

## Statutory Parental leave (not including additional childcare leave): April 2021

All EU member states must provide at least four months' **Parental leave** per parent, under the terms of Directive 2010/18/EU. The directive defines this leave as enabling parents 'to take care of (a) child until a given age,' so distinguishing this leave from Maternity leave, where the directive setting minimum standards was adopted as a health and welfare measure. No payment or flexibility requirements are specified in Directive 2010/18/EU, but Parental leave is defined as 'an individual right and in principle non-transferable,' though the directive goes on to add that 'member states are allowed to make it transferable.' In April 2019, the European Parliament adopted a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU. After the Council formally approved the Directive, EU countries have three years to comply with them. The Directive also requires: ten working days of Paternity leave, paid at no less than the level of sick pay; two months of non-transferable, paid Parental leave; five days of annual carer's leave; and flexible working patterns.

Around half of the non-EU countries in this review also provide Parental leave. The exceptions are Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, Mexico, Serbia, South Africa, Switzerland (the only European country included in this review not to provide Parental leave, though not an EU member state), and the United States (which has a generic and unpaid 'family and medical leave' that is not applicable to private employers with fewer than 50 employees).

Six countries (Australia, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, and Sweden) have Parental leave that subsumes either Maternity leave or Maternity and Paternity leave, although periods of Parental leave may be for mothers or for fathers only.

Parental leave varies on four main dimensions: length; whether it is an individual or family entitlement; payment; and flexibility.

Broadly, countries divide into those where the **total length of Parental leave** available is less than 15 months; and those where continuous leave is available for up to three years or more. The former includes Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands,

New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, and the UK. The latter ('long leave' countries) includes the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Russia, Slovakia, and Spain. Sweden falls in between the two: paid leave is expressed in days (to emphasise that it can be taken very flexibly), roughly equivalent to 18 months if taken continuously, while each parent is also entitled to take unpaid leave until a child is 18 months of age – this is similar in Latvia. So, too, is this the case in Australia, Austria, Korea, and Romania, with leave lasting potentially until a child's second birthday. Greece is also exceptional, with four months per parent in the private sector and 60 months per parent in the public sector. Note, too, that some countries supplement Parental leave with childcare leave, so extending the period available (see below).

Parental leaves (benefits) are a **family entitlement** in nine countries, to be divided between parents as they choose (Austria, Canada - Québec, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, and Slovakia); an **individual entitlement** in 20 countries (Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain, and the United Kingdom); a **mixed entitlement** (part family, part individual) in seven countries (Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Romania, and Sweden); while in Malta it is a family entitlement for workers in the public sector and an individual entitlement for private sector workers. In most cases, individual entitlements are non-transferable, so if not used by a parent, these are foregone (following the 'use it or lose it' principle); but in the case of Croatia, Czech Republic, New Zealand, Slovenia, and Sweden, some amount of unused entitlements can be transferred to a partner. In this column of the table, only entitlement to leave is taken into consideration, and not entitlement to any payments. For example, in Latvia, there is an independent entitlement to leave for both parents, but not to the accompanying payment, which is a family entitlement.

A majority of countries in the review (30) provide some element of **payment**; only Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Malta, Netherlands, Spain, and the UK make no payment. Payment policy varies considerably and can include a **ceiling on benefit payments**.

**Flexibility** takes a number of forms, including:

1. the possibility to take leave on a full-time or part-time basis (i.e. so parents can combine part-time employment with part-time leave);
2. the possibility of taking leave in one continuous block or several shorter blocks;
3. the option to take longer periods of leave with lower benefits or shorter periods with higher benefits (e.g. Greece);
4. the possibility to transfer leave entitlements to carers who are not parents;
5. the possibility to use all or part of leave when parents choose, until their child reaches a certain age;
6. additional leave in the case of multiple births or, in a few cases, other circumstances;
7. the possibility for both parents to take all or some leave at the same time.

Various measures have been introduced to **encourage fathers to use Parental leave**. Mostly these are wholly or partly individualised entitlements, so that fathers not using their 'quota' lose it, as unused leave cannot be transferred to a partner. However, experience has shown that such 'father's quotas' need to be well-paid if they are to be widely used. Another approach is to offer some form of bonus (e.g. additional leave) if both parents take some Parental leave. Eleven countries offer such a bonus. For example, Germany extends paid leave by two months if fathers take at least two months of leave; Japan has a rather similar system, in which an extra two months of leave may be taken if both parents use some of their leave entitlement; and Portugal offers a bonus to families where the father shares part of the initial Parental leave (formerly Maternity leave). Similarly, in 2019 Canada introduced five or eight extra weeks of paid leave reserved for fathers/second parents, if Parental leave is shared between couples. Other countries with incentives for fathers to take leave are Austria, Croatia, France, Italy, Korea, Norway, and Romania.

