

Finland¹

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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 (*äitiysvapaa/moderskapsledighet*²) (responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Labour)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 105 working days (for all types of leave, one calendar week consists of six working days): between 30 and 50 days must be taken before the birth. It is obligatory to take two weeks before and two weeks after birth.

Payment and funding

- Earnings-related benefit. During the first 56 days of leave, the payment is equal to 90 per cent of the individual's annual earnings between €9,289 and €58,252, with a lower percentage (32.5 per cent) for earnings above this level. Mothers not employed and those whose annual earnings are less than €9,288 get a minimum flat-rate allowance of €27.86 per working day (€696 per month).

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² Names of the different types of leave are given in Finnish and Swedish. Finland is a bilingual country with a Swedish-speaking minority.

After this initial period of leave, benefit is paid at 70 per cent of annual earnings between €11,943 and €37,861, with a lower percentage for earnings above this level (40 per cent for annual earnings up to €58,252, and 25 per cent above this). Those whose annual earnings are less than €11,942 before the birth get the minimum flat-rate allowance. In 2017, 11 per cent of mothers received the minimum allowance. The proportion of recipients of minimum allowance has gradually decreased from the maximum figure of 30 per cent in 1996.³

- Mothers are permitted to work while on Maternity leave (except for the obligatory two weeks before and after the birth), but receive only the minimum flat-rate allowance for the days they work. Working on Sundays does not affect the benefit.
- Earnings-related benefits are funded by the sickness insurance scheme, financed by contributions from employers (in 2019, 30 per cent of the total cost), contributions from employees (in 2019, 61 per cent of the total cost), and the remaining 9 per cent is funded by the state. In 2019, employers pay 0.77 per cent of their total salary bill and employees pay 1.54 per cent of their taxable earnings higher than €14,282: these percentages are subject to annual change in the state budget. The minimum flat-rate allowances and 3.4 per cent of the benefit expenditure are funded from state taxation.
- Maternity leave accumulates the beneficiary's pension based on 141.7 per cent of the yearly earnings from which the leave benefit is calculated (2019). These earnings accumulate the pension at 1.5 per cent per year. For an unemployed beneficiary or a student, the pension is accumulated as if the earnings were €741.96 a month.

Flexibility in use

- None.

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

- Entitlements are based on residence: i.e. paid to all women who have lived in Finland, or who have been insured in another EU or EEA Member State, Switzerland or Israel, for at least 180 days directly before the date on which their baby is due.
- The basic formula is that a person entitled to family benefits is also entitled to leave.
- A woman is entitled to maternity benefit after her pregnancy has lasted 154 days.

³ Social Insurance Institution (2018) *Statistical Yearbook 2017*. Available at: www.kela.fi/statistics

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 premature birth, if the pregnancy has lasted at least 154 days and ends earlier than 30 days before the due date, the mother is entitled to benefit and leave from the next day for the following 105 days.
- Leave can be delegated to the father if the mother, due to illness, is unable to care for the child – or to another person responsible for the care of the child, if the mother dies and the father does not care for the child.

Additional note (e.g. frequent supplement of state benefit by collective agreements; employer exclusions or right to postpone)

- A brief made for the Committee on Parental Leave shows that in 2010, 96 per cent of employees in the private sector were covered by collective agreements guaranteeing full pay for part of the Maternity leave; in most cases (66 per cent) the full pay is for three months. In public sector collective agreements, coverage is also high. During periods of full pay, the daily benefit is paid to the employer. However, due to the high prevalence of fixed-term contracts for women of child-bearing age, a high proportion of women giving birth do not have an effective employment contract; so only 42 per cent of mothers on Maternity leave receive pay from the employer.

**b. Paternity leave (*isyysvapaa/faderskapsledighet*)
(responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
and the Ministry of Labour)**

Length of leave

- 54 working days (nine weeks), of which the father can take one to 18 days while the mother is on Maternity or Parental leave.

Payment (applies for the whole period of Paternity leave) and funding

- Earnings-related benefit. Benefit is paid at 70 per cent of the individual's annual earnings between €11,943 and €37,861, with a lower percentage for earnings above this level (40 per cent up to €58,252 and 25 per cent above this). Those whose annual earnings are less than €11,942 before the birth get the minimum flat-rate allowance. In 2017, three per cent of fathers received the minimum allowance.

- Fathers are not permitted to work while on Paternity leave. Working on Sundays is permitted as the benefit is paid only for weekdays and Saturdays.
- Funding is the same as for Maternity leave.
- Pension is the same as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- One to 18 days can be taken in up to four blocks of time while the mother is on Maternity or Parental leave. Subsequently, all days or the remaining 36 days can be taken at most in two blocks after Parental leave. The 54 days can be taken up until the child turns two years of age; and the child can be in day care between Parental leave/home-care leave and Paternity leave (if taken up later).
- Paternity leave is child-specific, so that the birth of the next child before the leave period has elapsed for the previous child does not cancel the father's unused leave entitlement: he can take 24 leave days based on the previous child during the Maternity or Parental leave period for the next child, but only in one segment.

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

- Entitlement is based on residence, just as it is for Maternity leave.
- The father must live with the child's mother. The father is entitled to Paternity benefit even if the parents do not live together, provided that the father is responsible for childcare.
- In same-sex couples, the female partner who is married, in a registered partnership, or co-habiting with the biological mother is entitled to Paternity benefit.

