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 Social Security)

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.

Payment and funding

- One hundred per cent of earnings up to a ceiling of €3,606.00 a month in 2015 and €3,642.00 in 2016.
- 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 (unchanged since 2010).
- 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*), with an additional contribution paid to cover unemployment. In the case of public servants, all contributions are paid by their employer.

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 (non-eligible employees receive a flat-rate payment for 42 days after delivery): the mother needs to be making social security contributions at the beginning of the leave; or be receiving unemployment contributory benefit; or be 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 need 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. Self-employed mothers are exempt 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, 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.
• If the baby dies, Maternity leave is not reduced.
• If the mother dies, the father can take the Maternity leave entitlements, independently of the mother’s previous employment situation and entitlements.
• 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 or partly transferred, so both parents may share full or part-time leave simultaneously.
• The non-contributory benefit is extended by 14 days (from 42 to 56 days) for lone mothers, large families, multiple births or disabilities.

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

• Employed and self-employed pregnant women and mothers breastfeeding babies less than nine 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 nine months.
• By consolidating breastfeeding leave, mothers can in practice extend Maternity leave by two weeks (if stated in the collective agreement or agreed at company level) or four weeks (for civil servants) (see section 1e).
• A number of regional and local governments have improved entitlements for public sector employees. For example, women working for the municipality of Madrid have a right of up to eight additional weeks of maternity leave.
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 calendar days: two days of Birth leave (*permiso por nacimiento*) and thirteen days of Paternity leave (*permiso de paternidad*).

**Payment and funding**

- One hundred per cent of earnings, paid by the Social Security Fund with the same ceiling as for Maternity leave. In the case of public servants, all contributions are paid by their employer.
- Paternity leave is funded as Maternity leave, however Birth leave is still paid by employers.

**Flexibility in use**

- The two days of Birth Leave (*permiso por nacimiento*) have to be used at the time of birth. Fathers who need to travel for 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 taken during or immediately after the end of Maternity leave and on a full-time or part-time basis. This does not apply in the public sector, where the 15 days are considered as a whole, to be taken full-time at birth time, as a general rule (except when the specific regional government or institution - *Comunidades Autónomas* - regulates differently). Fathers who use Paternity leave part-time need their employer’s agreement.

**Regional or local variations in leave policy**

- A number of regional and local governments have improved entitlements for public sector employees. For example, in Catalonia they 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. The same applies for male employees of the municipality of Madrid (collective agreement, 2012-2015, though the leave has to be taken at birth or adoption) and other cities.

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

- All employees have the right to Birth leave (the self-employed are excluded, as it is provided by employers).
- All employed fathers or partners (employees and self-employed) fulfilling contributory requirements (i.e. at least 180 days in the previous seven years, or 360 days during working life) are entitled to Paternity leave.

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

- Leave is extended by two extra days per child from the second onward, in the case of multiple births (or adoption or fostering) or if the child has a disability; and from 15 to 20 days for large families or households with a disabled person.
• 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) (see 1e below).
• 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 or municipalities for their employees.

C. Parental leave (Excedencia por cuidado de hijos) (responsibility of the Ministry of Employment and Social Security)

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. Since 2011 all employees taking leave are credited with social security contributions for the whole period, which affects pension accounts, health cover and new Maternity or Paternity leave entitlements. However, unemployment benefits and sickness leave are excluded.

Flexibility in use

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

Regional or local variations in leave policy

• Since 2000, seven out of seventeen regional governments - Comunidades Autónomas - have introduced flat-rate benefits (Navarre in 2000; Castile and León in 2001; Basque Country and Castile-La Mancha in 2002; La Rioja in 2003; and, finally, Balearic Islands and Murcia in 2008). However, these benefits have been reduced or abolished since 2010 as a consequence of the fiscal crisis. For example:
  o Basque Country: €271.25 per month for mothers or fathers in 2016, compared to €291 in 2011 (the amount of the benefit has not been updated since 2012).
  o La Rioja: €250 per month in 2016, 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).
  o Balearic Islands abolished benefits in 2010; Murcia in 2011; Castilla-León and Castilla-La Mancha in 2012; and Navarre in 2013.
Eligibility (e.g. related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employees. Employees on temporary contracts can only claim leave that is shorter than their contract period. Unemployed and self-employed workers are not eligible.

