Spain

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For comparisons with other countries in this review – on demographic, economic, employment and gender equality indicators and on leave provision and early childhood education and care services - go to cross-country comparisons page on website. To contact authors of country notes, go to membership-list of members page on website.

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

a. Maternity leave (Permiso y prestación por maternidad) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Immigration)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- Sixteen weeks: six weeks are obligatory and must be taken following the birth, while the remaining ten weeks can be taken before or after birth. By consolidating an entitlement to reduced working hours, mothers can in practice extend Maternity leave by two to four weeks (see 1e permiso de lactancia, originally to support breastfeeding).

Payment and funding

- Hundred per cent of earnings up to a ceiling of €3,230 a month.
- A flat-rate benefit (€532.51 per month or €17.75 per day) is paid for 42 days to all employed women who do not meet eligibility requirements.
- Financed by social insurance contributions from employers and employees. As a general 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). An additional contribution is paid to cover unemployment.

Flexibility in use

- The start date for taking leave before birth can vary.
- Mothers, including those who are self-employed, may take leave part time except for the six weeks following birth.

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

- All employed women are entitled to Maternity leave, but conditions must be met to qualify for the earnings-related Maternity leave benefit (all employees can receive a flat-rate payment for 42 days after delivery): for example, the mother needs to be making social security contributions at the beginning of the leave; or be receiving unemployment contributory benefit; or in the first year of the Parental leave, and have contributed to social security at least 180 days in the previous seven years, or 360 days during working life. Women under 21 years do not need any previous period of
social security contribution, and women between 21 and 26 only 90 days, in the last previous seven years, or 180 days during working life. This requirement is more flexible for women working part time. On the other hand self-employed mothers are exempted from paying social security contributions while on 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

- In the case of multiple births (or multiple adoption or foster), or birth (or adoption or foster) of a child with some disability, working mothers have the right to two extra weeks of leave per newborn child from the second onward, and the family benefits from an additional lump sum benefit.
- In the case of a premature birth or infant hospitalisation, Maternity leave is extended up to 13 weeks.
- Employed mothers have the right to transfer up to ten of their 16 paid weeks of Maternity leave to the father on condition that they take six weeks after giving birth, that their partner fulfils contributory requirements, and that the transfer does not endanger their health. Leave can be completely transferred or partly transferred, so both parents share full or part-time leave simultaneously.
- The non-contributory benefit is extended from 42 to 57 days for lone mothers, large families, multiple births or disabilities.
- If the mother dies, the father can take the Maternity leave entitlements, independently of the mother’s previous employment situation and entitlements.
- If the baby dies, Maternity leave is not reduced.

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

- Employees in the public sector in Catalonia can choose between extending Maternity leave 16 weeks or reducing working time by a third until the child is approximately 17 months old; either option is paid.
- Risk during pregnancy and breastfeeding: 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 is not possible or cannot be reasonably required, the working contract or activity has to be interrupted, and leave can be taken with payment of 100 per cent of earnings. Such leave correspondingly lasts until the beginning of Maternity leave or until the baby reaches the age of 9 months.

b. Paternity leave (permiso de paternidad, permiso por nacimiento) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Immigration)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- Fifteen days.

Payment and funding

- One hundred per cent of earnings, paid by the Social Security Fund with the same ceiling as for Maternity leave.
- Financed by social insurance contributions from employers and employees, except for the first two days that are paid by employers in the private sector or the self-employed.
Flexibility in use

- The first two days have to be used at the time of birth (*permiso por nacimiento* i.e. birth leave). Fathers who need to travel in their work have two extra days, paid by the employer (this does not apply in the public sector).
- The 13 days of Paternity leave (*permiso de paternidad*) can be used during or immediately after the end of Maternity leave. This does not apply in the public sector, where the 15 days are considered as a whole, to be taken at birth time as general rule (except when the specific regional government (*Comunidades Autónomas*) or institution regulates differently).
- Fathers can use Paternity leave part time with employer’s agreement.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- A number of regional governments have improved entitlements. For example, public sector workers in Catalonia receive five days at birth (as birth leave), and a month of Paternity leave that has to be taken at the end of Maternity leave.