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

- Fathers with multiple children born or adopted at the same time receive an additional 18 days (three weeks) of paternity benefit for each additional child, with the maximum being 105 days (17.5 weeks). This extension of Paternity leave can be taken while the mother is on Maternity or Parental leave, or after the Parental leave period.
- Single mothers are entitled to paternity benefit days added on to their Parental leave (see c) Parental leave).

Additional note (e.g. frequent supplement of state benefit by collective agreements; employer exclusions or right to postpone)

- As a result of collective agreements, 60 per cent of all fathers with an employment contract in the private sector, as well as all fathers employed by the state, receive full pay during the first five or six days of their Paternity leave.

**c. Parental leave (*vanhempainvapaa/föräldraledighet*)
(responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
and the Ministry of Labour)**

Length of leave

- 158 working days, to be taken after the end of Maternity leave. This is a family entitlement, and parents can share the leave between themselves as they choose.

Payment and funding

- Benefit is paid at 70 per cent of the individual's annual earnings between €11,943 and €37,861, with a lower percentage for earnings above this level. Those whose annual earnings are less than €11,942 before the birth get the minimum flat-rate allowance.
- Parents are permitted to work while on Parental leave, but they receive only the minimum flat-rate allowance for the days they work. Working on Sundays does not affect the benefit.
- Funding is the same as for Maternity leave.
- Pension is the same as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- Each parent can take leave in two parts of at least 12 days' duration.
- Leave can be taken part-time, at 40 to 60 per cent of full-time hours and for at least two months at a time, but only if both parents take part-time leave and take care of the child themselves. Benefit payment is half of what the benefit is for full-time leave. To get the partial benefit, the parents must make an agreement with their employer regarding part-time work.
- Parents cannot be on leave at the same time.

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

- Entitlement is based on residence, just as it is for Maternity and Paternity leave. The father is entitled to Parental leave even if the mother does not fulfil the residence criteria; in this case the father's Parental leave period starts 75 days after the child's birth.

- The father must live with the child's mother. The father is entitled to parental benefit even if the parents do not live together, provided that the father is responsible for childcare.
- The parental benefit is paid provided the mother has had a check-up by a doctor or a qualified nurse employed in the public health care system five to 12 weeks after the birth.
- In same-sex couples, the female partner who is married, in a registered partnership, or co-habiting with the biological mother is entitled to parental benefit.

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, the length of leave is extended by 60 days for each additional child. Either the father or the mother can use the extended leave, partly or wholly during the Maternity leave or the Parental leave period.
- If, due to premature birth, the Maternity leave has started earlier than 30 working days before the expected date of delivery, Parental leave is extended by as many working days.
- If the mother does not take part in the care of the child, the father is entitled to parental benefit even if the parents no longer live together, provided that the father is responsible for childcare. If the mother dies and the father does not care for the child, the parental benefit can be paid to another person responsible for the care of the child.
- Entitlement to the parental benefit ends if a new entitlement to parental benefit starts due to a subsequent child.
- The parental benefit period for single mothers (paternity of the child is not confirmed and the mother does not have a spouse who is entitled to paternity benefit, or the mother is a sole adoptive parent) is lengthened with 54 working days (nine weeks).

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

- Childcare leave, referred to as 'home-care leave' (*hoitovapaa/vårdledighet*) can be taken from the end of Parental leave until a child's third birthday. This leave can be taken in two parts, the minimum length being one month. While taking leave, a parent can receive a home-care allowance (*kotihoidon tuki/hemvårdsstöd*) consisting of a basic payment of €338.34 per month, with an additional €101.29 for every other child under three years of age and €65.09 for every other pre-school child over three years of age, plus a means-tested supplement (up to €181.07 per month). This home-care allowance can be paid to any parent – whether or not they are on home-care leave from their

job – as long as their child is not in a childcare service provided or funded by the local authority. The average home-care allowance per family in 2017 was €411 per month. Home-care allowance is financed from municipal taxation with a state subsidy of 25 per cent of the costs.

- In 2018, 19 per cent of local authorities paid a municipal supplement to the home-care allowance, most commonly in big municipalities. These supplements averaged €147 per month per child, with a range from €50 to €300.⁴ The local authorities usually impose specific conditions on paying the supplement, most frequently that all children in the family below school age are taken care of at home. Paying a municipal supplement has become less common: in 2014, 30 per cent of municipalities still offered it.
- If a child under school age is taken care of in a private day care centre, by a private nanny, or another person employed by the family and accepted by the local authority, the family is entitled to a private day care allowance (*yksityisen hoidon tuki/privatvårdsstöd*), which is €172.25 per month per child. An addition of up to €144.85 per month per child can be paid, based on the size and income of the family. If the child is only entitled to 20 hours of early childhood education per week, the allowance is €63.38 per month and the addition is halved. In 2018, 44 per cent of municipalities paid a municipal supplement to the private day care allowance, with a range from €50 to €1,210 in full-time care. The local authorities usually impose specific conditions on paying the supplement, most frequently related to the hours of private day care. 30 per cent of municipalities offer a service voucher for private day care services, with a range from €408 to €1,115: offering vouchers has grown more popular among the municipalities during the past few years.⁴
- During home-care leave, pension is accumulated as if the earnings were €741.96 per month. These earnings accumulate the pension at a rate of 1.5 per cent per year.

e. Other employment-related measures

Adoption leave and pay

- Adoptive parents of a child (under 18 years of age) are eligible for Parental leave of 233 working days starting from the day the child comes to their care, provided that the parent presents a certificate given by the adoption agency.