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

- The period of job-secured leave is extended to 15 or 18 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.

Pension credits

- For the calculation of the retirement or permanent disability pension, parents who have left employment, voluntarily or not, between the ninth month before birth (third in case of adoption or fostering of a minor) and the sixth year after, are recognized with between 116 days (four months) and 260 days (nine months) Social Security credits per child (RD 1716/2012). The number of days has been increasing gradually from 2013 to 2019 (with 191 days recognized in 2016), with a maximum of five years for all children. These credits apply not only for calculating the aforementioned pensions, but also for all other Social Security benefits (except for the minimum payment period) and covers only the period not in employment. It applies also to all births, either after or before the Law took force. Only one of the parents has the right to these pension credits; in case of dispute, it is being attributed to the mother.

b. 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 older children with additional needs (e.g. disabilities, international adoptions).
- Either parent can benefit from the Maternity leave entitlement in the case of an adoption.
• Public employees involved in an international adoption have the right to two months of paid leave; this includes 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 by the employer. The entitlement is extended to four days if travelling is required for work. 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 the earnings (subject to the same ceiling as Maternity leave) 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. 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; if they have joint custody, it is the one who makes the claim first.

• 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 dependant relative (up to the ‘second degree of consanguinity or affinity’) due to severe illness, disability, accident or old age. In cases of chronic dependency, the informal carer on leave may receive a payment if co-resident, which varies depending on region of residence, relative’s level of dependency recognised by a public agency, and household income (e.g. in the case of Navarre, one of the regions with the highest benefits, the payments are between €60 and €542.85 per month in 2016). The payment is claimed by the dependent relative. 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.

• 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 or fathers are entitled to one hour of absence during the working day without loss of earnings, which is paid by employers; this part-
time leave (*permiso de lactancia*) was originally to support breastfeeding. It is a family entitlement that can be used by either employed parent, but if both parents are working, only one can use it. 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, or by the equivalent time on full-time days. The public sector and many collective agreements allow for a full hour shortening of the normal working day. By consolidating this entitlement, families can in practice extend Maternity (or Paternity) leave by two to four weeks (depending on the terms established by collective or company agreements). In the case of multiple births (or multiple adoption or fostering) the length of this leave increases proportionally.

- The law also guarantees that employees can postpone their annual holidays and use them after maternity or paternity leave, so they do not lose them.
- 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 twelfth year or to look after a disabled child (*reducción de jornada por guarda legal*). Employees may decide, within their usual work schedule, the extent and period of the working time reduction. It is defined as an individual right, and there is no payment, but workers taking this ‘part-time leave’ are credited with up to two years full-time social security contributions (which affect pension accounts, unemployment benefits and new leave entitlements). In addition, public employees have guaranteed some working time flexibility to adapt (for example, to school hours).
- Since 2000, a number of regional governments have introduced payments to parents reducing their working hours. For example: Basque Country, Navarre, La Rioja, Galicia, Castilla La Mancha or Castilla-León have provided flat-rate payments to support this measure proportional to the working time reduction, though Navarre has abolished these payments in 2011 and Castilla-Leon and Castilla La Mancha in 2012. Since 2002 public employees in Catalonia (both fathers and mothers) can reduce their working hours by a third with a 20 per cent earnings reduction, or by a half with a 40 per cent earnings reduction, if they have a child under six years or care for a disabled relative. Since 2012, they can consolidate this reduction in working time during the first year as full-time leave, to extend in practice their Maternity or Paternity leave.

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

The maximum period of post-natal leave available in Spain is three years, but most of this period is unpaid; leave paid at a high rate ends after Maternity and Paternity leave (around five months after birth, including the consolidation of reduced working hours related to the Breastfeeding leave (*permiso de lactancia*, see 1e section on flexible working). The 2006 Spanish Education Law (*Ley Orgánica de Educación*), modified in 2013 by the Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality (*Ley Orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa*), provides an entitlement to ECEC from three years onwards, and nearly all children over this age attend early education. So there is no gap between the end of Parental leave and an ECEC entitlement, but a substantial gap of approximately 2½ years between the end of well-paid leave and this *de facto* entitlement. 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 2015 (including proposals currently under discussion)

In the context of economic austerity and public funding cuts in Spain, additional support to parents taking leave provided by regional governments (Autonomous Communities) has been severely reduced (see sections 1c and 1e). The proposal to increase Paternity leave from two to four weeks, which had been approved in 2009 to be implemented in 2011, has been postponed for a further year until January 2017 (Disposición Final Undécima Ley 48/2015, de 29 de octubre, BOE 260, October 30th, 2015, modifying the 9/2009 Paternity leave law).

