the registered same-sex partnership of the person using Maternity leave.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone

- None reported.

c. Parental leave (starševski dopust) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities)

Length of leave

- 160 calendar days per parent.
- Leave is an individual entitlement, part of which (100 days) is transferable to the other parent.

Payment, funding and taxation

- As for Paternity leave.
- For persons not insured at the time the leave starts, but who have been insured for at least 12 months in the last 3 years before exercising the right to salary compensation (Maternity, Paternity, or Parental, whichever is taken first), see 1a.[487]
- Taxed and funded as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- Either parent may transfer 100 days of their entitlement to the other parent. The parents must agree upon the use of Parental leave, in writing, 30 days prior to the expiry of Maternity leave. If the parents cannot reach an agreement, or their decision is not to the benefit of the child, the Centre for Social Work decides on this matter by considering the best interests of the child.
- Parental leave may be taken full-time or part-time: in the case of part-time leave being taken, the duration of leave is not extended proportionately. One of the parents must take it immediately after Maternity leave. Up to 60 non-transferrable days per parent may be taken at any time until the child is 8 years, but not more than twice a year, with each section lasting at least 15 days (unless a lower number of days is at disposal).

[487] In 2025, such cases accounted for around 3.2 per cent of all persons who received parental earnings compensation (slightly above than in 2024, when the percentage was 3.1 per cent, and less than in 2023, when the percentage was 3.5 per cent).

- Non-transferrable days of Parental leave may be used during Maternity leave.
- Parents can combine part-time Parental leave (20 hours per week for the mother, 20 hours per week for the father), taking it at the same time. Parents may also use full-time Parental leave concurrently in the case of multiple births, birth of a child in need of special care, or if they already raise at least 2 children below the age of 8 years or a child in need of special care. This applies only to extended Parental leave due to these reasons (see 'Variation in leave' below) and non-transferrable days of Parental leave.
- Separated parents have the same rights as those living together.
- The Parental leave and earnings compensation are the rights of biological, adoptive and foster parents. If the same-sex partner has not adopted the child, he/she is not eligible. In that case, the biological parent is entitled to the whole of the parental leave and the respective earnings compensation.
- In rare cases, where the father is unknown and his entitlement cannot be transferred to the mother, a single mother is entitled to all 320 days of Parental leave.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- As for Maternity leave.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- In the case of a premature birth, the leave is prolonged by as many days as the pregnancy was shortened.
- In the case of multiple births, Parental leave is extended by 90 days for each additional child. The same applies to cases of the adoption or placement with the person for the purpose of adoption or granting parental care to the relative of multiple live born children or multiple children of different age if the oldest child age is below the age of 8 years. Parental leave is also extended by 90 days in the case of the birth of a child in need of special care.
- Leave is extended by 30 days if parents already have at least 2 children below the age of 8 years; by 60 days if they have three such children; and by 90 days if they have four or more such children.
- Additional leave for premature or multiple births, or if parents have two or more younger children, is a family entitlement (i.e., the parents must decide which of them will take the leave).
- A person other than a parent who nurses and cares for the child is entitled to Parental leave, reduced by the number of days the parents have already used.
- If the mother is below 18 years of age and is an apprentice, pupil, or student, one of the grandparents (who is insured for Parental protection) may take the leave with the parents' consent.

Parental benefit for persons who are not eligible for insurance-based leave and earnings compensation

- Parents who are not eligible for insurance-based Maternity/ Paternity/Parental leave and earnings compensation, are entitled to flat-rate parental benefit. Both the parent and the child must have permanent or

temporary residence status and reside in Slovenia. The benefit amounts to €507.43 net per month and is received for 365 days from the birth of a child (longer in the cases of multiple or premature births, or the birth of a child in need of special care). The benefit is exempt from the personal income tax. Contributions for pension and disability insurance are paid from the central government budget. The mother is entitled to parental benefit for the first 77 days after the birth of the child. The father is entitled in this period only if the mother abandons the child, is not able to nurse and care for the child (medical certificate is needed),or dies. After 77 days, parental benefit is the right of one of the parents and is used according to their written agreement. Another person nursing and caring for the child, as well as fulfilling the same conditions as the parent, is entitled to the parental benefit, too – namely for 365 days minus the number of days the parents have already used. While receiving the parental benefit, the parent is covered by the pension and disability insurance.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other employment-related measures

Adoption leave and pay

- The adoptive parent or the person with whom the child is placed for the purpose of adoption, or the child's relative who is granted parental care, may take Paternity leave as full-time or part-time continuous leave in three months following the placement of the child with the (future) adoptive parent or the granting of parental care to the relative, but at the latest until the child is eight years old.
- Adoptive parents (and child's relative who is granted parental care) have the same entitlements to Parental leave as other parents (see 3). The leave should start no later than 15 days from the placement of the child into the family for the purpose of adoption or the adoption itself (or granting parental care to the relative). It may be used until the child reaches 8 years of age.
- There are 30 days of Parental leave in the case of (foreseen) adoption (or granting parental care to the relative) of a child who has already turned eight years old and is below 15 years of age. The leave should start no later than 15 days from the placement of the child into the family for the purpose of adoption or the adoption itself (or granting parental care to the relative).
- Foster parents are eligible for 30 days of Parental leave for a foster child for which they cannot take regular Parental leave any more, but who is below the age of eight years. For a child who has already reached eight years of age and is younger than 15 years they are entitled to parental leave lasting

15 days. In both cases the leave should start no later than 15 days after the placement of the child into foster care.

Time off for the care of dependants

- An insured person is entitled to take **leave to care for an immediate co-resident family member who is ill** (spouse and children, biological or adopted). Generally, 10 working days of leave may be taken for each episode of illness per family; however, 20 working days may be taken for a child of up to 7 years or a child who is moderately, severely, or very severely mentally and physically disabled. In exceptional cases, if required due to the health condition of the sick family member, the period may be extended to 20 and 40 working days respectively, or longer in extreme cases (up to six months).

  Leave is paid at 80 per cent of the individual's average earnings in the preceding calendar year, per month. This cannot be lower than 60 per cent of the minimum wage (€889 gross per month)[488] or higher than the wage which the person would receive if they were working or their insurance base, with a ceiling at 2.5 times the national average gross salary per month.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Breastfeeding mothers who work full-time have the right to one break during working time lasting no less than 1 hour per day, until their child is 18 months of age. Payment is made for 1 hour per day, based on the proportional part of the basis (defined in 1a; this cannot be more than the proportional part of 2.5 times the national average gross salary per month).

Flexible working for carers

- A parent who is taking care of a child below 3 years of age (or 18 years of age if the child has a severe physical disability, or a moderate or severe mental disability), or at least 2 children, the younger of whom is below the age of 8 years, has the right to work part-time. The hours worked must be equal to or longer than half of full-time working hours (i.e., at least 20 hours per week). For hours not worked, social security contributions (including pension credits) are paid, based on the proportional part of the average monthly earnings during the previous 12 months (defined in 1a; this cannot be less than the proportional part of the minimum wage and not more than the proportional part of 2.5 times the national average gross salary per month). The parents may concurrently exercise the right to work part-time, whereby their total hours worked must be equal to or longer than half of full-time working hours per week. They have the right to return to the hours worked before (usually full time) afterwards.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- For medical examinations related to pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding that cannot be performed outside regular working hours, employed women

[488] But not higher than the individual's insurance base.

are entitled to paid leave. This is financed through the compulsory health insurance scheme funded by contributions.

Other provisions of leave

- **Bereavement leave**. Employees are entitled to a limited number of paid days off, within an annual allowance of up to 7 days paid leave for personal circumstances, upon the death of a close family member. The leave is paid at 100 per cent of salary and is primarily intended for attending the funeral and managing immediate matters. There is no age limit related to the deceased, and the entitlement is individual and non-transferable. Flexibility is limited, but a more precise determination of the duration of absence for individual cases may be laid down by a collective agreement or a general act of the employer. In the case of the death of a child, the same general rules apply, with no specific extended or separate statutory parental bereavement leave; parents typically rely on this short leave, supplemented by sick leave (where medically justified) or annual leave.
- **Stillbirth and child death leave**. If a mother gives birth to a stillborn child, she is entitled to Maternity leave for a further 42 days from the day of the birth. If the child dies during Maternity leave, the mother retains Maternity leave to the extent already used, but for at least 42 days from birth, and is additionally entitled to 10 days after the child's death. If the child dies during Paternity leave, the father retains leave already used and is entitled to a further 3 days, not exceeding a total of 15 days. If the child dies during Parental leave, the parent retains leave already used and is entitled to an additional ten days.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is 12.2 months, paid at a high rate. There is an entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) from the end of Parental leave, available on a full-time basis in centres. There is no gap, therefore, between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

No changes reported.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

As Maternity leave is obligatory, all employed women should take up some (normally all) leave.

b. Paternity leave

Roughly 90 per cent of fathers took Paternity leave in 2025 (the same as in 2024, while in the previous years the percentage was higher 98 percent in 2023 and 93 per cent in 2022), up to 15 days.[489] The average number of taken days in 2025 was 10.87, almost the same as in 2024 (10.84), however less than in 2023 (11.85) and especially compared to 2021 and 2022 (13.5 days). The first 15 days are usually taken when the mother and child come home from the hospital.[490]

c. Parental leave

Most mothers take the entire Parental leave allocation, and some take a good portion of it. Since 2017 the share of fathers among all leave-takers has stayed at around four per cent (in 2025 4.1 per cent, slightly less than 4.3 per cent in 2024).[491] [492] Considering the full earnings compensation while taking leave, the reasons for fathers' persistent low participation may be found in the traditional division of tasks within the family; societal attitudes (not the declared ones, but rather those that rule people's behaviour); the absence of a positive image of the father who takes over more family responsibilities; and employers' expectations of their male employees.[493] [494] Paternity leave provisions and fathers having the same individual entitlement to Parental leave as mothers, do not significantly influence mothers' earlier return to work after their leave period. Since fathers usually take only part of the Parental leave (if any at all), women's professional careers continue to be affected by their absence from work as a direct result of taking up Parental leave. However, the more recent introduction of 60 days of non-transferable Parental leave for fathers shows promise. In 2025, around 86 per cent of fathers took up this leave,[495] indicating a much higher take-up rate than in the previous year (64 per cent in 2024) and a significantly higher take-up rate compared to transferable leave. The take-up rate of non-transferable Parental leave for fathers

[489] The data on uptake of leave is an estimate and not fully comparable between years as these proportions relate to all fathers and are thus higher for eligible fathers. The number of deliveries in 2025 is used as denominator while the Paternity leave may have been taken in 2025 for children born in 2024 as well, as in 2026 for children born at the end of in 2025.

[490] Stropnik, N. (2018) 'Fathers' rights and uptake of leaves in Slovenia,' Peer review on 'Instruments to foster long-term paternal involvement in family work,' Berlin, 4-5 October 2018. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/mlp-gender-equality-seminar-long-term-paternal-involvement-family-work_en

[491] This data on fathers who took Parental leave refers only to the transferable days of Parental leave.

[492] These proportions relate to all fathers and are thus higher for eligible fathers. The number of deliveries in 2025 is used as denominator while the Parental leave may have been taken in 2025 for children born in 2024 as well, as it will be taken in 2026 for children born at the end of in 2025.

[493] Rakar, T., Stropnik, N., Boškić, R., Dremelj, P., Nagode, M. and Kovač, N. (2010) *Raziskava o vplivih veljavnih ukrepov družinske politike na odločanje za otroke* [Research on the impact of family policy measures on deciding to have children], Ljubljana: Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia. Available at: http://www.irssv.si/publikacije/leto-2010/index.html

[494] Hrženjak, M. (ed.) (2016) *Spremembe očetovstva: moški med delom in starševstvom* [Changing fatherhood: men between employment and parenthood], Ljubljana: Mirovni inštitut.

[495] See Footnote 12 for data calculations.

is therefore approaching that of Paternity leave, indicating that this trend has the potential to significantly shift attitudes toward fathers' involvement in childcare.

South Africa[496]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

Note on leave information: South Africa is governed as a constitutional democracy with a three-tiered interdependent governmental structure – i.e., national, provincial, and local. Leave entitlement in the South African context is primarily through one main statute that applies to the whole country, namely, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) (Act No. 75 of 1997, as amended). Though there are nine provinces in South Africa, they do not have the authority to develop or amend any leave provision standards. The BCEA sets the minimum standards for leave provision in the country, except for the following exclusions: the National Defence Force, National Intelligence Agency, or SA Secret Service, workers who work fewer than 24 hours per month and unpaid volunteers working for an organisation with a charitable purpose. There are two other mechanisms that can have an influence on leave determinations, and those are: a collective agreement (in terms of section 213 of the SA Labour Relations Act (LRA), (Act 66 of 1995 as amended.) and sectoral determinations (issued in terms of Chapter 8 of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA), Act 75 of 1997, as amended).

Collective agreements
A collective agreement is a written agreement concerning terms and conditions of employment (or any other matter of mutual interest): it is concluded by, on the one hand, one or more registered trade unions, and, on the other, one or more employers or one or more registered employers' organisations – section 213 of the LRA. Certain limitations do, however, exist in terms of the two parties' contractual freedom.

Sectoral determinations
A sectoral determination is not an agreement: it is a determination made by the Minister of Employment and Labour, in terms of Chapter Eight of the BCEA, and, before making a sectoral determination for employees in an area or sector, the Minister of Employment and Labour is required to direct the Director-General: Labour to investigate conditions of employment in the sector or area concerned.

[496] Please cite as: Farista, F., Jaga, A. and Buys, B. (2026). 'South Africa country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, Á., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

[2] Our thanks go to Herman Kasselman for his longstanding contribution to the South African country note.

Please take note that collective agreements and sectoral determinations are, indeed, separate legal instruments governed by two different acts (the LRA and the BCEA, respectively) – as such, they have different purposes. Lastly, it is to be noted that, Section 23(1)(d) of the LRA makes provision for the extension of a collective agreement to non-parties.

The Minister of Employment and Labour, in terms of the BCEA (as mentioned above), must make – and has made – a number of sectoral determinations (e.g. hours of work, overtime, payment for overtime, night work, standby, meal intervals, rest periods, payment for work on Sundays and public holidays) to make provision for unique circumstances in the following industries: contract cleaning sector, civil engineering sector, learnerships, private security sector, domestic workers, wholesale and retail sector, and children in the performing arts. There are also sectoral determinations for the taxi sector, forestry sector, farm work sector, and hospitality sector, plus the ministerial determination for the small business sector (for businesses with fewer than ten employees). Many of these determinations contain leave provisions identical or a little better than those in the BCEA.

The leave provisions in the BCEA and sectoral determinations are minimum standards provided, but these standards may be improved upon through two different modes. The first is that an employer can decide to increase the leave days that they want to give their employees. The condition is that the leave cannot be less than prescribed by the BCEA or the sectoral determinations. Many employers have also done this, i.e., leave policies of different employers indicate that they are giving between 15 and 30 working days' leave to employees. It is also common practice for employers to use leave as a retention and reward strategy, in as far as they provide more leave to employees who have been working for them longer and, as a reward, they increase or provide a set number of days with a long service award. For example, the Determination and Directive on Leave of Absence in the Public Service offers employees 30 days of annual leave after ten years of service (up from 22 days of annual leave).

The second mode of determining leave is the collective bargaining process, usually in statutory forums, referred to as bargaining councils. Information and data on leave provisions in bargaining council agreements is difficult to obtain, as there does not appear to be an accessible or central database housing the agreements of all the bargaining councils in South Africa. Bargaining council agreements are also not necessarily a reliable indicator of employer provision, because bargaining councils do not exist for all industrial sectors. Even in those sectors that do have bargaining councils, not all employers in the industry are necessarily members of the bargaining council or are covered by the scope of the collective agreements specific to their environment.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (responsibility of the Department of Labour)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 4 months.
- Leave may start at any time from 4 weeks before the expected date of birth, unless otherwise agreed; or on a date from which a medical practitioner or a midwife certifies that it is necessary for the employee's health, or that of their unborn child. The birth mother is only allowed to return to work 6 weeks after birth; this period can only be reduced if a medical practitioner or midwife certifies that the employee may return to work earlier.

Payment, funding and taxation

- Statutory Maternity leave is unpaid, but there are benefits that can be claimed from the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF).[3] If an employee has been contributing to the UIF, the employee will be able to claim benefits for a maximum period of 17.32 weeks or four months (section 24 of the BCEA). This claim is subject to the number of credit days an employee has. If an employee has worked and contributed for four continuous years, the employee will be entitled to the full amount of credit days for payment over the whole period of Maternity leave.
- The Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF benefits are payable at a flat rate of 66 per cent of monthly earnings to a female contributor for 'confinement' (i.e., being on Maternity leave) and the period after the birth of a child. As of June 2021, the benefit is capped to a maximum benefit of ZAR17,712 [€940.07][4] a month. Maternity benefits are paid for a maximum of 17.32 weeks (121 days). If an employee earns more than the threshold and the employer does not pay while the employee is on Maternity leave, UIF will pay the maximum earnings ceiling of ZAR17,712 [€940.07] or ZAR212,544 [€11,280.81] per annum. If the employer pays less than the regular earnings per month, the UIF will top the payment up to the maximum earnings ceiling. Income tax is not payable on benefits received from the UIF.
- Employers are not legally obliged to pay leave benefits for employees, but it is common practice amongst employers to provide some form of maternity benefits to employees while on Maternity leave. These benefits vary from employer to employer. Employers may expect, by mutual agreement, the employee to sign a service agreement[497] when they receive any maternity benefits. This mutual agreement between the employer and employee outlines specific terms related to Maternity leave. This agreement may

[3] UIF payments are based on the number of 'credit days' an employee has accumulated in 4 years. An employee must work six days to receive 1 credit day at the UIF. This means that for every 6 days the employee works, they can claim 1 day's pay from the UIF. The employee would need to accumulate 238 credit days to receive the full benefit.

[4] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://data.ecb.europa.eu/currency-converter.

specify that the employer will provide the employee with a certain duration of Maternity leave with full pay. In return, the employee may be contractually obligated to continue working for the employer for a specified period after returning from the leave. This arrangement can be seen as a form of payback or return on investment for the employer. It serves as an amendment to the original contract of employment, detailing the terms and conditions related to Maternity leave and the subsequent work commitment.

- Data from 2021[5] indicated that while 60 per cent of participating employees were provided with fully paid Maternity leave, 24 per cent did not receive a salary creating a financial burden during a time when these funds are critically needed.
- If an employee receives maternity benefits in terms of a collective agreement, contract of employment or any other legal means, the UIF benefit will only cover the shortfall between the benefit received and their normal monthly salary. This is done so that the total amount the employee will receive from the UIF, and other sources cannot exceed their normal monthly salary. Employees must apply for Maternity leave benefits at a labour centre at least eight weeks before the expected date of birth (section 25 of the Unemployment Insurance Act).
- Compulsory contributions to the UIF are made by employers and employees on a monthly basis, and each contributes one percent of the employee's earnings, this respective monthly UIF contribution per employee/employer is limited to ZAR177.12 [€9.40] per month.
  The main exception concerns employees working in the national and provincial government. Public service employees are entitled to four months of paid Maternity leave (under the terms of the August 2021 Directive and Determination on Leave of Absence in the Public Service').[6]
- Companies still pay the pension and medical contributions for employees on Maternity leave, but this could be altered by agreement between the employee and employer.

Flexibility in use

- Employees who have miscarriages or give birth to stillborn babies in their third trimester are entitled to six weeks' leave afterwards, regardless of whether or not they have already gone on Maternity leave (section 25 (4) of the BCEA).
- There is no distinction between live and stillbirths in the granting of maternity benefits if the pregnancy has lasted at least 24 weeks.

[5] Mindspace Team (2022) 'Why employers and HR need to review their maternity leave policies', *Old Mutual*, 12 May 2022. Available at: https://www.oldmutual.co.za/corporate/resource-hub/all-articles/why-employers-and-hr-need-to-review-their-maternity-leave-policies/

[6] Public Servants are exempt from contributing to the UIF. This is resultant of their distinct pension and social security scheme administered by the Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPF). This is viewed as comprehensive hence not requiring additional security in the form of UIF.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Maternity leave is not sex specific.[7] According to section 25 of the BCEA, which governs Maternity leave in South Africa: (i) 'an employee is entitled to Maternity leave' and (ii) 'an employee may commence Maternity leave' anytime from six weeks prior to the employee's due date, or if otherwise prescribed by a medical practitioner. However, this Act infers that an 'employee' must be capable of conceiving and giving birth.
- The Unemployment Insurance Act (UIA) and Unemployment Insurance Contributions Act apply to all employers and employees, except for: employees working fewer than 24 hours per month for an employer; learners (including students and those on apprenticeships); public servants; and foreigners working on contract (who have a work permit and contribute to the fund); employees who get a monthly state pension; and workers who only earn a commission. Non-residents and undocumented migrants will also not qualify as they would not be contributing to the fund.
- The BCEA regulating Maternity leave specifically excludes employees of the National Defence Force, National Intelligence Agency, or SA Secret Service, workers who work fewer than 24 hours per month and unpaid volunteers working for an organisation with a charitable purpose.
- The UIA excludes public servants. Maternity leave and maternity pay for these employees are regulated by the determinations reached in their respective public service bargaining council (see 'additional note' below).
- Independent contractors and self-employed women are not eligible for Maternity leave or maternity pay.
- Entitlement to maternity pay is determined by an employee's status as a contributor and is not affected by whether her partner is working or not.
- There are differences in terms of eligibility for Maternity leave (BCEA) and maternity payments (UIA); however, both acts require an employee to be working for more than 24 hours per month, to receive Maternity leave and maternity pay.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to a person other than the mother

- If the baby is born prematurely, maternity payments will not be affected and will continue to be paid in the normal way. If an employee's baby is born before maternity pay has started, the employer must be informed of the birth as soon as possible.
- If an employee is sick during their pregnancy before they start their Maternity leave, the normal rules relating to notification procedures, medical certification, sick leave, and sick pay entitlements will apply. Where the

[7] Nowhere in the Act is 'an employee' defined in gendered terms; the act is silent on identifying an employee as female. The result of this is that, in the case of Mia v. State Information Technology Agency (Pty) Ltd, the Labour Court in Durban found that the failure of an employer to grant Maternity leave to a male employee in a duly registered civil union following the birth of a child through a surrogacy agreement, constituted unfair discrimination as the Judge ruled in the best interests of the child. The employer refused the male employee 4 months paid Maternity leave in line with company policy, on the grounds that he was not female and that their policy does not govern birth by surrogacy – see Van Bever Donker, K. (1 December 2015) *Case Law: Maternity Leave for Men. Labour law for Managers: Practical Handbook*, pp.C 35/001 - C 35/010.

employee is absent from work due to a pregnancy-related illness at any time after the start of the fourth week before her child is due, the employee may request to start their Maternity leave immediately, as per the provision in section 25(b) of the Code of Good Practice.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- Employees in the public service are entitled to 4 months paid Maternity leave and can apply for an additional 184 calendar days of unpaid leave. Employees falling under the public service bargaining council are entitled to up to 8 working days of pre-natal leave per pregnancy, in order to attend medical examinations.[8]
- A 2012 survey of wage agreements collected from trade unions, bargaining councils, and sectoral determinations – covering a diverse range of industries and over 900 bargaining units – showed that employers offered Maternity leave ranging from the statutory minimum of 4 months in sectoral determinations to 5.1 months in bargaining council agreements.
- The percentage of employers offering maternity pay (as a percentage of basic wage) ranged from 20 per cent in sectoral determinations to 47.7 per cent in bilateral agreements.[9]
- Employees are entitled to return to the specific post (or comparable post) that they left before going on Maternity leave. It would be considered discriminatory to dismiss an employee for any reason related to pregnancy, a right that is protected by the automatically unfair dismissal provisions of the Labour Relations Act and the unfair discrimination on a listed ground (pregnancy) provision of the Employment Equity Act.

b. Paternity leave (responsibility of the Department of Labour)

No statutory entitlement.

c. Parental leave (responsibility of the Department of Labour)

Length of leave

- 10 consecutive calendar days for employees who are parents - irrespective of sex - commencing on the day that the child is born (see 1b for the provision of leave in Section 25A of the Labour Laws Amendment Act, No. 10 of 2018).

[8] Department of Public Service and Administration (2021) *Determination and Directive on Leave of Absence in the Public Service, August 2021*, Pretoria: Government Printer.

[9] The last published report was in 2013, still only reflecting the 2012 survey. See also 'flexible working' (1e) for the code of good practice titled *Protection of Employees during Pregnancy and After the Birth of a Child* (Government Gazette, 1998); and Eisley, T. (ed.) (2013, March) *Bargaining Monitor*, Vol.27, 179. Available at: http://www.lrs.org.za/docs/LRS_BM_Strategic per cent20Bargaining per cent20in per cent202013.pdf

Payment, funding and taxation

- Statutory Parental leave is unpaid, but there are benefits that can be claimed from the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF). If an employee has worked and contributed for at least 13 weeks, the employee will be entitled to the full amount of credit days for payment over the whole period of Parental leave.
- Employees receive a benefit equivalent to 66 per cent of their contributable remuneration for each of the 10 days.

Flexibility in use

- None.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- The individual has to have been employed for a minimum of 13 weeks to be eligible for Parental leave benefits.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- Female employees who are adoptive parents or prospective adoptive parents may be eligible for Parental leave; one adoptive parent can apply for adoption leave, while the other may apply for Parental leave, with the adoptive parents choosing which parent applies for which leave. Additionally, an employee who is the commissioning parent in a surrogate motherhood agreement is entitled to Parental leave.
- Section 3 of the Labour Laws Amendment Act provides for adoption leave to be added to the BCEA, section 25B, and allows for an eligible employee who is adopting a child to take time off when a child is placed with them for adoption. An eligible employee is entitled to adoption leave of 10 weeks

consecutively. The provisions apply to married couples, couples in a civil partnership, unmarried couples (same and opposite sex), and single people who adopt. This applies to placements for children younger than 2 years. Adoption leave is extended to an individual or to one member of an adopting couple.

- An employee who is the primary carer is entitled to paid leave associated with the adoption of a child, and the payment of parental benefits are determined by the Minister, subject to the provisions of the Unemployment Insurance Act, 2001 (Act No. 63 of 2001). Section 8(c) of the Labour Laws Amendment Act provides, in subsection (cB), for adoptive benefits to be paid at a rate of 66 per cent of the beneficiary's earnings at the date of application. In order to qualify, an employee has to have been employed for at least 13 weeks and a contributing member to the UIF.
- Employees in the public service are entitled to leave of 45 working days when adopting a child under the age of 2 years, due to the August 2021 determination regulating leave in the public service. Section 4 of the determination now also includes surrogacy leave and adoptive leave (Department of Public Service and Administration). Although this determination does not explicitly state that adoption leave is fully paid, it can be assumed to be so because contract workers are entitled to fully paid adoption leave under this determination. These employees are permitted to extend this leave by 184 calendar days of unpaid leave.
- If the employee is a foster parent, who is also approved as a prospective adopter, and a child is placed with the employee in a 'foster to adopt' situation, they will have the same entitlement to adoption leave and pay.

