

Norway¹

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April 2019

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. Mother's quota (*mødrekvoten*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Children and Families)

N.B. There is no separate Maternity leave: the information below is for that part of Parental leave reserved for women before and after birth, and for which the term *mødrekvoten* or mother's quota is now used. Although it is treated separately here, it is, in effect, part of the longer *foreldrepengeperioden* (parental money) period.

In addition, leave of up to 12 weeks is available for pregnant women who must stop work because of chemical, biological, or physical hazards, and if the employer is unable to offer alternative work. It is paid at the same rate as sickness benefit.

Length of leave

- 18 or 22 weeks, depending on payment level (see 'payment and funding' below): three weeks before the birth and 15 or 19 weeks following birth. It is obligatory to take six weeks' leave after birth for health reasons.

¹ Please cite as: Brandth, B. and Kvande, E. (2019) 'Norway country note,' in Koslowski, A., Dobrotić, I., Blum, S., Macht, A., and Moss, P. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2018*. Available at: http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/

Payment and funding

- 18 weeks at 100 per cent of earnings or 22 weeks at 80 per cent of earnings, up to a limit of six times the basic national insurance benefit payment (i.e. NOK96,883 [€10,018.60]² per month), funded from general taxation.
- Parents who, for a temporary period, are not employed in order to care for children below school age, may receive some pension credits. Parental leaves are not affected by any reduction in pension credits as leaves are wage compensated.

Flexibility in use

- After the first six weeks, it can be flexibly used as part-time leave in combination with part-time work, or split up into smaller blocks of time.

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

- All women employed for six of the last ten months prior to delivery, and who have earned at least half the basic national insurance benefit payment over the previous year, are eligible for leave.
- Self-employed workers are eligible.
- Non-employed women receive a one-off payment of NOK83,140 [€8,597.47] per child. This payment is also given to non-employed women when the child is adopted.

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

- If the mother or child is ill and hospitalised after delivery, leave payment can be postponed.
- For multiple births or adoptions, the Parental leave period is prolonged. Parents to twins get 66/80 weeks and parents to triplets get 95/115 weeks.

b. Paternity leave (commonly known as *pappapermisjon*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

² Conversion of currency undertaken for 24 June 2019, using: <https://www1.oanda.com/currency/converter/>

- 2 weeks after birth – ‘daddy days’ (plus father’s quota, see section 1.c.).

Payment

- ‘Daddy days’ are unpaid by government: payment depends on individual or collective agreements, and most employed fathers are covered by such agreements.

Flexibility in use

- Paternity leave is flexible in a number of ways. Firstly, it can be used by someone else who will assist the mother (i.e. grandparents) if the parents do not live together. Secondly, the law does not inform as to when the leave must be taken other than ‘in connection with the birth.’ This is normally interpreted as two weeks before or two weeks after the birth. There is, however, an opportunity to move the leave if the situation requires it. Thirdly, the leave may be split up. The father may, for instance, use a day or two to be present at birth, go back to work, and then take the rest when mother and child come home from the hospital. Fourthly, it can be used by foster or adoptive parents when taking over the care of the child.

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

- All employed fathers have the right to leave, but payment is negotiated and paid by the employer.

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

- Leave can be transferred to someone else if the father does not live with the mother, since the purpose of the leave is to assist the mother. (See above regarding flexibility.)

c. Parental leave (*Foreldrepengeperioden*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Children and Families)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 46 or 56 weeks, depending on payment level (see ‘payment and funding’ below) plus a further three weeks before the birth, i.e. a total of 49 or 59 weeks. Of the post-natal period, 15 or 19 weeks are for mothers (*mødrekvoten* or mother’s quota) and 15 or 19 weeks are for fathers (*fedrekvoten* or father’s quota). The

remaining 16 or 18 weeks is a family entitlement (*fellesperioden* or shared period) and may be taken by either parent. See 'flexibility' below for options available to parents.

