

Parental leave

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Parental leave

- *Parental leave, or family leave, is an employee benefit available in almost all countries.*
- *The term "parental leave" may include maternity, paternity, and adoption leave; or may be used distinctively from "maternity leave" and "paternity leave" to describe separate family leave available to either parent to care for small children.*

Parental leave, or family leave, is an employee benefit available in almost all countries. The term "parental leave" may include maternity, paternity, and adoption leave; or may be used distinctively from "maternity leave" and "paternity leave" to describe separate family leave available to either parent to care for small children. In some countries and jurisdictions, "family leave" also includes leave provided to care for ill family members. Often, the minimum benefits and eligibility requirements are stipulated by law.

Unpaid parental or family leave is provided when an employer is required to hold an employee's job while that employee is taking leave. Paid parental or family leave provides paid time off work to care for or make arrangements for the welfare of a child or dependent family member. The three most common models of funding are social insurance/social security (where employees, employers, or taxpayers in general contribute to a specific public fund), employer liability (where the employer must pay the employee for the length of leave), and mixed policies that combine both social security and employer liability.

Parental leave has been available as a legal right and/or governmental program for many years, in one form or another. In 2014, the International Labour Organization reviewed parental leave policies in 185 countries and territories, and found that all countries except Papua New Guinea have laws mandating some form of parental leave. A different study showed that of 186 countries examined, 96% offered some pay to mothers during leave, but only 44% of those countries offered the same for fathers. The United States, Suriname, Papua New Guinea, and a few island countries in the Pacific Ocean are the only countries in the United Nations that do not require employers to provide paid time off for new parents.

Private employers sometimes provide either or both unpaid and paid parental leave outside of or in addition to any legal mandate.

Economic models

Benefits of universal, paid parental leave

Capabilities approach

- *Universal, paid parental leave is an example resource states can provide so people have the option of starting a family while also working; for instance, under capacity 10 (control of one's environment), the state has a responsibility to ensure all people have "the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others."*

Jeremiah Carter and Martha Nussbaum have developed a political model known as the capabilities approach, where basic freedoms and opportunities are included in economic assessments of a country's well-being, in addition to GDP. Nussbaum proposed 11 central capabilities as the minimum requirement for a decent society. In Nussbaum's model, states should provide the resources and freedoms to ensure people have the opportunity to achieve a minimum threshold of each central capability. Universal, paid parental leave is an example resource states can provide so people have the option of starting a family while also working; for instance, under capacity 10 (control of one's environment), the state has a responsibility to ensure all people have "the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others."

Income and workforce

- *Parental leave increases income at the household level, as well, by supporting dual-earner families.*
- *Paid parental leave incentivizes labor market attachment for women both before and after birth, affecting GDP and national productivity, as the workforce is larger.*
- *Paid parental leave incentivizes childbirth, which affects the future workforce.*

Paid parental leave incentivizes labor market attachment for women both before and after birth, affecting GDP and national productivity, as the workforce is larger. Parental leave increases income at the household level, as well, by supporting dual-earner families.

Paid parental leave incentivizes childbirth, which affects the future workforce. It is thus argued that paid parental leave, in contrast to unpaid parental leave, is harmful to children's welfare because in countries with an aging workforce or countries with sub-replacement fertility, children are born not because the parents want the child and can meet the child's needs but because children are expected to support their parents. Some see children as responsible for supporting all those in older generations in the society (not just the child's

specific parents); their earnings are expected not to be saved for the children's own old age, but to be spent on the earlier generations' demand for social security and pensions for which there was inadequate savings.

Challenges to universal, paid leave

Statistical discrimination

- *The neoclassical model of labor markets predicts that if the cost of hiring women of child-bearing years is anticipated to increase (either because the employer is mandated to pay for maternity leave, or because she will be absent from work on public leave), then the "demand" for women in the labor market will decrease.*

The neoclassical model of labor markets predicts that if the cost of hiring women of child-bearing years is anticipated to increase (either because the employer is mandated to pay for maternity leave, or because she will be absent from work on public leave), then the "demand" for women in the labor market will decrease. While gender discrimination is illegal, without some kind of remedy, the neoclassical model would predict "statistical discrimination" against hiring women of child-bearing years. To counteract this, some countries have introduced policies to increase rates of paternity leave, to spread the cost impact more evenly across the labor market.

Occupational sex segregation

- *The study found that while in the "family-friendly" sector, there was basically no wage loss related to taking parental leave, women did have consistent earnings loss in the "non-family-friendly" private sector for one year's leave.*
- *Women may seek out employment sectors that are "family-friendly" (i.e., with generous parental leave policies), resulting in occupational sex segregation.*

If women take long parental leaves, the neoclassical model would predict that their lifetime earnings and opportunities for promotion will be less than their male or childfree counterparts, or the "motherhood penalty." Women may seek out employment sectors that are "family-friendly" (i.e., with generous parental leave policies), resulting in occupational sex segregation. Nielsen, Simonsen, and Verner examine what the different outcomes for women in Denmark are between the "family-friendly" and the "non-family-friendly" sector. In Denmark, the public sector is "family-friendly" because of its generous leave and employee benefits; workers decide which sector to work on based on their preferences and opportunities. The study found that while in the "family-friendly" sector, there was basically no wage loss related to taking parental leave, women did have consistent earnings loss in the "non-family-friendly" private sector for one year's leave.