Since January 1st 2016, all new retirement, widowhood and permanent disability pensions are increased by 5% for mothers of two children (biological, adopted and/or foster), 10% for those with three children and 15% for those with four or more children, to acknowledge or somehow compensate for the loss of earnings associated to motherhood over the life course with less availability to perform paid work. All pensions are subject to a ceiling of €2,567 per month, but this ceiling can be increased by 50 per cent of this supplement. These increases do not apply in case of voluntary early retirement.

4. Take-up of leave

a. Maternity leave

Maternity leave benefit covered 64.7 per cent of the 427,595 births in 2014 (authors’ calculations based on data provided by the Social Security Institute and the Spanish Statistical Institute). Coverage is slightly lower than the previous years, after a long period of continuous increase (from 31 per cent in 1995 to 68 per cent in 2009) due to growing maternal employment and better coverage of atypical employment situations. It is worth highlighting that in the context of crisis and very high general unemployment, maternal employment is hardly diminishing while female activity rate in central adult age groups has sharply increased. According to the survey ‘The social use of leave in Spain, 2012’ (see section 5.c in the 2014 Annual Report), 80 per cent of mothers aged 25 to 60 who were in paid employment when pregnant, benefited from Maternity leave, with this percentage higher among younger women than among older ones (89 per cent for those aged less than 40 and 72 per cent for older women). This result is very close to that obtained using official statistics: 85.6 per cent of mothers, who were active in the labour market in the moment of the birth of the child, benefited from Maternity Leave in 2014 (authors’ own calculations). 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 all such leaves (1.8 per cent in 2014).

In 2015, an average of 6,464 women per month were on leave because of risk during pregnancy, with an average duration of 92.1 days, equivalent to 1.51 per cent of all live births in 2014. 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 to 6,464 in 2015), while the average number of days of leave taken has decreased (from 120 to 92.1 in the same period). The mean number of women per month taking leave during breastfeeding because of risk (introduced in 2007) has decreased once again to 60.4 in 2015, a tendency which can be observed
since 2009, when it reached a maximum of 100.8 women per month. The mean number of days in leave has increased slightly to 134.4 days.

b. Paternity leave

Most fathers are eligible for Paternity leave according to the Labour Force Survey data. While Paternity leave was restricted to two days (*permiso por nacimiento* i.e. Birth leave) paid by employers, there was no information on take-up rates. But from March 2007, fathers have received a 13 days payment from Social Security funds, and coverage was 55.4 per cent in 2014 (authors’ own calculations based on the ratio number of fathers who took a leave to total number of births), 0.7 percentage points less than the previous year. The total number of fathers who took Paternity leave decreased by 16.4 per cent between 2010 and 2014, due mostly to the decrease in births and male employment. However, according to the survey ‘The social use of leave in Spain, 2012’ (see section 5c in the 2014 Annual Report), the take-up rate among those eligible for Paternity leave is much higher: 74 per cent of men who became fathers after the introduction of this leave and were working at that time report having used it.

Those who were working when they fathered a child and did not take it, are mostly men who work without contract or are self-employed. The difference between take-up rates can be attributed to the high proportion of unemployment among young adults (the proportion of unemployed men aged 30 to 34 years increased from 9.2 per cent in 2008, to 25.9 percent in 2012, and was still 20.3 per cent in 2015) and to the fact that the Social Security Institution does not register the Paternity leave of some public servants.

On the other hand, the coverage rate amongst eligible fathers has shown a positive trend in spite of the crisis: from 63.8 per cent in 2008, to 76.7 per cent in 2011 (applying an estimation model to the registered social security data), which could be explained both by a genuine interest in taking Paternity leave and by the fact that male employment has been reduced in sectors and groups with lower quality employment conditions².

c. Parental leave

In 2014, 31,435 people started some period of Parental leave (10.8 per cent more than in the previous year, but 10.7 per cent less than in 2010). This corresponds to 7.4 per cent of the births in that year, but still higher than in the recent past (in 1995 it was only 1.7 per cent). However, this represents only 2.3 per cent of children under three years old; the age is relevant since leave can be taken until children reach three years. Fathers made up 6 per cent of users, with 0.5 percentage points more than in 2013³.