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

- All employees fulfilling contributory requirements (i.e. at least 180 days in the previous seven years, or 360 days during working life).

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 from 15 to 20 days for large families or households with a disabled person.
- Two more days are paid in the case of multiple births (or adoption or fostering) or if the child has a disability.
- The entitlement is gender neutral to encompass homosexual and lesbian couples, where this leave can be taken by the member of the couple who did not use the Maternity leave (or most of it).
- In the above-mentioned case of public employees in Catalonia, lone mothers can use the extra month for fathers at the end of Maternity leave.

Additional note (e.g. if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone) or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- See ‘regional or local variations’ for improved conditions offered by some regional governments for their employees.

c. Parental leave (*Excedencia por cuidado de hijos*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Immigration)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- Each parent is entitled to take leave until three years after childbirth. Leave is an individual right. During the first year, return to the same job position is protected; after the first year, job protection is restricted to a job of the same category.
Payment and funding

- None. Workers taking leave are credited with social security contributions, which affect pension accounts, health cover and new Maternity or Paternity leave entitlements, for the first two years in the private sector and for the whole period in the public sector.

Flexibility in use

- There are no limits to the number of periods of leave that can be taken until the child is three years, with no minimum period.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- Since 2000, a number of regional governments have introduced flat-rate benefits. However, the amounts of these benefits have been reduced since 2009 as a consequence of the fiscal crisis. For example:
  - Basque Country, €271.25 per month for mothers or fathers in 2012 (compared to €291 in 2009);
  - La Rioja, €250 per month in 2012, but restricted to families with an annual income below €40,000 or €50,000 in case of large families (the amount of the benefit remains stable since it was introduced, but the income ceiling has been increased);
  - Castilla-León, €3,000 for a period of six months (before it was €7,381 for one year; but also restricted to families with an annual income below €30,000; or €3,750 in case of lone parent families with an annual income below €18,000 in 2012);
  - Navarre, when having a second child or a disabled child, €396.31 per month for one year, or until the child is three years in the case of large families in 2012 (in 2009 it was €416);
  - Castilla-La Mancha, lone parents can receive €600 per month up to €3,000 and men €1,200 per month up to €10,000).

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

- All employees, though 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)

- Social security contributions are credited for a longer period (from 30 to 36 months) in families with three or more children or with two children one of whom has a disability.

Additional note (e.g. if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone) or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- 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 two years, and in the third year within the same municipality.

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1 Information update provided by Irene Lapuerta in the framework of her research on impact of regional parental leave benefits in Spain (see the ongoing research section).
• See ‘regional or local variations’ for improved conditions offered by some regional governments for their employees.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

• Unpaid career breaks are recognised in the labour and public employees’ regulations (excedencia voluntaria). The only protection offered is to be able to claim 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 than in the private sector.

e. Other employment-related measures

Adoption leave and pay

• The same regulations as for other parents for the adoption or fostering of children under six years or children with additional needs (e.g. disabilities, international adoptions).
• Public employees involved in an international adoption have the right to two months of paid leave, including basic payment without benefits, when 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

• Two days leave per worker per event (permiso por enfermedad grave de un familiar) to care for a seriously ill child or for other family reasons (serious illness, hospitalisation or death of a relative to a second degree of consanguinity or affinity), paid for by the employer. The entitlement is extended to four days if travelling is required for work (e.g. the workplace is in a different municipality). However there is no agreement on what ‘serious illness’ means. For public sector employees this entitlement is extended to three days (five days if travelling is required) for the care of first degree relatives (e.g. partner, children or parents, including in-laws).
• 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 18 years old 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 regulatory basis from sickness insurance, with previous contributory requirements as for Maternity and Paternity 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; but parents can alternate the use of it on a monthly base. In case of divorce, when there is no agreement, the parent with legal custody has the right to take this leave and if they have joint custody, it is the one who makes first claim.
• Each worker may take up to two years of 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, accident or old age. In such cases, the informal carer on leave may receive a payment, between €300 and €520.69 per month. The payment is claimed by the dependent relative, and its amount depends on the relative’s level of dependency. Workers taking leave are credited with social security contributions, which affect pension accounts, health cover and new leave entitlements, for the first year of full-time or part-time leave. Otherwise informal carers are credited with the equivalent of €162.49 as social