Cost

- *Universal, paid parental leave can be privately funded (i.e., corporations are mandated to absorb the cost of paid parental time off as part of employee benefits) or publicly funded (i.e., transferred directly to workers on leave, like unemployment insurance).*
- *Datta Gupta, Smith, & Verneer found in 2008 that, while publicly funded parental leave has benefits, it is very expensive to fund and question if it is the most cost-effective use of funds.*

Universal, paid parental leave can be privately funded (i.e., corporations are mandated to absorb the cost of paid parental time off as part of employee benefits) or publicly funded (i.e., transferred directly to workers on leave, like unemployment insurance). Concerns about private funding include the statistical discrimination described above as well as the costs to smaller businesses. Datta Gupta, Smith, & Verneer found in 2008 that, while publicly funded parental leave has benefits, it is very expensive to fund and question if it is the most cost-effective use of funds.

Criticism of the 'Father Quota'

- *The father's quota is a policy implemented by some countries or companies which reserves a part of the parental leave or other types of family leave for the father.*
- *For more, see Paternity leave and its effects.*
- *If the father does not take this reserved part of leave, the family loses that leave period -- that is, it cannot be transferred to the mother.*

The father's quota is a policy implemented by some countries or companies which reserves a part of the parental leave or other types of family leave for the father. If the father does not take this reserved part of leave, the family loses that leave period -- that is, it cannot be transferred to the mother. Given the high rates of women's participation in the formal labor force in many parts of the world, there is increasing interest among social scientists and policymakers in supporting a more equal division of labor between partners. Early critics questioned whether such policies were evidence-based and expressed concern that they were "a social experiment, the effects of which are unknown". Studies undertaken since then have shown that paternity leave improves bonds between fathers and children and also helps mitigate the wage gap women face after taking maternity leave. Other psychological perspectives summarise evidence and find that the role of a father in child development is very similar to that of a mother, counteracting the concern that greater paternal involvement in childcare could lead to unforeseen negative consequences. Some criticism is less concerned about the idea of paternity leave than about the fact that laws or companies do not allow that time to be allocated to the mother instead. Critics argue that the quota harms mothers, depriving them of much needed leave, trivializes biological realities, and is an example of discrimination against mothers.

For more, see Paternity leave and its effects.

Comparison between countries

- *Comparison between countries in term of employee benefits to leave for parents are often attempted, but these are very difficult to make, because of the complexity of types of leave available and because terms such as maternity leave, paternity leave, pre-natal leave, post-natal leave, parental leave, family leave and home-care leave, have different meanings in different jurisdictions.*

Comparison between countries in term of employee benefits to leave for parents are often attempted, but these are very difficult to make, because of the complexity of types of leave available and because terms such as maternity leave, paternity leave, pre-natal leave, post-natal leave, parental leave, family leave and home-care leave, have different meanings in different jurisdictions. Such terms may often be used incorrectly. Comparing the length of maternity leave (which is common in international rankings) may say very little about the situation of a family in a specific country. A country for example may have a long maternity leave but a short (or non existent) parental or family leave, or vice-versa. In the European Union, each country has its own policies, which vary significantly, but all the EU members must abide by the minimum standards of the Pregnant Workers Directive and Parental Leave Directive.

Sometimes there is a distortion in how maternity leave is reported and delimited from other types of leave, especially in jurisdictions where there is no clear legal term of "maternity leave", and such term is used informally to denote either the minimum or the maximum period of parental leave reserved by quota to the mother. Some countries may be listed artificially as having more or less generous benefits. Sweden is sometimes listed in international statistics as having 480 days' "maternity leave", although these days include parental leave. As such, Sweden is often quoted as having an exceptionally long leave, although there are several countries with significantly longer leave, when maternity leave and other leaves are added, where a parent may take leave until a child is 3 years of age.

Effects of parental leave

- *The effects of parental leave on the labor market include an increase in employment, changes in wages, and fluctuations in the rate of employees returning to work.*
- *Typically, the effects of parental leave are improvements in prenatal and postnatal care, including a decrease in infant mortality.*
- *Leave legislation can also impact fertility rates.*

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Effects on the labor market

- *A study of California's leave policy, the first state in the U.S. to require employers to offer paid parental leave, showed that wages did increase.*
- *Parental leave can lead to greater job security.*
- *It does not appear that parental leave policies have had a significant effect on the gender wage gap, which has remained relatively steady since the late 1980s, despite increasing adoption of parental leave policies.*

A study in Germany found that wages decreased by 18 percent for every year an employee spends on parental leave. However, after the initial decrease in wages, the employee's salary rebounds faster than the salary of someone not offered parental leave. A study of California's leave policy, the first state in the U.S. to require employers to offer paid parental leave, showed that wages did increase.

Parental leave can lead to greater job security. Studies differ in how this helps return to work after taking time off. Some studies show that if a parent is gone for more than a year after the birth of a child, it decreases the possibility that he or she will return. Other studies of shorter leave periods show that parents no longer need to quit their jobs in order to care for their children, so employment return increases.

It does not appear that parental leave policies have had a significant effect on the gender wage gap, which has remained relatively steady since the late 1980s, despite increasing adoption of parental leave policies.

Maternity leave and its effects

- *Although this legislation thus appears to have minimal effect on women choosing to take leave, it does appear to increase the time women take in leave.*
- *Alternatively, these policies could be positive for employers who previously did not offer leave because they were worried about attracting employees who were disproportionately likely to use maternity leave.*

In the U.S., while the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 allows for unpaid parental leave, parents often do not utilize this eligibility to its fullest extent as it is unaffordable. As a result, some studies show that the FMLA has had a limited impact on how much leave new parents take. Though specific amounts can vary, having a child (including the cost of high-quality childcare) costs families approximately \$11,000 in the first year. These high costs contribute to new mothers in the United States returning to work quicker than new mothers in European countries; approximately one third of women in the United States return to work within three months of giving birth, compared to approximately five per cent in the UK, Germany, and Sweden, and just over half of mothers in the United States with a child under the age of one work.

