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

a. Maternity Leave (ولادה, Hufshat Leida – literally ‘birth leave’) (responsibility of the National Insurance Institute)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 26 weeks: up to six weeks before the birth and the remainder following the birth. It is obligatory to take the first fourteen weeks.

Payment and funding

- 100 per cent of earnings for the first 14 weeks, with a ceiling of five times the average salary (NIS44,755 [€9,4522] Per month). The remaining 12 weeks are unpaid.
- The benefit is paid by the National Insurance Institute, funded by contributions from employers, employees and the state. Employers pay 3.45 per cent of earnings and employees 0.4 per cent up to 60 per cent of average earnings; above which payment is 6.75 per cent and seven per cent respectively up to a ceiling.

Flexibility in use

- Women may use the first six weeks of leave before birth. The leave may be shortened to 14 weeks, but not by less than that.

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

- All women are entitled to the first 14 weeks of leave (including job protection, if relevant), regardless of employment status.
- Only women who have worked with the same employer for a full year before birth are entitled to a 26 weeks leave.
- Entitlement to benefits depends on prior participation in the labour force (and payment of social insurance) for ten out of 14 months or 15 out of 25 months prior to leave. Self-employed women are eligible.
Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- A mother who has been hospitalized during her leave for two weeks or more may extend her paid leave for the hospitalization period, up to four weeks, or split her leave so the hospitalization period will not be included.
- A mother whose baby has been hospitalized during the leave for two weeks or more may extend her paid leave for the hospitalization period, up to 20 weeks, or split her leave so the hospitalization period will not be included.
- In multiple child births, the mother is entitled to an additional three weeks of leave and benefits) for each child beyond the first.
- When the mother is unable to care for the newborn because of illness or disability, the full leave can be transferred to the father (and only to him). If both pass the eligibility criteria, benefits are then paid to the father, based on his income.
- The mother can transfer part of her leave to the father, as long as the following conditions are met:
  - The first six weeks after birth cannot be transferred.
  - Both the mother and the father must be eligible for leave and for benefits.
  - The minimum period to be transferred is 21 days.
  - The mother must return to work.
  - The mother has to provide written consent to transfer her leave.

b. Paternity leave

No statutory entitlement.

c. Parental leave (Also named חופשת לידת, Hufshat Leida)

Length of leave

- Up to one year after childbirth for each parent.

Payment and funding

- None.

Flexibility in use

- Both parents are entitled to take leave at the same time.
- Both parents can take up to two leave intervals.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None

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

- Parents are eligible to a leave period no longer than a quarter of the length of their employment with the current employer, up to a leave of one year for four years of employment.
Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- None

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other employment-related measures

Adoption leave and pay

- For adoptive parents the same regulations for Maternal Leave apply as for other parents.

Time off for the care of dependents

- In case of the sickness of a child (below 16 years of age), parents may use up to eight days each year out of their own allotted sick leave (totaling 18 days per year, paid by the employer from the second day at 50 per cent of earnings, 100 per cent from the fourth day). A single parent may use up to 16 days. In case of a malignant disease, the period of leave increases to 90 days (110 for a single parent).
- Parents of a child with special needs are entitled to 18 days out of their own sick leave (36 for a single parent).
- In case of the sickness of a spouse, workers may use up to six days per year (60 days for a malignant disease), out of their allotted sick leave.
- During the pregnancy of his spouse, a worker is entitled to use seven days of his allotted sick leave to attend medical examinations and treatments related to the pregnancy.
- A worker may use up to six days per year of his allotted sick leave to care for a parent over 65 years of age.

Flexible working

- During the first four months after the end of the Maternity leave, mothers employed full time and who are breastfeeding are entitled to one hour absence from work, in addition to break times defined by law.

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

The maximum period of post-natal leave in Israel is 12 months, but most of this is unpaid; leave paid at a high rate runs for 3.25 months. There is no entitlement to ECEC. Demand for children under three years exceeds supply, and places in government regulated and subsidized care are hard to come by. So when the initial birth leave of 26 weeks ends, parents have difficulties finding places in regulated ECEC centres, especially when the leave ends in the middle of the school year. Many parents, therefore, have to use the unpaid Parental leave, or else rely on family assistance or on expensive, unregulated private care.