According to the survey ‘The social use of leave in Spain, 2012’⁴, only 0.5 per cent of men aged 25 to 59 who were working when they became fathers made use of Parental leave, compared to 10.4 per cent of women. In most cases leave was taken for the first child (69 per cent); and women mostly took it just after Maternity leave (64 per cent) for a maximum of one year (85 per cent), and most commonly for six

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months or less (46 per cent), i.e. until a childcare arrangement was available. After
leave, all men returned to a full-time job, but only 55 per cent of women did so, while
a third returned to part-time job or part-time leave (35 per cent) and only seven per
cent gave up paid work altogether or lost their jobs (three per cent).

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 and gender-equal use of the fully-paid working time reduction of one-
third of usual working hours, for parents of children under one year old; this was
available for public employees in Catalonia between 2002 and 2012 (see section 3 in
the 2013 Annual Report).

Otherwise the use of unpaid working time reductions is limited. According to the
survey ‘The social use of leave in Spain, 2012’, 19.9 per cent of women and 1.8 per
cent of men aged 25 to 59 years, who were working when they became parents
made use of the right to reduce their working hours. As in the case of Parental leave,
most working time reduction is taken for the first child (61 percent among those with
two or more children) and, among women, mostly taken just after Maternity leave (55
per cent) or during the first year of the child (79 per cent). Men reduce their working
hours mostly for less than one year (72 per cent), while women tend to do it for a
rather longer period of time (61 per cent for more than one year).

According to the Spanish Social Security Statistics, the number of parents who have
taken the leave to care for seriously ill children, introduced in 2011, has increased
slightly from 1,114 in 2012 to 1,665 in 2015. However, the mean number of days of
leave taken has risen sharply from 176.9 to 361.3 during this period.

Unpaid leave to care for dependent relatives has been available from 2001 onwards.
Between 2001 and 2005 about 9,000 employees have used it: 82 per cent were
women, with a median duration of 62 days, and 18 per cent were men with a median
duration of 55 days (Escobedo and Navarro, 2007). Since 2006, the number of users
has grown, increasing to 8,176 new users in 2014 (compared with 3,332 in 2005).
The proportion of new male users remained stable at around 15 per cent between
2010 and 2014.

The Statistical Yearbook of the Ministry of Labour does not provide details on the
duration, nor on the extent to which the leaves to care for dependent relatives are
connected to the benefit for informal carers, introduced since the 2006 Spanish Law
to support dependents. In January 2016, 35.9 per cent of all benefits provided under
this law were used for paying informal family carers (351,393 benefits, 5.2 per cent
less than one year ago). However, it seems difficult to link care leave to benefits,
which usually require a long administrative process.

5. Research and publications on leave and other employment-
related policies since April 2015

a. General overview

5 http://www.seg-
social.es/Internet_1/Estadistica/Est/Otras_Prestaciones_de_la_Seguridad_Social/index.htm
Leave arrangements have become a research topic in Spain, particularly their use by mothers and fathers, and their impact on gender and social equality in the labour market, and on fertility decisions. Fathers’ use of leave arrangements is presently a main research focus, as is leave in the organisational context of the workplace and companies.

Since 2006, a fund on Social Protection has supported research on leave arrangements and the Ministry of Labour created a continuous database with a sample of four per cent of all social security contributors, 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. The Ministry still provides limited information on leave arrangements, but has allowed researchers to produce detailed information about unpaid leaves such as 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 on paid leaves (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, which research projects have contributed to filling (see Lapuerta in Spain country note, sections 5b and c, of the 2013 Annual Review).

There is increasing research interest in the benefits addressed to long-term dependants and family informal carers 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. Further research is needed in this area.

b. Selected publications since April 2015


This study analyses first-time heterosexual parents’ childcare plans, examining how gender attitudes, parenthood ideals and institutional constraints influence childcare plans in the first months of the child’s life. It is based on a sample of 68 dual-earner couples who were expecting their first child in 2011. The analysis reveals that most couples aim to maintain a dual-earner model in which both parents are employed after the transition to parenthood. However, when difficulties balancing work and family are anticipated, women show a greater predisposition to adapt their working lives to childcare needs. Men, in contrast, exhibit much greater resistance to making important employment-related adjustments, due to their fear of being penalized in the workplace or to their particularly strong work orientation.