There is some evidence that legislation for parental leave raises the likelihood of women returning to their previous jobs as opposed to finding a new job. This rise is thought to fall

to between 10% and 17%. Simultaneously, there is a decrease in the percentage of women who find new jobs which falls between 6% and 11%. Thus, such legislation appears to increase how many women return to work post-childbirth by around 3% or 4%.

Additionally, it appears that parental leave policies do allow women to stay home longer before returning to work as the probability of returning to an old job falls in the second month after childbirth before dramatically rising in the third month. Although this legislation thus appears to have minimal effect on women choosing to take leave, it does appear to increase the time women take in leave.

Maternity leave legislation could pose benefits or harm to employers. The main potential drawback of mandated leave is its potential to disrupt productive activities by raising rates of employee absenteeism. With mandated leave for a certain period of time and facing prolonged absence of the mothers in the workplace, firms will be faced with two options: hire a temp (which could involve training costs) or function with a missing employee. Alternatively, these policies could be positive for employers who previously did not offer leave because they were worried about attracting employees who were disproportionately likely to use maternity leave. Thus, there is potential for these policies to correct market failures. A drawback of rising leave at the societal level, however, is the resulting decrease in female labor supply. In countries with a high demand for labor, including many present-day countries with aging populations, a smaller labor supply is unfavorable.

Something important to note for all the research cited above is that the results typically depend on how leave coverage is defined, and whether the policies are for unpaid or paid leave. Policies guaranteeing paid leave are considered by some to be dramatically more effective than unpaid-leave policies.

For women individually, long breaks in employment, as would come from parental leave, negatively affects their careers. Longer gaps are associated with reduced lifetime earnings and lower pension disbursements as well as worsened career prospects and reduced earnings. Due to these drawbacks, some countries, notably Norway, have expanded family policy initiatives to increase the father's quota and expand childcare in an effort to work towards greater gender equality.

According to a 2016 study, the expansion of government-funded maternity leave in Norway from 18 to 35 weeks led mothers to spend more time at home without a reduction in family income.

Paternity leave and its effects

- *When guaranteed leave is unpaid, research indicates that men's leave usage is unaffected.*
- *Consequently, middle class fathers may be more likely to use their allotment of leave right after the mother returns to work, while working class fathers may opt to take their leave during the mother's leave.*

- *Although parental leave is increasingly granted to fathers, mothers continue to take the majority of guaranteed parental leave.*
- *As of 2016 paternity leave accounts for 25% of paid parental leave in Sweden.*

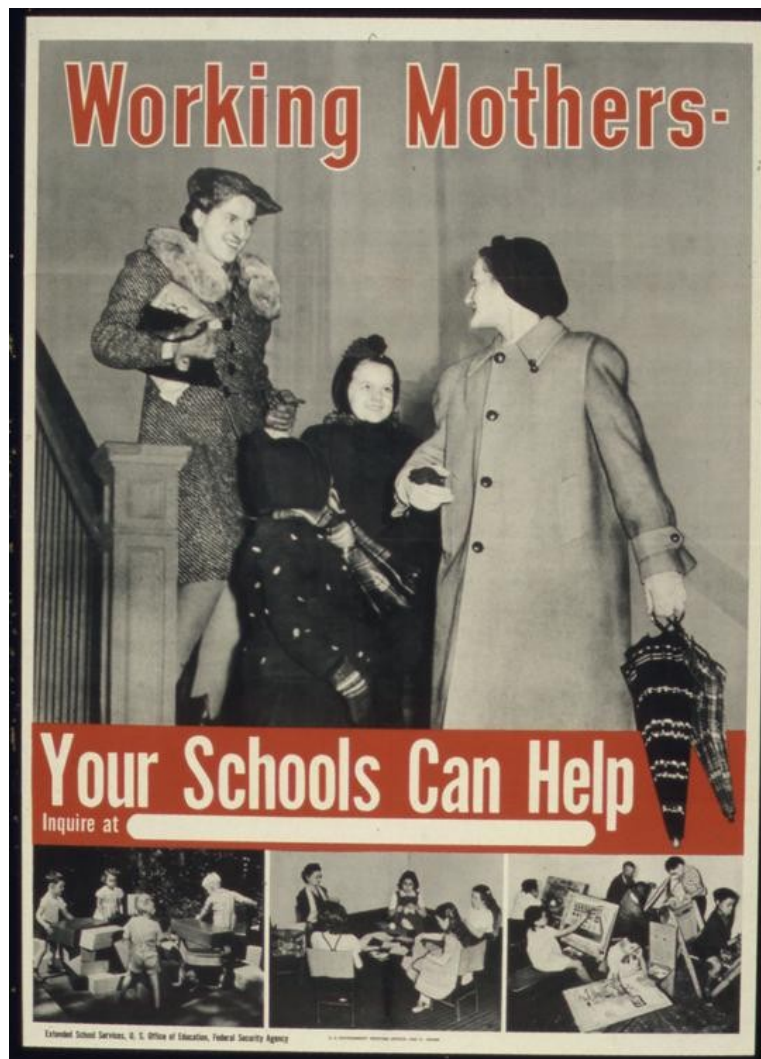
Although parental leave is increasingly granted to fathers, mothers continue to take the majority of guaranteed parental leave. When guaranteed leave is unpaid, research indicates that men's leave usage is unaffected. In Germany, where parental leave is guaranteed for both parents, the financial incentive, alone, was not enough to encourage fathers to take paternal leaves. While uncommon on a worldwide scale some countries do reserve parts of the paid leave for the father, meaning it can't be transferred to the mother and lapses unless he uses it. Among the earliest countries to actively push for increased usage of paternity leave are the Nordic welfare states, starting with Sweden making parental leave gender neutral in 1974 and soon followed by Iceland, Denmark, Norway and Finland. These countries lack a unified concept of paternity leave, each imposing different conditions, ratios and timescales, but are regarded as among the most generous in the world.