Time off for the care of dependants

- **Family Responsibility leave** can be used if an employee's child or adopted child is sick (younger than 18 years, or any age if the child is differently abled). Family responsibility leave is 3 days of paid leave per year, which full-time employees are entitled to. An employee must have been employed for longer than 4 months for the same employer and work at least 4 days per week to qualify for this leave.

  In the private sector, an employee is entitled to Family Responsibility leave when the employee's child is sick; or in the event of the death of the employee's spouse or life partner, or the employee's parent, adoptive parent, grandparent, child, adopted child, grandchild, or sibling. This leave is an individual entitlement that cannot be shared by spouses if one spouse chooses not to use their leave. It is fully paid by the employer and is available for a maximum period of 3 days in a 12 month period (5 days mandated for domestic workers under the Sectoral Determination for Domestic Workers); should the employee require more than 3 days, the employee will be required to take annual leave for the additional days. Evidence from a 2012 survey found that employers offered improvements on the 3 day statutory minimum period of family responsibility leave, ranging from 3.8 days to 4.3 days.[10] The employer is entitled to require proof such as a medical or death certificate. By virtue of a ministerial

[10] Eisley, T. (ed.) (2013) *Bargaining Monitor*, Vol. 27, 179, from the Labour Research Service. Available at: http://www.lrs.org.za/docs/LRS_BM_Strategic per cent20Bargaining per cent20in per cent202013.pdf

determination regulating conditions of employment in small businesses, employers who employ fewer than 10 employees are permitted to reduce the amount of annual leave granted to an employee by the amount of family responsibility leave granted to that employee.

In the public sector, according to the public service determination,[11] employees are entitled to the following Family Responsibility benefits:

- 5 working days of Family Responsibility leave per annual leave cycle to be used if the employee's spouse or life partner gives birth to a child; or the employee's child, spouse or life partner is sick;
- 5 working days of leave per annual leave cycle to be used if the employee's child, spouse or life partner or an employee's immediate family member dies.
- 5 working days of leave per annual leave cycle to be used if an employee has any children with severe special needs. Severe special needs are defined as a child who has a mental, emotional, or physical disability, certified by a medical practitioner, which requires health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally. For the purposes of this provision, 'child' means the employee's offspring of any age. An application for family responsibility leave should be supported by reasonable proof to demonstrate the severe special needs of the employee's child.

Total Family Responsibility leave cannot exceed 5 days in an annual leave cycle (a period of 12 months based on the calendar year commencing from the first day of employment or from the end of the previous leave cycle). The determination does not stipulate that this leave is paid, but it can be assumed to be so because it specifically refers to the fact that if employees have used their family responsibility leave, they can apply for available annual leave or apply for a further 184 calendar days, to be utilised as unpaid leave.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Section 26(1) of the BCEA prohibits employers from requiring or allowing a pregnant or breastfeeding employee to perform work that is hazardous to her health or the health of her child. This means employers must assess and control risks to the health of pregnant or breastfeeding employees and that of the foetus or child. The 'Code of Good Practice on the Protection of Employees during Pregnancy and After the Birth of a Child' also recommends that arrangements be made for employees who are breastfeeding to have breaks of 30 minutes twice a day to breastfeed or express milk, for the first 6 months of a child's life.

Flexible working for carers

- No general statutory entitlement, though some companies may provide such leave as part of their attraction and retention strategy especially during and post COVID-19.

[11] Department of Public Service and Administration, June 2021

- Codes of Good Practice, whilst not constituting binding law, the Code must be considered when applying or interpreting any employment law. The code of good practice regarding the protection of employees during and after pregnancy[12] provides that employers must consider granting rest periods to employees who experience tiredness associated with pregnancy, and should also consider that tiredness associated with pregnancy may affect an employee's ability to work overtime. It further recommends that employers identify and assess any workplace hazards which may impact the pregnant mother and/or foetus, and consider appropriate action. The code of good practice titled 'Integration of Employment Equity into Human Resource Policies and Practices' adds that an employer should provide reasonable accommodation for pregnant women and parents with young children, including health and safety adjustments and ante-natal care leave.
- The code of good practice regarding the arrangement of working time adds that arrangements should be considered to accommodate the special needs of workers, such as pregnant and breastfeeding workers, and workers with family responsibilities (s26 BCEA).

  The code of good practice titled 'Integration of Employment Equity into Human Resource Policies and Practices' requires employers to endeavour to provide 'an accessible, supportive and flexible environment for employees with family responsibilities.' This is specified to include 'considering flexible working hours and granting sufficient family responsibility leave for both parents.' In addition, the code of good practice for working time arrangement states that the design of shift rosters must be sensitive to their impact on employees and their families and should take into consideration the childcare needs of the employees.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- The code of good practice titled 'Protection of Employees during Pregnancy and After the Birth of a Child' provides both recommendations and legal obligations. While it offers guidance to employers, it also outlines specific legal requirements. In line with the BCEA, it affirms that pregnant and breastfeeding employees have the legal right to attend antenatal and postnatal clinic visits, and that such leave should be granted at full pay.

Other provisions of leave

- **Bereavement leave**. The BCEA provides that full-time employees are entitled to 3 days of paid Family Responsibility Leave within each 12 month cycle in the event of the death of an immediate family member. This provision applies to the death of a spouse or partner, parent, adoptive parent, grandparent, child, adopted child, grandchild, or sibling.
- **Leave for surrogacy.** Section 3 of the Labour Laws Amendment Act states that if a surrogate motherhood agreement has two commissioning parents, one of the commissioning parents is entitled to commissioning Parental leave of 10 consecutive weeks, and the other commissioning parent is entitled to normal Parental leave of 10 consecutive days referred to in section 25A. Section 8(c) of the Labour Laws Amendment Act provides for

[12] Government Gazette (1998) *Code of Good Practice on the Protection of Employees during Pregnancy and After the Birth of a Child*, Pretoria: Government Publishers.

commissioning parental benefits to be paid at a rate of 66 per cent of the beneficiary's earnings at the date of application.

Surrogacy leave for public servants has been divided into two categories: (i) for the commissioning parent who may take 4 consecutive calendar months' paid leave, commencing from the date of the birth; (ii) for the surrogate mother, who will be entitled to 6 consecutive weeks of paid Maternity leave.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

Maternity leave benefits are paid for a maximum duration of 17.32 weeks (121 days), paid at 38 per cent to 66 per cent of earnings depending on the level of income. There is no entitlement to Early Childhood Education. The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2015), covers the period from conception until the year before children enter formal school or, in the case of children with developmental difficulties and disabilities, until the year before the calendar year they turn seven, which marks the age of compulsory schooling or special education. In South Africa in 2022, 1.6 million children (72 per cent) under the age of 6 years were enrolled to attend an Early Learning Programme meant to prepare them for school. Concerningly, this figure was closer to 2 million before the Covid19 pandemic. The decline shows that parents are slow to send their children back to pre-school, possibly due to financial strain (many lost their jobs), or because many parents don't realise the importance of early education for their child's future success.[13]

No information for ECEC attendance levels in 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

In October 2025, South Africa's Constitutional Court delivered a landmark judgment in *Van Wyk and Others v Minister of Employment and Labour*, declaring aspects of the Parental-leave regime in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) and the Unemployment Insurance Act (UIF Act) unconstitutional for unfairly discriminating between parents on grounds of sex, gender, and family form. The Court found that the differentiated treatment of birth mothers, fathers, adoptive parents, and commissioning parents violated the constitutional rights to equality and human dignity.

Although the declaration of invalidity was suspended for 36 months to allow legislative amendment, the Court introduced an interim Parental leave regime with immediate effect. Under this regime, all parents—biological, adoptive, or commissioning—are jointly entitled to 4 months and 10 days of Parental leave to be shared between them, with single parents entitled to at least 4 consecutive months. Health-related protections for pregnancy and childbirth remain intact.

[13] Grow Educare Centres (2022, June) *The alarming state of early childhood development in South Africa*. Available at: https://www.growecd.org.za/2022/06/03/the-alarming-state-of-early-childhood-development-in-south-africa/

(The Constitutional Court's judgment is significant and has introduced an interim Parental leave regime pending legislative amendment by Parliament. However there remains uncertainty regarding implementation and administration of the Court's interim arrangement. Consequently, no change has been made to the information on Parental leave in Section 1.)

The Court also confirmed that the age limitation on adoption leave is unconstitutional. While no interim UIF benefit framework was established, the judgment has immediate implications for employer compliance and marks a significant shift towards gender-neutral and inclusive caregiving rights in South African labour law.

4. Uptake of leave

While over 17.1 million people are employed in South Africa, based on data from the Quarterly Labour Force Survey 2025, and many are legally entitled to maternity or parental leave, uptake is difficult to estimate. In 2024, 863, 858 births were registered, offering a rough proxy for potential maternity or parental leave use that year. However, official statistics on the actual number of employees who accessed such leave are not available.[14] [15]

a. Maternity leave

No information available

b. Paternity leave

No statutory entitlement.

c. Parental leave

No information available.

[14] Statistics South Africa (2025) *Quarterly Labour Force Survey*, Quarter 4: 2025, Pretoria: Statistics South Africa.
[15] Statistics South Africa (2025) *Recorded live births.* Pretoria: Statistics South Afric,

Spain[498]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

Note on terminology: A reform of the Spanish gender equality law came into effect in March 2019 and major changes were introduced in leave policy (see details in 2019 review), introducing gender-neutral leave terminology. 'Maternity leave' was replaced by Birth and Childcare Leave[499] and the allowance by Birth and Childcare Benefit. 'Paternity leave' was replaced by Birth and childcare leave and benefit for the parent other than the biological mother.

a. Birth and Childcare Leave for the mother (*Permiso y prestación por nacimiento y cuidado del menor,* replaced 'maternity leave': see 'note on terminology') (responsibility mainly of the Ministries of Labour and of Social Security)[500]

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 19 weeks: possibility to use up to 4 weeks before the birth, the remainder after the birth.
- It is obligatory to take 6 weeks after the birth.

[498] Meil, G., Escobedo, A., Lapuerta, I., Romero-Balsas, P. and Castellanos-Serrano, C. (2026) 'Spain country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, Á, Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026* Available at: http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/

[499] Terminology on leave for mothers is diverse within the Spanish regulation. Sometimes it refers to birth leave and sometimes to birth and childcare leave, particularly when it refers to adoption and fostering.

[500] Five ministries are presently involved in leave regulation: Ministry of Labour and Social Economy; Ministry of Finances; Ministry of Social Rights, Consumption, and 2030 Agenda; Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migrations and the Ministry of Digital Transformation and Civil Service.

- From week 39 of pregnancy employed mothers can take leave under a different specific scheme within sickness insurance[501].

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of gross earnings up to an upper limit of €5,101.20 (gross earnings) per month.
- In addition to the birth leave, a pregnancy leave right and benefit before delivery is established under the scope of the general sickness insurance. It is paid at 60 per cent of earnings by Social Security funds since the first day. All pregnant mothers can take this pregnancy leave from week 39 until birth.
- A flat-rate benefit (€600 per month or €20 per day, the same since 2023) is paid for 42 calendar days to all employed women who do not meet eligibility requirements.
- Payments are not taxed.
- Funded by social insurance contributions from employers and employees. As a rule, employers pay 23.6 per cent of gross earnings and employees pay 4.7 per cent, to cover common contingencies which include pensions, sickness, and leaves (contingencias comunes), with additional contributions paid to cover unemployment and other circumstances. In the case of public servants, all contributions are paid by their employer.

Flexibility in use

- Mothers can take birth leave from 4 weeks before the due date. This provision also applies in the case of international adoption if parents must move to the country of origin of the child.
- Six weeks must be taken on a full-time basis immediately after the birth (or the judicial decision of adoption or foster care). The remaining weeks may be taken in different ways: either continuously or in separate periods, on a full-time or part-time basis, subject in the latter case to agreement with the employer. Up to 11 of these weeks can be taken intermittently on a weekly basis within the first year after childbirth, adoption or foster care. The final 2 weeks may be taken at any time until the child reaches the age of 8.
- In case of adoption, the possibility to spread parts of leave over the first year applies only for children under 12 months of age, except for the last two weeks that can be used until the child turns 8.
- Employers must be informed at least 15 days in advance.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employed women (whether employee or self-employed; working on open-ended or fixed-term contracts; working full- or part-time) are entitled to Birth Leave.
- However, conditions must be met in order to qualify for the earnings-related leave benefit (non-eligible employees receive a flat-rate payment for 42 calendar days after delivery): the mother needs to be making social security contributions at the beginning of the leave; or be receiving an unemployment

[501] Ley Orgánica 1/2023, de 28 de febrero, por la que se modifica la Ley Orgánica 2/2010, de 3 de marzo, de salud sexual y reproductiva y de la interrupción voluntaria del embarazo [Organic Law 1/2023, of 28 February, amending Organic Law 2/2010, of 3 March, on sexual and reproductive health and voluntary termination of pregnancy]

contributory benefit; or be in the first year of the unpaid Parental leave, and have contributed to social security for at least 180 days in the previous 7 years (or 360 days during working life). Women under 21 years of age do not need to have had a previous period of social security contribution, and women between 21 and 26 years of age need only 90 days in the previous seven years, or 180 days during their working life. This requirement is more flexible for women who work part-time. Self-employed mothers are exempt from paying social security contributions while on leave.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In the case of the birth, adoption, or fostering of a child or children with a disability, mothers have the right to 1 extra week of leave for a new child, and to family benefits from an additional lump-sum benefit. In case of multiple birth, mothers have the right to 1 extra week for every new-born from the second child onward and to a family lump-sum social security benefit.
- In the case of a premature birth or infant hospitalisation, leave is extended up to 13 weeks.
- If the baby dies, leave is not reduced.
- If the mother dies, the other parent can take her leave entitlements, independent of the mother's previous employment situation and entitlements.
- The non-contributory benefit is extended to 14 calendar days (from 42 to 56 calendar days) for single mothers, large families, multiple births, or disabilities.
- In the case of adoption and foster care of a child less than six years of age, each parent must take 6 weeks of full-time leave just after the judicial or administrative decision. The 13 optional weeks for each parent can be taken full-time or part-time in this latter case in agreement with the employer. These optional weeks can be spread over the first year on a weekly basis (if the child is less than 12 months old and both parents work), or taken in one continuous period during the 1st year. The last two weeks can be taken until the child is 8. In the case of international adoptions, which require moving to the home country of the child, public employees can take an additional 2 month paid leave at a lower rate.
- In the case of one-parent families, the optional period of 13 weeks for the second parent is acknowledged to lone parents, extending total leave length to 32 weeks.
- Same-sex parents have the same rights as heterosexual parents.
- Employed and self-employed pregnant women and mothers breastfeeding babies less than 9 months old are entitled to be relocated to another workplace, if working conditions are not compatible with women in such circumstances or it is a risk for the baby. If this cannot be accommodated, the working contract or activity must be interrupted, and leave can be taken with payment of 100 per cent of earnings. Such leave correspondingly lasts until the beginning of Birth Leave, or until the baby reaches the age of 9 months.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- Several regional and local governments have improved entitlements for public sector employees. For example, women working for the municipality of Madrid have a right of up to 8 additional weeks of the Birth and Childcare Leave (Collective Agreement 2019-2022, applying also for 2025) and those working for the regional government of Madrid have a right of up to 10 calendar days in case of birth, adoption or foster care (Collective Agreement 2021-2024). These improved benefits are not applicable for the second parent

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Birth and childcare leave for the parent other than the biological mother (*permiso y prestación por nacimiento y cuidado del menor del progenitor distinto de la madre biológica,* replaced 'Paternity leave': see 'note on terminology') (responsibility of mainly the Ministries of Labour and of Social Security)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 19 weeks for all employed fathers or other parents (including self-employed) after childbirth, adoption, or foster care.
- It is obligatory to take 6 weeks after the birth.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of gross earnings up to an upper limit of €5,101.20 (gross earnings) per month.
- Funded and taxed as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- Same conditions as for Birth Leave for the biological mother, except for the possibility to initiate leave up to 4 weeks before birth (in case of international adoption, if parents have to travel to the adoptee's country of origin, both parents can initiate leave until 4 weeks before the formal adoption).

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Same conditions as for Birth and Childcare Leave benefit for the biological mother.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the father

- Leave is extended by 1 extra week per child from the 2nd onward in the case of multiple births (or adoption or fostering), or if the child has a disability.

- The entitlement encompasses same-sex couples: this leave can be taken by both parents (see 1e).
- In case of lone-parenthood the birth leave and benefit can be extended, upon request, to 32 weeks.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- Some regional and local governments have extended leave rights beyond what the labour legislation establishes.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave

As a consequence of the transposition of the EU Directive 2019/1158 on Work-Life Balance (article 5, Parental Leave), in June 2023 a new leave scheme has been introduced, *Permiso parental*, additional to the existing leave, *Excedencia por Cuidado de Hijos*. Therefore, there are now two Parental leave schemes once Birth and Childcare Leave has finished, with different names and different designs in relation to length, potential payment (initially foreseen for the new scheme, with some regional flat-rate allowances associated to the second scheme), job protection, and the period of use. We present these two leave schemes here as Parental leave 1 (8 weeks until age 8 years) and Parental leave 2 (until the child turns 3 years old).

c. Parental leave 1 (*Permiso Parental*) (responsibility of mainly the Ministriesy of Labour and of Social Security)

Length of leave

- 8 weeks per parent.
- Leave is an individual and non-transferable entitlement.

Payment, funding and taxation

- None.
- All employees taking leave are credited with Social Security contributions for the whole period, which affects all Social Security benefits, including pensions.

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be taken in one continuous period or split into shorter periods of time.

- Leave can be taken on a full-time or part-time basis.
- Leave can be taken until the child reaches 8 years.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employees.
- Employees on temporary contracts can only claim leave that is shorter than their contract period.
- Unemployed and self-employed workers are not eligible.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- The entitlement includes same-sex couples.
- In the case of single parenthood, there is no right to accumulate the leave rights of both parents. However, according to the ruling of the Constitutional Court in the case of Birth Leave, this provision should be interpreted in the same terms, allowing the accumulation of the leave rights of both parents.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- If both parents work for the same company, the employer can put restrictions on both parents using leave at the same time, if this is justified for production reasons (as is the case for other leaves).
- Employees must inform the employer of the time they plan to take with at least 10 days advance notice, except in case of *force majeure*. If employers consider that the leave request affects seriously the proper functioning of the company, they can delay it, providing a reasoned written answer to the request and after having offered an equally flexible alternative as the rejected one.

c. Parental leave 2 (*Excedencia por cuidado de hijos*) (responsibility mainly of the Ministries of Labour and of Social Security)

Length of leave

- Until the child reaches 3 years.
- Leave is an individual, non-transferable entitlement.
- During the 1st year, return to the same job position is protected; subsequently, job return protection is restricted to a job of the same category.

Payment, funding and taxation

- None.
- All employees taking leave are credited by the Social Security Institution with social security contributions for the whole period, which affects pension accounts, health cover, and new Birth and Childcare Leave entitlements. However, unemployment benefits and sickness leave are excluded.

Flexibility in use

- There are no limits to the number of periods of leave that can be taken until the child is 3 years old, with no minimum period required.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employees. Employees on temporary contracts can only claim leave that is shorter than their contract period.
- Unemployed and self-employed workers are not eligible.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- The period of job-secured leave is extended to 15 or 18 months in large families, defined as those with 3 or more children, or with 2 children, one of whom has a disability.
- The period of job-secured leave is also extended up to a maximum of 18 months when both parents use the Parental leave equally.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- Four out of 17 regional governments – *Comunidades Autónomas* – provide flat-rate benefits to increase the use of this Parental leave:
  - **Basque Country** offers €292 per month for families with an annual income below €20,000 per person (€245 for families with an annual income above this threshold). The amount of the benefit was updated in 2019 and income ceilings were introduced in 2015. The amount is increased by 30 per cent in case of single-parent or large families, severe disability of any of the family members or in situations of gender-based violence. Mothers can receive this benefit for 18 months per child, whereas fathers for 30 months, with a maximum period of 73 months for all the children (48 months when the Parental leave is only used by the mother and 73 months when the father is the sole user).
  - **La Rioja** offers €350 per month up to a maximum of €12,800 to families with an annual income below €60,000 (or €70,000 in the case of large families). The amount is increased by 30 per cent for single-parent families, in which case income ceilings are reduced to €35,000 (or €40,000 when the single-parent family has two or more children). In the case of multiple births, the benefits are doubled. To be entitled, parents must be employed in the private sector (public sector employees are excluded) and have been with the company for at least one year. Parental leave must be taken for a minimum period of four months. If both parents use the leave at the same time, only one of them can receive the benefit. This benefit

was updated in 2022, although the maximum income limits had already been revised several times since 2003, when the benefit was introduced.

- **Navarre** offers a payment of €750 per month for a maximum of 12 months to care for children who have suffered from a serious accident requiring hospitalisation and continuous care during and/or after hospitalisation. The amount is reduced to €500 per month in the cases of: (i) adoptions or foster care with an expected duration higher than a year; (ii) the care for children in the case of multiple births, adoption or foster care, until the children reach the age of 6 years; (iii) families with two children when one of the siblings has a disability and both are under nine years old; (iv) families with three or more children, when two of them are under 6 years; and (v) for the care of children from single-parent families, until they reach the age of 6 or 9 years if the child has a disability. The age limit for the children is extended in the two latter cases to nine years when the child has a disability of 33 per cent or a recognised dependency. All these benefits are means-tested, with a range from €50,400 per year for families of two members to €75,600 for a family of six. The amounts and the cases covered were extended in the year 2025. Care of sick children, regardless of their seriousness, is not included among the protected family circumstances.
- **Castilla-León** entitles to €1,500 for Parental leave of three months or more, provided that it is initiated and taken consecutively by both parents for at least one and a half months each. In the case of single-parent families, the leave shall be taken by the parent for a minimum period of three months For large families, single-parent-families and families in a situation of permanent foster care or guardianship for the purpose of adoption of the child who motivates the leave, the amount of the grant is increased by an amount of €1000.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- If both parents work for the same company, the employer can put restrictions on both parents using leave at the same time, if this is justified for production reasons.
- In the public sector, the job position is protected for 2 years, and in the 3rd year within the same municipality.
- For the calculation of the retirement or permanent disability pension, parents who have left employment, voluntarily or not, between the 9th month before birth (3rd in case of adoption or fostering of a minor) and the 6th year after, are given 270 days (9 months) from the social security credits per child,[502] until all children reach the maximum limit of 5 years. These credits apply not only for calculating the aforementioned pensions, but also for all other social security benefits (except for the minimum payment period) and cover only the period spent outside of employment. It also applies to all births, after or before the law took force. Only one of the parents has the right to these pension credits; in the case of dispute, it is attributed to the mother.
- There is a complementary pension benefit of €35.90 per month and per child for mothers (or alternatively for the father if he interrupted employment in connection to childbirth and has a lower pension than the mother) in the

[502] Regulated by RD 1716/2012. Available at: https://www.boe.es/ buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2012-15765

case of contributory old age or permanent sickness pensions, or widowhood pensions.[503]

1. Childcare leave or career breaks

iv. No statutory entitlement. Unpaid career breaks are recognised in the labour and public employees' regulations (*excedencia voluntaria)*. The only protection offered is claiming the right of return to an equivalent job before the end of the leave, once there is a vacancy. This job protection works much better in the public sector than in the private sector.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- The same regulations as for other parents for the adoption or fostering of children under 6 years of age or older children with additional needs (e.g., disabilities, international adoptions).
- Public sector employees involved in an international adoption have the right to 2 months of paid leave: these include basic payment without benefits, and the process requires that the adoptive parents stay in the country of origin of the future adoptive child.

Time off for the care of dependants

- Parents are entitled to full-time or part-time leave (with a minimum reduction of 50 per cent of working time) **to take care of a seriously ill child** under 23 years of age (provided the illness started before 18 years) during the period the child is in hospital or in need of continuous treatment at home (with certification by the public health service); 109 types of illness are included. The scheme is paid at 100 per cent of the individual's earnings (subject to the same upper limit as for the Birth and Childcare Leave benefit) from professional sickness insurance schemes, with previous contributory requirements as for Birth and Childcare Leave. This entitlement is extended to parents working part-time, in which case leave must be at least equivalent to 25 per cent of full-time hours. The leave is an individual right, but only one of the parents is entitled to take leave at any one time. Parents can alternate its use on a monthly base. In the case of divorce, when there is no agreement, the parent with legal custody has the right to take this leave; if they have joint custody, it is the one who makes the claim first.
- 5 days leave per employee per event (*permiso por enfermedad grave de un familiar*), **to care for a seriously ill child**, spouse or partner or a relative to a second degree of consanguinity or affinity, including partner's relatives. The leave period is paid by the employer. However, there is no agreement on what 'serious illness' means.
- Employees have the right to **time off from work on grounds of force majeure for urgent family reasons**. These urgent issues comprise cases of illness or accident of a person that lives with the worker, making the

[503]See: http://www.seg-social.es/wps/portal/wss/internet/Trabajadores/PrestacionesPensionesTrabajadores/4c43ce49-6636-4a12-bacf-5e6697eb81da (regulated by Ley 22/2021, 28 December 2021 on the General State Budget of the year 2022)

immediate attendance of the worker indispensable. The time off from work will be paid by the employer up to the equivalent of 4 working days per year.

- Each employee may take up to 2 years of **unpaid leave** (*excedencia por cuidado de un familiar*) or reduce working hours by between an eighth and a half (reducción de jornada por cuidado de un familiar) to take care of a dependent relative (up to the 'second degree of consanguinity or affinity') due to severe illness, disability, accidents, or old age. Workers taking leave are credited with social security contributions, which affect pension payments, health cover, and new leave entitlements, for the first year of full-time or part-time leave.
  Public sector employees can extend the unpaid leave to care for a relative for up to 3 years, with the whole period credited with social security contributions and related social protection benefits. Furthermore, they can work part-time for up to one month without a loss in earnings in the case of a profoundly serious illness for a first-degree relative (child, partner or parent including in-laws); they can also benefit from extra flexibility in working time, as do parents of children under 12 years of age.
  In cases of chronic dependency, one person can become an informal carer to another who receives a payment if both are co-resident. It varies depending on the region of residence, the relative's level of dependency recognised by a public agency, and the household income (e.g., in the case of Navarre, one of the regions with the highest benefits, the payments are between €100 and €542.85 per month in 2025). The payment is claimed by the dependent relative. Informal carers are credited with social security contributions for the minimum base, which affect pension accounts and health cover.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- During the first 9 months of the child's life, adoption, or foster care (12 months in the public sector), employees (both parents) are entitled to 1 hour of absence during the working day without a loss of earnings. This time-off or part-time leave *(permiso de cuidado del lactante*) was originally meant to support breastfeeding, but is defined now as a period of nursing care. It is an individual, non-transferable entitlement paid by the employers. Self-employed parents are excluded. The period can be divided into two 30-minute breaks or be replaced by shortening the normal working day by 30 minutes, or by an equivalent period on full-time days. The public sector and many collective agreements allow for 1 hour shortening of the normal working day.
- Employees are entitled to consolidate this entitlement in equivalent full-time days off, at the end of their Birth and Childcare Leave by 2 to 4 weeks (if the statutory right is expanded by collective or company agreements). In the case of multiple births (or multiple adoptions or fostering) this leave is recognised for each child, although the length can vary depending on collective or company agreements, in the case of using it on a full-time basis. This absence is paid for by the employer. In the private sector, if both parents make use of this leave equally and in the same way, they can extend the leave until the child's 1st birthday. In this case, the wage reduction during this additional period is compensated by social security funds.

