

Sweden¹

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

April 2023

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 (responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs)

- Two weeks before or after delivery.
- It is obligatory to take this period, and individuals can decide whether to take part of the parental insurance benefit (see Section 1c) during this period of leave.
- In addition, pregnant women can take indefinite leave if a job is a risk to the foetus and no other work can be made available; or if a job is physically demanding and therefore hard for a pregnant woman to perform, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency can grant up to 50 days of leave during the last 60 days of pregnancy. This leave is paid at 77.6 per cent of earnings, which is called pregnancy benefit (*graviditetspenning*), and a doctor's certificate is needed. If a woman is not granted pregnancy benefit, she may start using Parental leave benefit during the last weeks of pregnancy (see Section 1c). Some women also are on sick leave.

¹ Please cite as: Duvander, A.-Z. and Löfgren, N (2023) 'Sweden country note', in Blum, S., Dobrotić, I., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A. and Moss, P. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2023*. 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*)² (responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs)

Length of leave

- Ten 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, 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 upper limit of SEK 393,750 [€33,075.73]³ per year. The maximum payment is SEK1,175 [€98.70] per day. 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 in Sweden pay 31.42 per cent of all employees' salary in such statutory contributions to cover all social insurance (including pensions). Out of the 31.42 per cent, 2.6 percentage points is dedicated to all Parental leave insurance. However, if costs exceed the 2.6 percentage points there is margin and funds for the parental insurance do not run out⁴.

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be used at any time during the first 60 days after childbirth. Most commonly, it is used as full-time leave (i.e., five days a week).

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
- The benefit is gender-neutral and attributed to the parent who has not been pregnant. If the parent who has been pregnant is sole custodian another close person can use the days. If the second parent agrees the days can be used by another person (of the parent's choice).

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 06 July 2023, using: <https://sdw.ecb.europa.eu/curConverter.do>.

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. Available at: www.inspsf.se. Swedish report with English summary.

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)

- Until the child reaches 18 months of age.
- Leave is an individual, non-transferable entitlement.
- In addition to this, a parent always has right to leave from work when using Parental leave benefit, to reduce work hours and when the child is sick (see below).
- 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). The legislations for rights to leave under the Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, and the legislation for benefits under the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs are thus separate entities.
- For each parent, 240 leave days are paid, mostly at an income-related level (see below); 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'). One of the parents may only take all benefit days in cases of one custodian, or the other parent being permanently sick and not able to care for the child. The remaining 105 income-based days for each parent can be transferred to the other by signing a consent form.
- In case of joint custody, a parent may transfer up to 150 days to a cohabiting partner who is not custodian. If a parent has sole custody up to 390 days may be transferred. The reserved three months may not be transferred.

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 upper limit of SEK525,000 [€44,100.97]⁷; (maximum SEK1,116 [€93.75] per day) the

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.

⁷ 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.

remaining 45 days are paid at a flat-rate payment of SEK180 [€15.12] per day. The first 180 days used for the child need to be earnings-related and not flat-rate. Parents who are not eligible to earnings-related leave receive a flat-rate of SEK250 [€21] per day for 240 days.

- Payments are taxed. Income tax is lower for a person working compared to a person on Parental leave (*jobbskatteavdrag*). In some cases, this leads to a gender-equalising effect when the mother works and the father is on Parental leave. All Parental leave benefits, income related and flat-rate, offer pension credits.
- There is an extra pension supplement for the parent who earns the lower 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 market⁸.
- Funding is the same as for temporary leave in connection with birth and adoption.

Flexibility in use

- 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.
- The length of leave is counted in calendar days (rather than weeks or months) to enhance flexibility of use. It is also 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 being on (days of) paid or unpaid leave.
- 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 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.

⁸ 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>

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 [€21] 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. Rights to leave and benefit are based on custody.
- Parent who migrate to Sweden with children under the age of 12 years receive 200 days of paid leave for children over 12 months, and 100 days for children over 24 months.

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, there are 90 additional days at 77.6 per cent of earnings and an additional 90 days at a flat-rate of SEK180 [€15.12] per day; for each additional child in a multiple birth, 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 custody⁹.