There is no comparative information on levels of attendance at formal services for children under three years; but attendance for children over three years is above average for the
countries included in this review and OECD countries. For actual attendance levels, see ‘relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements’ on cross-country comparisons page.

3. Changes in policy since April 2004\(^3\) (including proposals currently under discussion)

Since 1952, there was 12 weeks paid Maternity leave (‘birth leave’) and unpaid leave up to one year after childbirth. In 2007, Maternity leave was extended from 12 weeks to 14 weeks, all paid at a 100 per cent of pre-birth income. In 2010, this leave was further extended from 14 to 26 weeks, but the additional period was unpaid; effectively, this meant a period of 12 weeks was moved from the unpaid Parental leave to the unpaid Maternity leave, though with lower eligibility criteria and better job protection for this period.

Legislation is currently underway to grant fathers eight days of Paternity leave upon the birth of a child, to be deducted from their existing sick leave and annual leave period.

4. Take-up of leave

a. Maternity leave

All eligible women use Maternity leave as it is obligatory; As of 2010, women taking this leave account for 62 per cent of all women giving birth. Only 0.35 per cent of women receiving Maternity leave benefit transfer part of it to their spouse.

b. Paternity leave

No statutory leave entitlement.

c. Parental leave

No data exist on the use of the unpaid Parental leave.

5. Research and publications on leave and other employment-related policies since April 2010\(^2\)

a. General overview

Research on Israeli leave policy is quite rare; few studies target this policy specifically, and as Israel is not a member state of the EU, and has only recently joined the OECD, few comparative studies include Israel in their sample. Leaves are generally understood by researchers within the context of wider family policy, which has in turn been understood as subject to the logic of the Israeli-Arab, and specifically the Israeli-Palestinian, conflict. The main role of women, according to this logic, is to ‘fight the demographic battle’, and they are rewarded for fulfilling this role and can make claims to common resources based on its demands. This explains the then-generous Maternity leave of 12 weeks, introduced in 1952. Its stagnation for 55 years – and the minor expansions afterwards – are understood, again, within the general framework of family policy, now focusing on ‘rewarding childbearing while neglecting childcare’ policy, providing generous measures to pregnant women and to women seeking to become pregnant, but giving minimal support to parents after the children are born.

\(^3\) This section covers a longer period than other country notes since this is the first entry for Israel.
b. Selected publications since April 2010

The last in a series of periodical publications providing data on the recipients of Maternity leave benefits.

In Israel, fathers have the opportunity to share ‘maternity leave’ with their wives, although only a handful of fathers use it. This program has become a failure. Through a survey of comparative analysis of the policy regarding such leave in other welfare states and through an analysis of other leave programs, this paper attempts to understand the reasons that the leave is not used by fathers and possible obstacles to its full use. Recommendations for improving the program in Israel are also made.

Ideational explanations of social policy formation have gained a prominent role in the analysis of social policy formation in recent decades. Of late, researchers have taken up the task of creating explanations that combine ideational explanations with non-ideational ones. In this work, I will try to address this task at the intra-organizational level, creating an explanation for policy formation within a welfare state institution while taking into account both ideational and organizational factors. This method will be demonstrated using the legislative debate over the parental leave for fathers in Israel as a case study. The formation process of this program was long and complex, and included a struggle about the program's existence and its shape. This process allows us to look into the institutional interests of various participants shaping the struggle over the program. Coincidently, it offers a look into the cultural perceptions of those participants—operationalized as policy frames—and the effect these perceptions have on policy formation. This dual view provides an insight into the inter-relation and inter-dependence of both factors. This analytical framework creates a rich explanation, combining both types of analysis, showing how, at times, policy makers adopt perceptions most fitting their institutional interests, while at other times, policy frames serve as the basis for determining institutional interests.

c. Ongoing research

None reported.