Flexible working for carers

- A working parent can reduce their working day by between an eighth and a half of its normal duration, to care for a child under the age of 12 years or to

look after a disabled child of any age *(reducción de jornada por guarda legal)*. Employees may decide, within their usual work schedule, the extent and period of the working time reduction. It is defined as an individual right and there is no payment, but workers taking this part-time leave are credited with up to three years' full-time social security contributions (which affect pension accounts, unemployment benefits, and new leave entitlements). In addition, public employees are guaranteed some working time flexibility to adapt (for example) to school hours. Self-employed parents are excluded from this right.

- A number of regional governments offer payments to parents reducing their working hours. For example, Basque Country, Navarre, La Rioja, Galicia, Castilla La Mancha or Castilla-León have provided flat-rate payments to support this measure, proportional to the working time reduction. However, Navarre abolished these payments in 2011, and Castilla La Mancha and Castilla-León in 2012. This latter region has implemented a new benefit in 2020. Since 2002, public sector employees in Catalonia (both fathers and mothers) can reduce their working hours by a third with a 20 per cent earnings reduction, or by a half with a 40 per cent earnings reduction, if they have a child under six years of age or care for a disabled relative.
- Parents of children under the age of 12 years have the right to request an adaptation of their working time, including tele-working, to guarantee their right to balance working and family life. Employers can reject the request, but have to justify it based on objective reasons.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- Pregnant employees are entitled to paid time off to attend antenatal appointments or in the case of childbirth preparation techniques, for the necessary time, when it has to be done during working time. Fathers can also benefit of paid time off to attend childbirth preparation (art 37.3.f ET; art 48.e EBEP).

Other provisions of leave

- **Bereavement leave.** 2 days leave per employee in the case of death of a relative to a second degree of consanguinity or affinity, including partner's relatives, extended to 4 days if travelling is required. The leave period is paid by the employer. For public sector employees, the entitlement in case of death of a relative is extended to 3 days (5 days if travelling is required).
- **Sickness leave in case of menstruation or abortion.** Women have the right to sickness leave due to certified health problems associated to menstruation causing incapacity for work (*Incapacidad temporal por menstruación incapacitante secundaria*) and in case of voluntary or non-voluntary interruption of pregnancy, while receiving health care from the Public Health Service. The payment level is the same as in the case of ordinary sickness (60 per cent of previous earnings, frequently topped up by the employer), except for being paid from the 1st day (instead of the 4th day) of leave.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is 3 years, but most of this period is unpaid; leave paid at a high rate ends after 'Birth and Childcare leave' (around five months after the birth, including the consolidation of reduced working hours related to (breast)feeding leave or *permiso de cuidado del lactante* - see 1e - if both parents use their leaves simultaneously or eight months if they use them consecutively after birth). The Spanish Education Law considers ECEC as a non compulsory stage of the education system (*Ley Orgánica 3/2020, de 29 de diciembre, por la que se modifica la Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación, LOMLOE*). It provides *de facto* an entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) from 3 years of age, and nearly all children over this age attend early education. There is, therefore, no gap between the end of leave and an ECEC entitlement, but a substantial gap of approximately 2½ years between the end of well-paid leave and this *de facto* entitlement. Some regions (e.g. Catalonia) provide free access to early education from 2 years onward, but there are not enough available places in most regions.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

As the 8 week Parental leave to care for children under 8 years, introduced to fulfil the EU Directive 1158/201 minimum requirements had remained unpaid (see Parental leave 1 above), the European Commission initiated a procedure against Spain before the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), requesting the imposition of a flat-rate fine on the Spanish Government due to the failure to transpose the EU 2019 Directive regarding the payment of this leave entitlement (art. 8.3)[504]. The judgement on 1 August 2025 (C/2025/5184) ordered the Kingdom of Spain to pay to the European Commission a lump sum of €6,832,000 and a daily penalty payment of €19,700 from that date until that Member State has put an end to the failure to fulfil obligations.

Instead of introducing an earnings-related benefit for this 8 week Parental leave scheme, on 29 July 2025 the Government approved a Royal Decree-Law 9/2025 extending the Birth and care leave from 16 to 19 weeks, aiming at complying with EU Directives 92/85 and 1158/201 minimum requirements of paid leave duration for mothers that is estimated at 23 weeks (14 weeks+2 months). The Spanish Government claims for the application of a Passarella clause (foreseen in art. 20.6 EU 2019 Directive) to argue that this extension of Birth leave plus the entitlement to use the (breast)feeding leave *(permiso de cuidado del lactante*) in one anticipated spell instead of using it as working time reductions over an infant's first 9 months, would meet the required well paid 23 weeks. However, the Passarella

[504] Cf. European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, Burri, S., De la Corte-Rodríguez, M., Böök, B. et al. (2024) *The transposition of the Work-Life Balance Directive in EU Member States (II) – Considerable work still to be done*, Publications Office of the European Union, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2838/33291

clause establishes that its use cannot set additional requirements to the minimum standards set by EU 2019 Directive nor reduce general protection to employees established in Directives. Thus, there is a debate, with some lawyers and experts arguing that the (breast)feeding leave does not fulfil the requirements of the Passarella clause because it is not long enough or because of the nature of these time breaks paid by employers, which follow a different rationale than Maternity or Parental leave.[505]

In addition to the lengthening of Birth and care leave, the legislation also extended the right to a flat-rate benefit of 42 days, already available for those employed biological mothers who do not meet eligibility requirements, to adoption and foster care as well as for fathers. But it has not extended this non-contributory benefit to cover the minimum 14 weeks length for paid Maternity leave.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

Since the beginning of the economic crisis in 2008 the number of mothers benefiting from Maternity leave (Birth and Childcare leave since 2019) has been decreasing as did also the number of births. The take up rate measured in relation to the number of births has remained, however, stable around 66 per cent (ranging from 64.6 till 69.4 per cent). This percentage underestimates the real take-up rate in relation to eligible mothers (those paying Social Security fees or benefiting from unemployment benefits). According to the data provided by the *Fertility Survey 2018* of the National Statistical Institute (sample of interviewed women), 82.5 per cent of eligible mothers aged 18 to 55 years benefited from Maternity leave for their first child and 84.9 per cent for their second child.[506] According to the survey *Young Spanish Families 2025,*[507] 93.5 per cent of eligible mothers of children aged less than 7 years benefited from leave for their youngest child.

In 2024, the number of Birth and Childcare leaves acknowledged to the mother (or first parent) amounted to 220,562[508]. This represents 69.4 per cent of all births, 0.5 percentage points more than one year before. The mean number of days taken by the first parent amounted to 107.2 days (5 days less than 16 weeks).

Until now, most mothers have not used the increased flexibility in use allowed by the 2019 reform. A recent study based on all available administrative data sets

[505] Gorelli Hernández, J. (2025) 'El Real Decreto-ley 9/2025, ¿correcta transposición de la Directiva 2019/1158?', *E-Revista Internacional De La Protección Social*, Vol.10, 2: 14–45. https://doi.org/10.12795/e-RIPS.2025.i02.01

[506] Meil, G., Rogero-García, J. and Romero-Balsas, P. (2020) 'Los permisos para el cuidado de niños/as: evolución e implicaciones sociales y económicas' [Childcare leaves: evolution and social and economic implications], in A. Blanco et al. (eds.) *INFORME España 2020*, Madrid: Universidad Pontificia de Comillas, Catedra J. M. Martin Patino de la Cultura del Encuentro, pp.293-337. Available at: https://blogs.comillas.edu/informeespana/

[507] Meil, G., Rogero-García, J., Romero-Balsas and P. Diaz-Gandasegui, V. (2025) *Young Spanish Families, 2025, microdata of an online representative survey on parents of children aged less than 7 years old, implemented by Netquest Ldt*. Survey funded by grant PID2021-123736NB-I00 of the Spanish Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitivity

[508] Anuario de Estadísticas del Ministerio de Trabajo y Economía Social (2024), Avance Anuario Estadístico 2024, NIPO: 117-20-049-3. Available at: https://www.mites.gob.es/es/estadisticas/anuarios/2024/index.htm

this percentage at 95 per cent in the year 2022[509]. According to the survey *Young Spanish Families 2025, 83 percent of interviewed mothers refer not having split leave use for their last child.*

In 2024, an average of 5,122 women per month were on leave because of a risk during pregnancy, with an average duration of 91.6 days, equivalent to 0.19 per cent of all live births in 2024 Since 2008 (the first year for which there are available uptake data), there has been a steady increase in the number of women who take this kind of leave (from 2,546 per month to 6,895 in 2018), 2019 being the first year to decrease. The average number of days of leave taken has decreased steadily (from 120 till around 90 days in the last years. The number of women per month taking leave for breastfeeding because of a potential risk (introduced also in 2007) reached a mean of 96.7 per month in 2024. The mean number of days of leave was 147.2 days.

b. Paternity leave

A total number of 252,410 administrative processes of Birth and Childcare leave for the father (or second parent) was registered in 2024. The take-up rate measured in relation to the number of births increased from 73.7 per cent in 2021 to 79.4 per cent in 2024, following a steady increasing trend since the introduction of Paternity leave in 2007. Measured in relation to eligible fathers, as is the case with Maternity leave, the take-up rate is much higher, reaching 92.6 percent (i.e., 13.2 percentage points higher), according to the survey *Young Spanish Families 2025*. The mean number of days taken by the second parent amounted to 109.2 days in 2025 (3 days less than 16 weeks), what implies that nearly all parents take the whole period of leave. In fact, a recent study[510] based on administrative data show that 91.2 per cent of fathers (compared to 98.9 per cent of mothers) used the whole leave length.

Unlike mothers, fathers have increasingly made use of the flexibility options of the new regulation together with the extension of the leave duration. A recent study show that in 2022 and 2023 around 50 per cent of fathers uses the 16-weeks of Birth and Childcare leave simultaneously with the mother[511]. According to the mentioned survey *Young Spanish Families 2025*, 53 per cent interviewed fathers refer to have used the whole length of their leave for their last child together with

[509] Recio-Alcaide, A., Castellanos-Serrano, C. and Andrés-Jiménez, J. (2024): ¿Cómo incide el nuevo diseño de los permisos de nacimiento en la corresponsabilidad? Un análisis con registros administrativos de la Seguridad Social de 2016 a 2023 [How does the new design of Birth and Childcare Leave affect co-responsibility? An analysis with Social Security administrative records from 2016 to 2023]. Papeles de Trabajo 4/2024. Instituto de Estudios Fiscales. Available at: https://www.ief.es/docs/destacados/publicaciones/papeles_trabajo/2024_04.pdf

[510] Castellanos Serrano, C. and Recio Alcaide, A. (2025) Use of Paid Parental Leave in Spain by Mothers and Fathers of Children Born in 2023. The Problem of Simultaneity in the Parental Leave System Design, UNED. Available at: content

[511] Recio Alcaide, A. and Castellanos Serrano, C. (2025) ¿Qué factores influyen más en que los padres usen el permiso por nacimiento sin solaparlo con la madre? Caracterización del solo care en España y comparativa con los países de la Unión Europea. [What factors most influence parents to use birth leave without overlapping with the mother? Characterization of solo care in Spain and comparison with European Union countries]. Available at: https://www.ief.es/docs/destacados/publicaciones/documentos_trabajo/2025_02.pdf

the mother, a pattern which could limit the positive effects of this reform on gender equality.[512] The proportion of fathers who took advantage of the part-time leave option in 2023 was 10 per cent, compared to only 2 per cent of mothers.[513] Similar results are obtained analysing administrative data: 9.8 per cent of fathers used this leave in a part-time basis, while only 1.9 per cent of mothers use it part-time in 2022.[514]

It has been contended that this use of flexibilization of the leave right has been forced mostly by the employers as a response to the increase in duration. Reasons given by the interviewed fathers in the survey *Young Spanish Families 2025* show that only 6 per cent of those who split the leave did it due to employer´s demand, while 20 per cent attribute it to the content or characteristics of the work. Most of them, however, explained it is the best way to care for the baby (63 per cent).

c. Parental leave 2 (*Excedencia por cuidado de hijos*)

In 2024, 41,882 people started some period of Parental leave (13.2 per cent more than in previous year, changing the downward tendency after COVID pandemic). This corresponds to 13.2 per cent of the births in that year, much higher than in the recent past (in 1995 it was only 1.7 per cent). However, this represents only 4.2 per cent of children under 3 years; the age is relevant since leave can be taken until children turn 3 years. Fathers made up 13 per cent of users, the same proportion as in 2023.[515]

According to the survey *Young Spanish Families 2025*, 8.9 per cent of fathers of children aged less than seven years old made use of Parental leave for a mean period of 2.7 months, compared to 19.6 per cent of mothers who took it for a mean of 4.1 months. Leave is more often used for the child is less than one year of age (63.5 percent).

d. Other types of leave and flexible working

Data from a 2021-22 survey[516], indicate that amongst respondents two thirds of employed mothers used consolidated breastfeeding leave in weeks, while this was

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[512] Meil, G. and Rogero-García, J. (in print; 2026) 'Work-Life Balance Measures for Fathers as an Instrument to Foster Gender Equality in Family Work. The Experience of Spain, in V. Česnuitytė, G.A.Meil Landwerlin, J. Rogero-García and I.Budginaitė-Mačkinė (eds), *European Families Facing Hard Times: Challenges, Strategies, and Family Policies*, Leeds: Emerald Publishing.

[513] Meil, G., Rogero-García, J., Romero-Balsas and P. Diaz-Gandasegui, V. (2025) *Young Spanish Families, 2025, microdata of an online representative survey on parents of children aged less than 7 years old, implemented by Netquest Ldt*. Survey funded by grant PID2021-123736NB-I00 of the Spanish Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitivity

[514] Recio-Alcaide, A. et al (2024). Ibid.

[515] *Anuario de Estadísticas del Ministerio de Trabajo y Economía Social* (2024), *Avance Anuario Estadístico 2024*, NIPO: 117-20-049-3. Available at: https://www.mites.gob.es/es/estadisticas/anuarios/2024/index.htm

[516] Escot, L., Fernández-Cornejo, J., Del Pozo-García, E., Castellanos-Serrano, C. and Palomo-Vadillo, M. (2022) Encuesta sobre el uso de los permisos parentales 2021-2022 [Survey on the use of parental leave],2021-2022. Cuaderno de Trabajo número CT-01/2022. Cuadernos de Trabajo, Facultad De Estudios Estadísticos, Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Available at: https://docta.ucm.es/entities/publication/3fc89a69-5406-40d3-8db3-268c9f4d3c5f

the case for 4 of ten fathers. About 16 per cent of fathers and mothers used extra leave paid by their employers most of them for one or two weeks during this same period.

The fact that Parental leave and working time reduction are not paid limits their use, even among those who have a secure job. According to the survey *Young Spanish Families 2025*, 34.6 per cent of women and 18.3 per cent of men with children aged less than 7 years, employed at the time when they became parents, made use of the right to reduce their working hours. As in the case of full-time unpaid Parental leave, work time reduction is taken mostly during the child's 1st year of live. Men reduced their working hours on average 4 months, while women 4.9 months. According to another survey, for those who became parents in 2021-2022, 16.7 per cent of mothers and 7.4 per cent of fathers used unpaid full-time leave, most of them less than three months.[517]

According to the Spanish Social Security Statistics,[518] the number of parents who have taken the leave to care for seriously ill children (introduced in 2011) has increased from 1,114 in 2012 to 6,598 in 2024. The mean number of days of leave taken has risen sharply from 176.9 to a maximum of 587.7 in 2021 and decreased to 580.1 in 2024.

Unpaid leave to care for dependent relatives has been available from 2001 onwards. Since 2005, the number of users has steadily grown, increasing from 3,332 in 2005 to 12,058 new users in 2019, though in 2024 it has decreased to 11,589. The proportion of male users is growing from around 15 per cent before 2015 to 25 per cent in 2024 following the trend of men's greater use of leave provisions.

The statistical yearbook of the Ministry of Labour does not provide details on the duration, nor on the extent to which the leaves to care for dependent relatives are connected to the benefit for informal family carers (introduced since the 2006 Spanish law to support dependents). In December 2019, 30.26 per cent of all benefits provided under this law were used for supporting informal family care (426,938 benefits, 11 per cent more than in January 2018). In the following years, this percentage has remained stable around 31 per cent, while the number of benefits has steadily increased till 636,030by the end of 2024.[519] However, it seems difficult to link care leave to benefits, because these usually require a long administrative process, and because the benefit goes to the dependent person and not to the informal carer.

[517] Ibid.
[518] www.seg-social.es/Internet_1/Estadistica/Est/Otras_Prestaciones_de_la_Seguridad_Social/index.htm
[519] https://imserso.es/-/informes-publicados-2025

Sweden[520]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members' page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*Mammaledighet*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 2 weeks before or after delivery.
- It is obligatory to take this period,
- In addition, pregnant women can take indefinite leave if a job is a risk to the foetus and no other work can be made available; or if a job is physically demanding and therefore hard for a pregnant woman to perform, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency can grant up to 50 days of leave during the last 60 days of pregnancy.

Payment, funding and taxation

- Individuals can decide whether to take part of the Parental leave benefit (see 1c) during the 2 week period of leave.
- Additional leave taken if there is a risk to the foetus or if a job is physically demanding is paid at 77.6 per cent of earnings, which is called pregnancy benefit (*graviditetspenning*).

Flexibility in use

- The 2 weeks can be taken either just before or after birth.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All mothers are eligible

[520] Please cite as: Duvander, A.-Z. and Wennemo Lanninger, A (2026) 'Sweden country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother, lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave / Temporary leave in connection with a child's birth or adoption *(tillfällig föräldrapenning i samband med barns födelse eller adoption*)[521] (responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs)

Length of leave

- 10 days. Designed to be used for the other parent (or carer) to attend delivery, to care for older siblings while the mother is in the hospital, and/or to participate in childcare when the mother comes home. Most often this is used by the father of the child and was previously called 'daddy days' (*pappadagar*).

Payment, funding and taxation

- 77.6 per cent of earnings up to an upper limit of SEK 444,000 [€40,199.19][522] per year. The maximum payment is SEK1,325 [€119.96] per working day.
- Payments come from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency.
- Funded from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, which is financed from statutory contributions from employers and the self-employed. Employers in Sweden pay 31.42 per cent of all employees' salary in such statutory contributions to cover all social insurance (including pensions). Out of the 31.42 per cent, 2.6 percentage points is dedicated to all Parental leave insurance. However, if costs exceed the 2.6 percentage points there is margin and funds for the parental insurance do not run out.[523]

[521] Referred to as 'Paternity leave' in reviews before 2014; now revised to provide a literal translation of 'entitlement,' which is considered gender-neutral.
[522] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://data.ecb.europa.eu/currency-converter.
[523] Tax authorities, see: https://www.skatteverket.se/foretagochorganisationer/arbetsgivare/arbetsgivaravgifterochskatteavdrag/arbetsgivaravgifter.4.233f91f71260075abe8800020817.htm.

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be used at any time during the 60 days after childbirth. Most commonly, it is used as full-time leave (i.e., 5 days a week).

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employees are eligible, regardless of time spent in employment, but a person is required to have a sickness benefit qualifying income (SGI).[524]
- The benefit is gender-neutral and attributed to the parent who has not been pregnant. If the parent who has been pregnant is sole custodian another close person can use the days. If the 2nd parent agrees the days can be used by another person (of the parent's choice).

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- Leave is increased in the event of multiple births (e.g., doubled in the case of twins).
- Co-habiting adoptive parents get five days each at the time of adoption. A single adoptive parent gets 10 days. Benefits are conditional on the child being under ten years of age at their adoption (leave can only be used up until the child is 10 years of age, or 12 years if the parents obtained custody from 2014 and onwards).

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave *(föräldrapenning)* (responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of Employment)[525]

Length of leave

- Until the child reaches 18 months of age.
- Leave is an individual, non-transferable entitlement.
- Each parent with joint custody is eligible for 240 days of Parental leave benefit; some days may be transferred between parents, while others are non-transferable (see below). There is thus one legislation concerning the right to leave (18 months, see above) and another granting benefits (240 days); the former comes under the Ministry of Employment, the latter under

[524] Swedish Inspectorate for the Social Insurance (2016) *Sickness benefit qualifying income*. Report 2016:10. Stockholm. Available at: www.inspsf.se. Swedish report with English summary.

[525] Ministry of Health and Social Affairs has responsibility over the parental benefit and Ministry of Employment has responsibility over the legislated right to leave from work.

under the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, and are thus separate entities.

- For each parent, 240 leave days are paid, mostly at an income-related level (see below); 90 of these days are reserved and cannot be transferred to the other parent (often called a 'mother's quota' and a 'father's quota'). One of the parents may only take all benefit days in cases of one custodian, or the other parent being permanently sick and not able to care for the child. The remaining 105 income-based days for each parent can be transferred to the other by signing a consent form.
- In case of joint custody, a parent may transfer up to 150 days to a cohabiting partner who is not custodian. If a parent has sole custody up to 390 days may be transferred. The reserved three months may not be transferred.
- In case of joint custody, a parent may transfer up to 45 days to another individual of their choice, not including the reserved months. In case of sole custody, 90 days may be transferred.

Payment, funding and taxation

- For parents who are eligible for income-related benefit (see below), 195 days of leave are paid at 77.6 per cent of earnings, up to an upper limit of SEK592,000 [€53,598.91], the daily amount is SEK1,259 [€113.99] per calendar day;[526] the remaining 45 days are paid at a flat-rate payment of SEK180 [€16.30] per day. The first 180 days used for the child need to be earnings-related and not flat rate. Parents who are not eligible for earnings-related leave receive a flat rate of SEK250 [€22.63] per day for 240 days. These days on flat rate (180 or 250 SEK/day) cannot be used on work free days (typically weekends) without using benefit also on the day before or after.
- Payments are taxed. Income tax is lower for a person working compared to a person on Parental leave (*jobbskatteavdrag*). In some cases, this leads to a gender-equalising effect when the mother works and the father is on Parental leave. All Parental leave benefits, income related and flat rate, offer pension credits.
- There is an extra pension supplement for the parent who earns the lower income during the child's first four years. This supplement to the pension-qualifying amount is aimed to compensate the parent who takes the largest responsibility for childcare and therefore must scale back their work, or who temporarily exits the labour market.[527]
- Funded as for Temporary leave in connection with birth and adoption.

Flexibility in use

- Starting with children born from 1 January 2014, either form of paid leave can be used up until the child turns 12 years old (though only 96 days can be used after the child turns 4 years old). For children born before this date,

[526] The ceiling for Parental leave is higher than for Temporary leave in connection with a child's birth or adoption to encourage use of Parental leave by fathers.

[527] Swedish Pension Agency (2014) *Orange report 2014. Annual report of the Swedish Pension System*. Stockholm. Available at: https://secure.pensionsmyndigheten.se/download/18.3c07b8ed14fbdb77cd57cd1/1446806348928/Orange+Report+2014+eng.pdf

parents may use the paid leave up until a child's 8th birthday or until the end of the 1st school year.

- The length of leave is counted in calendar days (rather than weeks or months) to enhance flexibility of use. It is also possible to use the benefit during weekends. To get 77.6 per cent of earnings, seven days of benefit per week are needed.
- Parents can take paid leave days full-time, part-time, quarter-time, or one-eighth time, with the length of leave extended accordingly (e.g., 1 day of full-time leave becomes two days of part-time leave and 4 days of quarter-time leave). Parents cannot work while being on (days of) paid or unpaid leave.
- Paid and unpaid leave can be combined to enable parents to stay at home longer.
- Parents can take leave in one continuous period or in several periods of time. While, officially, employees taking Parental leave have the right to stay away from work for a maximum of 3 periods each year, many employers allow for more periods.
- Both parents can take up to 60 days of paid leave at the same time, until the child reaches 15 months of age. These days have been labelled 'double days' (*dubbeldagar*). Parents cannot use any of the mother's quota or father's quota when using double days. Parents must use the remaining 105 income-based days that they are each entitled to if they want to stay home at the same time.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- The benefit requirements are both residence-based and employment-based in Sweden. All parents living in Sweden are entitled to paid Parental leave. Paid leave at 77.6 per cent of earnings requires parents to have had an income of over SEK250 [€22.63] per day for 240 days before the expected date of delivery or adoption. A parent remains qualified to receive the same compensation for Parental leave if an additional child is born or adopted within 30 months of the birth or adoption of an earlier child. This is economically significant mainly to parents who reduce working hours (and income) after the first child, since it keeps them at a higher benefit level for the second (or subsequent) child. This is commonly referred to as the 'speed premium'.
- Self-employed persons contribute to the social security system with a separate tax and are eligible for the same leave benefits as employed persons.
- Parents are entitled to paid Parental leave even if their partners are unemployed.
- Same-sex parents have the same rights as opposite-sex parents and the Parental leave is gender-neutral in its construction. Rights to leave and benefit are based on custody.
- Parents who migrate to Sweden with children under the age of 12 years receive 200 days of paid leave for children over 12 months, and 100 days for children over 24 months.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- Families with multiple births are entitled to additional paid leave. In the case of twins, there are 90 additional days at 77.6 per cent of earnings and an additional 90 days at a flat rate of SEK180 [€16.30] per day; for each additional child in a multiple birth, an additional 180 days at 77.6 per cent of earnings.
- In the case of sole custody, the parent with custody receives all of the Parental leave days (i.e., 480 days). However, in most cases of parents who are living apart, parents share joint custody and, thus, both share rights to leave. Of all children up to two years of age, 95 per cent have two original parents with joint custody.[528]

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- Up to 45 Parental leave benefit days can be transferred to someone else (e.g., grandparents), or 90 days for parents with single custody.
- Additional Parental leave pay (föräldralön) has been negotiated in collective bargaining agreements in the public sector and is commonplace in the private sector. A common collective agreement is that the employer pays ten per cent extra under the upper limit (i.e., workers receive 90 per cent of earnings) and/or up to 90 per cent of income above the upper limit.[529]

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- Adoptive parents are entitled to the same rights to parental leave as birth parents, starting from the time they get the child into their custody.

Time off for the care of dependants

- **Temporary Parental leave** *(tillfällig föräldrapenning)* is available for 120 days per child, per year, for children under the age of 12, and for children

[528]See data in Statistics Sweden's database, available at http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/pxweb/sv/ssd/START__LE__LE0102__LE0102X/Vardnad/?rxid=67663b18-ed2c-45be-8526-7b45f6cc3f34

[529] Cronert, A. et al (2025) *Inkomsttrygghetens nya mosaik. Kompletterande ersättningar vid inkomstbortfall i Sverige* [The new mosaic of income security. Supplementary compensations for income loss in Sweden]. SNS Forskningsrapport 2025. Available at: The new mosaic of income security - SNS

aged 12 to 15 years, with a physician's certificate. This is paid at 77.6 per cent of earnings, up to an earnings ceiling of SEK444,000 [€40,199.19] per year; it is a family entitlement and it can be used to care for sick children. Sixty of these days can also be used to stay at home with young children if the regular caregiver is sick. It can be offered to someone outside the family if they are an eligible person in the social insurance system. The 10 days of temporary Parental leave associated with birth or adoption (see 1b) also come under this category of Temporary Parental leave. For more than 7 days in a row a physician's certificate is needed.