security and training contributions. These amounts were fixed in 2010, and have not been updated in 2011.

- Public employees can extend the unpaid leave to care for a relative for up to three years, with the whole period credited with social security contributions and related social protection benefits. Furthermore, they can work half-time for up to one month without loss of earnings in the case of a very serious illness of 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.

Flexible working

- During the first nine months after the child's birth (12 months in the public sector), employed mothers are entitled to one hour of absence during the working day without loss of earnings, which is paid by the employers (permiso de lactancia, originally to support breastfeeding). This absence is paid for by the employer. The period can be divided into two half-hours or be replaced by a half-hour shortening of the normal working day; the public sector and many collective agreements allow the full hour shortening of the normal working day. If both parents are working, the mother can transfer this right to the father or partner. All employed mothers can consolidate this reduction in working time as full-time leave, thus in practice extending their Maternity leave between two to four weeks.

- A working parent can reduce his/her working day by between an eighth and half of its normal duration to care for a child until the eighth year or to look after a disabled child (reducción de jornada por guarda de un hijo). 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 two years full-time social security contributions (which affect pension accounts, and new leave entitlements). Public employees can benefit from this working time reduction until the child is 12 years, and have guaranteed some working time flexibility to adapt, for example to school hours.

- A number of regional governments have introduced payments to parents reducing their working hours. For example: Basque Country, Navarre, La Rioja, or Castilla-León provide flat-rate payments to support this measure proportional to the working time reduction; public employees in Catalonia, both fathers and mothers, can reduce their working hours by one third for one year without reducing their earnings, following the end of Maternity and Paternity leave, that is approximately until a child is 17 months old; similarly, they may 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 or care for a disabled relative.

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

The maximum period of post-natal leave available in Spain is 3 years, but most of this period is unpaid; leave paid at a high rate ends after Maternity and Paternity leave (around 5 months after birth). The 2006 Spanish education law (Ley Orgánica de Educación) provides an entitlement to ECEC from 3 years onwards, and nearly all children over 3 years attend early education education. So there is no gap between the end of Parental leave and an ECEC entitlement, but a substantial gap of more than 2½ years between the end of well-paid leave and this de facto entitlement. Levels of attendance at formal services for children under 3 and over 3 years are above the average for the countries included in this review. For actual attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' on cross-country comparisons page.
3. Changes in policy since April 2011 (including proposals currently under discussion)

In the present context of severe economic recession and public funding cutbacks in Spain, the removal of additional measures to parents taking leave provided by regional governments (Autonomous Communities) have been announced and are under discussion. Such regional benefits have already been reduced or else income ceilings have been increased (see 1c). The proposed increase in Paternity leave from 2 to 4 weeks has been postponed once again.

4. Take-up of leave

a. Maternity leave

Maternity leave benefit covered 67 per cent of the 486,575 births in 2010 (author’s calculations based on data provided by the Social Security Institute and the Spanish Statistical Institute). Coverage is the same as the previous year, remaining stable after a long period of continuous increase (from 31 per cent in 1995) due to growing female employment and better coverage of atypical employment situations due to regulatory reforms. Fathers share some Maternity leave in around one-quarter of adoption cases (27.5 per cent in 2005), but less than 2 per cent of births (1.8 per cent in 2011).