This thesis analyses two Spanish public policies that regulate family relationships: the regulation of the types of cohabitation of couples and the parental leave system. It analyses the effects of these two policies on both parents' commitment to childcare, on their commitment to paid and unpaid work and on their income level. It also examines the gender bias and impacts of both public policies and the designs that would allow for the reduction of gender bias according to empirical evidence. The policy evaluation combines quantitative and qualitative methods within an international and historic approach. It is mainly based on the "Survey on the use of parental leave and its consequences for employment" (EUPPCL 2012), as well as on official national and international secondary sources, legal texts and interviews with key stakeholders. The results show that the design of the parental leave system not only affects the participation in childcare, but also the participation in the labour market and earnings. In fact, it is confirmed that the 2007 reform, which introduced paternity leave of 13 days, has caused fathers to use more days of non-transferable and fully-paid parental leave while they hardly use the other kinds of parental leave. Equal, non-transferable and fully-paid leave is, therefore, a relevant tool for reducing gender-specific division of work, strengthening parental bonds in the long term, favouring economic independence of mothers and reducing the risk of poverty.


This thesis explores some of the causes that sustain unequal power relations between men and women in Europe. The main contribution is through the concept and an indicator of the gender-transformative potential of public policies, based on an assessment of their impact on transforming the 'social norm' and the gender division of labour, from the perspective of a 'universal caregiver' society. This concept is developed based on a comparative analysis of leave policies - including Maternity, Paternity and Parental leaves - in 27 European countries (EU25 plus Iceland and Norway). The findings show that the most positive gender-transformative potential would be to guarantee a real change in male behaviour through equal, non-transferable and fully-paid Parental leave.


This article uses data from 2008–10 to analyse parental leave policies in twenty-one European countries and their influence on men's behaviour. It examines entitlement characteristics, such as non-transferability, duration, payment, compulsory period, and other policies to assess their effect on the proportion of leave, men use out of the total parental leave in each country. The findings, which suggest that a large majority of men take non-transferable and highly-paid leave, and a small minority take other types, provide the basis for developing the Parental Leave Equality Index (PLEI). PLEI ranks countries by the degree to which parental leave policies reinforce or diminish the gendered division of labour. Results indicate that although Iceland's parental leave policies do the most to advance gender equity, no country has equal, non-transferable, and well-paid leave for each parent. This policy arrangement would be a precondition to men's and women's equal participation in childcare.

This contribution addresses the challenge of reviewing Southern European welfare states by analysing how developments in leave policies are generating common or divergent trends across Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece. These societies offer a mixture of family patterns and family policies. Over the last decade they have developed significant work–family arrangements both in terms of parental leave and early education childcare services. The four countries have been moving in the direction of longer paid leave and the promotion of paternal leave, allowing for family diversity and new gender-equality incentives. Besides these common trends, the four countries also reveal differences enabling them to shift towards alternative leave models, such as the one-year gender-equality-oriented model or the choice-oriented leave model. However, for the time being, taking into account take-up rates and the impact of the economic 20 crisis, the four countries conform to what we have characterised as an ‘extensible early return to work’ leave model. Leave policies are reviewed in Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain mainly between 2004 and 2014, drawing on data from the Annual Reviews of the Leave Policies and Research Network, Eurostat and the OECD Family Database.


This book chapter provides a comparative analysis of the evolution of leave policies for fathers in Spain and France up to 2013. Although the two neighboring countries have very different historical trajectories in the development of the welfare state and social policies, until 2013 they have some similarities in the provision on parental leave from the perspective of available time and its distribution of use between men and women, even though significantly better supported by public resources and more widely used in France than Spain. The increasing male use of paternal leave, however, indicates in both countries the emergence of new paternity practices and more diverse family configurations. While the rhetoric of choice has been developed in the two countries (with considerably more success in France and Spain), unpaid or flat rate benefits limit choice for both fathers and mothers. This explains the relative success of part-time leave arrangements. Part-time leave appears to be a compromise solution to balance innovative parenting and the need to ensure the maintenance of wage income at home in both societies.