⁴ Lahtinen, J. and Svartsjö, M. (2018) Kotihoidon tuen ja yksityisen hoidon kuntalisät ja palveluseteli (Municipal supplements of homecare allowance and private care and service vouchers). Kuntaliitto, Helsinki.

- Adoptive parents are entitled to parental benefit for adoptive parents if they have lived in Finland for at least 180 days before receiving the child.
- Adoptive parents in both same- and opposite-sex couples are entitled to parental benefit for adoptive parents.
- Adoptive fathers are eligible for the same Paternity leave as fathers having biological children. In same-sex couples, entitlement to paternity benefit can be given to either of the adoptive parents with their agreement.
- In intra-family adoption, the non-biological parent can share Parental leave with the biological parent (or use all Parental leave if the biological parent is not taking it). Entitlement to Paternity leave depends on whether the biological (custodial or non-custodial) parent has taken Paternity leave: if either of the biological parents have taken Paternity leave, the non-biological adoptive parent (in intra-family adoption) cannot take Paternity leave.
- A mother who adopts and takes care of a child on her own is entitled to paternity benefit the same way as single mothers having biological children.
- Adoptive parents can be in full-time employment or studies during Parental leave – in which case, they receive minimum parental benefit.
- Adoptive parents are entitled to home-care allowance for a period which ends two years after the Parental leave period started, even if the child is older than three years of age.
- A parent who adopts a child younger than 12 months of age and is married to, and lives with, the parent of the child (within family adoption) is entitled to the same paternity and parental benefit as parents having biological children. In cases where paternity benefit has been granted to the adoptive parent's spouse, the adoptive parent is not entitled to paternity benefit.

Time off for the care of dependants

- Parents of children under ten years of age can take up to four days' leave when a child falls ill (temporary childcare leave, *tilapäinen hoitovapaa/tillfällig vårdledighet*). There are no limits on how often parents can take leave for this purpose during the course of a year. Payment is dependent on collective agreements, but is often at full earnings for three or four days at a time. A parent with joint custody who does not live with a child is entitled to the leave.

Leave of absence to care for a family member or other close person

- If an employee needs to be absent from work in order to care for a family member or other close person, the employer must try to organise work so that the employee can be absent for a fixed time period.
- The employer and the employee agree on the length of leave and other arrangements. Return to work must be agreed upon between the employer and the employee prior to the leave commencing. If an agreement cannot be reached, the employee can, with reasonable grounds, interrupt the leave by announcing this to the employer one month before their return at the latest. The employee must account for the grounds of the absence and for interrupting it, if the employer requests it.
- No benefit or wage is paid during this leave.

Special care allowance

- An allowance for a parent who is not able to work on the following grounds:
 - because they must engage in the hospital care of a child under the age of seven, a severely ill child between the ages of seven and 15, or in the rehabilitation of a child under the age of 16.
 - because they provide home-care for a severely ill child under the age of 16, when home-care is in connection to hospital care.
 - because they must be available during the school or day care assessment of a severely ill child.
- Both biological and adoptive parents are entitled to the allowance. It can also be granted to employees who care for the child of their spouse. During hospital care or rehabilitation, the allowance can be paid to both parents if the child's physician considers the participation of both parents to be necessary. The allowance is not paid to parents who receive parental, sickness, or unemployment benefit.
- The payment is equal to 70 per cent of annual earnings between €1,454 and €30,962, with a lower percentage (20 per cent) for earnings above this level. Employees whose annual earnings are less than €1,453 get a minimum flat-rate allowance of €27.86 per working day (€696 per month). The allowance is paid for at maximum for 60 working days for hospital care or rehabilitation of the same illness and for 60 working days for home-care.
- Receiving the allowance does not entitle the beneficiary to a leave of absence from work.

Flexible working

- Parents of children under three years of age are entitled to a flexible care allowance (*joustava hoitoraha/flexibel vårdpenning*) if, after taking Parental leave, they work less than 80 per cent of the normal full-time hours in their respective field. The flexible care allowance is €160.80 per month if the weekly working hours are no more than 30, or 80 per cent of the normal full-time hours, and €241.19 per month if the weekly working hours are no more than 22.5 hours, or 60 per cent of the normal full-time hours. Flexible care allowance can be paid to both parents at the same time if they take care of the child during different hours of the day or different days of the week.
- Parents can work reduced working hours ('partial childcare leave,' *osittainen hoitovapaa/partiell vårdledighet*) from the end of Parental leave until the end of the child's second year at school. The employee is entitled to partial childcare leave if they have been working for the same employer for at least six months during the past 12 months. The employee should negotiate the reduction in hours with the employer, and the employer can only refuse if the reduced working hours would lead to serious disadvantages for the organisation – in which case, working hours must be a maximum of 30 hours per week. Both parents can take partial childcare leave during the same period, but cannot take leave during the same hours of the day. Employees taking partial childcare leave during the child's first and second year at school are entitled to a partial home-care allowance (*osittainen hoitoraha*) of €96.89 per month. Partial home-care allowance is paid for only one child, even if the family has more than one child entitled to the allowance. The allowance is not paid for a leave period shorter than one month.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- None. Breastfeeding leave is not considered necessary, as Maternity leave and Parental leave last until the child is nine to ten months old.

