

China¹

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N.B. There are 31 provincial administrative regions in mainland China (including provinces, municipalities directly under the central government, and autonomous regions). These provinces are subordinate to the leadership, authority, and direction of the central government. The central government formulates national policies, which are nationally binding. Provincial local governments, in line with these central policies, can independently develop their own policies based on their respective conditions.

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the [cross-country tables](#) at the front of the review (also available individually on the [Leave Network website](#)). To contact authors of country notes, see the [members page](#) on the Leave Network website.

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

a. Maternity leave (产假) (responsibility of State Council at a national level and Local People's Congresses at a provincial level)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- Ninety-eight calendar days: 15 days before the birth and 83 days after the birth.
- It is not obligatory to take leave.
- To give a brief historical overview, Maternity leave in China began in 1951, when the Labour Insurance Regulations of the People's Republic of China stipulated that female employees must be given a total of 56 days of pre-natal and post-natal leave, with full earnings replacement. In 1988, Regulations Governing Labour Protection for Women Staff Members and Workers extended the length of Maternity leave from 56 days to 90 days.

¹ Please cite as Wu, F. (2023). 'China country note,' in Blum, S., Dobrotić, I., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A. and Moss, P. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2023*. Available at: http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/

In 1995, the Labour Law of the People's Republic of China was formally implemented, prescribing that female staff must receive no less than 90 days of Maternity leave after the day of delivery, which legally guaranteed women the right to take Maternity leave. In 2012, Special Rules on the Labour Protection of Female Employees was implemented, which is now in place.

Payment and funding

- One hundred per cent of earnings.
- Funded by the Maternity Insurance Fund for employees included in maternity insurance; and/or by work units (work units cover the balance if the maternity allowance is higher than the female worker's salary; and they pay the full benefit if the female worker did not participate in paying maternity insurance).

Flexibility in use

- None.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- National laws and regulations set the basic provisions for Maternity leave, such as the length of leave, its payment, and funding. However, provinces may develop their own regulations, in relation to their local conditions. On this basis, all provinces in mainland China have extended the duration of Maternity leave to employees who comply with fertility laws and regulations especially after the implementation of the three-child policy at the national level in 2021 (see below). This varies from extending leave from the national entitlement of 98 days to 128 days (in Jiangsu) to extending leave for up to one year (in Tibet). The most common extension is to 158 days (in Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Zhejiang, Hebei, Hubei, Guangxi, Fujian, Shanxi, Inner Mongolia, Liaoning, Anhui, Shandong, Hunan, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Ningxia, Shaanxi, and Xinjiang). Among them, 30 days can be added to leave if the mother gives birth to two children or three children (Hebei, Inner Mongolia and Zhejiang), and half a year can be added if the mother gives birth to three children (Shaanxi). The Maternity leave is provided for 178 days in Guangdong and Chongqing, and 180 days in Heilongjiang, Jilin and Gansu. Finally, in Henan, Jiangxi, Hainan and Qinghai, 188 days of leave are provided.
- In Shanghai, there are three additional provisions. First, female employees who are 28 weeks pregnant or more should receive an hour's break per day (paid at 80 per cent of their earnings) and should not work nightshifts. Second, women who need to be exempted from work to protect their foetus can, upon presentation of a medical certificate, take a 'foetus protection leave.' Third, female employees can take two and a half months break before giving birth to a child (paid at 80 per cent of their earnings) after the approval of working unit.

- In Beijing, there are also three additional regulations. Firstly, with the consent of employers, female employees may take an additional one to three months of maternity leave (158 days in Beijing). Secondly, couples can adjust the allocation of extended maternity leave with the consent of employers. If the wife voluntarily reduces the extension of maternity leave, the paternity leave enjoyed by the husband can be increased by the corresponding number of days. Thirdly, the employing unit should reduce the labour quota of pregnant employees based on their specific situation. For example, for female employees who are pregnant for seven months or more, appropriate rest time should be arranged during working hours, and night shift work between 22:00 to 6:00 is not allowed.