Additionally in 2011, an average of 4,853 women per month were on leave because of risk during pregnancy, with an average duration of 105 days: 0.13 per cent of all life births in 2011. In the first months of 2012, this number increased to 5,115 women per month while the average number of days taken decreased to 100 days. In fact, since 2008 (the first year for which there are available take-up data, there is a steady increase in the number of women who take this kind of leave (from 2,546 per month in 2008 to 5,115 in 2012), while the average number of days of leave taken has decreased (from 120 to 100 in the same period). Roughly the same tendency, though with much lower figures, can be observed with the leave during breastfeeding since it was introduced in 2007: the number of women on leave increased from 85 per month in 2008 to 132 in the first months of 2012, while the number of days in leave decreased from 132 to 98.

b. Paternity leave

Most fathers are eligible for Paternity leave according to the Labour Force Survey data. While payment for fathers taking Paternity leave was made only by employers, there was no information on take-up rates. But from March 2007, fathers receive two weeks payment from Social Security funds, which also covers the self-employed; 57 per cent of fathers received the benefit in 2010 (author’s own calculations), two percentage points more than in 2009, consolidating the trend to improved coverage. Yet in 2011 the absolute number of fathers who took Paternity leave decreased by 2.2 per cent; the reasons for this decrease are not clear. A significant proportion of employed fathers are still reluctant to benefit from this measure, so that the number of men claiming Paternity leave benefits in 2011 was equivalent to 83 per cent of the number of women receiving Maternity leave benefits.

c. Parental leave

In 2010, 34,812 people started some period of Parental leave (3 per cent more than in 2009). This corresponds to 7.2 per cent of the births in that year, a slight increase of 0.3 percentage points, after a continuous growth since 1995 (the first year for which the data are available, when it was 1.7 per cent). However, it represents only 2.5 per cent of children
under three years old, a relevant age since leave can be taken until children reach three years. Fathers made up 4.5 per cent of users, a slightly higher proportion as in 2009 (2009 Statistical Book of the Ministry of Labour).

Between 1995 and 2005, it has been estimated that 96 per cent of users have been mothers, with a median duration of 184 days, and 4 per cent fathers with a median duration of 172 days; 36 per cent of fathers and 26 per cent of mothers used this unpaid Parental leave for less than three months. Eleven per cent of user mothers and 25 per cent of user fathers did not return to the same company, which means that in these cases the use of Parental leave was connected to a change of employment. Qualitative research indicates that users are mainly women after their Maternity leave ends, in some cases taking leave for a short period until a childcare arrangement is available (for example if the Maternity leave ends in May and a place in a nursery is only available in September), but in other cases for a longer period. However, only 13 per cent of users took leave for more than one year in the period studied in this research up to 2005.

d. Other employment-related measures

The fact that Parental leave and working time reduction are not paid limits their use, even among those who have a secure job. The influence of payment can be seen from the high use made of the fully paid working time reduction of one-third of usual working hours for parents of children under one year old, available for public employees in Catalonial. Furthermore, this particular measure has evolved between 2003 and 2006 towards equal use between men and women.

Otherwise the use of unpaid working time reductions is limited. It has been estimated that 32 per cent of formally employed mothers having a first child in 2003 reduced their working time during some period in the following three years. Half of this 32 per cent resumed full-time work after seven months, while one-third (11 per cent) remained in part-time employment after three years; only 2 per cent of the employed mothers were using their job-protected and reversible entitlement to working time reduction and were on the same working contract they had at birth. This can be explained by the high rate of temporary employment in Spain and by the fact that employers have incentives when hiring a mother with a child under two years old.

Leave to care for dependent relatives has been available from 2001 onwards. Between 2001 and 2005 about 9,000 employees used it, of whom 82 per cent were women, with a median duration of 62 days, and 18 per cent men with a median duration of 55 days. Since 2006 the number of users has grown, increasing to 6,136 new users in 2010 (compared with 3,332 in 2005). The proportion of new male users remains stable at around 18 per cent.

