

# Finland<sup>243</sup>

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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

**Note on terminology:** a new leave scheme came into effect in August 2022 and major changes were introduced in leave policy. 'Maternity leave' was replaced with 'Pregnancy leave' and 'Paternity leave' was abolished as Parental leave was divided evenly between parents.

### a. Pregnancy leave (formerly Maternity leave, see note on terminology) (*raskausvapaa/graviditetsledighet*<sup>244</sup>) (responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Labour)

*Length of leave (before and after birth)*

- Forty working days (for all types of leave, one calendar week consists of 6 working days). Leave can start 30 days before and no later than 14 days before the estimated due date.
- It is obligatory to take leave for the last two weeks before the due date and two weeks after the birth.

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<sup>244</sup> Names of the different types of leave are given in Finnish and Swedish. Finland is a bilingual country with a Swedish-speaking minority.

### *Payment and funding*

- Ninety per cent of the individual's annual earnings between €10,665 and €67,296, with a lower percentage (32.5 per cent) for earnings above this level. Parents not employed and those whose annual earnings are less than €10,665 get a minimum flat-rate allowance of €31.99 per working day (€800 per month). In 2023, 14 per cent of pregnant/birthing parents received the minimum allowance, decreasing from 15 per cent in 2022.
- Pregnancy allowance is not paid for days when the pregnant/birthing parent is working, but the days cannot be saved and used later. Working on Sundays does not affect the benefit.
- A pregnant parent can receive the pregnancy allowance when studying during pregnancy. Receiving study grant payments does not prevent payment of the pregnancy allowance.
- Payments are made to the parent by the Social Insurance Institution (Kela). If an employer pays a salary to the parent during Pregnancy leave on the basis of collective agreements, the pregnancy allowance is paid to the employer.
- Payments are taxed.
- Earnings-related payments are funded by the sickness insurance scheme, financed by contributions from employers (in 2024, 47 per cent of the total cost), contributions from employees (in 2024, 40 per cent of the total cost), and the remaining 13 per cent is funded by the state. In 2024, employers pay 1.15 per cent of their total salary bill and employees pay 1.01 per cent of their taxable earnings higher than €16,518: these percentages are subject to annual change in the state budget. The minimum flat-rate allowances and 5 per cent of the benefit expenditure are funded from state taxation.
- Pregnancy leave accumulates the beneficiary's pension based on 121 per cent of the yearly earnings from which the leave benefit is calculated (2024). These earnings accumulate the pension at 1.5 per cent per year. For an unemployed beneficiary or a student, the pension is accumulated as if the earnings were €857.15 a month.

### *Flexibility in use*

- None. Pregnancy allowance days must be taken consecutively and cannot be postponed until later.

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

- Entitlements are based on being insured under the Finnish Health Insurance Act.
- The basic formula is that a person entitled to family benefits is also entitled to leave.
- A pregnant/birthing parent is entitled to pregnancy allowance after the pregnancy has lasted 154 days.
- Benefits are based on annual income in the preceding 12 months regardless of length of service. In certain situations (for example, the parent has recently returned to work after Parental or Child Home Care leave), the

allowance can be calculated on the basis of the last three months of the 12 month period. If the estimated due date of the new baby is before the previous child turns three years old, parental allowance can be based on the same annual or earned income that was used to calculate the allowance for the previously born child.

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

- In the case of premature birth, if the baby is born earlier than 30 days before the due date, the birthing parent is entitled to benefit and leave from the next day for the following 40 days.
- In case of miscarriage, if the pregnancy has lasted at least 154 days the parent who was pregnant can get pregnancy allowance for 40 days and parental allowance for 65 days if not working.
- Pregnancy allowance is paid only to the pregnant/birthing parent, it cannot be transferred to the other parent even if the beneficiary falls ill during pregnancy leave. If the beneficiary dies or is unable to care for the child, the other parent is entitled to parental benefit.

