

Uruguay¹

Karina Batthyány and **Valentina Perrotta** (Universidad de la República)

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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 (public sector) Law 19.121 (*Licencias por maternidad y por paternidad*)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 13 weeks: up to six weeks can be taken before the birth, one week of which must be taken at this time. Since 1 June 2017, civil servants of the Central Administration are entitled to 14 weeks of Maternity leave (as well as private sector workers).

Payment and funding

- 100 per cent of earnings with no upper limit on payments.
- Funded from general taxation.

Flexibility in use

- None, except for five weeks of leave that can be taken before or after birth.

Eligibility

- All female public sector employees.

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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 or premature births or disability, the leave is extended to 18 weeks.
- In the case of premature births with less than 32 weeks of gestation and requiring hospitalisation, both parents (biological or adoptive) are entitled to leave for the duration of such hospitalisation, up to a maximum of 60 days. Upon the termination of this license, the usufruct of Maternity or Paternity leave will begin.

a. Maternity leave (private sector) Law 19.161 (*Subsidio por maternidad*) (Instituto de Seguridad Social)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 14 weeks: up to six weeks can be taken before the birth. It is obligatory to take the full period of 14 weeks.

Payment and funding

- 100 per cent of earnings with no upper limit on payments. For employees, this is based on average earnings in the six months before taking leave. For self-employed workers, this is based on average earnings over the 12 months before taking leave.
- Funded by the social security system, which is financed by contributions: for sickness and maternity benefits, three to six per cent of employee earnings and five per cent of payroll from employer, plus earmarked proceeds of certain taxes.

Flexibility in use

- Women may postpone the start of Maternity leave (if authorised by her doctor).
- Premature delivery: if the birth occurs earlier than 42 days before the due date of delivery, the beginning of the subsidy is modified to the actual day of the baby's birth. The start of postpartum leave is not modified, that is, the original postpartum leave period is maintained, granting more days of leave.
- Delivery delay: if the birth occurs after the due date of delivery, the postpartum rest period is extended, taking into account the number of days of the delay.

Eligibility

- All female employees who contribute to the Social Security Institute (BPS).
- Self-employed workers who are covered by the Social Security Institute (BPS), with no more than one employee.
- Other self-employed workers who are covered by the Social Security Institute (BPS).

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 illness resulting from pregnancy or childbirth, the mother is entitled to an extension of pre- or post-natal leave.

b. Paternity leave (public sector) Law 19.121 (Licencia por paternidad)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 10 working days.

Payment and funding

- 100 per cent of earnings with no ceiling on payments.
- As for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- None.

Eligibility

- All male public sector employees.

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 births with less than 32 weeks of gestation and requiring hospitalisation, both parents (biological or adoptive) will be entitled to leave for the duration of such hospitalisation, up to a maximum of 60 days. Upon the termination of this license, the usufruct of Maternity or Paternity leave begins.

b. Paternity leave (private sector) Law 19.161 (Inactividad)

***Compensada por Paternidad)* (Instituto de Seguridad Social)**

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 10 calendar days
- Employed workers are entitled to a leave of absence of 13 days from the day of birth. The first three days are in the responsibility of the employer with regards to payment (Law 18.345), and the next ten are paid by the social security system (Law 19.161). In the case of self-employed workers, they are entitled to ten calendar days' leave.

Payment and funding

- 100 per cent of earnings with no ceiling on payments. For employees, this is based on average earnings in the six months before taking leave. For self-employed workers, this is based on average earnings over the 12 months before taking leave.
- As for Maternity leave, funded by the social security system, which is financed by contributions: for sickness and maternity benefits, three to six per cent of employee earnings and five per cent of payroll from the employer, plus earmarked proceeds of certain taxes.

Flexibility in use

- None.

Eligibility

- All male employees who contribute to the Social Security Institute (BPS).
- Self-employed workers who are covered by the Social Security Institute (BPS), with no more than one employee.
- Other self-employed workers who are covered by the Social Security Institute (BPS).

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

- None.

c. Parental leave

- Law 19.161 establishes a Parental Care Allowance² for the newborn of private employees or self-employed workers who contribute to the Social Security Institute (BPS). It is a part-time leave for care that may be used interchangeably and alternately by both parents after the Maternity leave. It lasts from the end of the Maternity leave until the baby is six months old. The Parental Care Allowance is based on previous income and is funded by the social security system. The payment is 100 per cent of previous income without a maximum limit. For employees, this is based on their average income in the six months before taking the leave (and twelve months for self-employed workers).
- Eligibility is the same as for the maternity and paternity subsidy in the private sector (Law 19.161). Therefore, female workers in the private sector who contribute to the Social Security Institute (BPS), both employed and self-employed, are eligible. Also eligible are male workers from the private sector who contribute to the Social Security System (BPS), both employed and self-employed. But, in the case of men, it is a requirement that the mother of the baby has been eligible for private sector Maternity leave.
- The use of part-time leave is voluntary. Flexibility in use is arranged so that parents can alternate their use in days, weeks, or months at any time during the period between the end of Maternity leave and the first six months of the baby's life.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

- No statutory entitlement.

e. Other family employment-related measures

Adoption leave and pay

In the case of adoption (Laws 17,292 and 18,436), workers in both the public and private sector are entitled to a continuous six-week leave and a reduction of the working day (up to 50 per cent) for six months. These subsidies may be used by one of the two parents from the time the child is integrated into the family, while the other parent is them granted ten working days of leave.

² In previous notes, we included the Parental Care Allowance in the 'flexible work' section. We think it is better to consider it as Parental leave because it shares its main characteristics mentioned by specialised literature. It is a part-time leave taken after Maternity leave, the fathers can take it, and it allows them to devote time to care.

Time off for the care of dependents

- No statutory entitlement.