The Statistical Yearbook of the Ministry of Labour does not provide details on duration nor to what extent these leaves to care for dependent relatives are connected to the new benefit for informal carers introduced since the 2006 Spanish Law to support dependents. It is, however, known that the total number of leave users was 40,948 in 2010, of whom 6.5 per cent were men. In April 2011, 47.5 per cent of all benefits provided under the Spanish Law to

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support dependents were used for paying informal family carers (409,522 benefits, 31 per cent more than one year ago), covering 57 per cent of the recognised cases of dependency. The Social Security system had formalised 156,352 specific conventions with family carers, of which 6.9 per cent were men and one-third were 50 to 60 years old (SAAD Statistics); it is not known, however, how the remaining benefits paid to family carers, are used.

Finally, there are no data on the use of short leave taken in cases of acute illness/accident of children or relatives, nor on other types of career breaks. Employers have no obligation to keep records, and the government has no statistics as no payment is involved.

5. Research and publications on leave and other employment-related policies since April 2011

a. General overview

Leave arrangements have become a research topic in Spain, particularly the use of leave arrangements by mothers and fathers, and their impact on gender and social equality in the labour market and on fertility decisions. Since 2006, a research fund on Social Protection has supported research on leave arrangements. In addition, in 2006 the Ministry of Labour created a continuous database with a sample of 4 per cent of all social security contributors and including selected life course data on work and social security (Muestra Continua de Vidas Laborales, MCVL [the Continuous Sample on Working Lives]), supplemented with tax and household data. It still provides limited information on leave arrangements; however, for the first time it does provide detailed information about unpaid Parental leave, leave to care for a relative, and working time reductions.

Otherwise, the indicators published on a yearly basis since 1995 by the National Institute of Social Security provide updated information (e.g. total social security expenditure by region and the number of administrative records initiated each year, with the percentage of those for fathers), but with no information on other items such as duration of leave, flexible use or characteristics of users. There is a clear data gap on the uses and impacts of the various regional flat-rate benefits and full-time or part-time additional schemes. Some complementary research projects are currently under way, orientated to fill in some of these gaps.

There is increasing research interest in the new benefits addressed to long-term dependent and family informal carers. These have been implemented since 2007 onwards, in the framework of a new public care system for the support of dependency and autonomy, primarily for the elderly but also covering adults and children with severe dependency.

b. Selected publications since April 2011


This paper analyzes the extent to which individual characteristics, the workplace situation, and regional policies influence the use and duration of Parental leave in Spain. The research is based on a sample of 125,165 individuals, and 6,959 Parental leaves covered in the MCVL (see above). A simultaneous equations approach is used to analyse the determinants of the use (logistic regression) and duration (event history analysis) of Parental leave, which allows for endogeneity and censored observations to be controlled. The results suggest that the Spanish Parental leave scheme increases gender and social inequalities, insofar as it reinforces gender role specialization, and only encourages the reconciliation of work and
family life among workers with a good position in the labour market (i.e. educated employees with a high and stable work status).


During the last decade, policy developments in the field of Parental leave have tended to promote actively men’s use of this kind of leave as a way for promoting a greater gender equality. Using the European Working Conditions Survey 2005, in particular the sub-sample of fathers with children less than 8 years old, this article analyses the research question: is men’s use of Parental leave related to greater involvement in childcare and housework?

Based on a binomial logistic regression, controlling for different aspects of work conditions, family situation and educational level, results show a positive relationship between men’s use of Parental leave in the year previous to the survey and daily childcare and housework involvement. Men’s use of Parental leave seems then to be an effective mechanism of men’s socialization in care activities.


The article provides a comparative analysis of policy developments on leave for fathers and on joint custody in Spain and France in the last decade. These two types of measures have been selected because they are both widely recognised as main instruments to promote new fathering styles and consequently more gender equality in the European Union. While the rhetoric of choice has been developed in both countries in relation to maternal employment and childcare, with better results in France than in Spain, it remains to be seen to what extent choice will also be extended to fathers.


