

Sweden¹

Ann-Zofie Duvander (Stockholm University) and **Niklas Löfgren** (Swedish Social Insurance Agency)

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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 (pregnancy benefit: *graviditetsspenning*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs)

- It is obligatory for women to take two weeks' Maternity leave before or after delivery; they can decide whether to take part of the paid parental insurance benefit during this period of leave. Pregnant women can take indefinite leave paid at 77.6 per cent of earnings, if a job is a risk to the foetus and no other work can be made available. If a job is physically demanding and therefore hard for a pregnant woman to perform, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency is likely to grant eligibility of up to 50 days of leave during the last 60 days of pregnancy, paid at 77.6 per cent of income. This benefit is called pregnancy benefit and the woman will need a physician's certificate. If she is not granted pregnancy benefit, she may start using Parental leave benefit during the last weeks of pregnancy (see footnote for Parental leave).
- The Parental leave law §4 (under Maternity leave) states the right to breastfeed the child, but there are no further details about how this impacts work (for example, how often, for how long, and so on).

¹ Please cite as: Duvander, A.-Z., and Löfgren, N (2019) 'Sweden country note,' in Koslowski, A., Blum, S., Dobrotić, I., Macht, A., and Moss, P. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2018*. Available at: http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/.

b. (Paternity leave) Temporary leave in connection with a child's birth or adoption (*tillfällig föräldrapenning i samband med barns födelse eller adoption*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs)²

Length of leave

- 10 days. Designed to be used for the other parent (or carer) to attend delivery, to care for older siblings while the mother is in the hospital, to stay over in the hospital in a family room after childbirth, and/or to participate in childcare when the mother comes home. Most often this is used by the father of the child and was previously called 'daddy days' (*pappadagar*).

Payment and funding

- 77.6 per cent of earnings up to an earnings ceiling of SEK341,250.60 [€32,053.20]³ per year (see section 1.c. for information regarding eligibility and further details). Payments come from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency.
- Funding for all forms of Parental leave is obtained from statutory contributions from employers and the self-employed. Employers pay 2.6 per cent on all employees' earnings, while all self-employed workers pay 2.6 percent on their earnings as well.⁴

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be used at any time during the first 60 days after childbirth.

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

- All employees are eligible, regardless of time spent in employment, but a person is required to have a sickness benefit qualifying income (SGI).⁵

² Referred to as 'Paternity leave' in reviews before 2014; now revised to provide a literal translation of 'entitlement,' which is considered gender-neutral.

³ Conversion of currency undertaken for 24 June 2019, using:

<https://www1.oanda.com/currency/converter/>

⁴ Tax authorities, see:

<https://www.skatteverket.se/foretagochorganisationer/arbetsgivare/arbetsgivaravgifterochskatteavdrag/arbetsgivaravgifter.4.233f91f71260075abe8800020817.htm>

⁵ Swedish Inspectorate for the Social Insurance (2016). 'Sickness benefit qualifying income.' Report 2016:10. Stockholm, at www.inspsf.se. Swedish report with English summary.

- The benefit is gender-neutral and attributed to the second parent or another close person, if the second parent is unknown.

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.

- Leave is increased in the event of multiple births (e.g., doubled in the case of twins).
- Co-habiting adoptive parents get five days each at the time of adoption. A single adoptive parent gets ten days. Benefits are conditional on the child being under ten years of age at their adoption (leave can only be used up until the child is ten years of age, or 12 years if the parents obtained custody from 2014 and onwards).

c. Parental leave (*föräldrapenning*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of Employment) ⁶

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- Each parent is entitled to take full-time leave from work until their child is 18 months old, regardless of whether they are using paid benefits.
- Parents with joint custody are eligible for 240 days of Parental leave benefit each; some days may be transferred between them while others are non-transferable (see below). There is thus one legislation concerning the right to leave (18 months, see above) and another granting benefits (240 days).
- For each parent, 195 of the 240 leave days are income-based (see below). For children born 2016 or later, 90 of these days are reserved and cannot be transferred to the other parent (often called a 'mother's quota' and a 'father's quota'). The remaining 105 income-based days for each parent can be transferred to the other by signing a consent form.
- For each parent with joint custody, 45 days of the 240 total leave days are paid at a minimum level (see below). These days can be transferred to the other parent by signing a form.
- Starting with children born from 1 January 2014, either form of paid leave can be used up until the child turns 12 years old (though only 96 days can be used after the child turns four years old). For children born before this date, parents may use the paid leave up until a child's eighth birthday or until the end of the first school year.

⁶ Ministry of Social Affairs has responsibility over the parental benefit and Ministry of Employment has responsibility over the legislated right to leave from work.