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

The maximum period of paid post-natal leave available in Finland is 36 months (including low paid 'home-care leave'). The maximum period of highly paid leave is 11.5 months after birth. As there is an entitlement to ECEC from the end of the Parental leave, there is no gap between leave and ECEC entitlements. However, from August 2016 onwards, the

ECEC entitlement is restricted to 20 hours per week, unless both parents work or study full-time. Levels of attendance at formal services for children under three years of age are about the average for the countries included in this review and for OECD countries; however, they are below average by both measures for children over the age of three years. For actual attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' on the [cross-country comparisons](#) page.

3. Changes in policy since April 2018 (including proposals currently under discussion)

- Since the beginning of 2019, the minimum flat-rate allowance for parental benefits was raised by 13 per cent.
- Since April 1 2019, several improvements to the entitlements of various types of families were launched.
- The parental benefit period for single mothers (paternity of the child is not confirmed, and the mother does not have a spouse who is entitled to Paternity benefit, or the mother is a sole adoptive parent) was lengthened by a further 54 working days (nine weeks).
- Fathers with multiple children born or adopted at the same time receive an additional 18 days (three weeks) of paternity benefit for each additional child, the maximum being 105 days (17.5 weeks). This extension of Paternity leave can be taken while the mother is on Maternity or Parental leave, or after the Parental leave period.
- Adoptive parents now receive parental benefit for all children under the age of 18 (instead of only those under the age of seven) for 233 working days (about nine months), starting from the day the child comes into their care. Previously, the benefit period lasted 234 working days, counted from the birth of the child, but always for at least 200 working days.
- After the planned reform of the leave schemes was halted in February 2018 (see Country note 2018), no further steps were taken to launch a comprehensive reform before the parliamentary elections that took place in April 2019. In June 2019, the coalition government (Social democrats, Centre party, Greens, Left Alliance, and the Swedish people's party) announced plans to reform the Parental leave scheme in order to include quotas of equal length for mothers and fathers; the father's quota is to be lengthened without shortening the share currently available to mothers, and the Parental leave scheme is also to include a period that the parents can share as they wish. The government also plans to keep the home-care allowance unchanged and restore the universal right to ECEC services on a full-time basis.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

Almost all mothers use the leave. Two weeks of leave before the birth and two weeks after the birth are obligatory. Very few mothers entitled to Maternity leave work during the leave period.

b. Paternity leave⁵

From the beginning of 2013, Paternity leave was reformed into a nine-week leave period, which includes the former one to 18-day Paternity leave period, plus the former six-week 'fathers' month' (i.e., the bonus Paternity leave days, plus the last two weeks of the preceding Parental leave available for fathers between 2003 and 2012). Statistics allow for a different review of the uptake of the first 18 days of the new Paternity leave, which can be taken while the mother is on Maternity or Parental leave (comparable with the old Paternity leave) and the remaining 36 days which are taken after the Parental leave. The analysis of the fathers' uptake of leave is based on the THL study⁶ where the respondents had their child in 2011 and still used the entitlements of the old scheme.^[OBJ] These findings are thus comparable with findings from earlier research. A subsequent THL survey for fathers with a child born in 2013 covers fathers' uptake of different forms of leave since the reform in 2013⁷^[OBJ]

Since the end of the 1990s, a great majority of fathers have taken the one to 18 days' Paternity leave, or, since 2013, the first one to 18 days of the Paternity leave. The proportion of fathers taking this leave increased from 40 per cent in 1990 and 76 per cent in 2000, to 84 per cent in 2012 – with a slight drop to 83 per cent in 2013 and then a more significant drop in 2014, when only 78 per cent of fathers took this short period of Paternity leave. In 2017, again 83 per cent of fathers took the short Paternity leave. These percentages describe the uptake on an annual basis, counted as proportions of the parental benefit periods that started in the respective years. In a Kela study based on fathers' leave uptake on a cohort basis, the percentages are lower. Until 2013, the proportion of fathers taking the short Paternity leave was 70 to 75 per

⁵ One to 18 days which can be taken while the mother is on leave.

⁶ Salmi, M. and Närvi, J. (eds.) (2017) *Perhevapaat, talouskriisi ja sukupuolten tasa-arvo (Family leave, economic crisis and gender equality)*. Raportti 4/2017, Helsinki: THL.

⁷ Närvi, J. (2018) *Isä hoitaa – vai hoitaako? (Daddy takes care – or does he?)* Työpaperi 1/2018, THL, Helsinki

cent, but has dropped since then, and only 69 per cent of fathers of children born from 2015 onwards took this leave.⁸

Since 2013, it has been possible to postpone taking Paternity leave until the child turns two years of age. Preliminary analysis of the uptake statistics suggests that a shift towards leave uptake nearer the child's second birthday is taking place.⁹ The THL study based on survey data indicates that for most fathers (71 per cent), the possibility to postpone uptake was important for their taking of the leave, and for a third it was a decisive factor.⁷

Since 2008, the average length of the leave taken while the mother is on Maternity or Parental leave has been 15 working days.

Statistics indicate that one in five fathers do not take either Paternity or Parental leave. In the cohort-based analysis, the proportion of non-users was 29 per cent in 2006, decreasing gradually to 26 per cent in the 2015 cohort.⁸

The reasons for not taking the short Paternity leave are most often the father's work situation, the family finances, or the father not being in work.^{7,10}

c. Parental leave and fathers' individual leave (i.e. the days of Paternity leave to be taken after the Parental leave)

The 158 days of Parental leave is mostly taken by mothers. Almost all mothers take Parental leave, whereas only two to three per cent of fathers took Parental leave beyond the two weeks of the 'fathers' month' over the years when it was available. Less than one per cent of mothers entitled to Parental leave did not take the whole leave period, even if the father did not take Parental leave (2004 to 2007). Fewer than four per cent of mothers work to any extent during their leave period.