This article addresses the question of, to what extent young people show an inclination to accept some sacrifice in their career progression in the future in order to reach a better work–family balance. Data come from a survey conducted among a sample of 2,383 university students who attended three universities: University of Nairobi, University of Iceland, and Complutense University of Madrid. After building a set of indicators about career and family involvement aspirations of respondents, and after conducting a statistical and regression analysis, this research shows that young women (on average) still have a greater predisposition than young men to make sacrifices in the future in their working careers in order to achieve a better work–family balance. Moreover, having a high degree of leadership aspirations and belonging to an egalitarian household tend to reduce the inclination to sacrifice
career opportunities, whereas having a high inclination to be involved in childcare in the future and having the perception of a future work–family conflict tend to increase it. Gender attitudes have a differential effect on female and male students: having traditional gender attitudes tends to increase the inclination to sacrifice career opportunities, in the case of female students and to reduce it in the case of male students.


This book is inspired by an apparent paradox of human behaviour. Young people increasingly identify themselves with egalitarian values and, instead, when they are living with a partner, tend to reproduce an unequal distribution of tasks, which becomes worse with the arrival of the first child. This contradiction between ideals and practices is the essence of the “real utopia” that arises here. It is a utopia because many political changes are needed to enable a family model, where both members of the couple are employed and take care of children at different stages of their lives, without either lagging behind in their careers, or temporally leaving the labour market, or reducing working hours. Some couples try to reach this utopia in their families by sharing responsibilities in housework and caring, despite the difficulties in reconciling work with personal life. Family policies can be a good tool to reduce the tension between ideals and practices, although and as we shall see in this book, are not the only condition that could turn utopia into reality.


The chapter compares the childcare systems in the 11 European cities, looking particularly at whether the childcare provision in these cities follows national provision levels or not and how they interrelate to the provision of paid parental leave. Then focuses on analyzing the relationships between local and national childcare policies in four European cities: Bologna (Italy) and Terrassa (Spain) from Southern Europe, and Jyväskylä (Finland) and Aalborg (Denmark) from the Nordic countries. The availability and use of childcare services are analyzed, as are other factors influencing the possibilities and obstacles of labour market participation for mothers with young children. The aim of this analysis is to demonstrate the significance of local welfare Systems in their socio-cultural context and to understand the scope that local authorities have to draft local policies and thus to divert from national policy definitions. Local policy making also brings rigid welfare regime categories into question.


The Family chapter within this 2015 handbook on Spanish social situation, covers a broad analysis on family structure and change conducted by 13 Spanish family sociologists, with expertise in different specific fields (e.g. demography, family values and family models, work and family strategies including parental leave, divorce and custody, families and the life course). Family has a prominent role in this Social Situation in Spain in 2015, which has gathered 15 chapters and the contribution of 160 Spanish researchers.

Fathers’ participation in childcare has been on a steady rise in recent years. This article explores whether such growing involvement is replacing grandparents’ caring role or whether the two are complementary. The data used here were drawn from the Survey on the use of parental leave in Spain, whose coverage included 1125 working parents living with their likewise working partners and children under the age of 13 years. The results suggest that paternal and grandparental childcare tend to be more substitutional than complementary. The analysis also shows that a significant portion of dual-earner households do not routinely rely on grandparents for childcare, and that paternal and maternal grandparents do not replace but rather complement each other.


This paper aims to (1) determine the rate of (full- and part-time) caregiver leave-taking in Spain, (2) identify the reasons conducive to a more intense use of this resource, and (3) ascertain the main obstacles to its use, as perceived by caregivers. All 896 people covered by the sample were engaging in paid work and had cared for dependent adults in the last 12 years. This resource, in particular the full-time alternative, was found to be a minority option. The data showed that legal, work-related, family and gender norm issues are the four types of factors that determine the decision to take such leaves. The most significant obstacles to their use are the forfeiture of income and the risk of losing one’s job. Our results suggest that income replacement during a leave would increase the take-up of these resources. Moreover, enlargement of public care services would promote the use of leave as a free choice for caregivers.

c. Ongoing research

Fathers on Leave Alone in Spain (2014-2016), Gerardo Meil (coordinator), Department of Sociology, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. Funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation.