Payment and funding

- Parental money may either be taken for 49 weeks at 100 per cent of earnings or for 59 weeks at 80 per cent of earnings, up to a limit of six times the basic national insurance benefit payment (i.e., NOK96,883 [€10,018.60] per month (regulated on 1 May each year). When employees are included in collective agreements, the employers pay the difference between wages and the cap.
- Non-employed women receive a flat-rate payment of NOK83,140 [€8,597.47] per child.
- Funded from general taxation.

Flexibility in use

- For all the different parts of leave (e.g. mother's quota, father's quota), it is possible to choose a longer period of leave paid at 80 per cent of earnings, or a shorter period of leave paid at 100 per cent of earnings.
- After the first six weeks, it is possible for the mother to postpone parts of the parental money period, as long as it is taken during the first three years after the birth of the child, and the parent receiving the money is employed full-time during the postponement period. Hospitalisation and vacation may also qualify for postponement.
- After the first six weeks, it is also possible for one or both parents to combine all or part of the parental money period with part-time work. If parents take less than the full benefit payment, this will prolong the period of parental money. Both parents may choose to combine the parental money period with part-time work (for instance, each working part-time) at the same time. A written agreement from the employer is required in both cases. There is also a requirement that non-eligible mothers have returned to employment or study (*aktivitetskrav*), in order for the father to take the family entitlement part of leave (see below).
- Father's quota and mother's quota: this period of leave (15/19 weeks) is not transferable to the other parent, except in certain circumstances, i.e. if the parent is ill or otherwise unable to care for the child, or if the mother and father do not live together.
- Father's quota may not be taken in the first six weeks of the parental money period, except for multiple births or adoption. Otherwise, fathers are free to choose at what time to use it during the first three years after the child's birth. They can also choose whether to take the quota as part-time leave, as well as whether

to split it or use it in one block. This flexible use requires agreement with the employer.

- The family entitlement part may also be taken as one block of time, as part-time, or split into shorter blocks of time within the three-year period.
- Both parents may take leave at the same time, except during the period of obligatory leave for the mother (i.e., three weeks before birth and six weeks after) and during the period of shared leave, when mothers are required to go back to work or studies in order for the father to take it. During the period of the father's quota, there is no requirement for what mothers can do (i.e., both parents may be on leave together). Taking leave at the same time shortens the period of paid leave.

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

- The main eligibility rules are the same for fathers and mothers. They must be employed for six of the last ten months prior to the birth, and earn at least half the basic national insurance benefit payment over the previous year.
- The eligibility rules for the family entitlement and father's quota are somewhat different. The father can use the 16/18 weeks of paid leave (the family entitlement) even if the mother is not eligible; but the mother is required to take up work or study (at least 75 per cent of full-time hours). For the father's quota, the mother must also have been eligible, but there is no requirement that eligible mothers (employed for six of the last ten months prior to the birth) go back to work. According to data from 2011,³ 87 per cent of fathers were eligible. Most of the remainder were not eligible because the mother was not entitled to leave (being, for example, a student or unemployed), or themselves being unemployed.
- Self-employed workers are eligible for the same leave benefits as employees.
- Same-sex parents are eligible. When two women become mothers, the non-biological mother must have been officially recognised as a mother in order to have the rights to leave. Her rights are the same as a father's rights to leave. If two men have a child together through surrogacy, the biological father normally gets the whole leave if he is officially approved as a father. The other father may get paid Parental leave if he adopts the child (as a step-father) and if there are leave days left. The three-year period within which leave must be taken may present a challenge,

³ Kitterød, R.H., Halrynjo, S., and Østbakken, K. M. (2017) *Pappaperm? Fedre som ikke tar fedrekvote – hvor mange, hvem og hvorfor?* [Fathers who do not take paternity allowance - how many, who and why?]. Report 2017:2, Oslo: Institute for Social Research.

as they cannot apply for leave before the child is born and the adoption processes may take a long time. The 15-week quota for the second father is transferable to the first father. If both fathers are adoptive parents, they may choose which of them starts the leave period at the time of the care order.