*Additional note (e.g., frequent supplement of state benefit by collective agreements; employer exclusions or right to postpone)*

- Many collective agreements now include full pay during Pregnancy leave and part of Parental leave for both parents. There is not yet information of the coverage. During periods of full pay, the daily benefit is paid to the employer. However, as shown in the 2020 Labour Force Survey, due to the high prevalence of fixed-term contracts for women of child-bearing age, a high proportion of women giving birth do not have an effective employment contract; so only 42 per cent of women on leave (called Maternity leave in the old system) received pay from the employer. In addition, according to a study by Kela on Family Leave Compensation paid to employers, around 2020 in only a half of the started leaves (called Maternity leave in the old system) was the benefit paid to the employer (on the basis of the employer paying full wage for the employee during leave).<sup>245</sup>

## **b. Paternity leave (*isyysvapaa/faderskapsledighet*)**

No statutory entitlement. But see Note on terminology and section 1c on Parental leave.

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<sup>245</sup> Miettinen, A., Mustonen, J. and Räsänen, T. (2022) Perhevapaakorvauksen käyttöönotto. Tuloksia selvityshankkeesta [Introduction of family leave compensation. Results from the survey project]. Kela Työpapereita 167/2022.

**c. Parental leave (*vanhempainvapaa/föräldraledighet*)  
(responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the  
Ministry of Labour)**

*Length of leave*

- One hundred and sixty working days per parent.
- Leave is an individual entitlement, part of which (63 days) is transferable to the other parent or to a partner who is not the child's parent or to the partner of the child's other parent or to another person who is the child's legal guardian.

*Payment and funding*

- Ninety per cent of earnings to both parents for the first 16 Parental leave days. For the remaining period, benefit is paid at 70 per cent of the individual's annual earnings between €13,713 and €43,740, with a lower percentage for earnings above this level (40 per cent up to €67,296 and 25 per cent above this). Those whose annual earnings are less than €13,713 before the birth get the minimum flat-rate allowance (€31.99 per weekday, appr. €800 per month).
- Payments are taxed.
- Funding is the same as for Pregnancy leave.
- Pension is the same as for Pregnancy leave.

*Flexibility in use*

- The birthing parent can take Parental leave after the end of Pregnancy leave. The baby's other parent can take Parental leave from the day the baby is born.
- Parents can get parental allowance at the same time for a maximum of 18 days.
- Parental allowance can be used flexibly at the times of one's preference, in as many and as short periods (minimum one day) as requested until the child turns 2 years. However, employed parents can take Parental leave in 4 periods, each of a minimum duration 12 days per calendar year, and if the employer agrees, in more periods or even as individual days.
- Parental allowance is not paid for days when one is working more than five hours. As parental allowance is only paid for weekdays (Monday to Saturday) one can, however, work on Sundays or midweek holidays.
- Leave can be taken part-time if the daily working time is no more than five hours per day. One day of partial Parental leave decreases the leave by half a day. Partial parental allowance is half of what the allowance is for full-time leave. To get the partial Parental leave, employed parents must make an agreement with their employer regarding part-time work.
- Parents can take partial Parental leave for the same period of time.

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

- Entitlement is based on being insured under the Finnish Health Insurance Act, just as it is for Pregnancy leave.
- Parental allowance is available to biological or adoptive parents, and to any legal guardian of a child. Same-sex couples have the same leave rights as other couples.
- Both parents are entitled to Parental benefit even if the parents do not live together, provided that the parent is not working and is responsible for childcare.
- One can get Parental benefit while studying during Parental leave, as long as one is able to take care of the child.