Eligibility

- All female employees are entitled to 98 days of paid Maternity leave, whether they meet the requirements of fertility policies or not (see Section 3). Female staff who conform to fertility policies can (in most parts of the country) get a reward of extended paid Maternity leave or other additional social benefits in addition to the 98 days of Maternity leave (see 'regional or local variations' above).
- Women who are unemployed, flexibly employed, or agricultural workers are not eligible for Maternity leave. Self-employed workers are also not eligible.
- Since 2010, China's 'one child' fertility policy has been adjusted; along with this, Maternity leave policy has also been adjusted. At the end of 2011, the 'two-child policy for couples where both husband and wife are from a single-child family' (i.e., a policy of two children where both parents are only children) was implemented. At the end of 2013, the policy of 'two-child policy for couples where either the husband or the wife is from a single-child family' (i.e., a policy of two children where one parent is an only child) was implemented. Finally, in October 2015, the universal two-child policy was implemented,² following which the Chinese government made changes to Maternity leave and Paternity leave policies (December 2015). Then, in May 2021, the universal three-child policy was implemented, The Population and Family Planning Law of the People's Republic of China was amended by stipulating that 'the couples who bear children in line with the laws and regulations can get rewards of extended birth leave or other social benefits.' Consequently, late marriage and late childbirth among citizens are no longer encouraged and rewarded with additional entitlements. Maternity leave and Paternity leave policies apply to all Chinese people no matter where they reside. Mothers of single children, mothers of two children, and other families that conform to the policy are all now entitled to extended Maternity leave and other social benefits. As a result, a range of measures has been enacted by provinces since 2022, with the length of Maternity leave often being extended beyond 98 days (ranging from 128 days to one year). Paternity leave² has also been introduced in different areas, ranging from 10 to 30 days.

² In certain circumstances, couples can have more than two children: e.g., remarried couples, couples who have one or two children with disabilities, couples from ethnic minorities, or couples who legally adopt children.

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

- Female employees who suffer from dystocia can have an additional 15 days of leave.
- Female employees who have multiple births are entitled to an additional 15 days of leave for each additional birth.
- Female employees who miscarry within 4 months of pregnancy can have 15 days of maternity leave; female employees who miscarry after four months of pregnancy shall have 42 days of maternity leave.
- In four provinces, female employees who still cannot work after the end of Maternity leave, due to physical problems or other difficulties, can (with the approval of their work units) obtain additional leave. In Zhejiang, Jilin, and Chongqing, leave can be extended to one year after birth (including statutory Maternity leave), with the salary continuing to be fully paid (Zhejiang) or paid at 75 per cent or above (Jilin and Chongqing).

b. Paternity leave (陪产假) (responsibility of State Council at a national level and Local People's Congresses at a provincial level)

Length of leave

- No statutory entitlement nationally.
- However, in all provinces, Paternity leave is provided ranging from ten days (Shanghai) to 30 days/one month (Yunnan, Gansu, Henan, Anhui, Jiangxi, Guangxi and Tibet) with 15 days the standard in most areas. In Shaanxi, five and 15 days respectively can be added to Paternity leave if the husband and wife live in different places and if the wife gives birth to three children. In Inner Mongolia, Liaoning, Hunan, Sichuan and Chongqing, leave is provided for 20 days. In Ningxia and Jilin, leave can be extended to 25 days. Where Paternity leave is provided, fathers taking leave receive full earnings. All male employees who conform with fertility policies are eligible. There is no legal requirement as to when the Paternity leave should be taken.

Payment and funding

- One hundred per cent of earnings.

c. Parental leave (育儿假)

Parental leave in China began late. In 2019, the Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Development of Infant Care Services under 3 years old mentioned that all provinces are encouraged to explore parental leave that is connected with infant care services. In 2021, parental leave was officially added to The Population and Family Planning Law of the People's Republic of China that 'The nation supports the establishment of parental leave in provinces where conditions permit'.

Length of leave

- Ten days is most common, but ranges from five days (Beijing and Shanghai) to 30 days/one month (Shaanxi): In Shanxi, Gansu and Qinghai leave is provided for 15 days. Parental leave is only promoted in Jilin and Jiangsu, with no number of days specified, while there are no relevant regulations in Tibet and Xinjiang.

Payment and funding

- Where Parental leave is provided, parents taking leave receive full earnings.