Flexible working

- Mothers in the public sector may work part-time, but only if they are breastfeeding. This lasts according to the baby's needs, but usually continues until the baby is 12 months old. The worker must present a medical certificate that proves that she is breastfeeding, in order to continue using the reduction of working hours. Since 1 June 2017, civil servants of the Central Administration have been able to make use of a reduction in working hours, meeting a minimum of four hours per day, when the baby is between six and 12 months old. It must be used by one of the parents. This measure was established in the labour agreement signed in December 2016 by the Confederation of Organisations of State Officials (COFE), the Ministry of Economy and Finance, and the Ministry of Labor and Social Security. Before this agreement, only mothers were eligible.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

If the worker breastfeeds her child, she is authorised to interrupt her daily work for that purpose, and has a choice between two periods of half an hour each or a period of one hour. This time is computed as effective work. Her doctor is responsible for setting the duration of the breastfeeding period (Decree N°234/018). The certificates issued will be renewed in each control of the child; will be valid for no longer than three months; and may be extended for up to two years. The workers are required to present the certificate to their employer with whom they need to agree on how and when they will use the one-hour reduction during the working day.

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

The maximum period of post-natal leave is around three months, paid at a high earnings-related level. There is an entitlement to ECEC once children are four years old and attendance is obligatory. Through the first two years of the child's life, ECEC provision of full-time services is almost totally private as the supply of public care is scarce.

Attendance in 2017 was 32.5 per cent for children under two years of age. Generally, this attendance was part-time. 31 per cent of children

under two years of age went for four hours per week, 49.5 per cent went for between five and 20 hours a week, 9.5 per cent went for between 21 to 30 hours, and 9.5 per cent went for 31 hours and more.

Attendance in 2017 was 72.5 per cent for children aged three, and 93.9 per cent for children aged four. For children between three and five years old, coverage reached 88.2 per cent.³

Levels of attendance at formal services for children under the age of three (41.6 per cent) are around the average both for the countries included in this review and for OECD countries; but well below the average for children over the age of three. For 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)

None.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

Data on Maternity leave show a steady increase in the period 2011-2016, from 14,264 users in 2011 to 16,108 users in 2016. However, no significant impact can be observed since the new law, Nr.19161. From 2013, there has been a stability in the number of users (around 16,000): this means that when it comes to the first years of implementation, the new legislation has not involved a significantly important increase, in comparison to previous years. The new law, with the inclusion of new groups, did not imply substantive variations in the use of Maternity leave – probably because the non-dependent mothers who can use this license represent a very small proportion. In any case, it is interesting to investigate the state's capacities to disseminate and guarantee the rights of these groups.⁴

b. Paternity leave

³ Source: MIDES, based on the *Continuous Household Survey* of the Statistics National Institute, Uruguay, 2017. Available at: <http://observatoriosocial.mides.gub.uy/portal/indicadores.php#>

⁴ Batthyány, K., Genta, N., and Perrotta, V. (2018) 'Uso de licencias parentales y roles de género en el cuidado.' Departamento de Sociología, FCS-UDELAR, MTSS, SNIC, OIT, ONUMUJERES.

A substantive increase occurred in the case of Paternity leave, which rose from 8,799 in 2014 to 15,862 in 2016 (an increase of 80 per cent). Undoubtedly, this increase represents a significant advance for male parents' right to care, at least during the first days of the baby's life.⁵

c. Parental leave

Part-time leave (Parental Care Allowance) is voluntary. In 2016, 59.1 per cent of the users of Maternity leave in the private sector used part-time leave (Parental Care Allowance). This means that a significant group of women did not take it, despite having the right to do so.

Among the users of part-time leave (Parental Care Allowance), men represent two per cent.

Regarding the evolution in the use of Parental leave, it increased from 6,258 users in 2014 to 9,525 in 2016, signifying an increase of 52 per cent.⁶ Use of part-time leave has increased, not as fast as Paternity leave, although this use is fundamentally by women.

The reasons why the use of part-time leave is fundamentally by women are of a design nature. Couples must choose if it is the father or mother who takes part-time leave. Societal gendered norms associate mothers with being the best caregivers, especially in the first six months of babies' lives.

As observed in international precedents, when either parent is eligible for the benefit, it is normally used by women. In Uruguay, use reflects a rigid gender contract in social representations around childcare. The impact of social representations around childcare is reinforced by the state's strong promotion of exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months. National regulations adopted in 2009 (Ministry of Public Health Ordinance 217/09) establish the importance of exclusive nursing in the first six months, and supplementary breastfeeding up to the age of two, while defining the obligations of health services in that regard. Such recommendations form part of campaigns conducted by the state and health provider institutions. In other words, the shared use of part-time leave is discouraged by an apparent contradiction: on the one hand, women are advised to breastfeed their children during the first six months and, on the other, they are afforded the opportunity to transfer their right to part-time leave to their partners in the same six months (Batthyány and Perrotta, 2018⁷).

⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ Batthyány, K., and Perrotta, V. (2018) 'Maternity/paternity and paid employment: progress in and obstacles to the exercise of the right to care in Uruguay.' *Journal of the Ministry of Employment and Social Security*

Results of the *National Parental Leave Survey*, implemented in 2017, showed that men's major reason (72.1 per cent) for not using part-time leave was its overlap with the nursing period. The next most frequent reason given by fathers (six out of ten) was that they believed the baby is better cared for by mothers. One-third of the men replied that caring for babies in the first year of life is the task of mothers (Batthyány and Perrotta, 2018⁸).

d. Childcare leave and career breaks

There is no statutory leave entitlement.

e. Other family-employment related measures

None.

Economics and Sociology. Special issue on leave policy and its use in Mediterranean and South American countries.

⁸ Ibidem.