For terminally/seriously ill children (with life threatening circumstances) up to 18 years old there is no cap on the number of days that can be used. In such cases, both parents can be on leave at the same time.

- Parents whose children are sick or functionally disabled for more than 6 months could until 2018 apply for childcare allowance *(vårdbidrag*). In 2019 this benefit was replaced by Child carer's allowance (*omvårdnadsbidrag*) and Additional cost allowance for children (*merkostnadsersättning för barn*).

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- None. The Parental leave law §4 (under Maternity leave) states the right to breastfeed the child, but there are no further details about how this impacts work (for example, how often, for how long, and so on).

Flexible working for carers

- Until a child reaches the age of 8 years or completes the 1st grade of school, parents have the right to reduce their normal working time by up to 25 per cent; there is no payment for working reduced hours. Some collective agreements allow for such reductions longer, for instance within government sector up to the child is 12 years old. Local employers may allow for more flexibility but no national legislation changed recently. Employees (parents) always have a right to return to the original working hours at any point in time.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- None.

Other provisions of leave

- None reported.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of paid post-natal leave is approximately 16 months, with 13 months paid at a high rate. There is an entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) from 1 year of age, available in centres or at licensed family day carers, on a full-time basis for employed parents or a part-time basis if the parents are not employed. There is, therefore, no gap between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement. However, the present three reserved months for each

parent can create such a gap if one parent is not using the leave benefit but remains a custodian.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

From 1 January 2026, the Temporary Parental leave can be used in more situations, also when the child is not present, i.e., parents' meetings with preschool and school regarding the child's disability or ill health, for instance to instruct personnel in individual diabetes control; and for meetings with social service regarding the child's need for protection or support.

4. Uptake of leave[530]

a. Maternity leave

In 2025, 16,350 women received pregnancy benefits for an average of 41 days. Since there were 97,500 births in 2025, this suggests that 16.8 per cent of pregnant women took Maternity leave.

b. Temporary leave at the birth or adoption of a child

In 2025, 78,738 individuals took temporary Parental leave at the birth or adoption of a child. For 81 per cent of children born in 2025, the second parent or other designated persons took this leave. Of all leave users, only 1.4 per cent were women. Users took on average 9.7 of the ten eligible days.

c. Parental leave and child-rearing benefit

Leave uptake: Almost all families use paid Parental leave in Sweden. For children born up to the end of 2013, it has been possible to use this benefit until a child reaches the age of 8 years or after the 1st school year has ended and many parents use days during the preschool years. As mentioned above, for children born since 2014 most leave days have to be used before the child turns 4, but 96 days can be used until the child is 12. In 2025, most Parental leave days were taken by women during the 1st year of the child's life, while men tended to take leave when the child was between the ages of 1 and 3 years. However, most leave days are taken before children reach the age of 2 years; all children are entitled to an ECEC place from 12 months of age. While mothers still take more Parental leave, the proportion of total days used by men has slowly increased. In 2002, fathers took about 12 per cent of all Parental leave days used in that year; by 2021, it had increased to 30 per cent. The numbers increased to 31 per cent in 2025. For children born in 2023, 20.3 per cent of couples equally shared leave (40 to 60 per cent) during the child's first 24 months.

[530] See annual update on statistics on family policy in *Social Insurance in Figures 2019*. Available in English at: https://www.forsakringskassan.se.

Benefit uptake: In 2025, the majority of women (93 per cent) and men (98 per cent) who took Parental leave were entitled to benefits at the earnings-related compensation level, as opposed to the low, flat-rate level. Foreign-born parents and young parents, especially mothers, are more likely than native-born parents to have access to only the low, flat-rate payment. Fathers received benefits of SEK1032 [€93.44](when flat-rate days included SEK900 [€81.48]) per day in 2025, while the average mother received benefits of SEK909 [€82.30] (when flat-rate days included SEK716 [€64.83]).

Forfeited days: For children born in 2013 parents used on average 454 days, women 337 and men 116 days. This means that on average 26 days were forfeited.

Uptake patterns: Fathers with higher formal education take more Parental leave, as do fathers whose partners have higher levels of formal education. For children born in 2023 for the first 24 months, 27.6 per cent of tertiary educated parents shared equally, among those with secondary 11.9 per cent shared equally, among those with primary education 10.0 per cent shared equally.[531] Fathers who work in the private sector are less likely to take leave, perhaps because they more often lack extra compensation, as a result of collective agreements. Self-employed fathers take fewer leave days than wage-earning fathers. Mothers who are self-employed take fewer days than wage-earning mothers, but the proportional difference is much less for mothers than fathers. Groups who take little or no leave include those born outside Sweden and unemployed fathers (who typically have low benefit levels).[532]

d. Other types of leave and flexible working

Mothers are more likely than fathers to work (long) part-time hours (34 hours or fewer per week); The Labour Force Survey shows that 2936 per cent of all working mothers who have 2 children work part-time when the youngest child is 3-5 years old. For fathers who have 2 children, the part-time share is 8 per cent.[533]

Temporary Parental leave to care for sick children is used somewhat more by mothers, who took 63 per cent of all days taken in 2025. On average, mothers took 8.5 days and fathers 6.8 days, this being highly dependent on the age of the child, as most days are used during the first years of their life, and after regular Parental leave has ended. In 2025 the average per child aged 2 years old was 12.3 days.

[531] https://www.forsakringskassan.se/statistik-och-analys/statistikdatabas#!/ bf/fp-40-60

[532] Fahlén, S. and Duvander, A.Z. (2023) *Fathers who do not use parental leave: A register-based analysis of Swedish fathers to children born between 1994 and 2017*, *Working paper 2023(1)*, Swedish Inspectorate for the Social Insurance. Available at: https://isf.se/download/18.6cc2b25d18721c5cb1835db3/1680595970005/2023-1WP%20Fathers%20who%20do%20not%20use%20parental%20leave.pdf

[533] Statistics Sweden (2026) *Women and Men in Sweden 2026. Facts and Figures*, Statistics Sweden. Available at: Women and men in Sweden 2026

Switzerland[534]

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Switzerland is a federal state with three political levels: the communes, the cantons, and the Confederation. In principle, family policy follows the principles of federalism and subsidiarity: the Confederation cedes responsibility for many areas of family policy to the cantons and the communes, insofar as they are able to perform these tasks, and retains an ancillary and enabling role. The Swiss Constitution defines the areas of responsibility of the Confederation. Pursuant to article 116 of the Swiss Constitution, in fulfilling its tasks, the Confederation shall take due account of the needs of the family and may legislate on family allowances; this article also provides the legal basis for maternity insurance.

Family policy may be organised very differently from one canton to another. Various cantons have also set up special family commissions. In their respective areas of responsibility (e.g., schools, childcare), many cantons and communes also implement family policy measures. Many non-governmental organisations are, in part, subsidised by the state and carry out specific tasks related to family policy. The division of responsibilities among political levels and the number of actors involved is, therefore, complex. For instance, each political level intervenes in early childhood education and care: for example, though most childcare services stem from the market, they are regulated and partially subsidised by the communes and/or the cantons. Finally, the federal level is also involved through a temporary programme, which subsidises new childcare initiatives and the creation of additional places for pre-school children.

The Swiss political system is a direct democracy: through referendums and initiatives, citizens may challenge any law passed by parliament and propose amendments to the federal constitution. In the case of an amendment proposed to the federal Constitution, a referendum is mandatory.

Note on Leave policies in private law vs. public law: the information provided in this report refers, unless explicitly stated, to the rules applicable for persons working under private law contracts. Leave policies in the public sector of the Confederation, the cantons, and the communes may vary considerably.

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To

[534] Please cite as: Bornatici, C., Lütolf, M. and Valarino, I. (2026) 'Switzerland country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/

contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*Mutterschaftsentschädigung, Allocation de maternité, Indennità in caso di maternità*) (responsibility of the Federal Department of Home Affairs, namely the Federal Social Insurance Office)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 14 weeks (98 calendar days), starting on the day of delivery.
- It is obligatory to take 8 weeks leave.
- Between the weeks 9 and 16 after birth, women covered by the Employment Act cannot be compelled to return to work. However, only 14 weeks are covered for payment by the statutory Maternity leave insurance.
- Employed women can be exempt from work before birth for medical and health reasons and, in this case, salary payment continues for a limited period, provided the employment relationship has lasted for or was concluded no longer than 3 months prior. However, absences prior to childbirth are governed by the Employment Act and do not form part of the maternity leave period.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 80 per cent of earnings up to an upper limit of CHF220 [€238.20][535] per day. The highest income thus covered at 80 per cent are monthly salaries of CHF8,250 [€8,932.44]; the annual income upper limit for employed and self-employed workers is CHF99,000 [€107.189.26].
- Payments are taxed.
- The period spent on Maternity leave counts for the establishment of pension credits.
- Funded by the Loss of Earnings Compensation fund, which also provides benefits for people carrying out military service, civil defence, or civil service. It is financed by equal contributions from employees and employers, each paying 0.25 per cent of earnings (0.5 per cent of earnings in total).

Flexibility in use

- None.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Eligible for maternity compensation are: employed women, whether employed under a fixed-term or open-ended contract; self-employed workers; women working in their husbands' or partners' businesses (or that

[535] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://data.ecb.europa.eu/currency-converter.

of a family member) and who are paid a salary; and women who are on unemployment, sickness, accident, or invalidity benefits or allowances are also entitled to maternity compensation.
- For maternity compensation, women must have in principle (shorter periods apply in case of early birth) a record of nine months of contribution to Old Age and Survivors Insurance; and must have worked for a minimum of five months, during the nine months preceding the birth. The insurance and employment periods completed in a member state of the EU, of the EFTA, or in the United Kingdom will be considered.
- If the maternity compensation criteria are not met, a mother may make a claim against her employer for the continued payment of her salary, based on Article 324a of the Swiss Code of Obligations.[536] Moreover, certain cantons provide for specific maternity benefits for mothers who do not meet the federal eligibility criteria.
- Only biological mothers are eligible.
- Eligibility does not require citizenship or permanent residency. A permission to work will however be a prerequisite, since only employed or self-employed women are entitled to maternity compensation.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- If the new-born child requires an uninterrupted hospital stay of at least 2 weeks immediately after birth and the mother provides evidence that she had intended to resume work after maternity leave, maternity allowances can be prolonged for the corresponding time, but by 56 days at most.
- If the mother dies while giving birth or during the 97 following days, the other parent is entitled to 98 additional consecutive days of allowances.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- The cantons may complement the basic statutory Maternity leave and payment, e.g., in the canton of Geneva, all working mothers are granted 16 weeks of Maternity leave, paid at 80 per cent of earnings. A cantonal Loss of Earnings Compensation fund pays for the 2 additional weeks, which are not covered by federal dispositions.
- The Confederation, cantonal public employers and communes are not subject to the basic legislation, but to specific regulations of their own. However, these regulations generally provide more generous maternity benefits for their employees.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- Maternity leaves are often supplemented by collective agreements, which can grant full wage replacement and/or extended lengths of leave (approximately 2 additional weeks, i.e., 16 weeks of paid Maternity leave).

[536] Bundesgesetz betreffend die Ergänzung des Schweizerischen Zivilgesetzbuches (Fünfter Teil: Obligationenrecht, SR 220 [Federal Action on the Amendment of the Swiss Civil Code (Part Five: the Code of Obligations)].

Companies, which often take out private supplementary insurance for such cases, cover these expenses.

b. Other parent leave (*Entschädigung des andern Elternteils, Allocation à l'autre parent, Indennità per l'altro genitore*[537]) (responsibility of the Federal Department of Home Affairs, namely the Federal Social Insurance Office)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 2 weeks

Payment, funding and taxation

- As for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- Other parent leave cannot start until the baby is born and must be taken within 6 months of the baby's birth.
- The leave can be taken in one continuous period or on a daily basis.
- If this parent deceases within 6 months after the birth of the child, the mother is entitled to 14 additional days of allowances, to be taken within 6 months of the death.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Employed workers are entitled to Other parent leave if they are legally the other parent of the child at the time of birth or within the 6 months after birth, no minimum employment relationship is required.
- For payment during Other parent leave, the other parent must, in principle, also have a record of 9 months of contribution to Old Age and Survivors Insurance and must have worked for a minimum of 5 months, during the 9 months preceding the birth.
- Eligibility does not require citizenship or permanent residency. A permission to work will however be a prerequisite, since only employed or self-employed persons are entitled to Other parent compensation.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- None

[537] Since 1 January 2024, the terminology has changed from 'Paternity leave and 'paternity allowance' to 'Other parent leave' and 'Other parent allowance' in response to the change in the Civil Code introduced in 2022, which enables same-sex marriage. If the mother is married to a woman at the time of the birth and if the child was conceived through sperm donation in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Law on medically assisted procreation, the mother's wife is the other parent of the child (Civil Code, art. 255a al.1). In that case she can benefit from this leave.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- Pre-existing Other parent allowances granted through collective labour agreements or work contracts may supplement federal Other parent leave.

c. Parental leave

No statutory entitlement. There is some indication that a minority of companies in the private sector grant their employees unpaid Parental leaves.[538] Many cantonal public employers also grant unpaid Parental leaves – ranging from a few days up to 24 months – but in a few cases with gendered eligibility criteria (i.e., leaves are exclusively or predominantly addressed to female civil servants).[539]

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

- No statutory entitlement. The years spent out of the labour market to care for children under 16 years of age are credited for old-age pension to the parent who was the main carer during this time (it is split between parents, if both were equally responsible). The amount corresponds to 3 times the amount of the minimum annual retirement pension. It increases the average annual income from which the retirement pension is calculated (up to an upper limit) when individuals reach retirement age. This Parenting Credit system is regulated in the Federal Act on Old Age and Survivor's Insurance and in the Ordination to the Federal Old Age and Survivor's Insurance.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- Working parents who are adopting a child below the age of 4 years are entitled to two weeks of adoption leave (one entitlement per adoption event, regardless of the number of children adopted simultaneously; stepchild adoptions are excluded).
- Adoption leave is to be taken within the 1st year following the child's arrival. It can be taken by one parent or the right to paid leave can be shared between the parents, however, the maximum length remains two weeks, sharing does not prolong the right to paid adoption leave
- Payment as for Maternity leave.

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[538] Swiss Federal Council (FN 9), 14.

[539] Swiss Federal Council (FN 9), 15 f. ; Fuchs, G. (2008) *Prestations en cas de maternité et initiatives parlementaires sur les congés et prestations offerts aux parents (notamment congé paternité, congé parental et congé d'adoption): rapport sur la situation actuelle dans l'administration fédérale, les cantons et quelques municipalités* [*Maternity allowances and parliamentary initiatives about Parental leaves and benefits (Paternity leave, Parental leave and adoption leave): report on the current situation at the federal administration, the cantons and several municipalities*]. Available at: http://www.equality.ch/f/publications.htm, 14 ff.

- Some cantons[540] have implemented gender-neutral adoption allowances for all working parents, available to only one of the adoptive parents. The cantons of Vaud and Geneva entitle adoptive parents to 14 and 16 weeks of pay, respectively, at 80 per cent of the salary. Such cantonal allowances are provided only if one of the parents interrupts their employment.
- In the public sector, at present, about half of the cantons offer their employees paid adoption leave between 2 days and 16 weeks in length.[541]

Time off for the care of dependants

- Employees are entitled to paid **leave for the time necessary to care for a family member, domestic partner or partner with a medical condition**. However, the leave cannot exceed 3 days per event and 10 days per year. The upper limit of 10 days does not apply for the care of a child with health impairment.
- Parents of seriously ill or injured children are eligible for up to 14 weeks of paid **Care leave** (financed through the Loss of earnings compensation Act, as for Maternity leave). If both parents are employed, the allowances are split equally unless they agree otherwise. The leave must to be taken within an 18-month time-frame, in one or several periods/days. Payment is the same as for Maternity leave.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- During the child's first year, the time taken by mothers to breastfeed or express milk during a working day counts as working time. Salary payment is mandatory within the following limits: for a working day of up to 4 hours, 30 minutes minimum; for a working day over 4 hours, 60 minutes minimum; and for a working day over 7 hours, 90 minutes minimum.[542]

Flexible working for carers

- There is no statutory entitlement to reduced or flexible working hours for employed parents. However, the Employment Act states that the employer should consider the employee's family responsibilities' when fixing work and rest hours. Family responsibilities are defined as the education of children up to 15 years of age and the charge of other family members in need of care.
- Some collective labour agreements specifically include the right to reduced working hours for parents and there is some indication that a significant proportion of companies allow flexible working hours.[543]

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[540] More information can be found in the corresponding cantonal laws. The following page contains a link to all cantonal online legislation catalogues: http://www.lexfind.ch.
[541] For more information, see: Pärli (Fn 6), S. 953.
[542] Art. 60 Verordnung 1 zum Arbeitsgesetz (ArGV 1) [Ordination 1 to the Employment Act], SR 822.111.
[543] See Bühler, S. (2004) *Bébés et employeurs - Comment réconcilier travail et vie de famille. Version abrégée de l'étude comparative de l'OCDE portant sur la Nouvelle-Zélande, le Portugal et la Suisse: aspects suisses* (Vol. 1f). [Babies and Bosses – Reconciling Work and Family Life. Summary version of the OECD comparative study on New Zealand, Portugal and Switzerland: Swiss aspects (Vol. 1f)]. Berne: Secrétariat d'Etat à l'économie.

- The Confederation grants its employees the right to reduce their working time by 20 per cent, however the lowest part-time work allowed is at 60 per cent.[544]

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- None.

Other provisions of leave

- None reported.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of paid post-natal leave is just over 3½ months, all paid at a high rate, with the possibility in some cases of an additional two weeks of unpaid leave. In the majority of Swiss cantons (17 out of 26), statutory provision for two years of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is available, with the implementation of an inter-cantonal agreement for the harmonisation of education systems (HarmoS). In these cantons, compulsory schooling now starts when children reach 4 years of age, while in the rest of the country it starts between 5 and 7 years of age.[545] There is a gap, therefore, of more than three years between the end of well-paid leave and any entitlement to ECEC.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

In the past years there have been many proposals and debates in the Swiss Parliament to reform and improve existing Maternity and Other parent leave policies. To address several of these recent proposals, the Federal Council drafted a proposal to harmonize allowances of the Loss of Earnings Compensation Act (LECA). The LECA was initially implemented in 1953 to compensate men during military service. Since then, it has been extended to also cover loss of income in case of parenthood, adoption and caring for children with severe health problems. Yet, allocations differ in some respects among recipients. The revision of the LECA aims to harmonize allowances, guarantee equal treatment among recipients, and adapt them to current societal evolution and realities. The revision was voted between September and December 2025 and accepted by a large majority of the Council of States (41 votes in favour vs. 3 against) and of the National Council

[544] Art. 60a of the Bundespersonalverordnung (BPV) [Federal Personnel Ordination (FPO), SR 172.220.111.3.

[545] With HarmoS, pre-primary or elementary programmes are included in obligatory schooling. See EDK. (2019). *Bilan 2019. Harmonisation des éléments visés par l'art. 62, al. 4, Cst. dans le domaine de la scolarité obligatoire*. Bern: Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education: http://edudoc.ch/record/204716/files/Bilanz-Bericht_II_f.pdf

(130 votes in favour vs. 63 against). The following main modifications will be implemented:[546]

- *Harmonization of benefits*: The operating allowance (for self-employed people) will be extended to all self-employed LECA beneficiaries (not just those performing military service), as will the childcare allowance. The child allowance will be abolished, as it is now redundant due to existing family allowances and can lead to overcompensation. In addition, the maximum daily allowance amount will also be harmonized between recipients on Military Leave, Maternity Leave or on Leave for the other parent.
- *Prolongation of Maternity Leave benefits in case of hospitalization of the mother or the new-born child*: benefits are extended for a duration equivalent to the hospitalization if the mother or the child are hospitalized for at least 2 weeks after birth. Job protection will only be guaranteed during the first 12 weeks of leave prolongation.
- *Allowance to the other parent in case of child death*: The father or the mother's spouse will retain their entitlement to leave compensation in case of stillbirth or child death within the first 14 days after birth (currently, the entitlement ends upon the child's death).
- *Care Leave benefits in case of hospitalization of the new-born child right after birth*: the benefits will be extended for the duration of the child's hospitalization (after the 4th day).
- *Care allowance*: parents will be eligible for a 98 day Care Leave allowance (to be shared between parents if both are employed) if the child has severe health problems related to sickness, accident or hospitalization for at least 4 days. The more restrictive criteria that were in force to date will be deleted.
- *Cantonal legislations*: LECA will allow cantons to provide and finance higher and/or longer Leave allowances for the other parent. This modification responds to several recent parliamentary initiatives (deposited by MPs or cantons themselves, e.g. Geneva[547]) asking for this legislative change in order to remove the current legal obstacle that prevents the implementation of Parental leave or of a longer Other parent leave than the one mandated by the LECA.

Two other motions submitted in June and December 2024 by Socialist and Green MPs are still pending. They concern the implementation of a (3 week) prenatal leave for pregnant women, which does not currently exist (Maternity leave starts on the day of birth). Several propositions were also made to implement a Parental leave, which can be divided into two groups:

- Proposals addressing the legal blockage at the federal level that prevents cantons to implement their own Parental leave schemes. This has been addressed by the LECA revision described before, which will enable cantons to provide longer and/or higher leave benefits for the Other parent.
- Proposals in favour of a federal Parental leave:

[546] Full legal text available under : https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/fga/2026/29/fr.

[547] In January 2024, Geneva submitteda cantonal parliamentary intervention asking for cantons to be enabled to implement Parental leave at the cantonal level. In June 2023 the electorate in Geneva accepted to introduce a Parental leave of 24 weeks in total (including the existing 14 weeks of Maternity leave and 2 weeks of Paternity leave) but this law was not implemented since the LECA (at the federal level) first needed to be modified. Once the LECA revision (accepted in 2025) comes into force, Geneva should be able to implement a cantonal Parental leave.

- In December 2024, a Socialist MP asked that the Federal Council adapts Swiss legislation in order to comply with the EU directive 2019/1158 on work-life balance for parents and carers. The Federal Council recommended rejecting this Motion in February 2025. It has yet to be treated by both Chambers of Parliament.
- In 2025, the cantons of Neuchâtel and Jura submitted parliamentary initiatives asking that the Federal assembly implements a Parental leave at the national level (no length was specified, leaving it to the Parliament to decide). In January and May 2025, the Committee for Social Security and Health of both parliamentary Chambers recommended following up on Jura's proposal. Its treatment in Parliament is pending. Since the proposal of the canton of Neuchâtel has similar content, the Committee for Social Security and Health of the Council of States rejected it in March 2026, arguing that it will already be addressed through Jura's proposal.

Finally, in April 2025, a popular initiative in favour of a Parental leave was launched by left-wing and centre parties, as well as women's and workers' associations.[548] In order for the proposition to be submitted to a national vote, 100,000 signatures must be collected by October 2026. The proposition of a new article in the Swiss constitution lists the following elements: Parental leave should serve children's well-being and gender equality; parents should have equal leave lengths; parents can take a maximum of 25 per cent of the leave length together; leave is paid and financed similarly to current allowances in case of military and civil service (but allowances can reach 100 per cent for low-income parents). If the principle of a Parental leave is accepted in a national vote but no law is implemented within 5 years after the vote, the following Parental leave model will enter into force: 36 weeks in total (including existing leaves), i.e.. 18 weeks for each parent.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

In 2022, 80 per cent of women giving birth met the eligibility criteria for maternity allowances and 77 per cent benefitted from them.[549] This means that 94 per cent of eligible mothers used their Maternity allowances, while 6 per cent forfeited their right. Roth and Unterhofer (2025) identify three characteristics associated with this forfeiture. First, these mothers have on average lower incomes than those who claim their rights. This may reflect more frequent irregular or multiple contracts (and thus more difficult access to their rights), or an earlier return to paid work or economic reasons, as Maternity allowances are compensated at 80 per cent of the salary. Second, a slightly higher share of mothers with very high incomes (more than CHF250,000 [€270,679.95] per year) also forgo their rights. This could also be explained by an early return to employment linked to the benefit ceiling and/or high job-related responsibilities. Third, forfeiture is much more common among self-employed women (17 per cent versus 6 per cent among salaried

[548] https://www.conge-familial.ch/.
[549] Roth, A. and Unterhofer, U. (2025). Maternité et paternité : les mères prennent plus souvent leur congé que les pères [Maternity and paternity : Mothers take more often their leave than fahters]. *Sécurité sociale, 16* January 2025. Available at: https://sozialesicherheit.ch/fr/maternite-et-paternite-les-meres-prennent-plus-souvent-leur-conge-que-les-peres/

women), likely due to the greater difficulty of interrupting professional activities and the need to navigate claims independently.
According to register data,[550] the number of recipients increased gradually since the introduction of Maternity leave in 2005, reaching 73,794 women in 2021, probably reflecting both higher birth rates and rising female employment. It declined thereafter to 64,055 women in 2024, a level similar to 2014 (64,651 recipients). Recipients use slightly more than the statutory entitlement of 98 days (99 days on average in 2024).[551] This can be explained by the possibility to extend the leave up to 56 days if the newborn is hospitalised after birth. Survey evidence also suggests that employed women often take leave beyond the statutory 14 paid weeks: a 2012 survey of 335 mothers found that over 60 per cent did so, although only half received additional employer-paid leave, while 37 per cent took unpaid leave.[552]

Register data also show that Maternity benefit expenditure amounted to around CHF900.7 million [€975.2 million] in 2024, broadly stable compared with 2023(CHF 901.4 [€ 976] million). In 2024, the average daily was CHF 143 [€154.83], well below the ceiling of CHF220 [€238.20]. It should be noted that women receive, on average, lower indemnities for second and subsequent births, as their earnings tend to decline after the first child by around 40 per cent on average, largely due to increased part-time employment.[553]

Finally, the mean age of maternity benefit recipients was 33 years in 2024, with 63 per cent of Swiss nationals recipients and 37 per cent of foreign nationals.

b. Other parent leave (known as 'Paternity leave' until December 2023)

Paternity leave entitlement was introduced on 1 January 2021. Since January 2024, eligibility has been extended to include other parents (see Part 1 above for further information). The terminology of this section reflects the year of the data collection.

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[550] The figures based on register data refer to maternity leave recipients for births occurring in a given calendar year (residing in Switzerland or abroad), based on data available in April 2026. The data are available at: https://www.pxweb.bfs.admin.ch/pxweb/en/px-x-1304070000_102/px-x-1304070000_102/px-x-1304070000_102.px/. It should be noted that in recent years, the Swiss Statistical Office has revised its method for counting recipients of loss of earnings compensation, and allowances may be claimed retrospectively for up to five years after leave uptake. As a result, figures reported in previous country note editions may differ.