- There is an extra pension supplement for the parent who earns the least income during the child's first four years. This supplement to the pension-qualifying amount is aimed to compensate the parent who takes the largest responsibility for childcare and therefore must scale back their work, or who temporarily exits the labour market.⁷

Payment and funding

- For parents who are eligible for income-related benefit (see below), 195 days of leave are paid at 77.6 per cent of earnings, up to an earnings ceiling of SEK455,000 [€42,737.50]⁸; the remaining 45 days are paid at a flat-rate payment of SEK180 [€16.91] per day. Parents who are not eligible to income-related leave receive a flat-rate of SEK250 [€23.48] per day for 240 days.
- All Parental leave benefit, income related and flat-rate, offer pension credits.
- Funding is the same as for temporary leave in connection with birth and adoption.

Flexibility in use

- The length of leave is counted in calendar days (rather than weeks or months) to enhance flexibility of use. It is thus possible to use the benefit during weekends. To get 77.6 per cent of earnings, seven days of benefit per week are needed.
- Parents can take paid leave days full-time, part-time, quarter-time, or one-eighth time, with the length of leave extended accordingly (e.g. one day of full-time leave becomes two days of part-time leave and four days of quarter-time leave). Parents cannot work while on paid or unpaid leave unless they are not taking the leave full-time.
- Paid and unpaid leave can be combined to enable parents to stay at home longer.
- Parents can take leave in one continuous period or in several blocks of time. While, officially, employees taking Parental leave have the right to stay away from work for a maximum of three periods each year, many employers allow for more periods.
- Both parents can take up to 30 days of paid leave at the same time, until the child reaches one year of age. These days have been labelled 'double days' (*dubbeldagar*). Parents cannot use any

⁷ Swedish Pension Agency (2014) Orange report 2014. Annual report of the Swedish Pension System. Stockholm. Available at: <https://secure.pensionsmyndigheten.se/download/18.3c07b8ed14fbdb77cd57cd1/1446806348928/Orange+Report+2014+eng.pdf>

⁸ The ceiling for Parental leave is higher than for temporary leave in connection with a child's birth or adoption to encourage use of Parental leave by fathers.

of the mother's quota or father's quota when using double days. Parents must use the remaining 105 income-based days that they are each entitled to if they want to stay home at the same time.

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

- The benefit requirements are both residence-based and employment-based in Sweden. All parents living in Sweden are entitled to paid Parental leave. Paid leave at 77.6 per cent of earnings requires parents to have had an income of over SEK250 [€23.48] per day for 240 days before the expected date of delivery or adoption. A parent remains qualified to receive the same compensation for Parental leave if an additional child is born or adopted within 30 months of the birth or adoption of an earlier child. This is economically significant mainly to parents who reduce working hours (and income) after the first child, since it keeps them at a higher benefit level for the second (or subsequent) child. This is commonly referred to as the 'speed premium.'
- Self-employed persons contribute to the social security system with a separate tax and are eligible for the same leave benefits as employed persons.
- Parents are entitled to paid Parental leave even if their partners are unemployed.
- Same-sex parents have the same rights as opposite-sex parents and the Parental leave is gender-neutral in its construction.

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 parents

- Families with multiple births are entitled to additional paid leave (in the case of twins, an additional 90 days at 77.6 per cent of earnings and an additional 90 days at a flat-rate of SEK180 [€16.91] per day). For each additional child in a multiple birth, parents are entitled to an additional 180 days at 77.6 per cent of earnings.
- In the case of sole custody, the parent with custody receives all of the Parental leave days (i.e., 480 days). However, in most cases of parents who are living apart, parents share joint custody and, thus, both share rights to leave. Of all children up to two years of age, 95 per cent have two original parents with joint custody.⁹

⁹ See data in Statistics Sweden's database, http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/pxweb/sv/ssd/START__LE__LE0102__L E0102X/Vardnad/?rxid=67663b18-ed2c-45be-8526-7b45f6cc3f34.

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

- Additional Parental leave pay (*föräldralön*) has been negotiated in collective bargaining agreements in the public sector and is commonplace in the private sector. A common collective agreement is that the employer pays ten per cent extra under the ceiling (i.e., workers receive 90 per cent of earnings) and/or up to 90 per cent of income above the ceiling.¹⁰

e. Other employment-related measures

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- None.