The main idea proposed in this article is that organizations that provide facilities for reconciling working and family life among their employees - family-friendly companies - not only make it easier for mothers to combine work and family, but also for fathers. Consequently, working in this type of environment may stimulate the father’s involvement in childcare. For the case of Spain, based on a sample of 3,094 males originating in the Spanish macro Survey of Quality of Life in the Workplace of 2007 (VI Encuesta Nacional de Condiciones de Trabajo), an indicator of a family-friendly company was constructed. From this indicator, as well as other socio-labour variables that appear in the survey, a descriptive statistical analysis and a multivariate logistic regression analysis was conducted in order to know, first, if working in this type of workplace exerts a positive effect on male workers’ willingness to take Maternity leave; and, second, what is the effect on this willingness of some other relevant socio-labour variables (age, university education, non-working partner, working in public administration and high net monthly earnings). Findings indicated that age, having a non-working partner and having a high income men are factors reducing male workers’ inclination to ask for leave; while, conversely, working in family-friendly companies makes it more likely that males will take leave.


This PhD thesis analyses the effectiveness of the Parental leave system in Spain to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life and to promote gender equality. Accordingly, the first chapter explores the individual and institutional factors that influence the use and
duration of full-time Parental leave, with special emphasis on the characteristics that influence male participation. The second chapter delves into differences at the regional level and evaluates the impact of policies developed by five Autonomous Communities on the utilization of full-time Parental leave; this helps clarify which combination of policy characteristics encourages the use of this resource. Finally, the third chapter examines the determinants of mothers’ transitions from full-time employment to part-time Parental leave following the birth of their first child, while accounting for all other alternatives: full-time Parental leave, part-time work and inactivity or unemployment. The empirical analysis is based on the MCVL (2005-2008 waves). The conclusions are that, first, the Spanish Parental leave system, far from encouraging use by men, actually accentuates already existing gender inequalities in society; and second, it also strengthens social inequalities, since its access is essentially restricted to workers who already enjoy privileged positions in the labour market.

Lapuerta, I. (forthcoming): ‘¿Influyen las políticas autónomicas en la utilización de la excedencia por cuidado de hijos?’ ['Do regional policies influence parental leave use?'], Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas. This article analyzes the impact of the policies on Parental leave implemented by five Autonomous Communities: Navarra, Castilla y León, Basque Country, Castilla La Mancha and La Rioja. The research adopts a quasi-experimental design, which is known in the public policy evaluation area as difference-in-difference. The analysis is based on a sub-sample from the MCVL (wave 2006), composed by 94,493 people who were entitled to Parental leave in the 1996-2006 period. The results show a positive effect on parental leave take-up rates of regional policies in Navarra and Castilla y León and confirm the relevance of benefit levels versus other design characteristics. However, none of these policies have effects on men’s use of Parental leave, even in the case of those Autonomous Communities that have implemented positive discrimination measures.

Lapuerta, I (forthcoming) ‘Is part-time parental leave an alternative? First-time mothers’ employment decisions after childbirth in Spain’, in: T. Martín-García (ed.) Spain and Italy: as similar as Thought? A comparative reflection on living arrangements and family relationships. London: Springer. This chapter examines the labour market transitions mothers make in Spain after having their first child, with special attention paid to part-time Parental leave (also known as ‘reduced working hours’). Until now, most studies have largely neglected this option, and those that do include part-time Parental leave have not usually distinguished it from part-time work. This results in a lack of knowledge about the causal mechanisms behind mothers’ employment decisions and, even more seriously, the confounding of two choices with very different constraints, especially in Southern Europe where part-time jobs have very poor employment protection, social benefits and earnings. Using a competing risk event history analysis, this chapter attempts to clarify these issues. The results show that only those mothers with middle-range wages, very high job security and working in the private sector have part-time Parental leave as a real labour market alternative in Spain; while those in more vulnerable positions in the labour market appear to be pressured into part-time work or, more frequently, withdraw from the labour market altogether.