[551] To provide a complete picture, the average number of leave days is not calculated on a calendar-year basis; it includes the number of days used up to two years after the child's birth year. Data for the most recent year are based on an estimation.

[552] Aeppli, D. C. (2012) *Wirkungsanalyse. Mutterschaftentschädigung* [Analysis of effects. Maternity benefits]. 95. Available at: https://www.aramis.admin.ch/Texte/?ProjectID=27235.

[553] Unterhofer, U. (2026). Après une naissance, les revenus des mères baissent significativement [After a birth, mothers' incomes decline significantly]. Sécurité sociale, 16 March 2025. Available at: https://sozialesicherheit.ch/fr/apres-une-naissance-les-revenus-des-meres-baissent-significativement/

In 2022, 89 per cent of fathers were entitled to Paternity allowances, and 67 per cent used their rights.[554] This means that only 74 per cent of eligible fathers used their entitlement (compared with 94 per cent of eligible mothers). Roth and Unterhofer (2025) identify several explanations associated with this substantial non-take-up by fathers. First, fathers less involved in the child's birth could be one reason, as data show that about half of fathers not living in the same household as the mother forfeited their rights. Second, as for mothers, fathers with low income (less than CHF 50,000 [€54,135.99] per year) or very high income (more than CHF 250,000 [€270,679.95] per year), and self-employed workers less often take Paternity leave. Third, uptake is particularly low among fathers receiving unemployment benefits prior to the birth, possibly because compensation levels are similar (80 per cent of salary), reducing incentives to claim. Finally, initial analyses also point to regional and cantonal differences in uptake. However, these do not appear to align with attitudes towards paternity leave: cantons that showed stronger support for its introduction in 2020 tend to have lower uptake rates. Further research is needed to better understand these differences.

According to register data,[555] in 2021, 67,223 fathers received Paternity benefits. The number of recipients declined thereafter to 62,655 in 2022, 62,902 in 2023, and 61,479 in 2024. Recipients use the full entitlement, with an average of 14 days taken in 2024, as in previous years. Leave can be taken within the child’s first six months, either in one block or individual days. First results suggest that fathers make use of this flexibility: 36 per cent of fathers whose children were born during the first trimester of 2021 took their leave in piecemeal ways, either in weeks or days.[556]

Regarding expenditures, register data indicate that in 2024 the average amount of the daily indemnities granted to fathers and other parents was CHF182 [€197.06], corresponding to a total expenditure of CHF 155.8 million [€168.7].

The mean age of recipients was 35 years with 56 per cent Swiss nationals and 44 per centforeign

c. Parental leave and parental benefit

No statutory entitlement.

[554] Roth, A. and Unterhofer, U. (2025). See full reference above.
[555] The figures in this paragraph are drawn from the same register data as for Maternity leave. They refer to Other parent leave recipients for births occurring in a given calendar year (residing in Switzerland or abroad), based on data available in April 2026. As with maternity benefits, changes in the counting methodology and the possibility of retrospective claims may lead to differences compared with figures reported in previous editions. The data are available at: https://www.pxweb.bfs.admin.ch/pxweb/en/px-x-1304070000_102/px-x-1304070000_102/px-x-1304070000_102.px/.
[556] Roth, A. (2022). La majorité des pères profite du congé de paternité [The majority of fathers take paternity leave]. *Sécurité sociale*, 24 August 2022. Available at: https://soziale-sicherheit-chss.ch/fr/la-majorite-des-peres-profitent-du-conge-de-paternite/

Türkiye[557]

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April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*analık izni*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 16 weeks: 3 to 8 weeks before the birth and 8 to 13 weeks after the birth.
- It is obligatory to take all the leave.
- At the end of paid Maternity leave, mothers can take a further 6 months of unpaid Maternity leave (*ücretsiz analık izni*).

Payment and funding

- Employees employed under law no.4857 and civil servants employed under law no.657: 100 per cent of earnings up to an upper limit of 7.5 times the daily minimum wage. The amount of compensation is reduced for those whose social security contributions are less than 180 days within the last 12 months; the maximum amount they can claim is twice the minimum daily wage.
- Employees in the press and photography agencies employed under law no.5963: 50 per cent of earnings.
- Maternity leave payment is officially known as 'pension against incapacity to work' (*analık halinde iş görmezlik ödeneği*).
- Maternity leave payment is described as maternity insurance. It is treated as a form of temporary incapacity to work, same as having an occupational accident or an occupational hazard or other illness.
- Payments are paid directly to mothers by the Department of Social Security.
- Payments are not taxed.

[557] Please cite as: Uzunalioğlu, M. (2026) 'Türkiye country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, Á.A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

- Pension rights continue to accrue during leave.
- Funded through the maternity insurance fund (*analık sigortası*), which is financed by employee social security contributions paid by those who hold 4/a and 4/b insurance status.

Flexibility in use

- The mother has the option to work until the last three weeks prior to childbirth, in which case the remaining pre-natal 5 weeks of leave are added to the post-natal leave period. With a medical certificate, the mother can work up to 3 weeks before the birth, adding the ante-natal period not used to the post-natal leave.
- In the case of premature birth, unused pre-natal leave is added to the post-natal leave period.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Women must be employed under the law no.657 (civil servants) or no.4857 (private sector workers) or law no. 5693 (journalists, press workers)
- Women must hold 4/a or 4/b insurance status.
- Women must have paid at least 90 days of contributions to social security during the 12 months prior to childbirth.
- Women must be under the social security scheme at the time of the start of leave.
- Self-employed are eligible if they hold 4/b insurance status.
- Unemployed students and economically inactive women are not eligible.
- There are no citizenship or residency-based restrictions, but the mother has to be lawfully employed under law no.657, no.4857 or no.5693.
- Same-sex partnerships are not legal, so women in these partnerships are not eligible.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to a person other than the mother

- Additional 2 weeks of leave in the case of multiple births.
- If the mother dies in childbirth, her post-natal leave is transferred to the father.
- Depending on the health of the pregnant worker, the total leave length (for both pre-and post-natal periods) can be extended if proof is provided by a doctor. The length of the extended leave is not prescribed by the legislation but is defined by the doctor.
- In the case of a premature birth, all unused pre-birth leave will be added to the post-natal leave period; for example, if the child was born on the 29th week, 3 weeks between the premature birth and the official start of ante-natal Maternity leave (32nd week) will be added to the entire Maternity leave period, so that the mother will have 19 weeks of Maternity leave due to the early arrival of the baby. These 3 additional weeks are considered a form of sickness insurance.
- In the case of late births, i.e., a child arriving later than the due date, this additional ante-natal period will not affect the post-natal leave period.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- The legal framework defines the basic standards, and collective agreements allow employers to offer more. As of January 2025, 8.63 per cent of employees were covered by collective agreements.

b. Paternity leave (*babalık izni*)(responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security)

Length of leave

- 10 calendar days for civil servants (i.e., those who are employed under labour law no. 657) and 5 calendar days for private sector workers (i.e., those who are employed under labour law no. 4857).
- The civil servants' labour law (no.657) defines the leave as Paternity leave, whereas the private workers' labour law (no.4857) refers to 'compassionate leave' (*mazeret izni*).

Payment and funding

- 100 per cent of earnings, with no upper limit on payment.
- Payments are made to the parent by the employer.
- Payments are taxed.
- Funded by the employer.

Flexibility in use

- None. Leave must be taken at the time of the birth.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Employees must be employed under the law no.657 (civil servants) or no. 4857 (private sector workers). The leave is not compulsory. The law states that 'if the civil servant desires', they can opt for ten days of paternity leave.
- Self-employed individuals are eligible if they hold 4/b insurance status.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- The legal framework defines the basic standards, and collective agreements allow employers to offer more. As of January 2026, 14.45 per cent of workers were covered by collective agreements.[558]

c. Parental leave

No statutory entitlement. However, parents are entitled to work part-time for a period after Maternity leave; for details, see Section 1e, 'Flexible working'.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

- A mother who is a civil servant or a civil servant whose partner gives birth can request unpaid leave for up to 24 months. For private sector employees, unpaid leave can be requested for up to 6 months.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- In the case of an adoption of a child younger than 3 years old, one of the parents (the sex of the parent is not specified in the legislation) is given 8 weeks of paid leave starting from the child's arrival; a further period of 6 months of unpaid leave is available for one of the parents or the parent who adopted the child.
- If both parents are civil servants, both are eligible for 8 weeks of adoption leave starting from the arrival of a child younger than 3 years old.
- Parents who are civil servants are allowed to take unpaid leave for up to 24 months in the case of the adoption of a child under 3 years old. If both parents are civil servants and want to take this unpaid leave, they can take the 24 months in two consecutive parts.

Time off for the care of dependants

No statutory entitlement.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding (emzirme izni)

- Public sector workers: at the end of Maternity leave, mothers can have 3 hours per day for breastfeeding during the first 6 months and 1.5 hours per day until the child is 12 months old. Mothers decide how to use this leave, e.g., the frequency, the days, etc.
- Private sector workers: at the end of Maternity leave, mothers can have 1½ hours per day for breastfeeding until the child is 12 months old. Mothers can also choose to use this leave by reducing their working time to four days per week during this period.

558 https://www.csgb.gov.tr/cgm/haberler/17012026/#:~:text=17%20Ocak%202026%20tarihli%20Resm%C3%AE,say%C4%B1s%C4%B1%202%2C4%20milyonu%20a%C5%9Ft%C4%B1.

- Breastfeeding leave is paid at 100 per cent of earnings. To be eligible for this breastfeeding allowance (*emzirme ödeneği*), the mother must have paid social security contributions for at least 120 days during the year before childbirth.
- If a mother uses her unpaid Maternity leave (see 1a), she loses her breastfeeding leave entitlement. If a mother has lost her social insurance status by the time she starts breastfeeding but has contributed to social security for at least 120 days during the 15 months before childbirth, then she can claim a reduced, one-off payment of TRY1,621 [€30.07].[559] This benefit is only for private sector employees (4/a insurance status) and self-employed (4/b insurance status) and not for civil servants (employed under law no.657).

Flexible working for carers

- After the end of paid and unpaid Maternity leave, parents who are employees can work half their normal weekly working hours for 60 days for the first birth, 120 days for the second birth, and 180 days for subsequent births. There is an additional 30 days in the case of multiple births, and part-time working can be extended to 360 days in the case of a child born with a disability. Only one parent can claim this leave *(çalışma süresinin yarısı kadar ücretsiz izin hakkı)*. It is unpaid.
- After the end of paid and unpaid Maternity leave, parents can request a further period of part-time leave until their child starts compulsory primary education at 6 years; the employer has to agree on the length of the leave and how it is taken. The worker has to file their demand to their employer at least one month before their start date and must provide written proof that their partner, the other parent, is employed. Only one parent can claim this leave *(kısmi süreli çalışma izni)*, and the other parent must be employed. It is unpaid, i.e., the parent taking leave receives reduced earnings.
- Although the law does not specify the sex of the partner, same-sex marriages are illegal in Türkiye. Hence, all co-parents mentioned here should be considered heterosexual couples.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- None.

Other types of leave

- None reported.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is nine months, of which three months are well paid. There is no entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), and the compulsory school age is six years. However, parents can request to start five-year-old children at school if they wish to, i.e., between 60 and 72

[559] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://data.ecb.europa.eu/currency-converter.

months, in which case children are allowed to start formal primary education voluntarily. Publicly provided ECEC services are available from 36 months onwards, and services for younger children are only available from private providers.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

On 15 April 2026, the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM) issued an official announcement confirming amendments to provisions on parenting-related leave[560]:

- The post-natal Maternity leave will be enhanced by 8 more weeks, extending this leave to a total of 24 weeks, as opposed to the previous 16 weeks (this applies to both civil servants working under the Law No. 657 and private sector employees or workers working under the Law No. 4857);
- Paternity leave for private sector employees and workers under Law No. 4857 is increased from 5 to 10 working days, equalising the Paternity leave entitlement to that of civil servants working under Law No. 657.
- Leave of 10 working days for foster families will be introduced.

The final law on these amendments is yet to be published.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

No information available.

b. Paternity leave

No information available. The most comprehensive research on the status of fatherhood in Turkey and the determinants of involved fatherhood has been conducted by the leading NGO, Mother and Child Education Foundation (known as ACEV). However, this does not include any information regarding the use of Paternity leave or any other leaves taken for the provision of care by the father of young children.

c. Parental leave

No statutory entitlement.

d. Other employment-related measures

No information available.

560 See https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/Haber/Detay?Id=8a8955d3-161c-4d55-9cba-019d8dd8d078

United Kingdom[561]

Kathrin Morosow (University of Manchester), **Samuel Mohun Himmelweit** (University of Bristol), **Jamie Atkinson** (Manchester Metropolitan University) and **Alison Koslowski** (University College London)

April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (responsibility of the Department for Business and Trade)[562]

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 52 weeks: leave can be started from 11 weeks before the beginning of the week the baby is due.
- It is obligatory to take leave during the two weeks after childbirth (or four weeks if the mother works in a factory).

Payment, funding and taxation

- 90 per cent of a woman's average gross earnings for six weeks with no upper limit, followed by a flat-rate payment of either GBP£194.32 [€228.91][563] or 90 per cent of average gross weekly earnings (whichever is lower) for the next 33 weeks. The remaining 13 weeks are unpaid.
- Payments are made by employers; medium and large businesses can claim back 92 per cent from the Exchequer (central government) and small businesses 108.5 per cent. This is done through reductions to the amount of National Insurance contributions paid by employers to HM Revenue & Customs.

[561] Please cite as: Morosow, K., Mohun Himmelweit S., Atkinson J. Koslowski, A. and O'Brien, M. (2026) 'United Kingdom country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/

[562] See https://www.gov.uk/maternity-pay-leave.

[563] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://data.ecb.europa.eu/currency-converter.

- Payments (statutory and any employer top up) are taxed if earnings are above the personal allowance threshold (currently GBP£12,570 per year) [€14,807.75].
- Annual leave entitlements continue to accrue during the leave period.
- Mothers are entitled to Maternity leave and SMP if their baby is born early, is stillborn after 24th week of pregnancy or dies after being born.

Flexibility in use

- The mother can opt to start her leave at any point from 11 weeks before the beginning of the week the baby is due until the baby is born, though leave and payment begins automatically if the mother takes time off work for a pregnancy-related illness in the 4 weeks before the week that the baby is due. Mothers can choose to return to employment from two weeks after childbirth (or four weeks, if they work in a factory).
- Up to ten 'keeping in touch' days can be spent working for the employer during the period of statutory Maternity leave, without it affecting Maternity leave or pay.
- Employed mothers have the right to transfer all Maternity leave to the father or partner, except for the 2 weeks of obligatory leave, i.e., up to 50 weeks are transferable. This period of leave is termed 'Shared Parental leave' (SPL).[564] There is no requirement for a woman to return to employment before the father can begin taking SPL. Instead, the mother must commit to an employment return date in the future, when she will end her Maternity leave[565].
- SPL can be taken in blocks of time of at least one week. It cannot be taken in a day mode or on a flexible part-time basis. However, legislation does provide for 20 optional 'keep in touch' days for employees taking SPL. This provides the opportunity for employees to complete paid work during the leave period, with the possibility of receiving their full salary for that time (up to a maximum of 20 days) provided their employer agrees. Subject to their employers' approval, parents can take alternating weeks and there is provision for parents to take leave together.
- Eligible parents have the right to give their employer up to three notices of their intention to either take continuous leave (full blocks of leave), discontinuous leave (blocks of leave mixed with periods at work), or to change dates of already arranged leave.
- Employers must be given 8 weeks' notice for each block of leave. Employers are only legally obliged to agree to continuous block arrangements but can agree to discontinuous forms of leave and more than three notices.
- While Shared Parental Leave (SPL) is the entitlement that allows eligible parents to share up to 50 weeks of leave following the birth or adoption of a child, Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) is the statutory payment (subject to eligibility and lower than normal earnings) that may be paid for up to 37 of those weeks when the parent is on SPL.
- Statutory shared parental pay (ShPP) is available to eligible employees who meet the prescribed qualifying conditions. However, the level of income

564 See: https://www.gov.uk/shared-parental-leave-and-pay

565 The total period that both parents can be on the shared leave together would be six months, although the policy does not stipulate that parents can both be on leave at the same time. Only one payment is given to the SPL couple to share whether on leave together or separately.

replacement under ShPP is no more generous than standard statutory maternity pay. Importantly, when parents convert maternity leave into Shared Parental Leave (after the compulsory first two weeks of maternity leave), neither the mother nor the partner is entitled to the higher statutory maternity pay rate that normally applies in weeks 3 to 6. Instead, during the up to 37 weeks of paid Shared Parental Leave, ShPP is paid at either 90 per cent of earnings, or the weekly flat-rate of GBP£194.32 [€228.91], whichever is lower, with the remaining 13 weeks unpaid. Like other forms of leave payment, ShPP is treated as earnings for tax purposes. Any earnings above the annual personal allowance threshold (currently GBP£12,570 [€14,807.75]) will be subject to deductions for income tax and National Insurance.

- In order to qualify for SPL, an individual needs to be legally classified as an 'employee'; meet a continuity of employment test (currently 26 weeks' service with the same employer by the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth); have a partner who meets an employment and earnings test (i.e., have worked for 26 weeks out of the 66 weeks before the expected week of childbirth and have earned at least GBP£30 [€35.34] in total in 13 of the 66 weeks); and be working for the same employer when they want to take leave.
- To qualify for ShPP an individual must earn on average at least GBP£129 [€151.96] per week for 8 weeks preceding the 15th week before the expected birth date and pass the continuity of employment test (see previous bullet point). Some workers (i.e., not employees) could qualify for ShPP though ineligible for SPL.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Access to employment benefits for all UK citizens and EU citizens who were resident in the UK before 31 December 2020 and with leave to remain in the UK, is based only on employment status, length of service, and an earnings threshold. For non-UK residents, access to employment benefits requires a visa first.[566] There are a range of visas including general work visas, short-term work visas, and study visas. Different employment benefit rules apply for each visa type.
- Asylum seekers are not normally allowed to work whilst their claim is being considered.[567] They may apply for permission to work, and so be eligible for employment benefits, if they have not received an initial decision on their claim within 12 months, but this will only be considered if that delay was through no fault of the claimant.
- Rights to leave are contingent on employment status. Women must have 'employee' employment status – not 'worker,' self-employed, or contractor employment status.[568] Under UK employment law, women who have 'worker,' 'exclusively self-employed,' or 'contractor' employment status are not eligible to receive Maternity leave or pay (they may be eligible for Maternity Allowance, see below).

[566] https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/work-visas
[567]https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/583192/Permission-to-work-v7.pdf
[568] https://www.gov.uk/employment-status

- To qualify for Maternity leave, women have to be employed – independent of the employment length – and notify their employer of the intent to take Maternity leave at least 15 weeks before the due date.
- Female employees who have worked for their employer continuously for 26 weeks, up to the 15th week before the week the baby is due, and who meet a minimum earnings threshold (currently GBP£129 [€151.96] per week), are eligible for Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP), as described above.
- Reasons for ineligibility for SMP include: being exclusively self-employed, not satisfying the continuous employment rule, or having a stillborn baby before the 24th week of pregnancy.
- Women who are not eligible for SMP may be eligible for a Maternity Allowance (MA) for up to 39 weeks at the flat-rate of GBP £194.32 [€228.91] or 90 per cent of average gross weekly earnings (whichever is the lowest). Women who have recently left work, changed jobs, or are self-employed may be eligible for this payment. To qualify, they must have worked for 26 weeks out of the 66 preceding the expected week of childbirth and have earned at least GBP£30 [€35.34] per week in 13 of these weeks. For self-employed women, the amount of MA depends on National Insurance (NI) contributions: to get the full amount, they must have made 13 weeks' of Class 2 NI contributions, while those who have made no NI contributions will get £27 [€31.81] per week. Women not eligible for the Maternity Allowance may be eligible for the UK social assistance scheme (Universal Credit).
- Married couples (including same-sex couples), civil partners, joint adopters, the child's other parent, and partners living with the parent and the child – who share responsibility for the child – are all eligible for SPL.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent) or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- The individual receives the same amount of leave for multiple births.
- Entitlements for adopters and intended parents in surrogacy cases are closely aligned with the rights available to birth parents, e.g., no qualifying period for leave; enhanced pay to 90 per cent of earnings for the first six weeks (for one parent); and time off to attend introductory appointments. Intended parents in surrogacy and 'foster to adopt' arrangements will also qualify for adoption leave and pay (see below).
- As of 6 April 2026, eligible fathers and partners will be able to take up to 52 weeks of unpaid Bereaved Partner's Paternity Leave if the mother or primary adopter dies – they must take this leave within 52 weeks of the child's birth (including surrogacy), adoption placement, or entry to Great Britain for overseas adoptions

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- Some employers go beyond the statutory minimum.

b. Paternity leave (responsibility of the Department for Business and Trade)[569]

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 1 or 2 weeks, a week being equivalent to the number of days that the individual normally works in a week.[570] Eligible employees can choose to take 1 week or 2 weeks of Paternity leave.

Payment, funding and taxation

- Flat-rate payment of GBP£194.32 [€228.91] per week, or 90 per cent of average weekly earnings (whichever is lower).
- Paid, taxed and funded as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- Fathers and partners can take Paternity leave in non-consecutive periods of one week.
- Fathers and partners can take leave at any time in the 1st year after childbirth or adoption.
- Provided that fathers are eligible to take leave (see below), they should specify the starting date of the period of leave and its duration to their employer. They should provide this information at least four weeks prior to each period of leave (this does not apply to adoption cases).
- Dates for Paternity leave can be changed with 4 weeks' notice.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- For eligibility of UK citizens and EU citizens resident in the UK, as well as asylum seekers, see Maternity leave/eligibility.
- Rights to leave are contingent on employment status. To be eligible for Paternity leave or pay, individuals must be employees.
- To qualify for Paternity leave, employees must meet certain conditions: they must be either the child's biological father or the child's adopter or the husband, partner or civil partner of the mother (or adopter) or the intended parent in cases of surrogacy; ; they must be employed (eligible from first day of employment) and they must provide their employer with at least 15 weeks' notice of their intention to take Paternity leave.
- To qualify for Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP), as well as the above conditions, individuals must have worked continuously for their employer for at least 26 weeks by the 15th week before the baby is due and remain employed at the time of the child's birth and be earning at least GBP£129 [€151.96] per week (before tax).
- Reasons for ineligibility for SPP are the same as for employees claiming SMP, but there is no paternity allowance (equivalent to maternity allowance, MA), for those not eligible for SPP.

[569] https://www.gov.uk/paternity-pay-leave

[570] Stipulated as such by the government, except if the father normally works 2 or 3 days per week, he would receive 4 or 6 days leave, and if the father works 7 days, he would receive 14 days. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/paternity-pay-leave/leave.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- The individual receives the same amount of leave for multiple births.
- If the baby is stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy, individuals can still take leave already booked and can still book and take any remaining leave although this must be done within 8 weeks of the stillbirth.
- See note on Bereaved Partner's Paternity Leave in section 1a above.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- Some employers go beyond the statutory minimum.

c. Parental leave (responsibility of the Department for Business and Trade)

Length of leave

- 18 weeks per parent per child.
- Leave is an individual, non-transferable entitlement.
- Only 4 weeks of leave may be taken in any calendar year for each child per parent, unless an employer agrees otherwise (i.e., the 18 weeks cannot be taken in one continuous period of time).[571]

Payment, funding and taxation

- None.

Flexibility in use

- Leave may be taken in blocks or in multiples of one week, up to, and for no more than, 4 weeks per year unless the employer agrees otherwise. A week is equivalent to the number of days that the individual normally works in a week.
- Leave may be taken up until the child's 18th birthday.
- Employees must give employers 21 days' notice before taking leave.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- For eligibility of UK citizens, as well as asylum seekers, please see Maternity leave/eligibility.
- To be eligible individuals must have, or expect to have, parental responsibility for a child.[572]

[571] www.gov.uk/parental-leave
[572] See https://www.gov.uk/parental-rights-responsibilities

- Rights to leave are contingent on employment status. To be eligible for unpaid Parental leave, individuals must be employees (eligible from first day of employment).
- Employees must give 21 days' notice before their intended start date

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parent

- As the leave is per child, each parent of twins is entitled to 36 weeks.

Regional or local variations in leave policies

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- The statutory scheme is referred to as a fall-back scheme, since the intention is that 'wherever possible, employers and employees should make their own agreements about how Parental leave will work in a particular workplace'.[573]
- Employers may postpone granting leave for up to six months if they have a 'significant reason' to do so, for example if it would cause serious disruption to the business.
- Some employers go beyond the statutory minimum. Indeed, some employers structure additional employer-based leave policies around the individual entitlement basis of Parental leave rather than the gendered statutory Maternity and Paternity leave policies. Additional contributions are more common in large establishments.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- Providing they meet the eligibility criteria for Maternity leave, and its derivative Shared Parental Leave, an adoptive parent (or one of the parents in a joint adoption) is eligible for 52 weeks of adoption leave, paid at 90 per cent of the main adopter's average earnings for six weeks with no upper limit, then a flat-rate payment of either GBP£194.32 [€228.91] or 90 per cent of average gross weekly earnings (whichever is lower) for the next 33 weeks. The remaining 13 weeks are unpaid. There is also a right to paid Paternity leave for an adopter not taking adoption leave (if they meet the

[573] Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2014) *The Fourth Work-Life Balance Employer Survey (BIS Research Paper No184)*, London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills). Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398557/bis-14-1027-fourth-work-life-balance-employer-survey-2013.pdf

Paternity leave eligibility criteria). Adoptive parents are also eligible for unpaid Parental leave.

Time off for the care of dependants

- Parents of babies admitted to neonatal care are able to take up to 12 weeks paid **Neonatal Care Leave** (NCL); this leave is additional to any other leave entitlement, and is for parents of babies born after 6 April 2025 and admitted into neonatal care within 28 days of birth for a period of at least seven days. The minimum entitlement of NCL is 1 week (7 days) and the leave must be taken in blocks of a week. NCL must be taken in the first 68 weeks of the baby's birth. Neonatal care constitutes any medical care received in hospital, or elsewhere under direction of a consultant following discharge from hospital, or palliative or end of life care. To qualify for NCL, individuals must be the baby's parents or the partner of the baby's mother/adopter; they must also be legally classified as employees. There is no length of service qualifications as this is a 'day one' right.
  The right to receive Statutory Neonatal Care Pay requires 26 weeks of service and earnings on average of at least GBP£129 [€151.96] a week. It is a flat-rate payment, currently GBP£194.32 [€228.91] per week, or 90 per cent of average weekly earnings (whichever is less).
- Employees may take a 'reasonable' amount of **time off to deal with an emergency involving a dependent**. A dependent could be a spouse, partner, child, grandchild, parent, or someone who depends on the individual for care.[574] The legislation does not define what is 'reasonable,' since this will depend on the situation.[575] There is no entitlement to payment. Some employers go beyond the statutory minimum.
- Employees are entitled to take up to 1 week of unpaid **carer's leave** per year to provide or arrange care for a dependant with a long-term care need. A week means the equivalent to the number of days that the individual normally works in a week; this can be taken in individual days or half-days across a year.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- None.