The research focuses on use by fathers of any kind of leave to care for children while the mother returns to paid work for at least one month. A first objective is to examine fathers’ negotiations and experiences of leave taking ‘alone’ in dual earner families with a child under 3 years. Research will tap the reasons why some men take a large share of leave and the consequences of leave taking on fatherhood and work-family life. Are the new measures tailored to their needs and preferences, in terms of work-family balance and well-being? What are the factors that promote or hinder men’s take up of leaves? How father’s perspectives are influenced by mother’s attitudes or workplace cultures? What is the impact of leave, in particular of stay-at-home-alone fathering, when the mother returns to work, on family dynamics and the father-child bond? And what is its impact on men’s professional career? This study is part of a collaborative research project ‘Fathers on Leave Alone’ coordinated by Prof. Karin Wall and Prof. Margaret O’Brien, which adopts a comparative perspective among several industrialized countries. Contact: Gerardo Meil at gerardo.meil@uam.es.

The role of men in family dynamics from an international perspective (2014-2016). Teresa Martín-García (coordinator), Center for Human and Social Sciences (CCHS), Spanish Council for Scientific Research (CSIC). Funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation.

This project aims to analyze the role of men in family dynamics, with special emphasis on fertility. The first objective is to assess the differences in family formation/dissolution (cohabitation, marriage, divorce) and fertility (delay, number of children, infertility) and its related characteristics between men and women,
explaining what distinguishes their family and reproductive choices, preferences and behavior at the individual level. The second objective is to study the relevance of gender (in)equality in such decisions, taking into account the institutional and contextual aspects of (in)equality and specifically the parental leave and childcare policies. Contact: Teresa Martín at teresa.martin@cchs.csic.es and project website http://www.menrolesproject.com/.

Shared-responsibility woman-man in caring from the perspective of companies: Organizational culture and corporate responsiveness towards men who want to reconcile (2015-2017), José Andrés Fernández Cornejo and Lorenzo Escot (coordinators), Departament of Economy at the Universidad Complutense. Funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation.

This research aims at analysing the phenomenon of effective inclusion of male workers in work-life balance policies of companies. That is, its objective is the analysis of the shared-responsibility (between men and women in caring) from the perspectives of organizations. To do so, firstly, the researchers will carry out an analysis of changing trends in men’s and women’s time use in Spain, using data from the official national time use survey (TUS, “Encuesta de Empleo del Tiempo-EET”), labour force survey, (LFS, “Encuesta de Población Activa-EPA”) and the Spanish Quality of Working Conditions Survey (“Encuesta de calidad de vida en el trabajo-ECVT”). Secondly, the analysis will be focused on working environment in businesses through a qualitative analysis. This will consist of a series of focus groups with fathers with small children (employed in a range of companies); and semi-structured interviews with the same group and with HR managers. This analysis is essentially aimed at understanding the experiences and perceptions of respondents about barriers they may encounter when men try to balance work and life. Thirdly, a quantitative analysis will be conducted based on two surveys: one of them of working fathers with small children; the other one, of a sample of Human Resource managers. The purposes of these surveys are to better understand: what the needs of male workers are in the work-life balance domain; what kind of work-life balance policies are applied by organizations; to what extent these policies effectively include male workers; the organization-culture regarding work-life balance; what might be “good practices” that encourage men to use the reconciliation practices; and what are the costs and benefits for companies of men achieving work-family balance. Contact: José Andres Fernández Cornejo at jafercor@ccee.ucm.es.

Working time, paternity and childhood. How can business policies promote father involvement in care and maintain gender equality? (2015-2017) Teresa Jurado (coordinator), Department of Sociology II at Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), in cooperation with researchers in other Spanish Universities (UDIMA, UPF, UPO and UPNA). Funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness.

The objective of this project is to analyze the employment context in order to understand in which types of enterprises, under which circumstances and due to which reasons, a family responsible management of human resources without gender bias is found. Firstly, we will test how far the results from a previous qualitative study can be generalized. Secondly, a scheme will be elaborated of the features of the enterprises which favour work-family balance for their male employees. Finally, human-resources managers in this type of enterprise will be interviewed. This study intends to identify the degree of diffusion of equal-sharing couples in the Spanish society, their socioeconomic characteristics, and the existence of good practice among enterprises, with respect to work-family balance and its feasibility from a perspective of profit and competiveness. Contact: Teresa Jurado at tjurado@poli.uned.es.