Even if the popularity of the short Paternity leave is high, in 2013 only about 32 per cent of all fathers took the 'fathers' month' (which is still the entitlement for families where the Maternity leave started before 1 January 2013) or the six weeks of the new Paternity leave (to be taken after the Parental leave). In 2014, the proportion was higher (34 per

⁸ Saarikallio-Torp, M. and Miettinen, A. (2019) 'Family leaves for fathers: Non-users as a test for policy reforms.' Paper presented in the conference Towards Resilient Welfare States, Helsinki 14–15 March 2019.

⁹ Analysis by Anita Haataja, Social Insurance Institution.

¹⁰ Lammi-Taskula, J., Salmi, M. and Närvi, J. (2017) 'Isien perhevapaat' ['Fathers on family leave,' in: M. Salmi and J. Närvi (eds.) *Perhevapaat, talouskriisi ja sukupuolten tasa-arvo* [Family leave, economic crisis and gender equality]. Raportti 4/2017, THL, Helsinki 2017.

cent), and in 2015 the proportion jumped to 50 per cent, before increasing again to 56 per cent in 2017. The cohort-based analysis shows lower uptake among the birth cohorts born 2013 to 2015: 43 per cent of these fathers have taken the longer Paternity leave.⁸ The average length of leave taken by fathers after Parental leave has also risen from 21 days (2012 and 2013) to 27 days (2015) and 26 days (2017).

Like with the previous 'fathers' month' (see country note 2017), the longer part of Paternity leave has become more and more popular. However, its contribution towards actually equalising parental responsibilities is still called into question: in every third family, the mother stayed at home during all of the father's Paternity leave weeks, because she planned to continue to care for the child at home (supported by the home-care allowance), and because the father had to take his leave before the child's second birthday.⁷ However, before the extension of the time limit for taking leave (the 'fathers' month' was to be taken within six months of the end of the Parental leave), the majority of mothers stayed at home during this leave; with more flexibility in the use of the Paternity leave, more mothers have returned to work before the father takes his leave, which has directly increased fathers' individual care responsibility.^{7,10}

According to the two THL studies, men over the age 30, men with a good income, and men whose partners have a good income (as well as the fathers of first-born children) were more likely to take the 'fathers' month' or the longer Paternity leave. The impact of socio-economic resources on fathers' uptake of longer Paternity leave was further corroborated by the Kela study based on cohort data.⁸ In families where the mother had been employed before the child was born, the mother's high socio-economic status also increased the likelihood of the father taking the longer leave. This likelihood was halved if the father held the view that men were mainly responsible for the family's income, or if the father had recently experienced unemployment. The most common reasons that fathers gave for not taking the longer part of Paternity leave (or the 'fathers' month') were that they thought the family's finances did not allow it, or that their spouse was taking care of the child supported by the home-care allowance (this is for the cohort of fathers with children born in 2011 or 2013). The spouse not having a job also hindered fathers from taking their leave quota. Work-related obstacles were also mentioned quite often. Highly educated fathers stated that they tended not take the longer leave because of work pressure or the nature of their work, while blue-collar workers more often cited family finances as their reason for not taking leave. However, family finances were mentioned more often than work-related reasons, even by highly educated fathers. Very few fathers mentioned negative attitudes at their workplace as an obstacle, but instead considered their own long absence from work as too difficult to justify taking. This was related to the

distribution of their work during fathers' leave: fathers reported that a substitute was seldom hired, and work tasks were most commonly shared between fellow workers or, among white-collar employees, were left to be taken care of by the father himself despite taking leave, which made fathers hesitate to use the possibility of taking leave for longer than a few weeks.^{7,11}

In 2017, five per cent of fathers took Parental leave. Even if the number is still low, it is double that of previous years, when only one to three per cent of fathers took Parental leave beyond the two weeks included in the 'fathers' month.' The average length of fathers' Parental leave was 58 working days. Fathers with children born in 2011 were more likely to share the Parental leave with the mother if they were over 30 years of age and the fathers of first-born children. The spouse's higher education level had a significant – if small – effect on the likelihood of fathers sharing the Parental leave. Fathers with children born in 2013 more commonly took Parental leave if their spouse had a higher education level and income, especially if the father himself was not highly educated.⁷

The part-time option for taking Parental leave has not been popular. In 2003 (the first year that it was available) 37 parents received the partial parental allowance, rising to 84 (2004) then 117 (2007). This means that less than 0.1 per cent of families with a new-born child used the new arrangement in its first five years. The use has not increased subsequently; 30 to 40 couples used it between 2008 and 2014, and 77 couples used it in 2018.¹²

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

Almost all families (83 per cent in 2017) took advantage of the home-care allowance (HCA), at least for some time after Parental leave. Since 2006, statistics are available regarding its use by parents, showing that HCA is used almost entirely by mothers. In 97 per cent of all families receiving HCA, one of the parents takes care of the child and in 96 per cent of these cases, this is the mother.