Eligibility

- All employees who conform with fertility policies are eligible.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

- No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Time off for the care of dependants

- China does not legally recognise same-sex marriage, so all family policies refer to heterosexual couples.
- Currently, 25 provinces entitle an only child to leave in order to care for their parents (referred to as 'nursing leave for only child') and this leave applies if the parents have reached the age of 60 and are being treated in hospital. Nursing leave is provided ranging from five days (Zhejiang and Guangdong) to 20 days (Henan, Heilongjiang, Inner Mongolia, Yunnan, Anhui, Tianjin and Shandong), with 15 days being the standard in Hainan, Guangxi, Hubei, Shanxi, Sichuan, Guizhou, Liaoning, Hunan, Hebei, Shaanxi, Gansu and Ningxia. Of the 25 provinces, eight allow children with a sibling/s to receive nursing leave: Hubei (ten days), Heilongjiang (ten days), Yunnan (ten days), Tianjin (ten days), Hebei (seven days), Sichuan (seven days), Guizhou (seven days) and Ningxia (seven days).
- In Jiangxi, the number of days of leave is not clearly defined. Employees should discuss with their employers when they want to take nursing leave as there are no regulations as to how many days the employers should limit this type of leave.
- Employees taking leave receive full earnings.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- During the period of breastfeeding (including bottle-feeding) for infants under one year of age, work units should not extend mothers' working hours or arrange night shifts for them. They should also arrange at least one paid hour of breastfeeding time during the working day for mothers during this

period. Female employees who have had multiple births are entitled to another paid hour of breastfeeding time per day.

- In some provinces, additional breastfeeding leave can be applied for after the end of Maternity leave. In Shaanxi, if work units are unable to guarantee breastfeeding time and provide breastfeeding conditions due to special circumstances, three to six months of paid breastfeeding leave can be granted. In Hainan, after Maternity leave, work units can agree to breastfeeding leave until the child's first birthday, paid at no less than 75 per cent of the employee's basic wage. In addition, Hainan Province stipulates that the applicable groups of relevant provisions on holidays include contract workers and temporary workers. In Guangxi, employees who have difficulty with nurturing infants after the Maternity leave ends can be granted six to twelve months of breastfeeding leave, paid at 80 per cent of earnings.

Flexible working

- No statutory entitlement.

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

The maximum period of post-natal leave available in China is 12 weeks, as laid out by national regulations, but the period is extended in nearly all provinces, most frequently to 4.7 months. These leave periods are well paid. There is an entitlement to ECEC from 3 years of age. There is, therefore, a gap of over two and a half years between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement.

China is not included in the comparative tables on ECEC enrolment produced for the OECD Family Database.

China is lacking in a system of formal ECEC services for children under three years of age, so informal care is dominant. According to official national data, only 4 per cent of children under the age of three years were in ECEC in 2015³. Participation of children aged three years or older in ECEC was 79.6 per cent in 2017⁴.

³ National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China (2017) *Transcript of special press conference of the progress of the universal two-child policy held on January 2017*. Available at: <http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/s3574/201701/7ea4318bf0f7450aaf91d184e02e5dcf.shtml>

⁴ Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2018) *The Statistical Bulletin of National Education Development in 2017*. Available at: http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_sjzl/sjzl_fztjgb/201807/t20180719_343508.html

3. Changes in policy since April 2022 (including proposals currently under discussion)

- No changes reported.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

According to the statistics of the Third Survey of Chinese Women's Social Status, in 2010 almost all mothers had taken Maternity leave; mothers with no Maternity leave accounted for only 1.9 per cent.

A survey on the implementation of maternity leave for female employees in 2021 found that when asked 'how long have you taken maternity leave', the result shows that about four-fifths of female employees take the full amount of maternity leave, but nearly 22 per cent of female employees take less than 98 days of maternity leave.

b. Paternity leave

According to the Third Survey of Chinese Women's Social Status, nearly half (49.3 per cent) of fathers who had a child in 2010 did not have paid Paternity leave; nearly a third (31.9 per cent) had paid Paternity leave of one to seven days; 13.4 per cent had eight to 15 days; and 5.4 per cent had paid Paternity leave of more than 15 days.

c. Parental leave

As China has just begun to implement Parental leave, there is no relevant data.