Time off for the care of dependants

- Temporary Parental leave (*tillfällig föräldrapenning*) is available for 120 days per child, per year, for children under the age of 12, and for children aged 12 to 15 years, with a physician's certificate. This is paid at 77.6 per cent of earnings, up to an earnings ceiling of SEK348,756 [€32,758.20] per year; it is a family entitlement and it can be used to care for sick children. Sixty of these days can also be used to stay at home with young children if the regular caregiver is sick. Since 2001, it can be offered to someone outside the family if they are an eligible person in the social insurance system. The ten days of temporary Parental leave associated with birth or adoption (see section 1.b.) also come under this category of temporary Parental leave.
- Parents whose children are sick or functionally disabled for more than six months can apply for care allowance (*vårdbidrag*) from the birth of the child until the child reaches the age of 19. Parents may receive a maximum of SEK9,479 [€890.35] per month for extra care obligations, such as paying for a caregiver or as compensation for reduced work hours.

Flexible working

- Until a child reaches the age of eight or completes the first grade of school, parents have the right to reduce their normal working time by up to 25 per cent; there is no payment for working reduced hours.

¹⁰ Swedish inspectorate for the Social Insurance (2018) Utvecklingen av kollektivavtalade ersättningar sedan 2000-talets början [Development of extra payments from collective agreements since 2000] Report 2018:14.

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

The maximum period of paid post-natal leave available in Sweden is around 16 months, with 13 months paid at a high rate. There is an entitlement to ECEC from one year of age, available in centres or at licensed family day carers, on a full-time basis for employed parents or a part-time basis if the parents are not employed. Consequently, there is no gap between the end of leave and an ECEC entitlement. Levels of attendance at formal services for children both under and over three years of age are above the average for the countries included in this review and for OECD countries. For actual attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' on [cross-country comparisons](#) page.

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

In December 2017, a major commission on Parental leave published proposals for changes in Parental leave legislation.¹¹ The commission proposed among other things: 1) increasing the amount of each parent's quota to five months with five months to share between them; 2) stricter age limits for when Parental leave can be used; 3) abolishing the speed premium and temporary leave in connection to a child's birth or adoption; and 4) providing for the possibility to transfer two months of leave to someone other than the two primary parents. No new laws have yet been enacted so far.

There are some minor changes from 1 January 2019. The following changes in legislation are of importance for very few parents on rare occasions:

- Both parents are able to use Parental leave benefit to visit the healthcentre for mothers.
- Parents are able to use Parental leave benefit to facilitate the child's pre-school start, also for the time when the child is not in the parent's care.
- Temporary Parental benefit can be used for courses on how to take care of a child.

4. Uptake of leave¹²

¹¹ Jämställt föräldraskap och goda uppväxtvillkor för barn – En ny modell för föräldraförsäkringen [Gender-equal parenthood and good conditions for child-rearing – a new model for Parental leave] *Statens Offentliga Utredningar* 2017:101).

¹² All uptake statistics from Social Insurance in Figures 2018. Accessible in English at <https://www.forsakringskassan.se>.

a. Maternity leave

In 2018, 25,794 women received Maternity leave benefits for an average of 39 days. Since there were 115,832 births in 2018, this suggests that 22 per cent of pregnant women took Maternity leave.

b. Temporary leave at the birth or adoption of a child

In 2018, 89,360 individuals took temporary Parental leave at the birth or adoption of a child. Approximately 77 per cent of fathers, same-sex partners, or other designated persons took this leave. Of all leave users, only 1.1 per cent were women. Men took on average 9.6 of the ten eligible days.

d. Parental leave and child-rearing benefit

Almost all families use paid Parental leave in Sweden. For children born up to the end of 2013, it has been possible to use this benefit until a child reaches the age of eight or after the first school year has ended. In 2018, most Parental leave days were taken by women during the first year of the child's life, while men tended to take leave when the child was between the ages of one and three. However, most leave days are taken before children reach the age of two; all children are entitled to an ECEC place from 12 months of age.

In 2017, the majority of women (88 per cent) and men (95 per cent) who took Parental leave were entitled to benefits at the earnings-related compensation level, as opposed to the low, flat-rate level. Approximately 19 per cent of all days used were on the lower flat-rate. Foreign-born parents and young parents, especially mothers, are more likely than native-born parents to have access to only the low, flat-rate payment. The average cash benefit was 30 per cent higher for fathers. Fathers received benefits of SEK812 [€76.27] (when flat-rate days included SEK656 [€61.62]) per day in 2018, while the average mother received benefits of SEK702 [€65.94] (when flat-rate days included SEK 513 [€48.19]).

For children born in 2001, parents used 92 per cent of the 360 days that are paid at a high, earnings-related rate, and 69 per cent of the days that are paid at a low, flat-rate level. Parents of a foreign background are less likely than native Swedes to use all their available days. The great majority of fathers of children born in 2004 (88.3 per cent) took Parental leave at some stage before their child's eighth birthday, mainly

starting when their children were 13 to 15 months of age.¹³ Fathers of children born in 2008 took, on average, 106 days of Parental leave during the eight years they could use the leave, while mothers took 342 days (76 per cent).