Partly in an initiative to combat the "Motherhood penalty," Norway in 1993 initiated a policy change to incentivize paternal leave, the so-called "father's quota", and Sweden followed suit in 1995. This means a certain number of parental leave-days can only be used by the father, and are otherwise lost. In countries in which leave entitlements include a father's quota there has been a pronounced impact, with the quota being credited for increasing paternal involvement and challenging gender roles within the family, promoting a more equal division of labor. To evaluate this change, Rønsen & Kitterød looked at the rate and timing of women's return to work after giving birth, and the effect on this of the new parental leave policy. In their 2015 study, Rønsen & Kitterød found women in Norway returned to work significantly faster after the policy change. However, public or subsidized daycare was greatly expanded at the same time, so Rønsen & Kitterød did not find that the "father's quota" was solely responsible for the timing of work entry. But it can be understood to have an effect on division of household labor by gender when both parents can take time to care for a new baby.

Another impact from fathers taking more leaves is that in Norway, it has been shown to have the potential to either decrease or increase the time women take, depending on whether the mother's and father's childcare are seen as substitutes or complements. If substitute goods, mothers are able to return to work sooner as fathers take some of the childcare responsibility. Research has suggested a class element is at play: middle class fathers consider themselves a suitable alternative to the mother as primary caregiver, while working class men may see themselves more as supporters of their partner during her leave. Consequently, middle class fathers may be more likely to use their allotment of leave right after the mother returns to work, while working class fathers may opt to take their leave during the mother's leave. In some cases, longer leave for fathers can motivate mothers to also stay home.

Fathers tend to use less parental leave than mothers in the United States as well as in other countries where paid leave is available, and this difference may have factors other than the

financial constraints which impact both parents. Bygren and Duvander, looking at the use of parental leave by fathers in Sweden, concluded that fathers' workplace characteristics (including the size of the workplace, whether there were more men or women in the workplace, and whether the workplace was part of the private or public sector) influenced the length of parental leave for fathers, as did the presence of other men who had taken parental leave at an earlier point in time. As of 2016 paternity leave accounts for 25% of paid parental leave in Sweden.



Family policy during World War II when women were recruited into the workplace

Length of leave

- *Rasmussen found the increased length of parental leave had no negative effect on women's wages or employment, and in the short-run (i.e., 12 months) it had a positive effect on women's wages, compared to the shorter leave.*

- *Before the reform, women had a mandatory two-month parental leave, and could take up to three years' unpaid parental leave with their job guaranteed, though most women only took the two months.*
- *They were interested in the economic effects of full-time, short paid parental leave.*

In 2013, Joseph, Pailhé, Recotillet, and Solaz published a natural experiment evaluating a 2004 policy change in France. They were interested in the economic effects of full-time, short paid parental leave. Before the reform, women had a mandatory two-month parental leave, and could take up to three years' unpaid parental leave with their job guaranteed, though most women only took the two months. The new policy, *complément libre choix d'activité* (CLCA), guarantees six months of paid parental leave. The authors found positive effects on employment: compared to women in otherwise similar circumstances before the reform, first-time mothers who took the paid leave after the reform were more likely to be employed after their leave, and less likely to stay out of the labor force. The authors point to similar results of full-time, short paid parental leave observed in Canada in 2008 by Baker and Milligan, and in Germany in 2009 by Kluve and Tamm. However, Joseph, et al., also found that wages were lower (relative to women before the reform) for medium- and highly educated women after the leave, which could be because the women returned to work part-time or because of a "motherhood penalty," where employers discriminate against mothers, taking the six-month leave as a "signal" that the woman will not be as good of an employee because of her mothering responsibilities.

Rasmussen conducted analyzed a similar natural experiment in Denmark with a policy change in 1984 where parental leave increased from 14 to 20 weeks. Rasmussen found the increased length of parental leave had no negative effect on women's wages or employment, and in the short-run (i.e., 12 months) it had a positive effect on women's wages, compared to the shorter leave. There was no difference on children's long-term educational outcomes before and after the policy change.

Effects on health and development

- *It found that parents with paid parental leave had closer bonds with their children.*
- *A 10-week leave was associated with a 1–2% decrease; a 20-week leave with 2–4%; and 30 weeks with 7–9%.*
- *To counteract these pressures and encourage paternity leave, some countries have experimented with making paternity leave mandatory or otherwise incentivizing it.*

A Harvard report cited research showing paid maternity leave "facilitates breastfeeding and reduces risk of infection" but is not associated with changes in immunization rate. This research also found that countries with parental leave had lower infant mortality rates. Returning to work within 12 weeks was also associated with fewer regular medical checkups. Data from 16 European countries during the period 1969–1994 revealed that the decrease of infant mortality rates varied based on length of leave. A 10-week leave was associated with a 1–2% decrease; a 20-week leave with 2–4%; and 30 weeks with 7–9%.

The United States, which does not have a paid parental leave law, ranked 56th in the world in 2014 in terms of infant mortality rates, with 6.17 deaths per every 1,000 children born. The research did not find any infant health benefits in countries with unpaid parental leave.

Paid leave, particularly when available prior to childbirth, had a significant effect on birth weight. The frequency of low birth rate decreases under these policies which likely contributes to the decrease in infant mortality rates as low birth weight is strongly correlated with infant death. However, careful analysis reveals that increased birth weight is not the sole reason for the decreased mortality rate.

According to a 2016 study, the expansion of government-funded maternity leave in Norway from 18 to 35 weeks had little effect on children's schooling. However, when infants bond and have their needs met quickly by caregivers (mothers, fathers, etc.) they will become confident and be prepared to have healthy relationships throughout their life.

