

# English-speaking “Anglo” world and parental leave: Reviewing the past decade

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# Dimensions of Comparison

Conceptual framing:

- Ray, Gornick and Schmitt (2010): Gender Equality Index
- Ray et al argue that while correlated, there are two distinct dimensions of parental leave policies: Generosity and Gender Equality
- Generosity – refers to benefit level and duration: 1. the number of weeks of job protected leave for mothers/parents and 2. the share of those weeks that is paid
- Gender equality – refers to 1. the portion of leave available for fathers and 2. The percentage of earnings replaced

# Anglo Countries and Parental Leave Policies

- Propose two categories of (neo-liberal) countries organised according to the adoption of paid 'parental' leaves
- Earlier adopters: Canada, 1971 (parental leave 1990); UK 1975 (paternity leave 2003), Ireland (paid maternity leave 1981).
- Later adopters: NZ 2002, USA and selected States FMLA, 1993; California 2004, New Jersey 2009; Australia 2010 (unpaid maternity 1979; unpaid parental 1990).

# Current Leave Policies

	Generosity	Gender Equity
Canada	MT:15-18 weeks PL: 35-37 weeks*	Y: partial; capped at E375/week PT: none
UK	MT: 52 weeks	Y: 6 weeks @ 90% of individual's av weekly earnings; 39 capped at E160/week PT: 2 weeks; capped at E160/week
Ireland	MT: 42 weeks PL: 8 weeks**, unpaid	Y: partial; capped, E262/week for 26 weeks and 16 weeks unpaid
New Zealand	ML:14 weeks PL:52 weeks, unpaid	Y: 100% earnings but capped at E298 / week PT: 1-2 weeks, but only on transfer from mother; paid at same rate as ML.
USA California	FL: 12 weeks FL: 12 weeks	Y: none Y: partial; capped at E862/week
Australia	MT: 18 weeks PL: 52 weeks unpaid	Y: capped at min wage, E433 PT: 2 weeks, capped at min wage, E433
Proposed	MT: 26 weeks PL:52 weeks unpaid	Y: 100% earnings, capped at E2012/week PT: transfer from MT

# Assessment of leaves

- By generosity – paid ML ranges from 12- 42 weeks; for most income replacement is partial and capped. By gender equity – 0-2 weeks PT; no full income replacement except proposed new Australian scheme which offers 26 weeks at full income replacement, to a total of E2012/week.
- + -- eligibility- tendency to favour those in secure labour markets, but varies (greater social divisions since recession)
- + -- objectives -Workforce attachment, rather than gender equity or child wellbeing & fertility

# Conclusions

- Generosity: mid range
- Gender Equity: poor
- To date, Anglo policies are gender specific: Tendency to provide maternity instead of paternity leave.
- Recently, states' showing increasing interest in / rhetoric about paternity leave and fathers
- Over last decade Anglo states' interest increasing / changing and schemes expanding, mostly in terms of parental leaves rather than gender specific leaves, wither maternity or paternity
- Anglo employer and union interest increasing (limited acceptance)
- The objectives of schemes focus on maternal/parental labour market engagement (rather than fertility or gender equality)
- However, **even under austerity/budget constraints, policies not being reduced in aggregate; thus policies now embedded but architecture might change.**