Additional note (e.g., if 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

⁹ See data in Statistics Sweden's database, available at http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/pxweb/sv/ssd/START_LE_LE0102_LE0102X/Var_dnad/?rxid=67663b18-ed2c-45be-8526-7b45f6cc3f34

ten per cent extra under the upper limit (i.e., workers receive 90 per cent of earnings) and/or up to 90 per cent of income above the upper limit¹⁰.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

- No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

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 SEK 393,750 [€33,075.73] 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. For more than seven days in a row a physician's certificate is needed.
- For terminally/seriously ill children (with life threatening circumstances) up to 18 years old there is no cap on the number of days that can be used. In such cases, both parents can be on leave at the same time.
- Parents whose children are sick or functionally disabled for more than six months could until 2018 apply for childcare allowance (*vårdbidrag*). In 2019 this benefit was replaced by Child carer's allowance (*omvårdnadsbidrag*) and Additional cost allowance for children (*merkostnadsersättning för barn*).

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- None. 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).

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. Some collective agreements allow for such reductions longer, for instance within government sector up to the child is 12 years old. Local employers may allow for more

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.](#)

flexibility but no national legislation changed recently. Employees (parents) always have a right to return to the original working hours at any point in time.

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

- The maximum period of paid post-natal leave is approximately 16 months, with 13 months paid at a high rate. There is an entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (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. There is, therefore, no gap between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement. However, the present three reserved months for each parent can create such a gap if one parent is not using the leave benefit but remains a custodian.
- For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' on [cross-country comparisons](#) page.

3. Changes in policy since April 2022 (including proposals currently under discussion)

- Before 2 August 2022 the three reserved months did not apply for those parents using Parental leave benefit at flat rate. This meant that one parent could use the full leave. Since August 2022 the reserved months apply to all parents regardless of benefit level.

4. Uptake of leave¹¹

a. Maternity leave

- In 2022, 28,869 women received pregnancy benefits for an average of 63 days. Since there were 104,734 births in 2021, this suggests that 28 per cent of pregnant women took Maternity leave, which is an increase by ten percentage points as compared to the previous year¹².

¹¹ See annual update on statistics on family policy in *Social Insurance in Figures 2019*. Available in English at: <https://www.forsakringskassan.se>.

¹² <https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/sverige-i-siffror/manniskorna-i-sverige/fodda-i-sverige/>

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

- In 2022, 85,217 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 1.4 per cent were women. Users took on average 9.7 of the ten eligible days.

c. Parental leave and child-rearing benefit

- *Leave uptake:* 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 and many parents use days during the preschool years. In 2020, 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. 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 2021, it had increased to 30 per cent. The numbers are the same in 2022, indicating a stand still. On average women took 78 days and men took 39.5 days during 2022. The percentage of couples that are sharing Parental leave equally (40 to 60 per cent) is very slowly increasing. For children born in 2019, 19.4 per cent of couples equally shared leave used during the child's first 24 months.
- *Benefit uptake:* In 2022, the majority of women (89 per cent) and men (97 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 12 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 SEK8,834 [€742.07] (when flat-rate days included SEK864 [€72.58]) per day in 2021, while the average mother received benefits of SEK784 [€65.86] (when flat-rate days included SEK701 [€58.89]).
- *Forfeited days:* For children born in 2013 parents used on average 454 days, women 337 and men 116 days. This means that on average 26 days were forfeited.
- *Uptake patterns:* Fathers with higher formal education take more Parental leave, as do fathers whose partners have higher levels of formal education. For children born in 2020 for the first 24 months, 28 per cent of tertiary educated parents shared equally, among those with secondary 12.1 per cent shared equally, among those with primary education 9.4 per cent shared equally.¹³ 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 fewer leave days than

¹³ <https://www.forsakringskassan.se/statistik-och-analys/statistikdatabas#!/> bf/fp-40-60

wage-earning fathers. Mothers who are self-employed take 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)¹⁴.

d. Other types of leave and flexible working

- Mothers are more likely than fathers to work (long) part-time hours (34 hours or fewer per week); The Labour Force Survey shows that 36 per cent of all working mothers who have two children work part-time when the youngest child is still in pre-school. For fathers who have two children, the part-time share is 8 per cent¹⁵.
- Temporary Parental leave to care for sick children is used somewhat more by mothers, who took 60 per cent of all days taken in 2021. On average, mothers took 10.5 days and fathers 8.8 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. In 2022 the average per child was 9.5 days and during the pandemic the average number of days increased substantially by about two days per child.

¹⁴ Fahlén, S., & Duvander, A.Z. (2023) Which fathers do not use the parental leave? A register-based analysis of Swedish fathers to children born between 1994 and 2017. Swedish Inspectorate for the Social Insurance, Working paper 2023(1).

¹⁵ Statistics Sweden (2020) *Women and Men in Sweden 2020. Facts and Figures*. Statistics Sweden.