In the long run, HCA has become less popular; the proportion of children aged nine to 36 months taken care of at home supported by HCA has dropped from 58 per cent (2000) to 45 per cent (2017). Recently the uptake has been varied: HCA was paid to 87 per cent of families whose Parental leave ended in 2005, dropping to 84 per cent for 2006, rising again to 88 per cent from 2007 onwards, and 89 per cent in 2014 and

¹¹ Närvi, J. and Salmi, M. (2019) 'Quite an encumbrance? Work-related obstacles to Finnish fathers' take-up of parental leave.' *Community, Work and Family* Vol. 22 (2019):1, 23–42.

¹² See www.kela.fi/kelasto.

2015, but dropping to 83 per cent in 2017. At the same time, the proportion of children under three years of age taken care of and supported by HCA has varied between 45 and 53 per cent. The annual variation of HCA uptake is probably due to variations in female labour force demand, and in the composition of women giving birth. The overall decreasing popularity matches the growing proportion of young children attending childcare services from 2000 to 2017: while the proportion of children under the age of one in these services has dropped to less than one per cent, the proportion of children aged one has risen to 34 per cent (and children aged two to 63 per cent).¹³

Statistics also enable an assessment of uptake periods of HCA. In families paid this allowance at some point before their child turns three years of age,¹⁴ periods taken have divided rather evenly: 26 to 34 per cent take fewer than seven months; 22 to 26 per cent take between seven and 12 months; 27 to 29 per cent take between 13 and 24 months; and 13 to 25 per cent take longer than 24 months (the maximum length being 26 to 27 months). However, the proportion taking the longest period of leave declined from 25 per cent (2003) to 13 per cent (2017), while the proportion taking the shortest periods rose from 26 to 34 per cent. The (few) male recipients of HCA took less of the longest periods than their female counterparts (8 per cent in 2017) but, in 2014, the proportion of fathers taking HCA for longer than a year rose from 41 to 45 per cent (though dropping again to 42 per cent in 2015 and 36 per cent in 2017).¹⁵ In the long run, from cohorts of children born 2007 to 2015, the median lengths of HCA periods have decreased from 16 months to 13 months.¹⁶ Only 6 to 9 per cent of fathers have been recipients of HCA, 2006 to 2017. The THL study on parents who had a child in 2011 shows that it was most likely taken by fathers whose spouses had a high employment status and a high income.¹⁰

The fathers who answered the THL questionnaire in 2013 had taken some form of family leave and were, thus, more active leave users than the average father. Of these fathers, however, three in four said that they had both not used home-care leave with HCA when their child was two years old and that they will not use it.¹⁰ In 2013 and 2016, the main obstacle for taking the leave, according to the two THL studies, was family finances, which more than half of the surveyed fathers said

¹³ Säkkinen, S. and Kuoppala, T. (2018) *Varhaiskasvatus 2017 [Early childhood education 2017]* Helsinki: THL Statistical Report 32/2018.

¹⁴ These statistics exclude families receiving home-care allowance where the person taking care of the child is not a parent; however, these families only comprise 2 to 3 per cent of all recipients.

¹⁵ Calculations based on Statistical Yearbooks of the Social Insurance Institution 2004–2017.

¹⁶ Calculations by Anneli Miettinen and Miia Saarikallio-Torp, Social Insurance Institution.

hindered them from taking childcare leave. Other common reasons for not taking the leave (cited by a fifth to a third of fathers) were that their spouse did not have a job, that the father did not consider taking the leave to be necessary, and that the child started at day care. Work-related reasons such as the nature of their work or work pressure were mentioned by only one in six or one in five fathers.^{7,10}

The debate on possible cuts to the HCA period in 2013–2014 (see country note 2015) led to calculations on how many two-year-olds and their siblings are taken care of at home supported by HCA. At the end of 2010, 36 per cent of two-year-olds belonged to this group, either as the primary HCA recipient (69 per cent) or as a sibling of a younger HCA recipient (29 per cent). For 40 per cent of families, the HCA covers the care of one child; for another 40 per cent, two children; and in 19 per cent of families, it is for three or more children. Nine per cent of three to seven-year-olds (27,600 children) were taken care of at home as the siblings of younger children receiving HCA.¹⁷ According to annual statistics, in 2017, one in four children taken care of supported by the HCA was older than three years of age; thus, presumably they were older siblings.³ These 18,131 children comprised only six per cent of three to seven-year-olds.

A study based on register data shows that half of the women who had their first child in 1999 took Maternity, Parental, and home-care leave at most until their child was 18 months old; while almost 30 per cent stayed on leave for 36 months or longer, and ten per cent for almost five years. For these mothers, the leave that started with their first-born child continued without a break with successive children.¹⁸ Another analysis based on the same data shows that 47 per cent of mothers who had their first child 1999–2006 had a second child within three years of the birth of the first child. However, less than half of these mothers (48 per cent) continued to a new Maternity leave directly from the home-care allowance period with the first child, and half of the mothers stopped their home-care allowance period between children.¹⁹ Thus, contrary to common belief, only a small majority of Finnish mothers stay at home on family leave for several years non-stop, and it is a minority that takes the maximum length of leave.

¹⁷ Calculations by Anita Haataja and Siru Keskinen, Social Insurance Institution.

¹⁸ Haataja, A. and Hämäläinen, U. (2010) 'Viekö haikara tasa-arvon? Puolisoiden väliset tuloerot lapsiperheissä' ['Does the stork wash away gender equality? Income differences between spouses in families with children'], in: U. Hämäläinen and O. Kangas (eds.) *Perhepiirissä [In the family circle]*. Helsinki: Kela.