Flexible working for carers

- All employees have a legal right to apply to their employers to work flexibly (e.g., to reduce their working hours or work flexi-time); they are entitled to make a flexible working request from the first day of their employment and can make two requests a year. Employers have a legal duty to consider these requests and may refuse them only on one or more of eight business reasons that are set out in the legislation.[576] Employers are obliged to process requests within 2 months. Employers who turn down a request must consult the employee concerned and only turn down a request for one or more of the reasons given in legislation.

[574] www.gov.uk/time-off-for-dependants
[575] Ibid.
[576] www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/1/7/The-right-to-request-flexible-working-the-Acas-guide.pdf

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- Pregnant employees are permitted paid time off for antenatal care. Fathers are permitted time off to attend two antenatal appointments, but it does not have to be paid time off. Potential adopters are allowed time off to attend two adoption appointments.

Other provisions of leave

- **Bereavement Leave**. Employees who have a child who has died under 18 years old or who have a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy can take 2 weeks' paid Parental Bereavement leave (PBL); there is a flat-rate payment, currently GBP£194.32 [€228.91] per week, or 90 per cent of average weekly earnings (whichever is less). PBL can be taken as one continuous period or as two separate weeks and must be taken within 56 days of the date of the death or stillbirth. To qualify for PBL, individuals must be the child's parents or the partner of the child's parent. They must also be legally classified as employees. There is no length of service qualifications as this is a 'day one' right.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is 13.9 months, but most of this is unpaid or low paid; leave paid at a high rate is only available for six weeks of Maternity leave. Leave provision is the same across the UK as it is part of the national government's responsibility for employment policy, but Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) policy is devolved to England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and so is more heterogeneous; each country has a distinct education and health system, including ECEC.

In England, all children aged three and four years are entitled to 15 hours per week of free ECEC for 38 weeks per year (570 hours per year). Some two-year-olds are also eligible, for example, if a local authority is responsible for their care or if a parent receives income support. There is a separate, employment-related entitlement for working parents of children aged between nine months and four years to 30 hours per week of free ECEC. Together the two entitlements do not exceed 30 hours per week (1,140 hours per year); meaning that working parents of three- and four-year-olds qualify for a total of 30 hours. Most children start school in September after their fourth birthday. Eligible working parents can also get a 20 per cent top-up towards the cost of their childcare through Tax-Free Childcare[577] (this is available across all of the UK).

In Wales, all children aged three and four years are entitled to at least ten hours per week of free ECEC for 39 weeks, with up to 30 hours per week for 48 weeks available for parents who meet the eligibility criteria, which include employment rules. Some two-year-olds who need additional support are entitled to 12.5 hours per week of free ECEC. Most children start school in September after their fourth birthday.

[577] https://www.gov.uk/tax-free-childcare

In Scotland, all children aged between three and five years are entitled to 30 hours per week of free ECEC during term time (1,140 hours per year). Some two-year-olds are also eligible on a very similar basis to that in England. Generally, children start school when they are aged between four and a half and five and a half.

In Northern Ireland, all children are entitled to 12.5 hours per week of free ECEC during term time in the year before they start school (475 hours per year). This is in the process of being expanded to 22.5 hours per week (855 hours per year); children start school aged four or five.

While entitlements therefore vary across the UK, there is a gap of nearly two years between the end of leave and a universal ECEC entitlement and a gap of nearly three years between the end of well-paid leave and a universal ECEC entitlement.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

The Employment Rights Act 2025[578] was passed on 18 December 2025. Changes which have been brought into force as of April 2026 are detailed above. There are several proposed changes which the UK government plans to bring into force during 2026/27. These include:

- The government's intention is to make it unlawful to dismiss pregnant employees and new mothers who have been back at work for less than 6 months, unless there are specific circumstances.[579] The government has consulted on how best to implement this change, but has not yet come to any decisions.[580]
- Bereavement leave will be extended to a wider group of people, including employees who experience pregnancy loss before 24 weeks. This will be a day one right but will be unpaid. The government has consulted on various issues connected with this right including eligibility (i.e., the type of relationship with the deceased which would trigger the leave period), when and how leave should be taken and whether evidence of entitlement should be required. The consultation closed on 15 January 2026 and the government has yet to respond. Northern Ireland has already introduced a right to paid bereavement leave for women employees who suffer a pregnancy loss before 24 weeks. It is a day one right and can be taken for up to 2 weeks. The right also applies to anyone with a defined connection to the pregnancy, such as a spouse or partner.[581]
- A change to the law on flexible working will introduce the requirement that any refusal of a request must be reasonable and employers are obliged to explain why the refusal is reasonable to the employee.

[578] https://www.acas.org.uk/employment-rights-act-2025
[579] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/next-steps-to-make-work-pay
[580] https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/make-work-pay-enhanced-dismissal-protections-for-pregnant-women-and-new-mothers
[581] https://www.lra.org.uk/Latest-News/ni-leading-way-parental-bereavement-leave-and-pay-include-miscarriage

- Workers on zero-hours and low-hours contracts will get the right to guaranteed working hours, if they want them.

The Government's review of the Parental leave and pay system is continuing. It aims to modernise a system described as complex and outdated, ensuring it better supports working families and reflects the needs of today's economy[582]. The call for evidence closed in August 2025. A report is expected towards the end of 2026 with a roadmap for potential reforms in 2027.

The Government continues to conduct a review into Unpaid Carer's leave.[583] The review will assess how the entitlement operates in practice and consider whether further reforms—such as introducing paid carer's leave or extending the current entitlement—may be appropriate. The review is expected to conclude by the end of 2026.

4. Uptake of leave

The UK government still does not routinely collect data about uptake of leaves. The most recent government-endorsed evidence comes from the Parental Leave and Pay Review: Summary of Existing Evidence[584] (Sept 2025), which contains summary findings from the Parental Rights Survey in 2019 (PRS).

The *Millennium Cohort Study*, *Growing up in Scotland* and *Understanding Society* surveys also provide some indication of leave uptake.[585]

a. Maternity leave

No information available.

b. Paternity leave

No information available.

c. Parental leave

No information available. Estimates gathered for the Parental Leave and Pay Review were that 1 per cent of mothers and 4 cent of fathers took Shared Parental leave. No estimates are available for actual Parental leave.

d. Other employment-related measures

No information available.

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[582] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/next-steps-to-make-work-pay/next-steps-to-make-work-pay-web-accessible-version
[583] https://www.gov.uk/carers-leave
[584] https://www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/parental-leave-and-pay-review-call-for-evidence/parental-leave-and-pay-review-summary-of-existing-evidence#take-up-of-leave
[585] https://cls.ucl.ac.uk/cls-studies/millennium-cohort-study/, https://growingupinscotland.org.uk/ https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk

United States[586]

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April 2026

The United States is a federal state, with 50 states, a federal district (Washington, D.C.), and 5 inhabited territories.

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

Note on United States leave policy: There is no statutory right to any of the types of leave or other statutory measures covered in the other country notes in this review. The federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993 provides unpaid leave for a variety of reasons, including: childbirth or the care of a newborn child up to the age of 12 months; for the placement and care of an adopted or foster child; for the care of a seriously ill child, spouse, or parent; or for a serious health condition of the employee that makes them unable to work their regular schedule. The federal Department of Labor is responsible for the FMLA. In addition, 14 states, the District of Columbia and one territory offer all or some employees the statutory right to partly paid leaves for family reasons. In March 2023, 27 per cent of all civilian workers had access to paid family leave, and 90 per cent had access to unpaid family leave.[587] There is currently a tax incentive in the United States for employers to provide paid family and medical leave to certain employees. This incentive is temporary and scheduled to expire at the end of 2025.[588]

[586] Please cite as: Gatenio Gabel, S., Kaufman, G., Petts, R.J., and Engeman, C. (2026) 'United States country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A. A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A. Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/

[587] Bureau of Labor Statistics (2023). *What data does the BLS publish on family leave?* Available at https://www.bls.gov/ebs/factsheets/family-leave-benefits-fact-sheet.htm

[588] Congressional Research Service (2023) *Paid Family and Medical Leave in the United States, September 2023*. Available at https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R44835

a. Maternity Leave

There is no statutory right to maternity leave in the United States.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- One state (Hawaii) and one U.S. territory (Puerto Rico) have policies that provide paid time off to mothers for pregnancy and childbirth.
  - **Hawaii**. The state's insurance programme, first enacted in 1969, uniquely focuses on pregnancy and childbirth. Hawaii does not have a *paid* family leave programme. Hawaii provides up to 26 weeks of partial wage replacement under its Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) programme for leave to address health issues related to pregnancy and childbirth (certified by a health professional). Benefits are 58 per cent of average weekly wages, paid up to a limit which is set annually. In 2026, that ceiling was USD$831 [€727.29][589] per week.[590] The weekly wage base was USD$1,500.21 [€1,312.98] in 2026 and employee contributions are capped at 0.5 per cent of the weekly wage base (maximum contribution in 2025 is USD$7.50 [€6.56]). To be eligible for TDI benefits, employees must be employed and have worked for at least 14 weeks, for at least 20 hours per week for those 14 weeks in the year preceding leave. Under the Hawaii Family Leave Law and rules, an employee may be eligible for up to 4 weeks of *unpaid* family leave each calendar year for the birth or adoption of a child, or to care for his/her child, spouse, reciprocal beneficiary, or parent with a serious health condition. An employee may substitute accrued paid leave (i.e., vacation or sick leave) for any part of the State Family Leave. However, only the accrued and available sick leave in excess of the 15 days required under the State's self-insured Temporary Disability Benefits Plan, can be applied toward family leave purposes.

  - **Puerto Rico**. The Working Mothers Act (1942) requires employers to provide 8 weeks of Maternity leave paid at 100 per cent of earnings. Leave must begin 1 to 4 weeks prior to the expected delivery date.[591] A female employee who adopts a child under the age of 6 years is entitled to the same leave benefits as a person who gives birth.[592] [593] The Act was updated in 2020 to extend the right to 5 weeks of Maternity leave for working mothers who adopt children 6 years of age and older. The law does not extend the right to the leave to working fathers.[594] Under a separate disability law, workers have the right to 26 weeks of paid leave (in a 52-week period) to address a non-work-related disability, including pregnancy. The law permits employee contributions at the rate of 0.3 per cent of wages up to USD$9,000 [€7,876.77]. The maximum weekly

[589] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://data.ecb.europa.eu/currency-converter.
[590] https://labor.hawaii.gov/dcd/files/2025/12/2026-Maximum-Weekly-Wage-Base.pdf
[591] Original: https://bvirtualogp.pr.gov/ogp/Bvirtual/leyesreferencia/PDF/2/0003-1942.pdf; English translation: https://bvirtualogp.pr.gov/ogp/Bvirtual/leyesreferencia/PDF/2-ingles/3-1942.pdf
[592] http://www.oslpr.org/download/en/2000/0120.pdf
[593] http://www.oslpr.org/download/en/2000/0425.pdf
[594] https://www.littler.com/publication-press/publication/puerto-rico-enacts-law-extending-maternity-leave-mothers-adopting

benefit is USD$113 [€98.90] (USD$55 [€48.14] for agricultural workers). These statutory amounts have not changed since July 1972.[595]

b. Paternity Leave

No statutory entitlement.

c. Parental Leave

The federal **Family and Medical Leave Act** (FMLA) of 1993 provides unpaid leave for a variety of reasons, including: childbirth or the care of a newborn child up to the age of 12 months; for the placement and care of an adopted or foster child; for the care of a seriously ill child, spouse, or parent; or for a serious health condition of the employee that makes them unable to work their regular schedule. The federal Department of Labor is responsible for the FMLA.

Length of leave

- The FMLA provides up to 12 weeks of leave in a 12-month period. Leave is an individual entitlement (for those who are eligible, see below).

Payment, funding and taxation

- Leave under the FMLA is unpaid and job-protected, meaning that employees are guaranteed a return to the same or similar position with the same employer.
- In addition to the FMLA, employers who extend paid family and medical leave benefits to qualifying employees are entitled to a tax credit, a policy mechanism first enacted through the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act and made permanent by the One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025.[596]

Flexibility in use

- FMLA leave may be taken in one continuous period or divided into several periods of time.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- The federal FMLA covers all employees (including foreign workers who have a valid work visa[597]) who work for a covered employer and who have worked for that employer for at least 1 year (even if not for a continuous period) for at least 1,250 hours over the preceding 12 months.
- FMLA defines a child as a biological, adopted, or foster child, stepchild, legal ward, or a child of a person standing *in loco parentis.*[598] As such, a same-sex

[595] https://www.mercer.com/content/dam/mercer-dotcom/migrated-assets/blogs/law-and-policy/2026/02/pdf-2026-state-paid-family-and-medical-leave-contributions-and-benefits.pdf
[596] H.R.1 An act to provide for reconciliation pursuant to title II of H. Con. Res. 14. https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/1/text
[597] https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/FactSheet62/whdfs62I.pdf
[598] https://www.dol.gov/whd/fmla/adultchildfaqs.htm

parent may take leave under FMLA to care for their child, even if they are not an adoptive parent.
- The federal FMLA exempts (does not cover) private employers and non-profit organisations with fewer than 50 employees within a 75 mile radius (all public sector employees are covered).
- Because of the qualifying conditions, only about 58 per cent of workers in private firms are eligible for federal FMLA, with lower coverage for low-wage workers, workers with young children, and working welfare recipients.[599]

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- Some states and the District of Columbia have adopted parental leave[600], although considerable variation exists between them.[601] For details, see Annex at end of 1c.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- The Federal Employee Paid Leave Act (FEPLA) provides federal employees up to 12 weeks of paid time off for the birth of a child or the placement of a child for adoption or foster care. Leave may be used only during the 12-month period beginning on the date of the birth or placement involved as long as an employee has a continuing parental role with the child whose birth or placement was the basis for the leave entitlement. To receive paid leave benefits under FEPLA, federal employees must meet FMLA eligibility requirements.
- The majority of US workers lack access to paid family leave from any source. Only 27 per cent of private sector employees have access to paid family leave through their employers and 28 per cent of state and local government workers do.[602]

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[599] Council of Economic Advisors (2014) *The Economics of Paid and Unpaid Leave*. Washington, DC: Office of the President.
[600] Congressional Research Service (2023) *Paid Family and Medical Leave in the United States, September 2023*. Available at https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R44835
[601]Glass, R. and Marshall. K. (2026) *State paid family and medical leave contributions and benefits*. Mercer: Law & Policy Group. Available at: https://www.mercer.com/content/dam/mercer-dotcom/migrated-assets/blogs/law-and-policy/2026/02/pdf-2026-state-paid-family-and-medical-leave-contributions-and-benefits.pdf Glass, R. & K. Marshall (2026).
[602] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2024) *Employee Benefits: What data does the BLS publish on family leave?* https://www.bls.gov/ebs/factsheets/family-leave-benefits-fact-sheet.htm

Annex: Parental leave programmes in individual states and the District of Columbia.

- The development of paid family and medical leave (PFML) programmes in the United States has unfolded across three distinct phases. The first phase, spanning the 1940s through the 1960s, saw 5 states (California, Hawaii, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island along with Puerto Rico) establish state disability insurance (SDI) programmes providing wage replacement for non-work-related disability leave. In the second phase, during the 2000s and 2010s, four of those states (California, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island) expanded their programmes by adding paid family leave (PFL) benefits. The third and most expansive phase began in the 2020s, with nine states (Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oregon, and Washington and Washington, D.C.), enacting comprehensive PFML mandates. As jurisdictions with more established programmes continue to modernize their laws to align with newer frameworks, states that have yet to adopt any disability or PFML programme are increasingly likely to consider either implementing a comprehensive PFML mandate or permitting voluntary group PFL insurance. Eleven states currently authorize voluntary PFL group insurance programmes, while Michigan offers tax incentives to employers that provide certain paid leave benefits, contingent on the appropriation of state funds.[603]

  Most states fund the benefits through pooled payroll taxes on employees and/or employers, but this varies widely across the states. Several states - California, Connecticut, New Jersey (FLI), New York (PFL), Rhode Island, and Washington (PFL) - impose contribution obligations on employees only. Washington, DC represents the inverse, requiring contributions exclusively from employers. Colorado, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Oregon, and Washington further distinguish their programmes by waiving employer contribution requirements for small employers. Programme funding is typically capped at the maximum Social Security wage base (USD$184,500 [€161,473.83] for 2026) though exceptions apply.

  Most programmes provide at least partial wage replacement during leave, with some low-wage employees qualifying for full replacement. Mandated leave is generally required to run concurrently with federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave when both statutes apply. Covered individuals are determined by work location rather than residence, and employees are required to furnish documentation substantiating the need for leave.

  Total leave duration is typically capped at 8 to 16 weeks within a 12 month period. Contribution rates and maximum weekly benefits are adjusted annually with the exception of disability leave in New York and Puerto Rico. Intermittent leave is generally permitted, though some jurisdictions impose a separate duration limit for such leave. Employers are required to maintain health benefit continuation during leave periods.

  Most states allow employers to adopt a voluntary or private plan in lieu of participating in the state-administered programme; however, opt-out

[603] Ibid.

provisions are not available in Rhode Island or Washington, DC, nor for family leave benefits in New Jersey.

When compared with the FMLA, state programmes generally impose less stringent eligibility requirements, offer longer leave durations, and recognize a broader range of qualifying reasons for leave. Job protection provisions, however, tend to be less clearly defined than those afforded under the FMLA, though several states have enacted parallel legislation specifically addressing employment reinstatement rights.

For cross-national comparative purposes, we note that there are no nationality/citizenship-based eligibility requirements. Eligibility requirements centre on employment (i.e., number of weeks or hours worked, employer size, etc.). We also note that since the Supreme Court struck down state-level same-sex marriage bans in June 2015, leave to care for one's spouse includes married, same-sex couples, and leave to care for children includes children of same-sex couples where there is legal guardianship. Some states cover leave to care for children for employees standing in *loco parentis* – or acting as parents regardless of legal guardianship. This is noted in the descriptions of state provisions below.

- **California.** The first state to implement a comprehensive paid family leave (PFL) law in 2004, it covered all private sector employees. Some public sector employees are covered, and self-employed persons can opt in. PFL insurance allows covered employees, regardless of gender, to receive wage replacement benefits for up to eight weeks. Leave is partially paid at 70 to 90 per cent of earnings,[604] depending on income, up to a current maximum of USD$1,765 [€1,544.72] per week in 2026.[605] The average weekly benefit was USD$1,065 [€932.08] for 2025.[606] Leave is paid for childbirth, adoption, or care of a seriously ill child, grandchild, parent, parent-in-law, grandparent, spouse, or domestic partner. PFL was created by extending the State Disability Insurance (SDI) programme to cover family caregiving needs. The SDI provides 52 weeks of wage replacement benefits for leave related to employees' own temporary disability, serious illness, or non-work-related injury. Employee contributions fund PFL and SDI benefits and benefit levels are adjusted annually as wages increase.[607] As insurance programmes, the PFL and SDI programmes do not provide job protection. Job protection is provided under other laws, such as the FMLA or the California Family Rights Act. Under a separate law, pregnant employees have the right to an additional 4 months of job-protected leave for disability due to pregnancy, childbirth, or related health condition (if they work for an employer with 5 or more employees). They can receive wage replacement under SDI, typically for 4 weeks prior to and 6 weeks after childbirth (and this is in addition to 6 weeks of benefit payments under the PFL for bonding). Additional weeks can be granted with proper physician certification in cases of difficult pregnancies. In addition, workers in San Francisco city and county whose employers have 20 or more employees may be eligible for a top-off. The Paid Parental Leave Ordinance requires private sector employers in these

[604]https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220SB951
[605]https://edd.ca.gov/en/disability/Calculating_PFL_Benefit_Payment_Amounts
[606] https://edd.ca.gov/en/about_edd/Quick_Statistics#DIStatistics
[607] https://edd.ca.gov/about_edd/Quick_Statistics.htm#DIStatistics

locales to increase paid family leave benefits to 100 per cent of the average weekly wage or USD$2,522 [€2,207.25], whichever is less.[608]

A new law (2025 Ch. 772, SB 590) added designated persons to the list of family members for whom employees can take family care leave. A designated person is defined as a "care recipient related by blood or whose association with the individual is the equivalent of a family relationship." Employees must identify the designated person and attest that the individual qualifies as a designated person. The law will take effect on July 1, 2028.[609]

- **Colorado***.* The state passed paid family leave in 2020, making Colorado the first state to establish a paid leave insurance programmeme via ballot initiative. Contributions to the employer-employee jointly-funded programmeme began in January 2023, and employees became able to access benefits starting in January 2024. The programmeme provides 12 weeks of paid, job-protected leave to bond with a new child (birth, adoption, foster), for self-care or to care for a family member with a serious illness or health condition, to address issues related to a family member's military service, or to address issues related to surviving domestic violence, stalking, sexual assault or abuse. Family members include a child, spouse, domestic partner, spouse's/partner's parent, grandparent, grandchild, sibling, and other individuals the beneficiary considers family regardless of biological ties. In 2025, the Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) Division amended multiple regulatory provisions, including those necessary to implement Senate Bill 25-144, which extended paid family and medical leave (PFML) eligibility by 12 additional weeks for covered individuals providing care for an infant receiving inpatient treatment in a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), effective January 1, 2026.[610] Eligibility for paid benefits requires employees to have earned at least USD$2,500 [€2,187.99] from current and previous jobs.[611] Eligibility for job protection requires 180 days of employment prior to taking leave. Employees of both the private sector and state and local government are covered, and self-employed individuals can opt in. Benefit amounts are determined through a sliding-scale formula that considers the claimant's average weekly wage from the five preceding calendar quarters relative to Colorado's statewide average weekly wage, with provisions for incremental increases over time. The Colorado average weekly wage for 2025–2026 is USD$1,534.94 [€1,343.37], yielding a tiered replacement structure in which the first USD$735.67 [€643.86] of an individual's average weekly wage is compensated at 90 per cent and any amount exceeding that threshold is compensated at 50 per cent, up to a maximum weekly benefit of USD$1,381.45 [€1,209.04].[612]
- **Connecticut**. The Connecticut (CT) Family and Medical Leave (CTFMLA) and CT Paid Leave (CTPL) have been in effect since 2022. The CTFMLA

[608] https://www.sf.gov/information--paid-parental-leave-ordinance
609 Glass & Marshall, 2026.

[610] Glass & Marshall, 2026
[611] https://famli.colorado.gov/individuals-and-families/how-famli-works/premium-and-benefits-calculator
[612] https://famli.colorado.gov/individuals-and-families/how-famli-works/premium-and-benefits-calculator

provides eligible employees with up to 12 weeks of job-protected leave to care for a new child (birth, adoption, foster); to care for one's own health condition; care for a family member (child, parent, spouse, domestic partner, grandparent, grandchild) with a serious health condition; to address issues related to a family member's active military duty; or to serve as a bone marrow or organ donor. The CT Paid Leave Act requires beneficiaries to have been employed at least three months immediately preceding their first date of leave to be eligible for CT state leave.[613] An employee may also be eligible for two additional weeks of CT leave if incapacitated due to a serious health condition that occurs during a pregnancy. State employees are eligible for a maximum of 24 weeks of leave within a two-year period to bond with a new child. Covered employees in Connecticut are eligible for benefits if they have earned wages of at least USD$2,325 [€2,034.83] in 1 of the 5 most recently completed quarters. If your wages are less than or equal to the Connecticut minimum wage, the benefit amount is 95 per cent of your average weekly wage and for 60 per cent of your average weekly wage for those above minimum wage, capped at USD$1,016.40 [€889.55] as of January 2026. This programmeme is funded by a withholding tax of 0.5 per cent of earnings. All private sector employees are covered, and self-employed individuals can opt into the programme.[614]

- **Delaware**. The Delaware Healthy Delaware Families Act in 2022 began distributing benefits 1 January 2026. The insurance programme is jointly funded by employees (payroll contributions) and employers. Eligible employees can access 12 weeks of wage replacement benefits during Parenting leave or 6 weeks for family or medical leave. Additionally, employers cannot require employees to exhaust their accrued paid time off, such as vacation or sick leave, before accessing state leave benefits. That said, employers and employees may mutually agree to use paid time off to supplement, or 'top off', Delaware Paid Leave benefits. Leave is job protected, and employers are required to continue benefit coverage (e.g., health care) during leave. Leave benefits cover 80 per cent of the employee's average weekly wages, with a minimum weekly benefit of USD$100 [€87.52]. The weekly benefit is capped at USD$900 [€787.68] for 2026 and 2027. After 2027, the benefit cap increases in proportion to increases in the Consumer Price Index. Eligibility requires 12 months of employment with 12 employer for at least 1,250 hours before taking leave from that employer. Employers with less than ten employees are not required to offer paid leave, employers with 10-25 employees, must offer parenting leave only, and employers with more than 25 employees, must provide parenting, family, and medical leave. Parenting leave can be used to care for a newborn, newly adopted or newly placed foster child. Family leave can be taken to care for a seriously ill parent, spouse or child. Leave can be taken intermittently or used to reduce the employee's regular schedule.[615]
- **Maine**. Contributions to Maine's programme began on 1 January 2025, and paid family and medical leave benefits will start on 1 May 2026 to all eligible workers in the private and public sectors who employ at least one

[613] https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Statewide-HR/A---Z-Listing-Task-PDFs/ Family-Medical-Leave-DAS-General-Letter-39.pdf
[614] https://www.ctpaidleave.org/?language=en_US
[615] https://laborfiles.delaware.gov/main/pfl/Employer_and_TPAs_Guide_to_DPL.pdf

individual. To qualify for Maine Paid Family & Medical Leave (PFML) benefits, an employee must have earned wages in Maine totalling at least six times the state average weekly wage during the first four of the last five completed calendar quarters before the start of their benefit year, and must be actively employed either at the time of application (if applying before leave begins) or at the time leave starts (if applying retroactively). Employees who have worked for their employer for at least 120 consecutive days prior to taking leave are also entitled to job protection during that leave. This will cover part-time, seasonal, and temporary workers. Employees will receive up to 12 weeks of paid leave for family or medical reasons or for the birth or adoption of a child.[616] Benefits offer a 90per cent wage replacement for lower earners (up to 50per cent of the State Average Weekly Wage) and 66per cent for higher earners, capped at 100 per cent of the State Average Weekly, which was USD$1,198.84 [€1,049.22] in 2026. For 2026–2027, contribution rates are based on employer size. Employers with 15 or more employees contribute 1per cent of wages and may deduct up to 0.5per cent from employee wages. Employers with fewer than 15 employees contribute 0.5per cent and may deduct the full amount from employees.