c. Ongoing research

The social use of Parental leave (2009-2012). Gerardo Meil (coordinator), Cristina García, Mª Angeles Luque and Luis Ayuso, Department of Sociology and Department of Business Organizations of the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and Universidad de Málaga. Funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation. The research focuses on use of Parental leave; awareness of the existence and characteristics of the different Parental leave programmes; and decision-making processes in couples before applying for Parental leave. Consequences for family dynamics,
professional careers, and quality of life will be analysed. The research is based on 20 in-depth interviews with both men and women who are taking Parental leave at the time of the interview, as well as people who took Parental leave in the past. The analysis of these in-depth interviews will be used to design a representative survey of 4,000 people of working age (25 to 60) living in Spain. Contact: Gerardo Meil at gerardo.meil@uam.es

Lone fathers: fatherhoods in new forms of family life (France, Spain) (2009-2012). Coordinated by Agnès Martial (Centre Norbert Elias, CNRS) with the participation of French research institutions (Institut National d’Etudes Démographiques, Laboratoire Triangle) and the University of Barcelona (Xavier Roigé; Anna Escobedo). Funded by CNRS (France).

In France and Spain, recent policies have sought to encourage men’s involvement in fatherhood, promoting the norm of co-parenthood after divorce or separation; but one of the most problematic aspects of family transitions (increasing rates of divorce and separation, growing numbers of single-parent families and stepfamilies) is the decline of father-child relations. This research programme is based on quantitative and qualitative studies, and one work package within the overall project deals with leave arrangements and lone parenthood.

To what extend do regulations or agreements cover lone motherhood or fatherhood in Spain and France? Is joint custody a stimulus for male use of leave arrangements? Is it associated with specific use patterns of leave or work-family arrangements? Contact: Agnès Martial at agnes.martial@univmed.fr


Spanish case study in the framework of an international research project, whose aim is to analyse how dual-earner couples share and negotiate unpaid family work, particularly the care of children. The cross-county comparison will facilitate the study of the influence of institutional contexts. The research will be based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, including 30 qualitative interviews conducted in three Spanish cities before and after birth of a first child. Contact: Teresa Jurado at tjurado@poli.uned.es

An evaluation of the introduction of the 13 days Paternity leave. Has it fostered a higher degree of co-responsibility (between men and women) in the caring of child? 2011-2012. Lorenzo Escot (coordinator), José Andrés Fernández-Cornejo, Rocío Albert, Juan Ignacio Cáceres, Cristina Castellanos, María del Rosario Cintas, Elena Olmedo, María Teresa Palomo, Carlos Poza, Eva María Del Pozo y Mª Lina Vicente. Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Universidad San Pablo CEU, Universidad Antonio de Nebrija, and ESIC. Funded by Instituto de la Mujer and Ministerio de Sanidad, Política Social e Igualdad.

This study aims to evaluate the effects of the introduction of 13 days Paternity leave in Spain (e.g. utilization of the leave; promoting greater involvement of fathers in child care; change in gender attitudes). It will first conduct a quantitative analysis, with micro-data from the Spanish Labour Force Survey, about the effect of the introduction of Paternity leave in 2007 on take-up rates, and the profile of men who took leave. Then it will conduct a representative survey of 1,000 couples with children under 7 years from the Community of Madrid, in order to study in more detail: how the child care was organized; who took leave, for how long and what types of leave (Maternity leave, Paternity leave, Parental leave, vacation days etc.); when the child was born (before or after 13 days Paternity leave was introduced); the socio-labour characteristics of partners; their gender attitudes; the problems or barriers that they faced when trying to reconcile care and professional activities; and how fatherhood/motherhood affected their careers. Contact: Lorenzo Escot at loren@ccee.ucm.es and José-Andrés Fernández-Cornejo at jafercor@ccee.ucm.es.