Norway

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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

Note on terminology: there is no single agreed name for Maternity or Parental leave. The Work Environment Act 2005 (the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour), which grants leave but not money, uses the name *svangerskapspermisjon* (pregnancy leave) for the leave before birth, *fødselspermisjon* (birth leave) for the six weeks after and *foreldrepermisjon* (Parental leave) for the remaining leave period. The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, which grants the money for leave, refers to *foreldrepengeperioden* (parental money period).

a. Maternity leave (*svangerskapspermisjon* and *fødselspermisjon* – see note on terminology) (responsibility of the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion)

NB. There is no separate Maternity leave. The information below is for that part of Parental leave reserved for women before and after birth; it is treated separately here, but is in effect part of the longer *foreldrepengeperioden* (parental money period).

*Length of leave*

- Nine weeks: three weeks before the birth and six weeks following birth.

*Payment and funding*

- Hundred or 80 per cent of earnings (see 1c).
- Funded from general taxation.

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2 Leave of up to 12 weeks is available for pregnant women who must quit work because of chemical, biological or physical hazards and if the employer is unable to offer alternative work. It is paid at the same rate as sickness benefit.
Flexibility in use

- None. If the baby is born before the estimated delivery date (e.g. so that the mother only used two of her three weeks pre-birth leave), the remaining time cannot be transferred to after the birth and is therefore lost.

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

- All women employed for six of the last ten months prior to delivery are eligible for leave and who have earned at least half the basic national insurance benefit payment over the previous year. Non-employed women receive a one-off payment of NOK35,263 (€4,673).\(^3\)

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

- If the mother or child is ill and hospitalised after delivery, leave payment can be postponed.

b. Paternity leave (commonly known as pappapermisjon) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- Two weeks after birth – ‘daddy days’ (+ twelve weeks = father’s quota, see 1c).

Payment

- ‘Daddy days’ are unpaid by government; payment depends on individual or collective agreements and most fathers are covered by such agreements.

Flexibility in use

- None.

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

- All employed fathers have the right to leave, but payment is negotiated and paid by the employer.

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

- Leave can be transferred to someone else if the father does not live with the mother, since the purpose of the leave is to assist the mother.

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\(^3\) Conversion of local currency into Euros undertaken on 28 May 2013, using http://finance.yahoo.com/currency-converter/
c. Parental leave (Foreldrepengeperioden) (responsibility of the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- Forty-seven or 57 weeks depending on payment level (see ‘payment and funding’ below). Of these, nine weeks are for mothers, three before birth and six after (included in 1a above, under Maternity leave), and twelve weeks are for fathers (fedrekvoten or ‘father’s quota’). The remaining 26 or 36 weeks is a family entitlement and may be taken by either mother or father. See ‘flexibility’ below for options available to parents.

Payment and funding

- Parental money may either be taken for 47 weeks at 100 per cent of earnings or for 57 weeks at 80 per cent of earnings, up to a ceiling of six times the basic national insurance benefit payment (i.e. NOK492,732 a year, €65,302).
- Non-employed women receive a flat-rate payment of NOK35,263 (€4,673).
- Funded from general taxation.

Flexibility in use

- For the family entitlement part of leave, it is possible to choose a longer period of leave (36 weeks) paid at 80 per cent of earnings, or a shorter (26 weeks) paid at 100 per cent.
- After the first six weeks, it is possible to postpone parts of the parental money period, as long as it is taken during the first three years after birth and the parent receiving the money is employed full time during the postponement period. Hospitalisation and vacation may also qualify for postponement.
- After the first six weeks, it is also possible for one or both parents to combine all or part of the parental money period with part-time work; if parents take less than full benefit payment, this will prolong the period of parental money. If both parents choose to combine parental money with part-time work, for instance each working half-time, this will result in a longer period. A written agreement from the employer is demanded in both cases. There is also a requirement that the mother has returned to employment or study for the father to take leave.
- Father’s quota: this period of leave (twelve weeks) is not transferable to the mother, except in certain circumstances, e.g. if the father is ill or otherwise unable to care for the child or if the mother and father do not live together.
- Father’s quota: this may not be taken in the first six weeks of the parental money period, except for multiple births or adoption. Otherwise, fathers are free to choose at what time during the period to use it and whether to take the quota as part-time leave, also whether to split it or use it in one block. Flexible use requires agreement with the employer.
- The family entitlement part may also be taken as one block of time or split into shorter blocks of time.