Children whose mothers did not work in the first 9 months were found to be less ready for school at the age of 3 years. The effects of mothers' employment appeared to be the most detrimental when employment started between the sixth and ninth month of life. The reasons for this were uncertain, but there is conjecture that there was something unusual for the group of mothers who returned to work in this time period as they represented only 5% of all families studied. Negative impacts in terms of school-readiness were most pronounced when the mother worked at least 30 hours per week. These findings were complicated by many factors, including race, poverty, and how sensitive the mother was considered. The effects were also greater in boys which is explained by the fact that many analysts consider boys more vulnerable to stress in early life.

The same Harvard report also linked paid parental leave and a child's psychological health. It found that parents with paid parental leave had closer bonds with their children. Based on research of heterosexual couples, better immersion of the father in the process of raising a child can lead to improved development outcomes for the child and a better relationship between the parents. In recent years, various OECD countries drew attention to the topic, especially to the time of the parental leave taken by fathers, and concluded that short-term paternal leaves still lead to positive outcomes for the child's development. Families do take into account relative income levels of each parent when planning for parental leave; the partner earning a lower wage may be more likely to take parental leave. There is also often workplace pressure on men not to take paternity leave, or to take less than the maximum time allowed. To counteract these pressures and encourage paternity leave, some countries have experimented with making paternity leave mandatory or otherwise incentivizing it.

There are also observable improvements in the mental health of mothers when they are able to return to work later. While the probability of experiencing postpartum depression had no significant statistical change, longer leave (leave over 10 weeks) was associated with decreased severity of depression and decreased number of experienced symptoms. This reduction was, on average, between 5% and 10%.

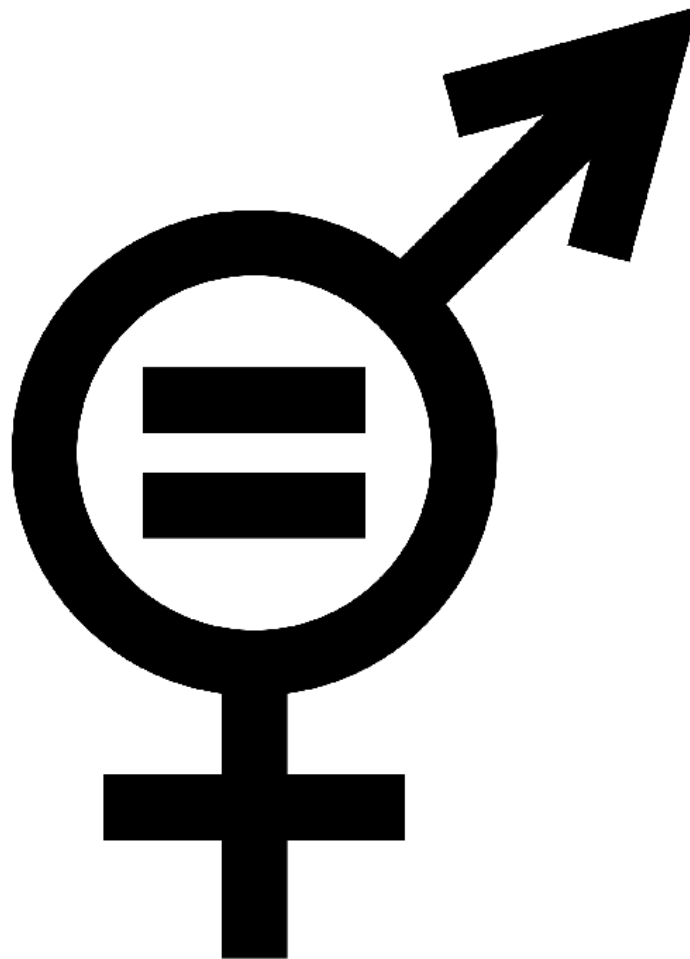
Studies looking for a connection between paid parental leave have shown conflicting results. Some research looked at women 25–34 years old, who are more likely to be affected by leave legislation. Fertility rates peaked for those between 25–29 and 30–34 across European countries. Conversely, however, research in Spain found that after the introduction of two weeks of paid paternity leave, fertility rates fell, suggesting that when fathers are more engaged in raising children, they may become more aware of the challenges; their priorities may shift to quality over quantity of children; and/or that mothers are better able to remain connected to the workforce.

A study of a 2012 law in Sweden that allowed fathers to take up to 30 days of paid family leave in the first year after the birth of the child simultaneously as the mother was on leave led to substantial improvements in the mental and physical health of mothers.

Effects on economy

- *Evidence from selected countries in Western Europe suggests that moderate levels of parental leave can encourage mothers to reenter the work force after having children, promoting national economic development.*
- *In the U.S., paid family leave tends to lead to a higher employee retention rate and higher incomes for families.*
- *The economic consequences of parental leave policies are subject to controversy.*

The economic consequences of parental leave policies are subject to controversy. According to a 2016 study, the expansion of government-funded maternity leave in Norway from 18 to 35 weeks had net costs which amounted to 0.25% of GDP, negative redistribution properties and implied a considerable increase in taxes at a cost to economic efficiency. In the U.S., paid family leave tends to lead to a higher employee retention rate and higher incomes for families. Evidence from selected countries in Western Europe suggests that moderate levels of parental leave can encourage mothers to reenter the work force after having children, promoting national economic development.



Symbol for gender equality

Effects on gender equality

- *Moreover, when discussing parental leave policies, the focus is often on comparing improvements in maternity leave policies to what was available in the past, rather than comparing the impact of diverse policies around the world that distribute parental leave differently between both parents.*
- *Many countries/regions have implemented paid parental leave policies for both parents, which promotes gender equality, while a minority of countries, like the United States, only have unpaid maternity leave.*

Parental leave policies have an impact on gender equality as it relates to parenting and are therefore used by various countries as a tool to promote gender equality. Many countries/regions have implemented paid parental leave policies for both parents, which promotes gender equality, while a minority of countries, like the United States, only have unpaid maternity leave.