¹⁹ Haataja, A. and Juutilainen, V-P. (2014) *'Kuinka pitkään lasten kotihoitoa? Selvitys äitien lastenhoitojaksoista kotona 2000-luvulla'* ['How long at home with children? A report on mothers' childcare periods at home in the 2000s'], Kela Työpapereita 58/2014.

The THL study of parents with a child born in 2011 shows that 46 per cent of all mothers were employed and 40 per cent were at home, taking care of the child/children when the child was approximately two years old. The remaining 14 per cent were mainly students (7 per cent) or unemployed (3 per cent). One in four mothers of two-year-olds already had a younger child, and a majority (84 per cent) of them were at home, taking care of the children, while one in ten was employed. Of those mothers whose youngest child was two years of age, only 24 per cent were still at home, taking care of the child supported by HCA, while 59 per cent were employed, and 17 per cent did something else (such as studying or were unemployed). Further analysis indicated that a mother whose youngest child is the two-year-old was more likely to be employed if she was: employed before the child was born, had a high-income level, had a high level of education, and had a permanent contract when the child was born. A mother was more likely to be still at home with a two-year-old if she was: a blue-collar worker, had a low level of education, had a low-income level before the child was born, and if she had three or more children. Of the mothers who were still at home with a two-year-old youngest child, less than half had a job waiting for them and half did not have an employment contract.²⁰ Even further analysis indicated that of the mothers without an employment contract, almost a third had no education after basic school; a third had vocational education, and a third had more than vocational education.^{19, 21} Recent statistics show that education is crucial for employability and there are major differences in the share of employed mothers according to their level of education: in 2016, when their youngest child was over three years old, the share of employed mothers was 36 per cent if they had only basic level education.²² So, the employability of these mothers varies in the current labour market, where there are fewer and fewer jobs for people with a low level of education. A study using register data on mothers of children born 2001–2009 also found that mothers who were highly educated and had a more secure labour market position pre-childbirth returned to employment more quickly.²³

²⁰ Närvi, J. (2017) Äitien perhevapaat ja osallistuminen työelämään [Mothers' family leave and participation in working life]. In: Salmi, M. and Närvi, J. (eds) *Perhevapaat, talouskriisi ja sukupuolten tasa-arvo [Family leave, economic crisis and gender equality]*. Raportti 4/2017, Helsinki: THL.

²¹ Salmi, M. and Närvi, J. (2019) *The Finnish family leave reform in the light of research: the rise and fall of a reform 2017–2018*. Paper presented at the conference Towards Resilient Welfare States, Helsinki 14–15 March 2019.

²² Statistics Finland, Labour force study, Families and Work 2016.

²³ Räsänen, T., Österbacka, E., Valaste, M. and Haataja, A. (2019).

'Lastenhoidon tukien vaikutus äitien osallistumiseen työmarkkinoille' ['The effect of child care subsidies on mothers' labour market participation'], Social security and health reports 14. Helsinki: Kela.

The THL study also showed that when mothers' individual motivations for relying on HCA were analysed, the issues where at-home mothers and at-work mothers differed were views on (a) the quality of day care services, with 29 per cent of at-home mothers but only eight per cent of at-work mothers mistrusting the quality; and (b) on the 'mother's place,' with 59 per cent of at-home mothers thinking that mothers of young children should stay home, while only 35 per cent of at-work mothers did so. When the significance of the ideal image for mothers' activity was analysed, together with the factors related to education and position in the labour market, both types of explanatory factors proved to be important. Level of education and labour market experiences still predicted the mother's activity, but a traditional view on a mother's place being at home almost doubled the probability of a mother still being at home with the two-year-old. However, the strongest predictor proved to be that the mother mistrusts the quality of day care services; this triples the probability of a mother still being at home with the two-year-old.^{19, 20}

The flexible care allowance, available from the beginning of 2014, seems to be much more popular than the previous partial care allowance for children under the age of three (see Country note 2018). During 2014, 15,251 children (6 per cent of the age group) were taken care of supported by this allowance, while in 2013 only 10,927 children under the age of three were taken care of supported by the partial care allowance. During 2016, 17,764 families received flexible care allowance, compared to 15,800 families in 2014 and 11,300 families receiving the partial care allowance in 2013. Thus, the popularity of the new part-time leave arrangement has risen by 57 per cent, compared to the previous entitlement, even if the numbers still are low and only seven per cent of the age group are taken care of supported by this allowance. One in ten recipients of the flexible care allowance were fathers.^{3, 24}

The THL study shows that of mothers with two-year-olds who had returned to employment, 28 per cent worked part-time (of all employed Finnish mothers with children below school-age, 18 per cent worked part-time in 2013²⁵; in 2015, 30 per cent of mothers with children aged one and two did so²⁶). A third of mothers still at home with their two-

²⁴ Kelan lapsiperhe-etuustilasto 2017 [Statistics on benefits for families with children 2017. Social Insurance Institution].

²⁵ Sutela, H. (2015) 'Pitkät työajat hankaloittavat perheen ja työn yhteensovittamista' ['Long working hours complicate combining family and work']. Tilastokeskus, *Tieto & trendit* 4/2015, 50–57.