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

- In the case of multiple births, the length of leave is extended by 84 days for each additional child. Parental leave is divided equally between both parents: in the case of twins, both parents get 202 days and in the case of triplets for 244 days of Parental leave. A parent of twins can transfer 105 days and a parent of triplets 147 days to the other parent.
- In multiple birth families, in addition to the usual 18 days, 90 days can be taken out at the same time for the second and each additional child.
- If, due to premature birth, the Pregnancy leave has started earlier than 30 days before the expected date of delivery, Parental leave is extended by as many days. Both parents can use half of these additional days or transfer some or all of them to another person.
- If the child is stillborn, or dies shortly after birth, the birthing parent is entitled to Pregnancy allowance and an additional 65 Parental allowance days (the birthing parent is always entitled to 105 consecutive Pregnancy and Parental leave days if the pregnancy has lasted 154 days). The other parent is entitled to 24 Parental allowance days starting from the day following the child's death. If the child dies later, but before 2 years of age, each parent is entitled to 24 Parental allowance days, starting from the day following the child's death (if there are Parental allowance days left). Parents can use these 24 days at the same time.
- If the pregnant/birthing parent dies and the other parent does not care for the child, the Parental benefit can be paid to another person responsible for the care of the child.
- Parental allowance cannot be used for 2 different children at the same time. Parents can choose for which child they apply for the benefit. Otherwise, there are no restrictions concerning the use of parental allowances payable on the basis of different children.
- If the right to parental allowance starts after a 1 year old (but below 2 years old) child has moved to Finland, the number of available parental allowance days is halved.
- Single parents can use all 320 days of Parental leave if the other parent has not been confirmed, the other parent is not the child's legal guardian, the

other parent is not insured under the Finnish Health Insurance Act or the other parent is, due to illness or injury, unable to take care of the child and cannot therefore be paid parental allowance. Of the 320 days, 126 days can be transferred to another person.

#### **d. Childcare leave or career breaks**

- Childcare leave, referred to as 'Home-care leave' (*hoitovapaa/ vårdledighet*) can be taken after 160 Parental benefit days have been used, until a child's third birthday. While taking leave, a parent can receive Child home care allowance (*kotihoidon tuki/hemvårdsstöd*).
- Childcare leave can be taken in two parts, the minimum length being one month. Parents can alternate the use of Child home care allowance and Parental leave in the case that one parent (usually the father) uses their Parental leave days later and not right after the other parent (usually the mother) has used their quota days.
- The Child home care allowance can be paid to any parent – whether or not they are on Childcare leave from their job – as long as their child is not in a childcare service provided or funded by the local authority.
- The Child home care allowance consists of a basic payment of €377.68 per month, with an additional €113.07 for every other child under three years of age and €72.66 for every other pre-school child over three years of age, plus a means-tested supplement (up to €202.12 per month).
- The average Home-care allowance per family in 2022 was €426 per month.
- In 2022, 21 per cent of municipalities paid a municipal supplement to the Child home care allowance, most commonly in big municipalities. These supplements averaged €169 per month per child, with a range from €50 to €350.<sup>246</sup> The municipalities usually impose specific conditions on paying the supplement, most frequently that all children in the family below school age have to be taken care of at home. Paying a municipal supplement has become less common: in 2014, 30 per cent of municipalities offered it.
- If a child under school age is taken care of in a private day care centre, by a private nanny, or another person employed by the family and accepted by the local authority, the family is entitled to Private day care allowance (*yksityisen hoidon tuki/privatvårdsstöd*), which is €192.28 per month per child. An addition of up to €265.85 per month per child can be paid, based on the size and income of the family. In 2022, 37 per cent of municipalities paid a municipal supplement to the private day care allowance, the average varying between €221 to €412 in full-time care depending on the age of the child and the type of ECEC. The local authorities usually impose specific conditions on paying the supplement, most frequently related to the hours of private day care. In 2022, 39 per cent of municipalities offered a service voucher for private day care services, the average varying between €444 to €1,115 (depending on the type of ECEC used, family income, and child's

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<sup>246</sup> Lahtinen, J. and Svartsjö, M. (2022) Kotihoidon tuen ja yksityisen hoidon tuen kuntalisät ja palveluseteli [Municipal supplements of home care allowance and private care allowance and service vouchers]. Helsinki: Kuntaliitto.

age): offering vouchers has grown more popular among the municipalities over the years<sup>4</sup>.

- Child home care allowance and municipal supplement are taxable income.
- During Childcare leave, pension is accumulated as if the earnings were €857.15 per month. These earnings accumulate the pension at a rate of 1.5 per cent per year.
- Child home care allowance is mainly funded by the municipalities. The state funds those allowances which are paid for a child who is not residing in Finland but at least one of the parents is working in Finland and is covered by employment pension insurance.