**Childcare leave** can usually be taken immediately after Parental leave, creating a continuous, longer period of leave, even if the conditions (such as the benefit paid) may not be the same. It is, however, much less common than Parental leave (available in Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, and Portugal), plus in the public sector in Malta. In most cases, childcare leave is unpaid or low paid. Finland is exceptional in that its home care leave is both available to all parents and paid, albeit with a relatively low flat-rate allowance (so, effectively, blurring the distinction with Parental leave). Greece is also exception in that childcare leave is available after Maternity leave, and as Parental leave is unpaid, its use is very limited, while childcare leave which is fully compensated is widely used.

In addition to these countries, some other countries offer either a very limited period of leave for all families or an extended leave for certain types of family. For more information on childcare leave, please consult the country notes.

In addition to Parental and childcare leave, a third type of leave is an entitlement to a break from employment for any reason, including (but not confined to) childcare: a **career break**. A statutory entitlement of this kind is found in only one country, Belgium, with one year's full-time leave (or 24 months' part-time leave or 60 months' one-fifth-time leave) that can be extended up to five years by collective agreement, negotiated at sectoral or company level; this is in addition to Parental leave. This career break entitlement includes a flat-rate payment under certain conditions (e.g. care of a young child, providing palliative care, or attending a training course).

Country	Summary of leave	Total amount of post-natal Parental leave available to family, <i>excluding</i> childcare leave (months)			Type of leave entitlement (leave only, not including payment)	Incentive for father to take (in addition to individual entitlement)	Flexibility
		Total	Paid	Well-paid			
Argentina	✘						
Australia <sup>34</sup>	■ ■	24	4.7	✘	Individual; non-transferable	✘	7b
Austria <sup>35</sup>	■ ■ ■	»24	»24	14 (2 bonus)	Family	Partnership bonus if parents share equally (60:40)	1; 2; 3; 5; 7b

<sup>34</sup> Australia: an individual can take a second 12 months of Parental leave, subject to employer agreement, but the maximum period of leave is 24 months per family. The leave period of 12 months is an individual entitlement; but the payment is a family entitlement. Fathers entitled to additional two weeks' flat-rate payment if they take leave.

<sup>35</sup> Austria: since 2017, there has been either the income-dependent parental benefit (80 per cent of earnings for 12 to 14 months) *or* a flexible payment scheme ('childcare benefit account'), where parents can distribute an overall sum of about €15,449 (if both parents participate, the other parent has to take at least 20 per cent of the overall duration) or €12,366 (if only one parent participates) over a specific time span.

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		Total	Paid	Well-paid			
Belgium	■ ■ +	8	8	×	Individual; non-transferable	×	1; 2; 5; 6; 7a
Brazil	×						
Bulgaria	■ ■	12	12	×	Family	×	4
Canada <sup>36</sup>	■ ■	8.1 to 15.9	8 to 15.9	×	Family	5 to 8 extra weeks	3; 7a
Québec	■ ■ ■	7.4	7.4	5.8*	Family	×	3; 5; 7a
Chile	×						
China	×						

<sup>36</sup> Canada: a supplement is payable to low-income (i.e., below the poverty line) families taking Parental leave, increasing payment to 80 per cent. There are regional variances in unpaid leave between jurisdictions. In 2019, Canada introduced extra weeks reserved for fathers/second parents, conditional upon parents sharing leave in the standard plan (shorter duration, higher benefit at 55 per cent) and extended plan (longer duration, lower benefit at 33 per cent).

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		Total	Paid	Well-paid			
Croatia <sup>37</sup>	■ ■      +	8	8 to 16	×	Individual; partly transferable	Higher payment for additional 2 months if both parents use	1; 2; 5; 6; 7a
Cyprus	■	8.4 <sup>38</sup>	×	×	Individual; partly transferable	×	2; 5; 6; 7a
Czech Republic <sup>39</sup>	■ ■ ■	▶▶36	[6 to 36]	[19*]	Individual; non-transferable	×	1; 3; 7a

<sup>37</sup> Croatia: in the case of twins, other multiple births, or for the third and every subsequent child, parents are entitled to leave until the child(ren) is 36 months old at 100 per cent of earnings; the ceiling for the period from 12 to 36 months is lower than for the first six months of Parental leave.