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

- The eligibility rules are the same for fathers and mothers. They must be employed for six of the last ten months prior to birth and earn at least half the basic national insurance benefit payment over the previous year.
- The eligibility rules for the father’s quota and the shared parental money period are somewhat different:
• The father can use the 26/36 weeks of paid leave even if the mother is not eligible; but the mother is required to take up work (at least 75 per cent of full-time hours) or study on a full-time basis. For the father’s quota, there is no requirement that mothers go back to work, but the mother must have been employed for six of the last ten months prior to birth.

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

• Family entitlement: when more than one child is born, parental money is increased by seven weeks for each child (with 80 per cent pay) or five weeks with 100 per cent pay. If the child dies during the Parental leave period, parents will receive payment for six weeks of the period that is left.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

• Each parent has the right to one year of unpaid leave after the parental money period.
• Parents with a child aged 12-36 months are entitled to receive a cash benefit (‘cash-for-care’ scheme) on condition they do not use publicly funded ECEC service. The full benefit is NOK5,000 (€663) per month for a child aged 12-18 months, and NOK3,303 (€438) for a child aged 18-23 months. Children who use ECEC on a part-time basis receive a reduced benefit (e.g. if parents use no place, they receive 100 per cent of the benefit; if they use a place for 17-24 hours a week they receive 40 per cent of the full benefit). The main criterion for eligibility, therefore, is not parental employment status, but parents not using a particular service.

e. Other employment-related measures

Adoption leave and pay

• The same regulations as for parents having their own children, except for the nine weeks of Maternity leave. The whole period, with the exception of the father’s quota, may be taken by either parent. In addition, parents adopting children from abroad receive a cash benefit of NOK35,263 (€4,673).

Time off for the care of dependants

• Each parent of a child under 12 years has a right to ten days leave per child per year when children are sick, or 15 if they have more than two children. Single parents have the right to 20/30 days a year. For severely or chronically sick children, there are extended rights to leave until the child is 18 years old. Leave is paid by the employer at the same rate as sickness benefit.

Flexible working

• The Work Environment Act grants breastfeeding mothers the right of breastfeeding breaks of up to one hour per day, without payment. But collective agreements ensure pay in many sectors.
• Parents have a right to part-time work to care for children until children are ten years old. This is unpaid.
2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave available in Norway is just over three years, but about two years of this is unpaid; leave paid at a high rate runs for 13 months. There is an entitlement to ECEC from one year of age, supposed to be available on a full-time basis at kindergartens. So there is no gap between the end of leave and an ECEC entitlement in theory. However, a child must be born before September 1, to be guaranteed a place in the autumn (start of the school year). Levels of attendance at formal services for children under and over three years are above the average for the countries included in this review and for OECD countries. For actual attendance levels, see ‘relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements’ on cross-country comparisons page.

3. Changes in policy since April 2012 (including proposals currently under discussion)

From 1st July 2013 the Parental money period will be extended to 49/59 weeks with 100/80 per cent of earnings. At the same time, the mother’s quota will be extended to 14 weeks and as will the father’s quota, while the shared period will be reduced to 18/28 weeks. The rationale for this change in Parental leave design is to achieve more equal rights between mothers and fathers, the Icelandic tripartite model being a source of inspiration.

On 1st August 2012 the ‘cash-for-care’ scheme was revised. Parents with a child aged 12 to 24 months are already entitled to receive a cash benefit on condition they do not use publicly funded ECEC service, but the revision increases the amount of the benefit for children under 18 months. The full benefit is now NOK3,303 (€438) per child per month for the oldest children in this group - 19-23 months - and NOK5,000 (€663) for the youngest - 13-18 months.

The government has proposed that women who breastfeed children under one-year-old should have the right to paid leave for one hour a day, to cover employees who do not have paid breastfeeding leave as part of their collective agreement.

The father’s quota is a much debated issue, and there are great differences between the left and the right of the political spectrum. For instance, while the present red/green government has continuously increased the father’s quota in Parental leave, the Conservative Party wants to do away with the father’s quota and make the whole Parental leave period subject to parental sharing and choice.

4. Take-up of leave

a. Maternity leave

Nine out of ten mothers have the right to parental money; the remainder do not meet eligibility conditions. These figures are based on data from public records4.

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b. Paternity leave

The share of fathers who take time off work around the birth of the child is approximately the same as for the father’s quota (89 per cent). This figure includes fathers taking time off work in various ways, including Paternity leave but also annual leave and other options.

c. Parental leave

In the years prior to the introduction of the father’s quota less than four per cent of fathers took some Parental leave. Only a few years later, the take-up rate was over 70 per cent (representative sample – own research from 1997), and data from recent public records show that 90 per cent of fathers take leave of some length. However, figures based on public records in 2011 show that 18 per cent of the parental leave days were taken by fathers.