As more women have joined the formal labor force, the lack of men's participation in parenting has been called out as a key example of gender inequality. Various studies highlight the importance of egalitarian parental leave policies in achieving equal distribution of childcare between parents. Moreover, when discussing parental leave policies, the focus is often on comparing improvements in maternity leave policies to what was available in the past, rather than comparing the impact of diverse policies around the world that distribute parental leave differently between both parents.

Statistics show a positive correlation between maternity leave policies and women's employment, but the causation relationship cannot be firmly established. While many believe that maternity leave policies encourage women's participation in the labor force, Anita Nyberg suggests that it is the other way around and that development of maternity leave policies was a response to women's participation in the labor force.

It is generally agreed that men's involvement in childcare at the same level as women is essential for eliminating differences in gender roles. Thus, an increase in the use of parental leave by women (and lack thereof by men) will have a negative impact on gender equality. Inversely, an increase in the use of leave by men will have a positive impact. Transferable leave policies appear to be fair and equal in theory, since they do not specifically allocate leave focused on childcare to women and even allow the family to choose. In practice, however, it leads to the majority of available parental leave being used by women.

Through examination of leave policies in twenty-one European countries by describing the existing policy schemes' duration, payment, and transferability, Carmen Castro-Garcia created the Parental Leave Equality Index (PLEI) which can predict the participation of each parent in raising their children based on their gender, and the existing policy regarding parental leave. His model shows that a policy that provides equal, nontransferable, and well-paid leave for each parent (which no country has at the moment) will best encourage men's and women's equal participation in childcare.

European Union

- *And that the uptake of paternity leave and father-specific parental leave also has a positive effect on the work-life balance of families.*
- *In 2014, the European Parliament concludes that by promoting the uptake of parental leave and paternity leave by fathers, governments can aim to facilitate a more gender-equal distribution of care work, support mothers' return to the labor market, and to equalize the circumstances in which women and men enter the labor market.*
- *More specifically, paternity and parental leave policies are key to encouraging fathers' involvement in parenting the child.*

The European Union recognizes the ability for countries to utilize varying parental leave policies to affect labor force participation, the labor market, maternal health, the work-life balance of parents, and the physical and emotional development of children. And by affecting the work-life balance of parents, it may reduce the barriers to participation of both

parents in parenting. More specifically, paternity and parental leave policies are key to encouraging fathers' involvement in parenting the child.

In 2014, the European Parliament concludes that by promoting the uptake of parental leave and paternity leave by fathers, governments can aim to facilitate a more gender-equal distribution of care work, support mothers' return to the labor market, and to equalize the circumstances in which women and men enter the labor market. And that the uptake of paternity leave and father-specific parental leave also has a positive effect on the work-life balance of families.

Findings by the European Parliament in 2015 found that 18 of the EU-28 countries offer paternity leave, and that the EU-average length is 12.5 days, ranging from one day in Italy to 64 working days in Slovenia. For 23 EU member states, on average only 10 percent of fathers take parental leave, ranging from 0.02 percent in Greece to 44 per cent in Sweden.

The gender difference in the employment rate is representative of the gender employment gap; filling this gap is an important objective in promoting gender equality and is a part of the Europe 2020 target of an employment rate of 75 per cent for both men and women. The uptake of leave by fathers can reduce the motherhood penalty by enabling mothers to return to the labor market, as illustrated by studies that have shown that the involvement of fathers in childcare has a positive effect on mothers' full-time employment.

Reduction of the gender pay gap (GPG) is also an important goal for the EU. In 2014 the GPG in the EU-28 was 16.1 percent, which means that for every euro men got paid in the EU, women got paid 83.9 cents. (The GPG exists equally after correction for occupation and education level.) An study done on the gender pension gap estimates the gap to be around 40 percent, which is more than twice the gender pay gap. Increased leave uptake by fathers can reduce the length of career interruptions for women, reduce part-time work by women and potentially reduce the GPG, all of which are leading causes of the gender pension gap.

Nordic Countries

- *However, the dual earner/dual care model seems to be the direction of all the Nordic countries are moving in the construction of their parental leave systems.*
- *each parent gets at least 90 days of parental leave, thus the quota applies equally to both parents and is not specifically fathers.*
- *Although, all Nordic countries have extended the total leave period, their politics towards father's quota are different.*

The advancement of gender equality has also been on the political agenda of Nordic countries for decades. Although, all Nordic countries have extended the total leave period, their politics towards father's quota are different. Iceland and Norway have established equal 3-month quotas for the father. In Sweden 90 days cannot be transferred from one parent to the other—i.e. each parent gets at least 90 days of parental leave, thus the quota applies equally to both parents and is not specifically fathers. The only Nordic country that

does not provide fathers with a quota is Denmark. However, the dual earner/dual care model seems to be the direction of all the Nordic countries are moving in the construction of their parental leave systems.

A study done in Norway found that when parental leave is granted for both parents, there is still gender inequality observed in the form of mothers being more likely to have part-time jobs compared to their partners. Since then, the governments has provided child care support for parents who wants them to encourage mothers to return to full-time jobs earlier, and it is effective to a certain extent.

Germany

- *So far this has not been reflected in official statistics, but Susanne Vogl concludes that if there is a general willingness of men to participate in parental leave the new Parenting Benefits regulations will help facilitate the actual decision to take a leave.*
- *A study done in 2006, 97% of the people who took the leave were mothers.*

In Germany, original laws tackling gender inequality with respect to parenting date back to 1986 in both Eastern and Western Germany where one parent could take up to two years of leave after the birth of the child with a maximum allowance. A study done in 2006, 97% of the people who took the leave were mothers.