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

- For multiple births or adoptions, the Parental leave period is prolonged: parents of twins get 66/80 weeks and parents of triplets get 95/115 weeks.
- If the child dies during the Parental leave period, parents will receive payment for six weeks of the period that is left.
- Single mothers who are eligible for Parental leave will automatically receive the father's quota. However, if the parents agree, they may apply for the non-residential father to use the father's quota.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

- Each parent has the right to one year of unpaid leave after the parental money period.
- Parents with a child between one and two years of age are entitled to receive a cash benefit ('cash-for-care' scheme) on condition they do not use a publicly funded ECEC service. The full benefit is NOK7,500 [€775.57] per month. Children who use ECEC on a part-time basis receive a reduced benefit (e.g. if parents do not use a place, they receive 100 per cent of the benefit; if they use a place for up to 20 hours per week, they receive 50 per cent of the full benefit). The main criteria for eligibility, therefore, is not parental employment status, but parents not using a particular service.

e. Other employment-related measures

Adoption leave and pay

- The same regulations apply as for parents having their own children, except for the three weeks of leave reserved for mothers before birth. The period is divided into non-transferable mother's and father's quotas and a family entitlement to be shared. Parents adopting from abroad may decide when to start the Parental leave period. Parents adopting children from abroad who are not eligible for Parental leave receive a cash benefit of NOK83,140 [€8,597.47]

Time off for the care of dependants

- Each parent of one or two children under 12 years of age has a right to: ten working days' leave per year when the child/ren are sick (or the childminder or grandparent is ill and the children are not attending kindergarten), or 15 working days' leave per year if they have more than two children. Single parents have the right to 20/30 days' leave per year. For severely or chronically sick children, there are extended rights to leave until the child is 18 years old.
- Employees who care for terminally ill family members in the home have the right to care leave for 60 days. There is also a right to leave for ten days every year to give necessary care for sick parents or spouses/partners.
- Leave is paid by the employer at the same rate as sickness benefit, i.e., at 100 per cent of earnings.

Flexible working

- Parents have a right to part-time work to care for children, until they are ten years old.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- The Work Environment Act grants all breastfeeding mothers the right to breastfeeding breaks of up to one hour per day for children under one year old. This leave is paid by the employer.

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

The maximum period of post-natal leave available in Norway is just over three years. About two years of this is unpaid (except for the recipients of 'cash-for care,' see section 1.d., but they may not use publicly-funded ECEC services or, if they do, only part-time). Leave paid at a high earnings-related rate runs for 13 months (59 weeks at an 80 per cent wage). There is an entitlement to ECEC from one year of age, available on a full-time basis at kindergartens (though if the child is born later than September 1, there might not be a place ready until one year later). So, there is no gap between the end of leave and an ECEC entitlement in theory. However, a child must be born before the beginning of September, in order to be guaranteed a place in August (start of the school year) the next year. Levels of attendance at formal services for children both under and over three years of age are above the average for both 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 2018 (including proposals currently under discussion)

The Conservative party government (in coalition with three other parties), which was elected in September 2017, increased the mother's and father's quotas to 15 weeks, after having included the Liberal party as their coalition partner. This made the rest of the Parental leave period, the family entitlement, much shorter. This new regulation was introduced on 1 July 2018. The aim has been a division of the leave into three equal parts. From 1 January 2019, it has become possible to extend the mother's and father's quotas by one month, by choosing 80 per cent wage compensation (instead of 100 per cent). The total length of the leave remains the same, which means that the shared part of the leave is reduced by ten weeks (if the 100 per cent compensation rate is chosen).

The decision to divide the paid Parental leave period into three equal parts has instigated a vigorous public complaint against it. Arguments concern negative effects of reduced leave for mothers. Several political parties want to reverse this decision, but the Prime Minister has said it will not happen under the current government.