<sup>38</sup> Cyprus: Parental leave can usually be taken for a minimum period of one week and a maximum period of five weeks, per calendar year.

<sup>39</sup> Czech Republic: each parent can take leave until their child is 36 months of age, but only one parent can receive Parental benefit, which is paid to all families, whether or not leave is taken when the child is between the ages of 12 and 48 months. Benefit can be paid for the full period at a lower rate or for a shorter period at 70 per cent of earnings, though with a low ceiling.

Country	Summary of leave	Total amount of post-natal Parental leave available to family, <i>excluding</i> childcare leave (months)			Type of leave entitlement (leave only, not including payment)	Incentive for father to take (in addition to individual entitlement)	Flexibility
		Total	Paid	Well-paid			
Denmark <sup>40</sup>	■■■	7.4 to 14.8	7.4 to 14.8	7.4*	Individual; non-transferable	✗	1; 3; 5; 7a
Estonia	■■■	▶▶36	[▶▶14.5]	[▶▶14.5]	Family	✗	2; 4; 5
Finland <sup>41</sup>	■■■ +	8.2	8.2	8.2	Family & individual non-transferable (technically Paternity leave)	✗	1; 2; 6; 7b

<sup>40</sup> Denmark: parents can opt for shorter, higher paid Parental leave or longer, lower paid leave; each parent is entitled to 32-46 weeks of Parental leave, but the total period cannot exceed 32-46 weeks per family. It can be extended to 64 weeks if taken part-time, subject to agreement with employer.

<sup>41</sup> Finland: paid at 70 per cent of earnings, but proportion is reduced beyond a specified level. The duration of Parental leave is 158 working days, including Saturdays, so 158 days is 26.3 weeks. Nine weeks of 'Paternity leave' are available and are included here as a form of Parental leave, only three of which can be taken whilst the mother is on leave, the other six (or nine) weeks are for after the family Parental leave period.



Country	Summary of leave	Total amount of post-natal Parental leave available to family, <i>excluding</i> childcare leave (months)			Type of leave entitlement (leave only, not including payment)	Incentive for father to take (in addition to individual entitlement)	Flexibility
		Total	Paid	Well-paid			
France <sup>42</sup>	■ ■	▶▶24 or 36 if shared between parents	[ ▶▶36]	×	Individual; non-transferable	Longer period of financial payments if both parents take some leave	1; 6; 7a
Germany	■ ■ ■	72	28 incl. 4 bonus	14 <sup>43</sup> incl. 2 bonus*	Individual; non-transferable	Bonus leave if parents share	1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7a
Greece Private sector	■      +	8	×	×	Individual; non-transferable	×	2; 5; 6
Public sector	■      +	120 (5 years per parent)	×	×	Individual; non-transferable	×	5

<sup>42</sup> France: Parental leave is not paid, but there is a Parental leave benefit. They do not always overlap because eligibility conditions are different. See country note.

<sup>43</sup> Germany: earnings-related payment varies between 65 and 67 per cent.

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		Total	Paid	Well-paid			
Hungary	■■■ +	»36	»36	24*	Family	×	1; 4; 6
Iceland	■■■ +	12	12	12*	six months individual; each parent may transfer up to six weeks of their leave to the other	×	1; 2; 5; 6; 7a
Ireland	■	14.4 <sup>44</sup>	2.3	×	Individual; non-transferable	×	2; 5; 6; 7a
Israel	■	»12	×	×	Individual; non-transferable	×	2

<sup>44</sup> Consists of one year of unpaid 'Parental leave' (26 weeks per parent) + 2.4 months of 'Parent's leave' (5 weeks per parent paid at a low flat rate). Both are individual, non-transferable rights equally available to both parents.

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		Total	Paid	Well-paid			
Italy	■ ■	11 incl.1 bonus	11 incl.1 bonus	✗	Individual; non- transferable	Bonus leave if parents share	1; 2; 5; 6; 7a
Japan	■ ■ ■	▶▶14 incl. bonus	▶▶14 incl. 2 bonus	12*	Individual; non- transferable	Leave can be taken over a longer period if parents share	2 (fathers); 7a
Korea	■ ■	24	24*	6*	Individual; non- transferable	3 months at 100 per cent earnings if second parent takes leave	1; 2; 5; 7a
Latvia	■ ■	36 ✗	18 <sup>45</sup>		Individual; non- transferable	✗	2, 3; 5; 7a

<sup>45</sup> Only one parent can receive payment. If a parent chooses to receive the benefit up until a child's first birthday, payment is at 60 per cent of their salary. If a parent chooses to receive the benefit until the child is 18 months of age, they receive 43.75 per cent of their salary for this period.