In 2016, 45 per cent of Parental leave benefit recipients were men, compared to 55 per cent who were women; on average, mothers took 86 days and fathers 40 days during that year. For children born in 2013, fathers had taken, on average, 69 days by the time their children were two, while mothers had taken 276.¹⁴ While mothers still take more Parental leave, the proportion of total days used by men has slowly increased. In 2002, fathers took about 12 per cent of all Parental leave days used in that year; by 2017, it had increased to 28 per cent. The percentage of couples that are sharing Parental leave equally (40 to 60 per cent) is very slowly increasing. For children born in 2013, 14.1 per cent of couples equally shared leave that year.¹⁵

Fathers with higher formal education take more Parental leave, as do fathers whose partners have higher levels of formal education. For children born in 2013, by 2015, fathers whose jobs required higher formal education had taken an average of 112 days of Parental leave, while mothers had taken 108. An important exception is men in management jobs who took an average of only 58 days, but this has increased more for men in this job than most others.¹⁶ Fathers who work in the private sector are less likely to take leave, perhaps because they more often lack extra compensation, as a result of collective agreements. Self-employed fathers take 27 fewer leave days than wage-earning fathers. Mothers who are self-employed take 46 fewer days than wage-earning mothers, but the proportional difference is much less for mothers than fathers. Groups who take little or no leave include those born outside Sweden and unemployed fathers (who typically have low benefit levels).¹⁷

The introduction of a father's quota in 1995 (one month) and its extension in 2002 (to two months) both led to more fathers taking more

¹³ Försäkringskassan [Swedish Social Insurance Agency] (2010) *Outnyttjad föräldrapenning [Unused Parental leave]*. Socialförsäkringsrapport 2010:14. Available at: www.forsakringskassan.se

¹⁴ Försäkringskassan [Swedish Social Insurance Agency] (2016). *Föräldrapenning och yrke. Korta analyser 2016:1*. [Parental leave and occupation – Short analyses].

¹⁵ Försäkringskassan [Swedish Social Insurance Agency] (2013:8) *De jämställda föräldrarna [Equal parents]*.

¹⁶ Försäkringskassan [Swedish Social Insurance Agency] (2016). *Föräldrapenning och yrke. Korta analyser 2016:1*. [Parental leave and occupation – Short analyses].

¹⁷ Anxo, D., Ericson, T. (2015) 'Self-employment and Parental leave.' *Small Business Economics* 45 (4), 751-770.

leave; though the second month had a less dramatic effect than the first.¹⁸ Still, only 44 per cent of fathers had taken their two reserved months by 2015, for children born in 2013.¹⁹ No study has so far investigated the effect on use by the introduction of the third reserved month in 2016.

d. Other employment-related measures

Mothers are more likely than fathers to work (long) part-time hours (34 hours or fewer per week); 22 per cent of all mothers with children from birth to 17 years of age worked part-time in 2012, compared to only five per cent of employed fathers.²⁰ In 2015, 21 per cent of women aged 20 to 64 and working part-time, reported doing so in order to care for children, compared to ten per cent of men.²¹ Part-time employment among mothers has declined during the last ten years. No official statistics are kept concerning how many parents working part-time are doing so by exercising their entitlement to work reduced hours.

Temporary Parental leave to care for sick children is used somewhat more by mothers, who took 62 per cent of all days taken in 2016. On average, mothers took 8.5 days and fathers 6.8 days, this being highly dependent on the age of the child, as most days are used during the first years of their life, and after regular Parental leave has ended.

¹⁸ Duvander, A. and Johansson, M. (2012) Ett jämställt uttag? Reformer inom föräldraförsäkringen [Equal use? Reforms within Parental leave insurance] Rapport 2012:4. Inspectorate of Social Insurance. Available at: <http://www.inspsf.se/>. See also Duvander, Ann-Zofie, and Mats Johansson (2014) Parental leave use for different fathers. A study of the impact of three Swedish Parental leave reforms, 349-369 in Rostgaard, T. and Eydal, G. (Eds.) *Fatherhood in the Nordic Welfare States - Comparing Care Policies and Practice*. Policy Press, and Duvander, Ann-Zofie, and Mats Johansson (2012) What are the effects of reforms promoting fathers' Parental leave use? *Journal of European Social Policy*, 22, (3): 319-330.

¹⁹ Försäkringskassan [Swedish Social Insurance Agency] (2016). Föräldrapenning och yrke. Korta analyser 2016:1).[Parental leave and occupation – Short analyses].

²⁰ Statistics Sweden (2013) *Allt fler mammor jobbar heltid*. Article 2013:31. Available at: www.scb.se

²¹ Statistics Sweden (2016) Lathund – Gainful Employment Table LF09.