Leave for born/adopted twins or triplets was extended, with parents who have three or more children in one birth/adoption receiving a double leave. It was announced in April 2019 that extended leave in the case of premature births will be implemented from 1 July 2019.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

Nine out of ten mothers have the right to parental money; the remainder do not meet the eligibility conditions.⁴ Mothers not eligible for parental money receive a one-off payment. This is a heterogeneous group of mothers, but with an overrepresentation of immigrant mothers.⁵

b. Paternity leave

⁴ Grambo, A.C. and Myklebø, S. (2009) *Moderne familier – tradisjonelle valg. En studie av mors og fars uttak av foreldrepermisjoner. [Modern families - traditional choices. A study of mother's and father's Parental leave episodes]*, Oslo: Nav.

⁵ NOU 2017:6 Offentlig støtte til barnefamiliene.

The share of fathers who take time off work around the birth of the child is approximately the same as for the father's quota: 89 per cent. This figure includes fathers taking time off work in various ways, including Paternity leave, but also annual leave and other options. These survey data are not recent. There is no official, aggregated registration of the use of Paternity leave.

c. Parental leave

In the years prior to the introduction of the father's quota, fewer than four per cent of fathers took some Parental leave. Only a few years later, the uptake rate was over 70 per cent (representative sample; own research from 1997), and data from public records later showed that about 90 per cent of eligible fathers take leave of some length.⁴ Comparable figures over time are hard to obtain because of changes in the way statistics are presented, and because the leave length changes frequently.

Although the length of the father's quota has varied over the last decade, most fathers (seven out of ten) have taken exactly the number of weeks represented by the father's quota, regardless of its length (NAV, 2017⁶). So, when the father's quota was 60 days, 70 per cent took exactly this period. The same happened when the quota was extended to 70 days in 2013. Then, after the quota was reduced to 50 days in 2014, again 70 per cent of fathers took the reduced quota days. Figures based on public records in 2011 show that 18 per cent of the Parental leave days were taken by fathers: in 2013, fathers took 46 days on average, and in 2014, 49 days; then, with the reduction of the quota's length to ten weeks/50 days in July 2014, fathers' average uptake decreased to 47 days. These figures from this natural experiment show that if the aim of policy is greater equality in leave-taking between mothers and fathers, changing the length of the father's quota is essential. In 2014, when the father's quota was reduced, mothers' leave use increased accordingly.

As the father's quota was lengthened, flexible use increased. In 2014, 25 per cent of eligible fathers took their father's quota part-time, combining leave and work. This figure was slightly reduced in 2015 and 2016. Also, as the quota has lengthened, parents rarely stay home together for the whole period, but it is quite common to stay home together part of the time.

⁶ Parliamentary report based on Schou, L. (2017) Fedrekvoten – uttak og holdninger. *Arbeid og velferd*, 3: 81-95. See also: NAV statistics, downloaded 6 June 2019. <https://www.nav.no/no/NAV+og+samfunn/Statistikk/Familie+-+statistikk/Nyheter/7-av-10-fedre-tar-ut-nøyaktig-fedrekvoten>

The shareable Parental leave is, for the most part, taken by mothers. Figures from register data show that 14 per cent of eligible fathers took less than the father's quota, and only ten per cent took more in 2011.⁷ As the quota became longer, fewer fathers took the shareable leave. Father's use of this leave is, in part, dependent on the mother and her willingness to share: mothers who have invested in education and have strong ties to working life (e.g., work full-time and have higher-status work) are thus most likely to share. This means that fathers are more likely to take some Parental leave, when mothers have: a high level of formal education, high income and work status, and full-time employment.

However, some characteristics of the father are also associated with use of leave. Although social class differences are small, the father's level of education has some influence, particularly on the length of the leave. The eligible fathers least likely to use the quota are fathers with long working hours, in managerial positions, or with a partner who works part-time. Moreover, fathers' sharing of the Parental leave also depends on their relationship to work. Fathers must sometimes negotiate with their employers when they want to take more leave than the father's quota, and the view that Parental leave is really for mothers is still to be found among some employers.

⁷ See Kitterød, R.H., Halrynjo, S., and Østbakken, K. M. (2017) *'Pappaperm? Fedre som ikke tar fedrekvote – hvor mange, hvem og hvorfor?'* [Fathers who do not take paternity allowance - how many, who and why?]. Report 2017:2, Oslo: Institute for Social Research.