With every expansion of the father’s quota fathers increase their uptake the following year. During 2012, 21 per cent of the fathers took exactly 12 weeks (60 working days), compared with only 0.6 per cent in 2011; the ‘father’s quota’ increased from ten to 12 weeks between these two dates. Flexible use is increasing as the father’s quota has been lengthened. In 2012, 21 per cent of eligible fathers took their father’s quota as part-time, combining leave and work.

The sharable parental leave is for the most part taken by mothers and has in practice become a Maternity leave. In 2012, only 15 per cent of fathers took any of this part of Parental leave (i.e. in addition to the father’s quota). Father’s use of this leave is dependent on the mother and her willingness to share: mothers who have invested in education and have strong ties to working life (e.g. work full time and have higher status work) are thus most likely to share. This means that fathers are more likely to take some Parental leave when mothers have a high educational level, high income and work status, and full-time employment.

However, some characteristics of the father are also associated with use of leave. Although class differences are small, the father’s level of education has some influence, particularly on the length of the leave. The eligible fathers least likely to use the quota are fathers with long working hours, in managerial positions or with a wife who works part time.

Moreover, father’s sharing of the Parental leave also depends on his own relationship to work. Fathers must sometimes negotiate with their employers when they want to take more leave than the father’s quota, and the view that Parental leave is really for mothers is to be found among some employers. Fathers therefore may experience their jobs as a hindrance to taking more leave.

5. Research and publications on leave and other employment-related policies since April 2012

a. General overview

There is constant research being undertaken. It is dispersed across many institutions in Norway, including a substantial part that in the form of doctoral or other small-scale studies.

b. Selected publications since April 2012

This chapter asks what fathers’ use of leave has meant to their working hours and relationship to their jobs. When studied qualitatively, fathers have several strategies of tailoring working hours to better balance work and childcare after having finished their leave. These strategies are not, however, visible in the statistics on working hours.

This article examines the reception among political actors in Norway of a proposal in 2008 to divide the existing Parental leave into three equal parts – one for the father, one for the mother and one shared at the discretion of both parents. Three rival ideational policy paradigms are identified: fathers’ right to care and mothers’ right to breastfeed compete among quota protagonists, while ‘choice’ is advocated by quota antagonists. So far, quota protagonists guided by the mothers’ rights paradigm have been the most successful, but persistent, ideational tensions are rendering future developments uncertain.

This book analyses important characteristics of Norwegian families in relation to the welfare state in a contemporary as well as a historical perspective. Topics include men’s provider work, gender division of work in immigrant families, class differences in divorce, family models and use of the various family policies.

This article discusses fathering practices of employees in two globalized knowledge and work organizations.

The cash-for-care scheme was introduced in 1998 in Norway. During the first period after its introduction, the percentage of users was high at 91 per cent. Since 2005, however, the use has decreased substantially year by year. This article analyses more closely ‘the rise and fall of the cash-for-care scheme in Norway, with a focus on the intersection of gender, class, and ethnicity in parents’ use of cash for care over this period. The findings indicate that cash for care is a scheme that mainly encourages mothers who have low income and a low educational level and who are to a large degree from immigrant backgrounds to remain outside the labour market. By distinguishing between three phases, the article also illustrates how the intersection of gender, class, and ethnicity enters in different ways into both the discourse and the practices connected to the cash-for-care scheme since it was introduced in 1998.

**c. Ongoing research**

*New theoretical perspectives on the Nordic model of work-family reconciliations.*
Berit Brandth, Elin Kvande and Sigtona Halrynjo, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). (2012-2015)
The objectives of this ongoing study are to develop new theoretically informed understandings and perspectives on the Nordic model of work/family adaptations, to contribute to new empirical knowledge on work/family adaptations through examination of possibilities and dilemmas within three empirical research contexts and to situate the Norwegian model in an international context through international collaboration and a comparative book project. Contact: Elin Kvande at elin.kvande@svt.ntnu.no and Berit Brandth at berit.brandth@svt.ntnu.no
'De andre fedrene'. Om farskap og maskulinitet blant minoritetsetniske menn i likestillingslandet. ['The other fathers'. Fathering and masculinity among minority ethnic men]. Anette Hoel, doctoral study at Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) (2012-2014). Contact Anette Hoel at anette.hoel@svt.ntnu.no

Balansen mellom jobb og hjem - og fedrekvotens innvirkning på denne, sett i et likestillingsperspektiv [The balance between work and family - the impact of the father's quota]. Kristine Smeby, doctoral study at Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). (2012-2014). Contact: Kristine Smeby at Kristine.Smeby@svt.ntnu.no