²⁶ Pärnänen, A. & Kambur, O. (2017) 'Suomi–Ruotsi-vertailu: Pienten lasten äitien työssäolossa ei suuria eroja' ['Comparing Finland and Sweden: No big differences in employment of mothers to young children']. Tilastokeskus, *Tieto & trendit* 25.4.2017.

year-old planned to work part-time. Also, one in three mothers were interested in working part-time, but did not find it possible. The most common obstacle was family finances, but part-time work was also considered unsuitable either because it would be difficult to arrange or because the mother thought she would have the same workload, but with less time and less pay.²⁷ The partial childcare leave was used or planned mostly by mothers who had a valid employment contract before the child was born.²⁸ The rule that the employee can take partial childcare leave only if they have been working for the same employer for at least six months during the past 12 months effectively hinders mothers from choosing the partial leave, as many mothers must find a new job after their family leave. This particularly concerns at-home mothers with a two-year-old youngest child as half of them do not have a job to return to.

In 2017, partial home-care allowance during the child's first and second years at school was used to take care of seven per cent of children seven and eight years of age.³

The use of the private day care allowance for children under the age of three has again increased: in 2017, 4,408 families received this allowance for a child under three years of age, while the figure was 3,510 in 2016 and 4,209 in 2015.³ Four per cent of one-year-olds and two-year-olds were taken care of supported by this allowance in 2017 and 2016.

The results of recent research confirm earlier findings that the length of leave periods taken by mothers depends on the mother's level of education, her employment status, and her possibilities and experiences in the labour market, as well as how easy it is to find employment, especially for women with a low level of education – however, the values and attitudes of the mother also play a role. The leave schemes also seem to create two categories of women in which a) women with a stable position in the labour market, higher levels of education, and better employment prospects have more options (i.e., being able to choose between a shorter or a longer family leave period, and between a period of part-time and full-time work), while b) women with little education

²⁷ Salmi, M., Lammi-Taskula, J. and Mäntylä, E. (2016) 'Pienten lasten äidit osa-aikatyöhön? Poliitiikan ja käytäntöjen ristiriitoja' ['More part-time work to mothers of young children? Contradictions of policy and practice'] *Yhteiskuntapolitiikka*. Vol.81 No.2: 206–215. See also: www.leavenetwork.org -> Annual seminar 2015 -> Presentations.

²⁸ Salmi, M., Närvi, J., Lammi-Taskula, J. and Mäntylä, E. (2017) 'Osa-aikaisten perhevapaiden ja osa-aikatyön käyttö, mahdollisuudet ja esteet' ['Take-up, possibilities and obstacles of partial childcare leave and part-time work'], in M. Salmi and J. Närvi (eds) *Perhevapaat, talouskriisi ja sukupuolten tasa-arvo* [Family leave, economic crisis and gender equality]. Raportti 4/2017, Helsinki: THL.

and fewer opportunities in the labour market have fewer alternatives. So, a woman with a fixed-term contract or without work prior to the birth of her child is more likely to stay at home for a longer period, and to be reliant on the home-care allowance. The HCA, therefore, has partly become an income source for unemployed women, even if it is lower than the basic unemployment benefit, while also functioning as an alternative to the use of childcare services for parents with an employment contract. It also serves as an alternative to unemployment, making room for mothers who identify strongly with the role of mothers as caregivers, instead of the less socially-valued identity of the unemployed.

While statistics and research indicate that, during the past ten years, more and more fathers have taken the longer Paternity leave (and 'fathers' month' before that), the leave takers still tend to more often be men with a high level of education and a good position in their working life, especially men whose spouses have a high level of education and a good position in their own working life. Recent research clearly points to the importance of developing the leave schemes towards longer quotas for fathers. At the same time, research shows that workplace practices in organising work during fathers' leave, as well as gendered ways of perceiving only the ear-marked leave as father's leave, play an important role in how fathers – in practice – consider themselves entitled to Parental leave.

e. Other employment-related measures

There are no annual statistics available on the uptake of temporary childcare leave to care for an ill child. In the Quality of Work Life Survey (2013),²⁹ 67 per cent of employed mothers and 52 per cent of employed fathers with children under ten years of age had taken temporary childcare leave during the past 12 months – this is compared to 65 per cent of mothers and 52 per cent of fathers in 2003, and 72 per cent of mothers and 56 per cent of fathers in 2008. In families where both parents have full-time employment, 71 per cent of mothers and 60 per cent of fathers have taken temporary childcare leave, compared to 80 per cent of mothers and 68 per cent of fathers in 2008. The researchers point out that the figures have dropped from 2008 back to the 2003 level; they ask whether this is due to parents not daring to take leave in times of economic crisis and the general insecurity of working life.

In the THL family leave study, 77 per cent of mothers of two-year-olds who had returned to work, and 54 of fathers, had taken temporary childcare leave during the past year. However, many of the fathers' spouses were still at home taking care of the two-year-old. In families

²⁹ Sutela, H. and Lehto, A-M. (2014) *Työolojen muutokset 1977–2013 [Change of working conditions 1977–2013.]* Helsinki: Statistics Finland.

where both parents were employed, 79 per cent of mothers and 74 per cent of fathers had taken leave to care for an ill child. One in four mothers and one in three fathers worked at home while being on temporary childcare leave. This has grown much more common, compared to 2006, when only ten per cent of mothers and 12 per cent of fathers did so. The increasing use of mobile technology, allowing for remote working, more prevalent in many workplaces could potentially explain this change.³⁰

³⁰ Närvi, J. (2017) 'Perhevapaat työpaikoilla ja työelämässä' ['Family leave at workplaces and in working life']. In: Salmi, M and Närvi, J (eds.) *Perhevapaat, talouskriisi ja sukupuolten tasa-arvo* [Family leave, economic crisis and gender equality]. Raportti 4/2017, Helsinki: THL.