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		Total	Paid	Well-paid			
Lithuania <sup>46</sup>	■ ■	▶▶36	▶▶24	▶▶12*	Family	×	4; 6
Luxembourg	■ ■ ■ ■	12	12	12	Individual; non-transferable	×	1; 3; 7a
Malta Private sector	■	8	×	×	Individual; non-transferable	×	2; 5
Public sector	■ +	12	×	×	Family	×	2; 5
Mexico	×						

<sup>46</sup> Lithuania: 12 months of leave at 77.58 per cent of previous earnings up to a ceiling; or 24 months at a lower earnings-related level (54.31 per cent for first year, 31.03 per cent for second year) up to a ceiling.

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		Total	Paid	Well-paid			
Netherlands <sup>47</sup>	■	12	×	×	Individual; non-transferable	×	(1); (2); 5; 6; 7a
New Zealand <sup>48</sup>	■■■	12	6	6*	Family	×	2, 7a
Norway	■■■ +	13	13	13*	Family & individual; non-transferable	×	1; 2; 3; 5; 6; 7b
Poland	■■■ +	7.4	7.4	7.4 <sup>49</sup>	Family	×	1; 2; 3; 4; 7a

<sup>47</sup> Netherlands: parents are entitled to 26 times their weekly working hours; figure of 12 months based on both parents with full-time jobs of 38 hours per week, which gives a leave period of 988 hours (= 26 weeks or six months).

<sup>48</sup> New Zealand: the leave in this table corresponds to what is referred to as primary carer's, partner's and extended leave in the country note.

<sup>49</sup> Poland: the level of payment during Parental leave can be 80 per cent or 60 per cent of earnings, depending on choices made by the mother during Maternity leave; if a mother opts for 100 per cent payment during Maternity leave, Parental leave payment is 60 per cent; but if she opts for 80 per cent payment during Maternity leave, then Parental leave payment is also 80 per cent. Access to Parental leave also depends on the full six months of Maternity leave being taken.

Country	Summary of leave	Total amount of post-natal Parental leave available to family, <i>excluding</i> childcare leave (months)			Type of leave entitlement (leave only, not including payment)	Incentive for father to take (in addition to individual entitlement)	Flexibility
		Total	Paid	Well-paid			
Portugal <sup>50</sup>	■■■ +	12	12	6	Initial Parental leave: family and partly transferable; Additional Parental leave individual, non-transferable	Bonus month if Initial Parental leave shared	1; 3; 5; 7b
Romania	■■■	▶▶24	▶▶24	▶▶24* <sup>51</sup>	Family	1 month of paid leave is lost if only one parent takes leave	2; 6
Russian Fed.	■■	▶▶36	▶▶18*	×	Family	×	1; 4

<sup>50</sup> Portugal: the leave in this table corresponds to what is referred to as Initial and Additional Parental leave in the country note. Length of leave includes bonus month for parents sharing Initial Parental leave.

<sup>51</sup> Romania: the period of paid leave is reduced by one month if both parents do not take at least one month of leave.

Country	Summary of leave	Total amount of post-natal Parental leave available to family, <i>excluding</i> childcare leave (months)			Type of leave entitlement (leave only, not including payment)	Incentive for father to take (in addition to individual entitlement)	Flexibility
		Total	Paid	Well-paid			
Serbia <sup>52</sup>	✘						
Slovakia	■ ■	▶▶36	[▶▶36]	✘	Individual	✘	1; 2; 6; 7a
Slovenia	■ ■ ■	8.6	8.6	8.6*	Individual; transferable	✘	1; 2; 4; 5; 6; 7a.
South Africa <sup>53</sup>	✘						
Spain <sup>54</sup>	■	▶▶36	✘	✘	Individual; non-transferable	✘	2; 6; 7a
Sweden <sup>55</sup>	■ ■ ■	▶▶18	15.9	12.9*	Family & individual;	✘	1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7a; 7b

<sup>52</sup> Serbia: in the case of multiple births, or for the third and every subsequent child, parents are entitled to 20.2 months of leave.