- **Maryland**. Maryland's FAMLI programme provides up to 12 weeks of paid leave per year—with maximum benefits of up to USD$1,000 [€875.20] per week—for qualifying reasons including bonding with a new child, a serious personal health condition, caring for a family member with a serious health condition, or managing needs related to a family member's military service or deployment. Participation is mandatory for all Maryland workers and contributions are non-refundable. FAMLI will begin offering benefits in January 2028. The programme has been postponed several times. Covered individuals may take an additional 12 weeks of leave if the individual is eligible for leave both due to bonding with a new child and to care for their own serious health condition. Workers are eligible if they worked at least 680 hours in the year prior to the date on which leave is to begin, and self-employed workers can opt-in. For workers earning less than 65 per cent of the state AWW, wage replacement is 90 per cent. Leave is job protected, although there are certain circumstances in which employers may refuse to protect the job. FAMLI is funded through payroll contributions from both employers and employees, with employees paying less than 1per cent of wages; starting as early as January 2027, employers will deduct employees' share—up to 50per cent of the contribution rate—from each pay check, though some employers may choose to cover the full contribution.[617]
- **Massachusetts***.* Benefits for paid family medical leave first became available in 2021. The programme provides: up to 12 weeks to care for a new-born, newly adopted, or newly placed foster child; up to 20 weeks to address one’s own serious medical condition, including pregnancy- and childbirth-related health issues; up to 12 weeks to care for a family member (i.e., parent, spouse, child, domestic partner, grandparent, grandchild, sibling, parent-in-law, and domestic partner’s parent); up to 26 weeks to address issues related to the military deployment of a family member or a family member’s serious illness or injury incurred in active military duty; and up to 26 weeks of combined medical and family

[616] https://www.maine.gov/paidleave/
[617] https://paidleave.maryland.gov/employees/

caregiving leave. Employees standing in *loco parentis* to a child can take leave to care for the child. The wage replacement rate is 80 per cent of average weekly wages, up to 50 per cent of the state-wide average weekly wage (AWW), plus 50 per cent of wages beyond that amount up to a cap of USD$1,230.39 [€1076.83] per week in 2026.[618] To be eligible, employees must work at least 15 weeks and earn at least USD$6,300 [€5,513.74] in the past year and earned at least 30 times more than they are eligible to receive each week in benefits.[619] The programme covers all private sector and most public sector employees.[620] Self-employed individuals can opt in. Contributions are 0.88 per cent of employee wages (up to the Social Security maximum), and revenues are divided between allocations for family and medical leave. Employees can top off paid family and medical leave benefits from the state or an employer's plan to accrued paid leave or other paid leave benefits.[621]

- **Minnesota**. Benefits under Minnesota's Paid Leave began on 1 January 2026. Benefits are paid, and job guaranteed for 12 weeks to employees who take time after the birth, adoption or foster care placement of a child; care of self or a family member due to their serious illness; due to military deployment of a family member; or in relation to family violence. Workers may potentially receive up to 20 weeks of paid leave in a calendar year for a combination of more than one event. Those earning less than 50 per cent of the state's average will receive 90 per cent of their weekly wages; workers earning the state average will receive two-thirds of their wages; and those earning above the state average will be entitled to 55 per cent of their wages for a maximum benefit of USD$1,423 [€1,245.41] per week in 2026. Firms with fewer than 30 employees may be exempt. The 0.88 per cent premium is shared, with employers typically paying at least 50 per cent.[622]
- **New Jersey**. Effective 17 July 2026, New Jersey will make several changes to the state's Family Leave Act (FLA) and its Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) and Family Leave Insurance (FLI) programmes. Under the FLA, the employer coverage threshold is reduced from 30 to 15 employees, and employee eligibility requirements are lowered from one year of employment and 1,000 hours worked to three months of employment and 250 hours worked in the past 12 months. For TDI/FLI, the new law addresses a longstanding gap by extending FLA job protections to employees who receive TDI or FLI benefits and meet the updated FLA eligibility threshold, ensuring that benefit eligibility and job protection are no longer treated independently. Additionally, employees who qualify for both TDI/FLI benefits and paid sick leave under the state's Earned Sick Leave Law may choose the order in which to use those benefits, though they may not receive both simultaneously. In 2026, New Jersey's paid family leave maximum benefits will increase to USD$1,119 [€979.35] per week. Eligible employees can receive 85per cent of their

[618] https://www.mass.gov/info-details/paid-family-and-medical-leave-pfml-overview-and-benefits
[619] https://www.mass.gov/doc/pfml-information-for-employees-overview/download
[620] https://www.mass.gov/info-details/your-eligibility-for-paid-family-and-medical-leave-pfml
[621] https://www.mass.gov/info-details/faqs-for-employers-about-topping-off-pfml-benefits
[622] https://paidleave.mn.gov/

average weekly wage, up to this maximum, for up to 12 weeks of leave to care for a loved one or bond with a new child. The 2026 taxable wage cap is USD$171,100 [€149,746.19]. Workers must have earned at least USD$310 [€271.31] weekly (for 20 weeks) or a total of USD$15,500 [€13,565.55] in the base year. Employees contribute 0.23 per cent of their earned wages up to USD$171,100 [€149,746.19].[623]

- **New York**. A comprehensive paid family leave policy was phased in beginning of 2018 in New York. Leave can be taken all at once or intermittently, in full-day increments. Twelve weeks of job-protected, paid leave to care for a new child, a seriously ill parent, spouse, domestic partner, child, grandparent, or grandchild, or to relieve family pressures when a spouse, domestic partner, child, parent, or sibling is called to active military service abroad are provided. Employees standing in *loco parentis* to a child can take leave to care for the child. Benefits are capped at 67 per cent of the state-wide AWW, or a maximum of USD$1,228.53 [€1,075.21] per week in 2026.[624] For 2026, employees will contribute 0.432 per cent of their gross wages per pay period, with a maximum annual contribution of USD$411.91 [€360.50] annually. Employees are eligible to participate after having worked for their employer for 26 weeks full-time or 175 days part-time. In addition to the paid family leave programme, the TDI programme for pregnancy and childbirth to birth mothers, paid at 50 per cent of average weekly wages up to a cap of USD$170 [€148.78] per week. This leave is managed through the TDI programme, which is jointly funded by employees and employers.[625] The total disability and family leave benefits in any 52-week period may not exceed 26 weeks. Self-employed individuals can opt in to the insurance programmes. As of 2026, PFL's benefits have been extended to construction workers covered by a collective bargaining agreement who worked at least 26 of the last 39 weeks.
- **Oregon**. The Paid Leave Oregon (PLO) programme began disbursing benefits on 3 September 2023.[626] Eligible employees may take up to 12 weeks in a benefit year to care for themselves or a family member, and up to two additional weeks for pregnancy, childbirth, or related circumstances. In some situations, up to 18 weeks may be taken in a benefit year, though four of those weeks may be unpaid.[627] Wage replacement is 65 per cent of state AWW plus 50 per cent of wages above the state AWW up to a maximum of USD$1,636.56 [€1,432.31] per week in 2026 which is 120 per cent of the state AWW.[628] Low-income workers will receive 100 per cent of the AWW. This programme is funded by a 1 per cent payroll tax, with employees paying 60 per cent and employers paying 40 per cent (businesses with fewer than 25 employees will be exempt from paying taxes though their employees will still be covered). Employees who earned at least USD$1,000 [€875.20] in the year they apply for paid leave are eligible for benefits, meaning that almost all

[623] https://www.nj.gov/labor/myleavebenefits/worker/fli/
[624] https://paidfamilyleave.ny.gov/2026
[625] https://www.wcb.ny.gov/content/main/DisabilityBenefits/employee-disability-benefits.jsp
[626] https://www.oregon.gov/employ/PFMLI/Documents/Milestonepercent20Newsletter_Final.pdf
[627] https://www.oregon.gov/employ/PFMLI/Documents/PFMLI_003_0921.pdf
[628] https://www.thehartford.com/paid-family-medical-leave/or

employees, including part-time employees, are covered.[629] Recent updates limit leave to care for a child to those under age 18 or with a limiting physical impairment and also disqualify employees receiving unemployment benefits during leave.

- **Rhode Island**. A paid family leave programme (referred to as Temporary Caregiver Insurance) went into effect in 2014 and provides job protection and extends the state's existing TDI programme to provide paid leave to care for a new child or a parent, spouse, child, domestic partner, grandparent, or parent-in-law with a serious health condition. The programme is financed by employee contributions of 1.3 per cent of wages (maximum taxable wage is USD$89,200 [€78,067.57]). Up to 13 weeks of unpaid leave within a 2-year period to care oneself or family member due to illness, birth, adoption or foster care placement. Up to 8 weeks (as of 2026) of paid parental leave is available at 60 per cent of previous weekly earnings for those who have contributed to the fund and meet earning requirements. The maximum benefit is USD$1,103 [€965.34] per week for 2026.[630] Benefits can be higher with dependents and are available for bonding with a new child, caring for a family member (including siblings as of 2026), or organ/bone marrow donation. In addition, pregnant employees qualify separately for job-protected paid leave through the TDI programme. TDI covers leave to address medical issues related to pregnancy and childbirth (child bonding is covered by the Temporary Caregiver Insurance).
- **Washington (State)**. Since 2020, paid family leave insurance has provided wage replacement during leave to: care for a new-born, newly adopted, or newly placed foster child; or a parent, spouse, domestic partner, child, grandchild, grandparent, or sibling with a serious health condition; or to address issues related to a family member's active military duty. Employees standing in *loco parentis* to a child can take leave to care for the child. Leave can also be used to address an employee's own health issues, including those related to pregnancy or childbirth. Benefits pay 90 per cent of the employee's average weekly wages for employees who earn 50 per cent or less of the state-wide AWW. Employees who earn more receive 90 per cent of their AWW, up to 50 per cent of the state-wide AWW, then 50 per cent of their AWW that exceeds 50 per cent of the state-wide AWW. In 2026, the maximum weekly benefit is USD$1,647 [€1,441.45]. The total premium rate will rise to 1.13 per cent of employee wages (up to USD$184,500 [€161,473.83]), split between employers (28.57per cent) and employees (71.43 per cent). Benefits are paid for up to 12 weeks for either medical or family leave, 16 weeks for combined self-care and family caregiving, or for up to 18 weeks to address a serious pregnancy-related health condition combined with family caregiving needs. To be eligible, employees must have worked at least 820 hours in four out of five previous quarters. Self-employed individuals can opt in.[631]

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[629] https://www.oregon.gov/employ/PFMLI/Documents/PFMLI_003_0921.pdf

[630] https://dlt.ri.gov/press-releases/maximum-weekly-benefit-amounts-unemployment-and-temporary-disability-insurance-2

[631] https://info.usi.com/rs/121-VCO-807/images/Washington_Increases_2026_Paid_Family_and_Medical_Leave_Premium_Jan_6_2026.pdf?version=0

Washington's PFML programme includes several updates for 2026. Employers with 25 or more employees (previously, only employers with 50 or more employees were required) are now required to provide job protection to employees taking WA PFML leave, and must maintain health insurance coverage for those employees as if they were still actively working, though employees may still be required to pay their share of the premium. The minimum leave increment has been reduced from eight hours to four hours. Additionally, employers are now permitted to count FMLA-protected leave against an employee's WA PFML job restoration period—known as 'stacking'—resulting in a maximum job protection period of 16 weeks (or 18 weeks in certain circumstances) within a 52-week period when an employee takes leave that qualifies under both programmes. Employers must provide notice when FMLA leave is being counted against this period.[632]

- **District of Columbia**. The Universal Paid Leave (UPL) began distributing benefits in October 2022. UPL allows up to 12 weeks of paid parental leave for a new-born, newly adopted, or newly placed foster child; 12 weeks of family leave to care for a parent, spouse, child, domestic partner, grandparent, or sibling; 12 weeks of medical leave to address one's own serious health condition; and two weeks prenatal leave.[633] Employees standing in *loco parentis* for a child can take leave to care for the child. The Act covers all private sector employees covered by the D.C. Unemployment Compensation Act. Self-employed individuals can opt in. Leave is job-protected, and benefit payments are 90 per cent of the employee's AWW, up to a cap of USD$1,190 [€1,041.48] per week in 2026.[634]

Voluntary State Parental and Family Leave Programmes

11 states have permitted insurers to offer voluntary paid family leave (PFL) insurance, providing partial wage replacement for qualifying leave events without mandating employer participation.[635]

Alabama's Paid Family Leave Income Replacement Benefits Act allows insurers to offer group FLI policies or voluntary employee-purchased policies covering leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition or military injury, bond with a new child, handle qualifying military exigencies, and other policy-specified reasons. Similarly, **Arkansas** permits insurers to offer FLI as a standalone group policy or as an amendment to a group disability policy for the same core qualifying reasons. Florida allows FLI to be offered as a rider or amendment to a disability policy or as a separate policy, covering new child bonding, a family member's serious health condition, and qualifying military exigencies.

Kentucky authorizes PFL as group insurance — either as part of or a rider to a disability income policy or as a standalone policy — with a minimum benefit duration of two weeks in a 52-week period. **Texas** follows a similar

[632] https://info.usi.com/rs/121-VCO-807/images/Washington_Increases_2026_Paid_Family_and_Medical_Leave_Premium_Jan_6_2026.pdf?version=0
[633] https://does.dc.gov/page/dc-paid-family-leave
[634] https://dcpaidfamilyleave.dc.gov/workers/
[635] See Glass & Marshall, 2026.

structure, allowing employers to purchase FLI as a separate policy or as a rider to a disability policy covering comparable qualifying events.

Tennessee's Paid Family Leave Insurance Act authorizes FLI as a standalone group policy or as an amendment or rider to a group disability or life insurance policy, though a tax incentive for employers that had been available for the 2024 and 2025 tax years has now expired. **South Carolina**'s Paid Family Leave Insurance Act similarly allows employers to provide PFL insurance as an amendment, rider, or separate policy, requiring at least two weeks of partial wage replacement for qualifying events; to date, no standalone PFL policies have been sold, with PFL instead being included within disability or income policies. **Michigan** offers a tax credit equal to 50per cent of an employee's wages, capped at USD$4,000 [€3,500.79] per employee, for up to 12 weeks of leave to bond with an adopted child, though the credit remains unavailable until funded by legislative appropriation.

New Hampshire's Granite State PFL Act requires PFL benefits for state employees through MetLife and makes the programme voluntary for other public and private employers, with individuals also able to purchase coverage independently. Benefits include 60per cent wage replacement for six or 12 weeks, covering serious health conditions, child bonding, military-related leave, and care for a service member. Employers offering MetLife coverage are eligible for a 50per cent business enterprise tax credit for the first six weeks of leave, and employers with 50 or more employees must provide job protection and group health coverage at active employee rates for employees who opt into the programme.

Vermont's voluntary VT-FMLI programme, launched through a governor's initiative rather than legislation, reached its third and final phase on January 1, 2026, extending coverage to employers with just one employee and to individuals without employer-sponsored PFML benefits. The programme provides 60per cent wage replacement, capped at the Social Security maximum, for up to six weeks in a 12-month period, covering new child bonding, care for a family member's or the employee's own serious health condition, and military-related qualifying events.

Virginia similarly allows insurers to offer family coverage as a class of insurance, covering new child bonding, care for a family member with a serious health condition, and military-related circumstances, though the law does not specify benefit amounts, costs, or duration.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- The federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993 provides unpaid leave for the placement and care of an adopted or foster child. See details in section c.

Time off for the care of dependants

- The federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993 provides **unpaid leave for the care of a seriously ill child, spouse, or parent**. Paid family and medical leave programmes that function at the state level in some states (and D.C.) cover care of dependents, e.g., a seriously ill child, spouse, or parent. See details in section c.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- The Fair Labor Standards Act, amended by the Affordable Care Act in 2010, requires that employers provide hourly workers with reasonable break time for an employee to express breast milk for her nursing child up to one year after the child's birth and a place, other than a bathroom, that is private and free from intrusion to be used by an employee to express breast milk. Employers with fewer than 50 employees may seek to be excused from these requirements if they can show that these requirements would impose an undue hardship on the employer.[636]
- The Fifth Circuit of the federal Court of Appeals decided in 2013 that discriminating against a female employee because she is lactating or seeking to express breast milk may constitute sex discrimination under the Pregnancy Discrimination Act and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

Flexible working for carers

- The U.S. Department of Labor states that flexible work arrangements are 'a matter of agreement' between employers and employees.[637] Some states have 'fair workweek laws', but many of these laws only provide employees the right to request schedule changes without retaliation or protect employees against employer-driven flexibility. Such protective measures include the right to advanced scheduling or partial compensation when shifts are cancelled or reduced.[638]

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- None.

Other provisions of leave

- None reported.

[636] U.S. Department of Labor (January 2023). Fact Sheet #73: FLSA Protections for Employees to Pump Breast Milk at Work. https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/73-flsa-break-time-nursing-mothers.
[637] See: https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/workhours/flexibleschedules
[638] https://www.abetterbalance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Updated-Fair-Flexible-Fact-Sheet.pdf

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

There is no statutory entitlement to paid leave or to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act, enacted on 4 July 2025, made permanent a PFML tax credit that has been available since 2018 and two extensions through the end of 2025. Through 2025, the tax credit amount was determined solely based on wages paid to qualifying employees while on leave. Beginning in 2026, employers will have the additional option of calculating the credit based on premiums paid for an insured policy. The definition of a qualifying employee is also expanding. Through 2025, a qualifying employee was required to have at least 1 year of employment and earn less than 60 per cent of the highly compensated employee threshold. Beginning in 2026, the employee must also be regularly employed at least 20 hours per week, and while the one-year employment requirement remains the default, employers will have the option to reduce it to 6 months.

4. Uptake of leave

In 2025, approximately 15 million US workers took leave under the FMLA. This is similar to the numbers who took leave under FMLA in 2024. Of these, about half (51.5 per cent) took leave for their own illness; 20.8 per cent took leave for reasons related to a new child; and 23 per cent took leave to care for family members.[639] Though the law provides *de facto* parental leave entitlements, studies have found it has had generally small effects on mothers' likelihood of taking time off from work at childbirth,[640] [641] and little or no effects on time off taken by new fathers.[9] [10] Based on two national surveys, only 4 to 6 per cent of fathers take more than 2 weeks of Paternity leave[642]. This suggests there are limits to the extent to which families are willing and able to use unpaid leave. The National Partnership for Women and Families estimates that over 11 million workers needed leave but went without leave in 2025, with a majority saying they could not afford unpaid leave. [643] In contrast, evidence suggests that workers are much more likely

[639] These are estimates reported by the National Partnership for Women and Families and based on data collected in a previous study. See https://nationalpartnership.org/report/fmla-key-facts/

[640] Han, W.J. and Waldfogel, J. (2003) 'Parental leave: The impact of recent legislation on parents' leave-taking', *Demography,* Vol.40, 1: 191-200.

[641] Han, W.J., Ruhm, C., and Waldfogel, J. (2009) 'Parental leave policies and parents' employment and leave-taking', *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, Vol.26, 1: 29-54.

[642] Petts, R. J., Knoester, C., and Li, Q. (2020) 'Paid paternity leave-taking in the United States', *Community, Work & Family*, Vol.23, 2: 162-183.

[643] These are estimates reported by the National Partnership for Women and Families and

to use paid leave. A report shows that among workers who have access to paid family or parental leave, 87 per cent of women and 59 per cent of men use at least half of the paid parental/family leave that they have access to (66 per cent of women and 36 per cent of men use all available paid leave).[644] Also, implementation of California's PFL law increased the leave-taking of new fathers by 46 per cent and new mothers by 13 per cent.[645] In the first 12 weeks after a first child is born, 45 per cent of mothers and 33 per cent of fathers take at least some paid Maternity/Paternity leave. Another 39 per cent of mothers use unpaid Maternity leave while another 35 per cent of fathers use paid vacation.[646]

based on data collected in a previous study. See https://nationalpartnership.org/report/fmla-key-facts/

[644]ttps://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/research-and-surveys/Documents/2017per cent20Employeeper cent20Benefitsper cent20Report.pdf

[645] Bartel, A. P., Rossin-Slater, M., Ruhm, C. J., Stearns, J., and Waldfogel, J. (2018) 'Paid family leave, fathers' leave-taking, and leave-sharing in dual earner households', *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management,* 37: 10-37.

[646] Scherer, Z. (2021) *Two-Thirds of Recent First-Time Fathers Took Time Off After Birth,* Washington, D.C.: Census. https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/09/two-thirds-recent-first-time-fathers-took-time-off-after-birth.html

Uruguay[647]

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For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (public sector) (*Licencias por maternidad y por paternidad*)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 14 weeks: up to 6 weeks can be taken before the birth, 1 week of which must be taken at this time.

Payment. Funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings with no upper limit on payment.
- Payments are not taxed, except for contributions for retirement and social health insurance.
- Funded from general taxation.

Flexibility in use

- None, except for 5 weeks of leave that can be taken before or after birth.

Eligibility

- All female public sector employees.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent) or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In the case of premature births with less than 32 weeks of gestation and requiring hospitalisation, both parents (biological or adoptive) are entitled to

[647] Please cite as: Batthyány, K. and Perrotta, V. (2025) 'Uruguay country note,' in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, Á. A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2025*. Available at: http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/

leave for the duration of such hospitalisation, up to a maximum of 60 days. Upon the termination of this license, the usufruct of Maternity or Paternity leave will begin.
- Maternity leave is set at 18 weeks for full-term births when the baby's birth weight is 1.5 kg or less. Regardless of the week of pregnancy in which the birth occurs, if the newborn has a disorder, illness, comorbidity, or condition that, due to its nature or severity, poses a risk or compromises the newborn's life, requiring hospitalization or home treatment, maternity leave may be extended until the child is 6 months old. The maternity leave period will be extended by the same period if the newborn has a disorder, illness, comorbidity, or condition that, while not life-threatening, involves sensory, physical, or intellectual disabilities that require hospitalization or treatment. In such cases, a medical specialist must confirm that the mother’s care is necessary or beneficial (Law No. 20212, 2023).

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

a. Maternity leave (private sector) (*Subsidio por maternidad*) (responsibility of Instituto de Seguridad Social)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 14 weeks: up to 6 weeks can be taken before the birth.
- It is obligatory to take all the leave.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings with no upper limit on payment. For employees, this is based on average earnings in the 6 months before taking leave. For self-employed workers, this is based on average earnings over the 12 months before taking leave.
- Payments are not taxed, except for contributions for retirement and social health insurance.
- Funded by the social security system, which is financed by contributions and taxes: for sickness and maternity benefits, 3 to 6 per cent of employee earnings and 5 per cent of payroll from employer, plus earmarked proceeds of certain taxes.

Flexibility in use

- Women may postpone the start of Maternity leave (if authorised by their doctor).
- If the birth occurs earlier than 42 days before the due date of delivery, the beginning of the subsidy is modified to the actual day of the baby’s birth. The start of postpartum leave is not modified, that is, the original postpartum

leave period is maintained, granting more days of leave.
- If the birth occurs after the due date of delivery, the postpartum leave is extended, considering the number of days of the delay.

Eligibility

- All female employees who contribute to the Social Security Institute (BPS).
- Self-employed workers who are covered by the BPS, with no more than 1 employee.
- Other self-employed workers who are covered by the BPS.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent) or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In the case of illness resulting from pregnancy or childbirth, the mother is entitled to an extension of pre- or post-natal leave.
- In the case of full-term births, if the baby's birth weight is 1.5 kg or below, Maternity leave is extended to 18 weeks.
- Maternity leave may be extended until the child turns 6 months in cases when: the new-born presents any disorder, illness, co-morbidity or condition, which due to its nature or severity involves a risk to the life of the new-born; the new-born presents any disorder, illness, co-morbidity or condition that involves sensory, physical or intellectual disabilities; the new-born requires hospitalization or treatment, and a specialist doctor recommends the mother's care.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave (public sector) (*Licencia por paternidad*)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 10 business days or 20 calendar days according to preference.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings with no upper limit on payment.
- Payments are not taxed, except for contributions for retirement and social health insurance.
- Funded as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- None.

Eligibility

- All male public sector employees.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent) or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In the case of premature births with less than 32 weeks of gestation and requiring hospitalisation, both parents (biological or adoptive) will be entitled to leave for the duration of such hospitalisation, up to a maximum of 60 days. Upon the termination of this period, Maternity or Paternity leave begins.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave (private sector) (*Inactividad Compensada por Paternidad*) (responsibility of the Instituto de Seguridad Social)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- Employee: 20 continuous days of leave beginning on the day of delivery. The first three days are paid by the company, and the next fourteen are paid by the BPS (Social Security Institute).
- Non-employee: 20 continuous days of leave beginning on the day of delivery (Law 20312, 2024).
- In the case of dependent workers, the right to Paternity leave is mandatory and non-waivable.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings with no upper limit on payment. For employees, this is based on average earnings in the 6 months before taking leave. For self-employed workers, this is based on average earnings over the 12 months before taking leave.
- For employees, the first 3 days are paid by the employer and the next 14 days are paid by the social security system.
- Payments are not taxed, except for contributions for retirement and social health insurance.
- Funded as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- None. To be taken from the day of birth.

Eligibility

- All male employees who contribute to the BPS.
- Self-employed workers who are covered by the BPS, with no more than one employee.
- Other self-employed workers who are covered by the BPS.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent) or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In cases of multiple births, low birth weight (1.5 kg or less), medically complex births, or premature births, the days payable by the BPS may be extended up to a maximum of 30 consecutive days, as prescribed by the attending physician, as established in Law No. 20,000. This law applies to births as of its entry into force (4 December 2021), as well as to those still receiving the subsidy on that date.
- The parents of stillborn children born more than 20 weeks pregnant or weighing more than 500 grams are entitled to Paternity leave (Law No. 20,377, 2024).

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave (public sector)

- Public sector workers have a right to Parental leave after the end of Maternity leave, until the baby reaches 6 months of age. This is extended to 9 months of age, in situations where the child's life is at risk or the child has a disability. Mothers and fathers can alternate use of Parental leave, but cannot be on Parental leave at the same time. Mothers or fathers can only

take leave as long as the mother remains economically active or is covered by medical leave.[648]

c. Parental leave (private sector)

Length of leave

- Until the child reaches 6 months.
- Leave must be taken part time; the parent taking leave cannot work more than 4 hours a day.
- Leave is a family entitlement.

Payment, funding and taxation

- As for Maternity and Paternity leave (private sector) (see 1a and 1b).

Flexibility in use

- Parents can alternate taking leave in days, weeks or months.
- Leave cannot be taken at the same time by both parents.

Eligibility

- As for Maternity and Paternity leave (private sector) (see 1a and 1b), except it is a requirement for fathers that the mother has been eligible for private sector Maternity leave.
- The law does not define whether same-sex couples are eligible. However, the BPS report that they approve part-time leave applications from women whose partners have taken BPS-provided Maternity leave.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent) or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

[648] https://www.impo.com.uy/bases/leyes/20212-2023

e. Other family employment-related measures

Adoption leave and pay

- In the case of adoption, workers in both the public and private sector are entitled to a continuous 6 week leave and a reduction of the working day (up to 50 per cent) for 6 months. These leaves may be used by one of the 2 parents from the time the child is placed in the family, while the other parent is them granted 10 working days of leave.

Time off for the care of dependents

No statutory entitlement.

Specific provision for (breast) feeding

- If the worker (public or private) breastfeeds her child, she may interrupt her daily work for that purpose, and has a choice between two 30 minute periods or one period of 1 hour. This time is counted as employment. Her doctor is responsible for determining the duration of these breastfeeding breaks, which may be extended for up to 2 years. Workers are required to present a doctor's certificate to their employer with whom they need to agree on how and when they will use the 1-hour reduction of the working day.