In 2007, declining birth rates and demographic change led to a new law, the "Parenting Benefits and Parental Leave Law" (Bundeselterngeld- und Elternzeit-Gesetz). This change in family policy had mainly two aims: to reduce parents' financial loss in the first year after childbirth, and to encourage fathers to actively participate in childcare by taking parental leave.

With this shift in paradigm, a better work-life balance and less support for the male breadwinner model was targeted. This was part of a "sustainable family policy" promoted by German unification and European integration with the underlying objective was to raise birth rates by providing financial incentive.

The law's impact was mainly perceived positively with men reporting high motivation to take leave. So far this has not been reflected in official statistics, but Susanne Vogl concludes that if there is a general willingness of men to participate in parental leave the new Parenting Benefits regulations will help facilitate the actual decision to take a leave.

United States

- *In states without such laws, a proportion of companies do provide paid parental leave.*
- *Even though, according to a survey conducted by WorldatWork and Mercer in 2017, 93% of Americans agree that mother should receive paid parental leave, while 85% agree that fathers should receive paid parental leave, as of October 2018, the United States does not*

have nationwide laws that guarantee paid parental leave to its workforce; however, certain states have passed laws providing paid workers with such rights.

Even though, according to a survey conducted by WorldatWork and Mercer in 2017, 93% of Americans agree that mother should receive paid parental leave, while 85% agree that fathers should receive paid parental leave, as of October 2018, the United States does not have nationwide laws that guarantee paid parental leave to its workforce; however, certain states have passed laws providing paid workers with such rights. As of July 2018, six states (California, New Jersey, Rhode Island, New York, Washington, and Massachusetts) and the District of Columbia have enacted laws that grant parental leave as part of state paid family and medical leave insurance laws, with 4 being effective currently. In states without such laws, a proportion of companies do provide paid parental leave.

According to Eileen Appelbaum, the lack of parental leave policies results in many low income families struggling to support themselves financially if both parents are off work. As a result, many mothers leave work to take care of her children while the father remains at work to financially support the family. This reinforces gender roles and gender inequality.

Australia

- *Michael Bittman saw that the reason they provide parental leave is unique in that they view children as "public goods", and therefore, the state is responsible to provide and support the child.*
- *The Australian government provides paid parental leave for both parents, but more for the mother compared to the father.*

The Australian government provides paid parental leave for both parents, but more for the mother compared to the father. Michael Bittman saw that the reason they provide parental leave is unique in that they view children as "public goods", and therefore, the state is responsible to provide and support the child. But like most places around the world, studies done in Australia shows that the inequality still persists within the family, and that women spends more time doing unpaid work (like parenting) compared to men.

China

- *These measures included an entitlement to 56 days of paid maternity leave.*
- *The length of paid maternity leave was extended from fifty-six days prior to reform, to ninety days in 1988, and to 98 days in 2012.*
- *Thus, under the Labor Law and Labor Contract Law, women employees are entitled to job-protected maternity leave.*

According to a study done by Nan Jia, during the Maoist era, women's full participation in the labor force played a key role in the Chinese government's efforts to advance women's position in society, and to facilitate women's labor force participation, the Chinese government initiated a series of measures to mitigate the work-family conflict that women

face during pregnancy and childbirth. These measures included an entitlement to 56 days of paid maternity leave.

In the post-reform era, a series of new regulations have been introduced to protect women's employment and reproductive rights in the new market economy. The Labor Law adopted in 1995 ensured that women and men have equal employment rights and that employers will not lay off women employees or lower their wages for reasons of marriage, pregnancy, maternity leave, or breastfeeding. The Labor Contract Law enacted in 2008 introduced the provision that prohibits employers from unilaterally terminating labor contracts with women employees who are pregnant, give birth, and care for a baby postpartum. Thus, under the Labor Law and Labor Contract Law, women employees are entitled to job-protected maternity leave.

The post-reform era saw further improvements in maternity benefits. The length of paid maternity leave was extended from fifty-six days prior to reform, to ninety days in 1988, and to 98 days in 2012. Most recently in 2016, paid maternity leave is extended to a minimum of 128 days after the long-standing one-child policy was replaced with a policy that encourages each couple to have two children. This latest extension of paid leave aims to increase fertility rates and slow the population aging process. None of the policies directly aim to tackle gender roles and gender inequality, but rather to solve immediate problems the country is facing at the time.

Private parental leave

- *The report also noted that it would take newer workers four years to accrue enough paid leave (sick leave and annual leave) to equal the 12 weeks of unpaid parental leave provided under the FMLA, and that private sector companies which offer paid parental leave have a significant advantage over the federal government in the recruitment and retention of younger workers who may wish to have children.*

Some businesses adopt policies that are favorable to workers and public opinion. In their study of maternity leave policies in the United States, Kelly and Dobbin found that public policy surrounding pregnancy as a temporary disability (for instance, California's Family Temporary Disability Insurance program) gave rise to business practices that included maternity leave as a benefit.

Companies are starting to offer paid parental leave as a benefit to some American workers, seeing a profitable aspect of doing so, including: reduced turnover costs, increased productivity from workers, and increased rates of retention among women after childbirth. Some see the increase in paid parental leave as indicative of companies reaching out to women, as more women are working and returning to work after having children, and by doing so these companies generate positive publicity as employers with family-friendly workplaces. Working Mother magazine publishes a list of 100 Best Companies for working mothers each year, a list which is noted not only by the readership of the magazine, but also by corporate America and increasingly by researchers and policy institutes as well. The

Institute for Women's Policy Research issued a report in 2009 encouraging Congress to give federal workers four weeks of paid parental leave. The report cited statistics from the Working Mother 100 Best Company list, using private sector corporations as examples of substantial increase in the retention of new mothers after instituting a longer maternity leave policy. The report also noted that it would take newer workers four years to accrue enough paid leave (sick leave and annual leave) to equal the 12 weeks of unpaid parental leave provided under the FMLA, and that private sector companies which offer paid parental leave have a significant advantage over the federal government in the recruitment and retention of younger workers who may wish to have children.[citation needed]

As of February 2018, multinational companies such as Deloitte, TIAA and Cisco were providing parental leave regardless of the parent's gender.