<sup>53</sup> The South African parliament passed a bill in 2017 for the introduction of at least ten days of Parental leave for employees who are also parents, and for at least ten consecutive weeks of Parental leave for an employee who is a commissioning parent in a surrogate motherhood agreement.

<sup>54</sup> Spain: each parent is entitled to take leave until a child's third birthday.

<sup>55</sup> Sweden: paid Parental leave is for 480 days, the denomination in days intended to indicate and encourage flexible use (e.g. a parent can take five paid days of leave for every one calendar week). In addition, each parent is entitled to take unpaid leave

Country	Summary of leave	Total amount of post-natal Parental leave available to family, <i>excluding</i> childcare leave (months)			Type of leave entitlement (leave only, not including payment)	Incentive for father to take (in addition to individual entitlement)	Flexibility
		Total	Paid	Well-paid			
					partly transferable		
Switzerland	×						
United Kingdom <sup>56</sup>	■	4.2	×	×	Individual; non-transferable	×	2; 5; 6; 7a
USA	×						
Uruguay Public sector Private sector	× ■ ■ ■	× 3	× 3	× 3	× Family	× ×	

**Key:**

until a child is 18 months of age. In December 2017, a major commission on Parental leave published proposals for changes in Parental leave legislation – please see country note for details.

<sup>56</sup> United Kingdom: this does not include the recently introduced shared Parental leave, which is actually a form of transferable Maternity leave, whereby the mother can transfer most of her Maternity leave to a partner, if she so chooses. Only actual Parental leave is included, i.e. leave that is an individual and non-transferable right for each parent.



**Summary of leave:** ✕: no statutory entitlement; +: period of additional childcare or other leave available after end of Parental leave (or in the case of Greece after the end of Maternity leave), this leave is not included in subsequent columns; ■: statutory entitlement but unpaid; ■■: statutory entitlement, some of the period paid, but either at a flat rate or (if income-related) at less than 66 per cent of earnings for all or most of the period; ■■■: statutory entitlement, paid for all or most of the period at 66 per cent of earnings or more, the latter being an indicator used by the European Commission in monitoring member states' progress in meeting Employment Guidelines (European Commission (2010), *Indicators for monitoring the Employment Guidelines including indicators for additional employment analysis, 2010 compendium*, Table 18.M3. Available at: <http://www.nbbmuseum.be/doc/seminar2010/fr/bibliographie/risque/compendiumjul2010.pdf>)

**Total amount of post-natal Parental leave available to family:** leave may be awarded as **either** (i) a period of time (e.g. 12 months) **or** (ii) until a child reaches a certain age (e.g. until a child's third birthday). In the 'total amount' column, ► indicates (ii), e.g. in Austria leave is until a child reaches 24 months of age; in these cases, where the entitlement is 'individual,' then each parent may take leave until the child reaches this age. Where there is no ► indicated, then leave is (i) and the total amount of leave available to both parents is given. Paid: payment may be flat-rate and/or earnings-related. The generosity of flat-rate payments relative to individual earnings varies across (and sometimes within) countries. See country notes for more detailed information. Well-paid: earnings-related payment at 66 per cent of earnings or above. ✕: not paid or not well-paid. \*: ceiling on earnings-related payment. Square brackets [ ] indicates all parents with a young child receive a payment, whether on leave or not. **Type of leave:** there are two dimensions here. Firstly, leave can be a 'family' or an 'individual' entitlement; and, secondly, an 'individual' entitlement can be non-transferable (i.e., if the individual does not use their entitlement, it is lost) or 'transferable' (i.e. the individual can transfer part or all of their entitlement to someone else, usually the other parent). **Incentive for father to take:** 'Father's quota' indicates a basic, individual entitlement that only fathers can use (i.e. non-transferable) and which is 'well-paid' (see above for definition). 'Bonus months' indicates a period of paid leave additional to the basic, paid entitlement, and which becomes available if the basic, paid leave is shared by both parents (i.e., if each parent takes at least some of the basic, paid leave); ✕: no incentive. **Flexibility:** 1 – leave can be taken full-time or part-time (i.e. option to work part-time or other reduced hours); 2 – leave can be taken in one block of time or several blocks; 3 – leave can be taken for a shorter period with a higher benefit paid or for a longer period with a lower benefit; 4 – leave can be transferred to a non-parent; 5 – all or part of leave can

be taken at any time until a child reaches a certain age; 6 – other, including additional leave in case of multiple births or serious illness/disability; 7a – both parents can take all leave at the same time; 7b – both parents can take some leave at the same time. Brackets indicate that the option requires employer agreement.