Flexible working for carers

- Mothers in the public sector may work part-time, but only if they are breastfeeding. This lasts according to the baby's needs but usually continues until the baby is 12 months old. The worker must present a medical certificate that confirms she is breastfeeding.
- Civil servants of the Central Administration may work part-time, at least 4 hours per day, when their baby is between 6 and 12 months old. Mothers and fathers are eligible, but reduced hours can be used by only one of the parents.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- No information.

Other provisions for leave

- None reported.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of full-time post-natal leave is just under three months, paid at a high rate; part-time unpaid leave can be taken in the private sector until 6 months after childbirth. There is an entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) once children are four years of age and attendance also becomes obligatory at that age. There is a gap, therefore, of more than three and a half years between the end of well-paid leave and an entitlement to ECEC.

National statistics report that 56.2 per cent of children from birth to 4 years attended ECEC, but attendance is very different according to age: 13.3 per cent for children under the age of 1 year, 38.7 per cent for 1 year-olds, 57 per cent for 2 year-olds, 77.7 per cent for 3 year-olds, and 93 per cent for 4 year-olds.[649] Moreover, if children who attend 20 hours a week or more, which is equivalent to at least a part-time working day, are considered these figures drop to 2.5 per cent for children under the age of 1 year, 13.8 per cent for 1 year-olds, 42 per cent for 2 year-olds, 70.4 per cent for 3 year-olds and 86.9 per cent for 4 year-olds.

Until 2 years old, most children attend private ECEC centres (funded by families), as public centres are not extended, especially for children under one year of age. From the age of three, public centres are more widely covered.

During the period 2015-2020, within the framework of the implementation of the National Integrated Care System, early childhood education and care services were increased, adding 16,000 new places to the public system. In 2022, there were 78,344 children cared for in public centres, but due to the decrease in births, coverage was 53 per cent of the population between 0 and 3 years old.[650]

No information for ECEC attendance levels in 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

No changes reported.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

Data on Maternity leave show a steady increase in the period 2011-2016, from 14,264 users in 2011 to 16,108 users in 2016. However, no significant impact can be observed since the new law, Nr.19161. From 2013, there has been a stability in the number of users (around 16,000): this means that when it comes to the first years of implementation, the new legislation has not involved a significant increase, in comparison to previous years. The new law, with the inclusion of new groups, did not imply substantial changes in the use of Maternity leave – probably because the non-dependent mothers who can use this leave represent a very small

[649] Own elaboration based on micro data from the Nutrition, Child Development and Health Survey, INE, MIDES, 2018. See: http://www.ine.gub.uy/web/guest/encuesta-de-nutricion-desarrollo-infantil-y-salud-endis-2018-

[650] https://www.gub.uy/sistema-cuidados/comunicacion/publicaciones/memoria-quinquenal-2015-2020; https://www.gub.uy/sistema-cuidados/institucional/informacion-gestion/memorias-anuales/sistema-cuidados-informe-anual-2022;nd https://www.gub.uy/sistema-cuidados/comunicacion/publicaciones/memoria-quinquenal-2015-2020

proportion. In any case, it is interesting to investigate the state's capacities to disseminate and guarantee the rights of these groups.[651]

The number of individuals utilising Maternity leave has shown a continuous decline from 2016 to 2025. While in 2016 there were 16,911 users, this number fell to 12,554 in 2020 and to 11,356 in 2025.[652] It is important to note that also births in Uruguay have decreased over this time period. In 2016 there were 47,058 births, while in 2025 there were 29,903. The reduction of births occurred across all age groups, with the most significant decline observed among women under 24 years old. There has also been a decrease in the adolescent fertility rate (number of births among women aged 15 to 19) in recent years.

A recent policy document published in November 2020[653] states that a comprehensive explanation of the recent decline requires not only to consider the factors that converged on the exit from fertility stagnation adolescent, but that it is also necessary to understand reasons and the mechanisms that inclined the rest of women to limit their offspring. The fact that births of three and more children have decreased, whose mothers usually belong to groups of advanced age, suggests that interest in controlling more fertility is not exclusive to women teenagers and very young.

b. Paternity leave

There was a substantial rise in the take-up of Paternity leave up to 2016, from 8,799 in 2014 to 15,862 in 2016 (an increase of 80 per cent). This represents a significant advance for fathers' right to care, at least during the first days of the baby's life.[654] However, there has subsequently been a decrease, from 15,372 users in 2017 to 11,275 in 2025. Again, this needs to be considered together with the decreased number of births.

c. Parental leave

Part-time leave (Parental Care Allowance) is voluntary. In 2016, 59.1 per cent of the users of Maternity leave in the private sector used part-time leave (Parental Care Allowance). This means that a significant group of women did not take it, despite having the right to do so.

Regarding the evolution in the use of Parental leave, it increased from 6,258 users in 2014 to 9,525 in 2016, signifying an increase of 52 per cent[655]. However, a decrease in users is observed in 2017 and 2018, a slight increase in 2019 and again a decline in 2020 and 2021.[656]

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[651] Batthyány, K., Genta, N. and Perrotta, V. (2018) *Uso de licencias parentales y roles de género en el cuidado* [Use of parental leave and gender roles in caregiving]. Departamento de Sociología, FCS-UDELAR, MTSS, SNIC, OIT, ONUMUJERES.

[652] Own elaboration based on BPS, Social Security Indicators, 2026.

[653] Comisión de Expertos en Seguridad Social. NOTA TÉCNICA Nº1 Proyección de la Población de Uruguay a 2100. 27 November 2020.

[654] Batthyány, K., Genta, N. and Perrotta, V. (2018) *Uso de licencias parentales y roles de género en el cuidado* [Use of parental leave and gender roles in caregiving]. Departamento de Sociología, FCS-UDELAR, MTSS, SNIC, OIT, ONUMUJERES.

[655] Ibid.

[656] Own calculation based on BPS, Social Security Indicators, 2022.

Between April 2024 and April 2025, there was a decrease of 9.42 per cent. A monthly average of 2,001 (individuals on Parental leave) were recorded in April 2025 and they were 2,035 in April 2026.[657]

Among the users of part-time leave (Parental Care Allowance), men represent two per cent, a proportion that has remained stable in recent years. The reasons why the use of part-time leave is fundamentally by women are of a design nature. Couples must choose if it is the father or mother who takes part-time leave. Societal gendered norms associate mothers with being the best caregivers, especially in the first six months of babies' lives.

As observed in international precedents, when either parent is eligible for the benefit, it is normally used by women. In Uruguay, use reflects a rigid gender contract in social representations around childcare. The impact of social representations around childcare is reinforced by the state's strong promotion of exclusive breastfeeding in the first 6 months. National regulations adopted in 2009 (Ministry of Public Health Ordinance 217/09) establish the importance of exclusive nursing in the first 6 months, and supplementary breastfeeding up to the age of 2 years, while defining the obligations of health services in that regard. Such recommendations form part of campaigns conducted by the state and health provider institutions. In other words, the shared use of part-time leave is discouraged by an apparent contradiction: on the one hand, women are advised to breastfeed their children during the first 6 months and, on the other, they are afforded the opportunity to transfer their right to part-time leave to their partners in the same six months.[658]

Results of the *National Parental Leave Survey*, implemented in 2017, showed that men's major reason (72.1 per cent) for not using part-time leave was its overlap with the nursing period. The next most frequent reason given by fathers (6 out of 10) was that they believed the baby is better cared for by mothers. One-third of the men replied that caring for babies in the 1st year of life is the task of mothers.[659]

During 2025, with the new government that took office in March, the Social Dialogue on Social Protection and Care was implemented. It was a national participatory process convened by the Uruguayan Government and coordinated by the Office of Planning and Budget (OPP). It brought together representatives from government institutions, social organizations, academia, social partners, political actors, and citizens to discuss the future of Uruguay's social protection system. The process focused on four main areas: childhood protection, the care system, protection for people during their working lives, and pensions. Regarding care-related leave policies, the final recommendations emphasize the need to strengthen the framework of leave entitlements as part of a broader care system. The document highlights the importance of promoting co-responsibility in caregiving, advancing gender equality, improving the reconciliation of work and

[657] Social Security Indicators, Social Security Institute (BPS), 2026.
[658] Batthyány, K. and Perrotta, V. (2018) 'Maternity/paternity and paid employment: progress in and obstacles to the exercise of the right to care in Uruguay', *Journal of the Ministry of Employment and Social Security Economics and Sociology,* Vol. 136. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/37432019/Revista_del_Ministerio_de_Empleo_y_Seguridad_Social.
[659] Ibid.

family life, and ensuring better conditions for the care of children during their early years. The recommendations are presented as part of a broader strategy aimed at expanding care protections and supporting families throughout the life cycle. These recommendations are expected to be incorporated into a bill that the government will submit to parliament during the current legislative session.

d. Childcare leave and career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other family-employment related measures

No information available.

Vietnam[660]

Ngoc Luong and **An Huy Tran** (Bielefeld University)

April 2026

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the Leave Network website). To contact authors of country notes, see the members page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (Maternity regime: *Chế độ thai sản*) (responsibility of Ministry of Finance/the Vietnam Social Security[661] as stated in the 2024 Law on Social Insurance and the 2019 Labour Code)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 6 months for the first and third child onward: 2 months may be taken before the birth; 7 months for the second birth: 2 months may be taken before the birth.
- Female employees are also entitled to a 'leave for convalescence and health rehabilitation' within the first 30 working days after the Maternity leave period:
  - A maximum of 10 days for a multiple birth
  - Up to 7 days for a surgical birth
  - Up to 5 days for other cases.
  - The number of leave days is jointly decided by the employer and the Trade Union at the grassroots level or solely decided by the employer if there is no grassroots Trade Union.

[660] Please cite as: Luong, N. and Tran, A.H. (2026) 'Vietnam country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, Á., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/

[661] Vietnam Social Security (VSS) is a governmental agency under the management of the Ministry of Finance, managing the implementation of social and health insurance regimes and policies; managing the unemployment insurance regime; as well as managing the funds for social, health, and unemployment insurance in accordance with the law. The functions, tasks, powers and organizational structure of the Vietnam Social Security: https://baohiemxahoi.gov.vn/gioithieu/Pages/chuc-nang-nhiem-vu.aspx

Payment, funding and taxation

- Maternity leave: 100 per cent of average earnings for the 6 months before leave on which social insurance premiums are based.
- One-time maternity allowance for voluntary social insurance contributors: VND2,000,000 [€66.70]/child for contributors or the wife of contributors.
- Leave for convalescence and health rehabilitation: 30 per cent of the basic salary per day (30% x VND2,340,000 [€78.04][662] = VND702,000 [€23.41] per day).[663]
- The payments are not taxed.
- Funded by the Social Insurance Fund (*Quỹ Bảo hiểm Xã hội*), managed by the Vietnam Social Security, which is financed by social security contributions from employers and employees (coming from those who participate in social insurance contributions s).[664]

Flexibility in use

- Female employees can negotiate with their employers for additional unpaid leave after the statutory leave period (no restriction on how long the unpaid leave can be).
- Female employees can return to work after they have taken at least 4 months of Maternity leave, if requested by the employee and agreed by the employer. Employees have to obtain a confirmation document from a qualified medical establishment stating that the early resumption of work does not negatively affect their health condition. In this case, the employees are still entitled to maternity benefit following the social insurance law plus the normal salary.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Female employees who are Vietnamese citizen, and who work with indefinite-term, definite-term from one month; or are cadres, civil servants and public employees; or are defence workers and employees, public security workers and persons doing other jobs in cipher organizations; or officers and professional non-commissioned officers and officers and technical non-commissioned officers of the people's public security and army; or salaried managers of enterprises, representatives of enterprise capitals; or controllers and representatives of state capitals, or management and union positions of cooperatives; or persons working on a part-time basis in communes, villages and residential quarters; or owners of registered business households.

[662] Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using: https://www.xe.com/.
[663] The basic salary rate in Vietnam is VND2,340,000 [€78.04] per month: https://thuvienphapluat.vn/van-ban/Lao-dong-Tien-luong/Nghi-dinh-73-2024-ND-CP-muc-luong-co-so-che-do-tien-thuong-can-bo-cong-chuc-luc-luong-vu-trang-615447.aspx?anchor=dieu_3
[664] Employees and employers are both required to contribute to the social insurance managed by the Vietnam Social Security (VSS). The contribution is based on employees' monthly gross wage. Employees are required to pay an eight per cent rate for the mandatory social insurance and employers are required to contribute 17.5 per cent.

- Female employees of non-Vietnamese citizenship who work legally (having a work permit) with indefinite-term contract or a fixed term contract of at least 1 year with an employer in Vietnam.[665]
- Female employees must have contributed to the social insurance system for at least 6 months within 24 months before childbirth for mothers who cease work for infertility treatment (2024 Social Insurance Law).
- For voluntary social insurance contributors: The mothers or her husband must have contributed to the voluntary social insurance system for at least 6 months within the 12 months before childbirth.[666]
- Overall, only a minority of women are eligible (see 4a)

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- If the employee is pregnant with multiple children, the length of the Maternity leave is extended by 1 month for each additional child.
- In the case of a miscarriage, abortion, intrauterine foetal demise, stillbirths occurring during labour or ectopic pregnancy, a female employee may take Maternity leave as prescribed by a competent health establishment. The maximum leave period depends on how far the pregnancy has proceeded before the miscarriage etc.: 10 days for a pregnancy under 5 weeks; 20 days for a pregnancy between 5 weeks and under 13 weeks; 40 days for a pregnancy between 13 weeks and under 22 weeks; and 50 days for a pregnancy of 22 weeks or more. In case of stillbirths or foetal death during labour for a pregnancy of 22 weeks or more, a female employee and her husband are entitled to Maternity leave as in the case of giving birth if they have contributed to the social insurance system for at least 6 months within the 12 months before childbirth.

  The payment is calculated based on a monthly allowance divided by 24 days; the monthly allowance is equal to 100 per cent of average earnings during the 6 months before the leave on which social insurance contributions are based or the average of earnings during the months for which social insurance contributions have been paid if the employee has paid social insurance contribution for under 6 months.
- In the case of a postnatal death of a child under 2 months of age, the mother is entitled to continue a 4 month leave, counted from the date of childbirth; in the case of the death of a child older than 2 months of age, the mother is entitled to a 2 month leave, counted from the date of the child's death. However, the Maternity leave period must not exceed the statutory 6-months period.
- If the mother, who is eligible for the Maternity leave, dies in or after childbirth, her (remaining) post-natal leave is transferred to the father or another direct guardian. If the mother dies and she has not accumulated enough contributory time within the social insurance system to be entitled to the Maternity leave, the father or the direct guardian is entitled to

[665] Except for internal travel within the enterprise, being at retirement age when signing the labour contract or other provisions by treaties to which Vietnam is a contracting party.

[666] In many cases, the employers have collected the contributions from the female employees but have not paid to VSS which can affect the actual maternity entitlement.

Maternity leave until the child reaches 6 months of age. If the mother dies, the father or the direct guardian who currently contributes to social insurance but does not take transferred Maternity leave is entitled to both their regular salary and the Maternity leave for the remaining period applicable to the mother.

- If the mother dies in childbirth or faces a postnatal risk certified by a competent health establishment that she is unable to take care of the child and only the father is covered by social insurance, the father is entitled to a Maternity leave until the child reaches 6 months of age.
- A surrogate mother is entitled to Maternity leave and benefits as a normal female employee, except that she can take Maternity leave only until the time of relinquishing the child to the intended mother. However, the minimum length of leave is 60 days and the maximum length of leave is 6 months from the childbirth regardless of the relinquishing date. An intended mother is entitled to Maternity leave from the time of receiving the child until when the child reaches 6 months of age.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or right to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave ("*chế độ thai sản cho nam giới có vợ sinh con*") (responsibility of Ministry of Finance/the Vietnam Social Security as stated in the 2024 Social Insurance Law and the 2019 Labor Code)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 5 working days.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of average earnings for the 6 months before leave on which social insurance premiums are based, or the average salary of the months for which social insurance contributions have been paid in case the employee has less than 6 months of social insurance contributions.
- A male employee is entitled to a one-time lump sum payment equivalent to two times basic salary pay rate per child (VND4,680,000 [€156.07]) in specific cases if he contributes to the social insurance system (see more on Eligibility)
- Payments are made to the parent either in cash directly at the local Social Insurance Agencies, or through the employer, or transferred directly to their bank account.
- Taxed and funded as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be taken within the first 60 days after the birth.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Male employees, whose wives give birth to children (including surrogate mothers in surrogacy arrangements), are entitled to Paternity leave if they currently pay social insurance contributions. Same-sex and co-inhabiting couples are not recognized in Vietnam for any legal benefit entitlement, including Maternity and Paternity leave and benefit.
- Male employees who are Vietnamese citizen and who: work with indefinite-term, definite-term or seasonal labour contracts; have from 3 to 12 months full-time contracts; are cadres, civil servants and public employees; who work in defence, public security or cipher agencies (i.e., governmental agencies under the Ministry of Defence specialising in cryptogram, coding and decoding); officers and professional non-commissioned officers and officers and technical non-commissioned officers of the people's public security and army; or salaried managers of enterprises and cooperatives.
- Male employees of non-Vietnamese citizenship who work legally (having a work permit) with indefinite-term contract or a fixed term contract of at least 1 year with an employer in Vietnam.
- For one-time maternity allowance: Male employees whose wives are not eligible to maternity leave, must have contributed to the social insurance system for at least 6 months within the 12 months before childbirth.[667]

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- The length of leave can be extended beyond 5 days, depending on the type of birth and the number of children born. In particular:
  - 7 working days in case of a surgical birth or a birth before 32 weeks of pregnancy.
  - 10 working days in case of twins or the birth of the second child in case of multiple births, the length of leave is extended for 3 additional working days for each additional child.
  - 14 working days in case of a surgical multiple birth.

- If the wife dies after giving birth, the father is also entitled to a one-time maternity allowance for each child. Plus, the husband is entitled to maternity benefits for the remaining period that the mother has not yet taken.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or right to postpone)

- None reported.

[667] In many cases, the employers have collected the contributions from the female employees but have not paid to VSS which can affect the actual maternity entitlement.

c. Parental leave

No statutory entitlement.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- In the case of the adoption of a child who is younger than 6 months of age, employees are entitled to Maternity leave and benefits until the child reaches 6 months. If both parents are covered by social insurance, either the father or the mother is entitled to Maternity leave.

Time off for the care of dependants

- When parents are covered by social insurance, both or one of them can take **leave to care for sick children** under 7 years of age, with the certification of a competent health establishment. The allowed number of leave days per parent depends on the age of the children: up to 20 working days per year if the child is under 3 years of age; up to 15 working days per year if the child is between 3 and 7 years of age. Payment is based on the number of leave days x a monthly allowance equivalent to 75 per cent of earnings in the month preceding leave on which social insurance contributions are based and divided by 24 days.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- A female employee with a child under 12 months of age is entitled to a 60 minute break for breastfeeding, lactating, or resting during every working day with full pay.[668] The break time can be chosen and must be informed to the employer in advance. If the employee does not want to take the break and if agreed by the employers, she is entitled to extra payment for the additional hour of work.

Flexible working for carers

- According to the 2019 Labour Code (Article 137 – Maternity protection), employers must not require female employees to work nightshifts, work overtime, or go on long-distance working trips if (i) they reach 7 months or more of pregnancy (or 6 months or more of pregnancy in case they work in highland, deep-lying, remote, border or island areas); or (ii) they are raising children under 12 months of age (unless the workers agree).
- If the pregnant female employees is engaged in heavy, hazardous, dangerous work that can negatively affect their ability to reproduce and nurse children during pregnancy, their employees should assign them to safer and less laborious tasks or reduce 1 working hour per working day

[668] According to the 2019 Labour Code and Decree 145/2020/ND-CP.

without reducing their salaries, rights, and benefits. This regulation applies until the female employees' children reach 12 months old.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- During pregnancy, a female employee is allowed fully paid leave on 5 occasions for prenatal check-ups. The length of each period of leave is up to 2 working days.

Other provisions of leave

- None reported

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of paid post-natal leave is 6 months, unless the employee negotiates a longer period with their employer. There is no entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), and the compulsory school age is 6 years.

According to the 2019 Law on Education, public and private nurseries (for children from the age of 3 months to 3 years), kindergartens (for children from 3 to 6 years), and preschools (for children from 3 months to 6 years) are allowed to provide ECEC for children from 3 months to 6 years old. Yet, the majority of public nurseries only take in and provide ECEC for children starting from 12 months of age. Private nurseries take children from 5 months of age. In 2009, the Vietnamese government approved universal access to ECEC for children aged 5 years; even though attendance is not mandatory, 99 per cent of 5-year-old children now attend.[669]

No information for ECEC attendance levels in 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the cross-country tables at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

The revision of the 2014 Social Insurance Law was approved on 29 June 2024, and came into effect on 1 July 2025 with the following changes:

- Expansion of Maternity leave coverage
  - New groups: defence employees, management positions at state capital enterprises and cooperatives, persons working on a part-time basis in communes, villages and residential quarters, owners of registered business households.
  - New types of labour contract: employees with labour contract from one month (instead of 3 months) and people working part-time (only full-time employees were covered previously) and having monthly salary equal to or

[669] Nguyễn, H.T.T. and Boyd, W. (2022) 'Early Childhood Education in Vietnam', in L.P. Symaco and M. Hayden (eds.) *International Handbook on Education in South East Asia*, Singapore: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-8136-3_35-1

higher than the lowest salary on which compulsory social insurance premiums are based.

- Expansion of eligible conditions for maternity benefits
  - Surrogating mothers, who have paid social insurance contributions for at least 12 months and have paid social insurance contributions for at least 3 months within the 12 months before childbirth, are also entitled to taking a leave during pregnancy for pregnancy care.
  - Female employees who cease work for infertility treatment are entitled to maternity leave benefits if they have contributed to the social insurance system for at least 6 months within the 24 months (instead of 12 months) before childbirth.
  - Female employees undergoing any type of abortion, not just for pathological abortion as stipulated in the previous regulations, are entitled to maternity benefits.
- Increase of maternity benefits
  - Eligible female employees and their husband may take Maternity leave as for regular birth in case of a miscarriage, abortion, intrauterine foetal death, or stillbirths occurring during labour after 22 weeks of pregnancy.
  - The length of prenatal check-up leave increase from one to up to two working days for all, regardless of pregnancy conditions or residential locations which were the conditions for previous 2-day check-up entitlements.
  - Maternity allowances which are based on basic salary increase thanks to the raise of basic salary from VND1,800,000 [€60.02] to VND2,340,000 [€78.04]/month from July 2024.
- Extension in the time period in which Paternity leave can be taken
  - Male employees can take their Paternity leave within 60 days after the childbirth, an extension of the 30 days in the previous version of the law.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

Only 30 percent of Vietnamese women giving birth are covered by the Maternity leave and benefit. The majority of the remaining uncovered women are those working in the informal sectors.[670]

b. Paternity leave

No information available.

c. Parental leave

No statutory leave entitlement.

[670] Vietnam's Women Union (2024) 'Maternity regime should apply to all women, including workers in informal sector'. Available at: https://hoilhpn.org.vn/web/guest/tin-chi-tiet/-/chi-tiet/che-%C4%91o-thai-san-can-%C4%91uoc-ap-dung-cho-tat-ca-phu-nu-ke-ca-lao-%C4%91ong-tu-do-60378-1801.html

d. Other employment-related measures

No information available.

5. Technical Appendix

What is the International Review?

The *International Review of Leave Policies & Research* provides comparable information on leave policies in participating countries in the form of country notes. Each country note is organised in four sections: Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents; Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy; Changes in policy since the preceding review; and Take-up of leave. Before 2018, the review also included a fifth section on Research and publications.

Types of leave covered are: Maternity leave; Paternity leave; Parental leave; Childcare leave and Career breaks; and Other employment-related measures, including leave to care for sick or disabled relatives, other provisions of leave (e.g., bereavement leave), breastfeeding breaks and flexible working for carers. Definitions of each main type of leave are given at https://www.leavenetwork.org/leave-policies-research/defining-policies/. Information on each type of leave in country notes is organised using a common format.

In addition, the International Review has several comparative tables, enabling comparison to be made between participating countries. The formatting of these tables was revised in 2024, to make them more user-friendly. As of 2024, the tables are also accompanied by open-source Excel data, making it easier to reuse the data.

Information included in the International Review refers to a common reference date, usually April in the year of publication.

The International Review is published online, both as a complete document and disaggregated into individual countries and cross-national tables. An archive of previous reviews, going back to 2005, is also available online.

How is the review produced?

Country notes are produced by one or more national experts, usually members of the *International Network on Leave Policies and Research*. After a country note is initially prepared, the authors are requested to review and update it each year. The International Review is overseen and edited by an editorial group, currently consisting of six network members; each year, one member of the team assumes the role of lead editor.

For each edition of the International Review, countries are allocated between members of the editorial team. Members then contact the national experts for the countries for which they are responsible, asking the experts to review and update the previous year's country note. The editors then review and edit the revised country notes, returning the edited country note to national experts for them to check; editors will also ask experts to clarify any points that are not clear. Once

the national experts respond, the country note is considered finalised for the current year. Most of the work on reviewing and updating the cross-national tables is undertaken by the lead editor

As there is no funding available to permit a thorough copy edit by a professional copy editor, one member of the editorial team undertakes a limited copy edit of the whole review before it is published.

Overall, the International Review depends on the knowledge and experience of the national experts who author and revise country notes. However, **the editorial team always welcome comments from users of the International Review, either raising queries about country notes and comparative tables, or making suggestions about items for inclusion in future editions.**

The International Review does not receive any direct funding although the indirect support from the institutions of contributors is gratefully acknowledged.

How are countries selected for the review?

When the International Review was begun, in 2005, the first countries to be included reflected the membership of the network as it then stood. As the network has gained new members from new countries, so too has the review expanded to include those countries.

The majority of the countries covered by the International Review are European, and in recent years a proactive attempt has been made to include all European Union member states as well as all OECD member states. However, the International Review now also includes many non-European/OECD countries. It was recently decided to limit new entrants in any one year to two countries given the extra time that it takes to develop a new country note.

Format and house style

The format of the International Review is decided by the editorial team, in consultation with the network's coordinators and network members. Over time, new items have been included, in response to changing conditions or emerging interests.

The house style conventions, used in editing the International Review, stem from a period when the International Review was funded and published by a UK government department. The department requested the review use its 'style guide'. Although no longer funded and published by the department, the editors have mostly continued to use the house style.

Some technical notes

- For presenting financial amounts, e.g. payment to people taking leave, the reference currency used is the Euro. Other national currencies are expressed in Euros based on the exchange rate at a common date shortly before the International Review is published.

- All information about leave policies refers to a common reference date given at the top of each country note, usually April of the year in which the International Review is published. Any changes in leave policies scheduled to be introduced after this date are *not* included in Section 1, which provides information on leave policies at the common reference date; such upcoming changes may, however, be noted in Section 3, on 'Changes in policy'.
- Duration of leave uses a common duration period. If that duration is months but the period of leave in a country is expressed as weeks, weeks are converted to months on the basis of 4.3 weeks=1 month, i.e. 12 weeks would be expressed as 2.8 months.