By country

- *Parental leave is generally available to either parent, except where specified.*
- *Leave marked "Unpaid" indicates the job is protected for the duration of the leave.*
- *Different countries have different rules regarding eligibility for leave, and long a parent has to have worked at their place of employment prior to giving birth before they are eligible for paid leave.*
- *Others allow the parental leave to be transferred into part-time work time.*

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women introduces "maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of former employment, seniority or social allowances". The Maternity Protection Convention C 183 adopted in 2000 by International Labour Organization requires 14 weeks of maternity leave as minimum condition.

National laws vary widely according to the politics of each jurisdiction. As of 2012, only three countries do not mandate paid time off for new parents: Papua New Guinea, Lesotho, and the United States.

Unless otherwise specified, the information in the tables below is gathered from the most recent International Labour Organization reports. Maternity leave refers to the legal protection given to the mother immediately after she gives birth (but may also include a period before the birth), paternity leave to legal protection given to the father immediately after the mother gives birth, and parental leave to protected time for childcare (usually for either parent) either after the maternity/paternity leave or directly immediately after birth (for example when the parent is not eligible for maternity/paternity leave, and/or where the time is calculated until the child is a specific age—therefore excluding maternity/paternity leave—usually such jurisdictions protect the job until the child reaches a specific age.) Others allow the parental leave to be transferred into part-time work time. Parental leave is generally available to either parent, except where specified. Leave marked "Unpaid" indicates the job is protected for the duration of the leave. Different countries have different rules regarding eligibility for leave, and long a parent has to have worked at their

place of employment prior to giving birth before they are eligible for paid leave. In the European Union, the policies vary significantly by country—with regard to length, to payment, and to how parental leave relates to prior maternity leave—but the EU members must abide by the minimum standards of the Pregnant Workers Directive and Parental Leave Directive.

Africa

Americas

Asia / Pacific

Europe and Central Asia

Parental leave policies in the United Nations

- *As international organizations are not subject to the legislation of any country, they have their own internal legislation on parental leave.*

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Parental leave policies by countries

Luxembourg

- *If there is a childbirth, the mother regardless of whether she works for an organization, is an apprentice or has her own business gets a pre-natal maternity leave of 8 weeks before the expected date and 12 weeks' post-natal leave.*
- *The first leave has to be taken right after maternity leave and the second can be taken taken before the child turns 6 years old.*

Luxembourg's parental law covers a breath of different situations like childbirth to adoption and several others, depending on the age and situation. If there is a childbirth, the mother regardless of whether she works for an organization, is an apprentice or has her own business gets a pre-natal maternity leave of 8 weeks before the expected date and 12 weeks' post-natal leave. While the father gets 10 days' leave and 4 days in case they are a civil servant and are required to take it within the first 2 months of the child's birth. If there is an adoption, one of the two spouses can take up to 12 weeks' leave if the adopted child is

under the age of 12 years. Luxembourg provides a fix compensation rate during parental leave, which is €1,778, while most of the other European countries get compensation as a percentage of the salary. Luxembourg doesn't have a policy for maternity allowance in place or in addition to the maternity leave pay. Maternity allowance means the money paid during pregnancy or just after child birth. According 2013 OECD data, public expenditure on maternal and paternal leaves on per child born was the most in Luxembourg out of almost all the European counties at the 35,000 at prices and PPPs of 2013 in USD.

On December 1, 2016, "family leave reform bill 7060" was passed in the Luxembourg parliament. According to this new reform, now fathers and mothers can take leave together. The first leave has to be taken right after maternity leave and the second can be taken taken before the child turns 6 years old. This new reform provides much more flexibility. The parent has four different options: either they can take 4 to 6 months' full leave, 8 to 12 months' part-time leave, take one day off per week for 20 months or can take 4 individual months within 20 months. The official Luxembourg government portal suggests that according to the data collected more than 85% of the parents are extremely happy with this new reform and 79% people think that this new system is better than the older system.

See also

- *Maternity leave and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development*
- *Sick leave*
- *Leave of absence*

Baby bonus

Childfree

Father's quota

Leave of absence

Maternity leave and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Parenting

Pregnancy discrimination

Sick leave

Time bind

Work-life balance

Motherhood penalty

Further reading

- *Getting Paid While Taking Time: The Women's Movement and the Development of Paid Family Leave Policies in the United States* (Temple UP, 2016), 240 pp.
- "Good mothers and responsible citizens: Analysis of public support for the extension of paid parental leave".
- *Comparing the relative influence of international organizations on paid maternity and parental leave policies in liberal welfare states*".

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References

External links

- *Trends in Maternity Leave for First-Time Mothers in the US*
- *BBC article on success of Norway's parental leave scheme*
- *Parental Leave in 21 Countries*
- *International Network on Leave Policy and Research*
- *In this BBC article parental leave means unpaid leave)*

BBC article on proposed parental leave in Germany designed to halt the decline in the birth rate and male/female workplace inequality

BBC article on declining birth rate in Italy

BBC article on declining birth rate in Poland and new schemes designed to increase it

BBC article on success of Norway's parental leave scheme

BBC guide to parenthood policies in Europe (n.b. In this BBC article parental leave means unpaid leave)

Trends in Maternity Leave for First-Time Mothers in the US

TUC page about maternity rights in the UK

Center for Law and Social Policy on need for reform in the US

Canadian Labour Standards Government website

International Network on Leave Policy and Research

Parental Leave in 21 Countries