## **e. Other types of leave and flexible working**

### *Parental leave for adoptive parents and pay*

- Adoptive parents of a child (under 18 years of age) are eligible for Parental leave of 320 working days. Each parent is entitled to 160 days of leave starting from the day the child comes to their care, up until two years have elapsed from that date.
- Entitlements are based on being insured under the Finnish Health Insurance Act.
- Adoptive parents in both same- and opposite-sex couples are entitled to Parental leave allowance.
- A single parent who adopts and takes care of a child is entitled to all 320 days of Parental leave the same way as single parents having biological children.
- An adoptive parent can receive parental benefit also during studies as long as the parent is able to take care of the child.
- Adoptive parents are entitled to Child home care allowance for a period which ends two years after the day when the child comes to their care, even if the child is older than three years of age (but below school-age).
- A parent who adopts their partner's child (intra-family adoption) is entitled to the same Parental allowance and parental leave days as parents having biological children when their parentage has been confirmed. If the biological parent has already used more than 160 days, the adoptive parent is entitled to the remaining days.

### *Time off for the care of dependants*

- Parents of children under ten years of age can take up to four days' leave when a child falls ill (temporary childcare leave, *tilapäinen hoitovapaa/tillfällig vårdledighet*). There are no limits on how often parents can take leave for this purpose during the course of a year. Payment is dependent on collective agreements but is often at full earnings for 3 or 4 days at a time. A parent with joint custody who does not live with a child is entitled to the leave.
- If an employee needs to be absent from work in order to care for a family member or other close person, the employer must try to organise work so that the employee can be absent for a fixed time period. The employer and the employee agree on the length of leave and other arrangements. Return

to work must be agreed upon between the employer and the employee prior to the leave commencing. If an agreement cannot be reached, the employee can, with reasonable grounds, interrupt the leave by announcing this to the employer one month before their return at the latest. The employee must account for the grounds of the absence and for interrupting it, if the employer requests it. No benefit or wage is paid during this leave.

### *Special care allowance*

- An allowance for a parent who is not able to work on the following grounds:
  - because they must engage in the hospital care of a child under the age of 7 years, a severely ill child between the ages of 7 and 15 years, or in the rehabilitation of a child under the age of 16 years.
  - because they provide home care for a severely ill child under the age of 16 years, when home care is in connection to hospital care.
  - because they must be available during the school or day care assessment of a severely ill child.
- Both biological and adoptive parents are entitled to the allowance. It can also be granted to employees who care for the child of their spouse. During hospital care or rehabilitation, the allowance can be paid to both parents if the child's physician considers the participation of both parents to be necessary. The allowance is not paid to parents who receive parental, sickness, or unemployment benefit.
- The payment is equal to 70 per cent of annual earnings between €13,713 and €43,740, with a lower percentage (40 per cent for annual earnings up to €67,296, and 25 per cent above this) for earnings above this level. Employees whose annual earnings are less than €13,713 get a minimum flat-rate allowance of €31.99 per working day (€800 per month). The allowance is paid for at maximum for 60 working days for hospital care or rehabilitation of the same illness and for 60 working days for home care. Receiving the allowance does not entitle the beneficiary to a leave of absence from work.

### *Specific provision for (breast)feeding*

- None. Breastfeeding leave has not been considered necessary, as Parental leave available to the mother lasts until the child is 9 to 10 months old.

### *Flexible working*

- Parents can work reduced working hours (Partial Childcare leave, *osittainen hoitovapaa/partiell vårdledighet*) from the end of Parental leave until the end of the child's second year at school. The employee is entitled to Partial Childcare leave if they have been working for the same employer for at least six months during the past 12 months. The employee should negotiate the reduction in hours with the employer, and the employer can only refuse if the reduced working hours would lead to serious disadvantages for the organisation – in which case, working hours must be a maximum of 30 hours per week. Both parents can take Partial Childcare leave during the same period but cannot take leave during the same hours of the day.



- Parents of children under three years of age are entitled to Flexible care allowance (*joustava hoitoraha/flexibel vårdpenning*) if, after taking Parental leave, they work less than 80 per cent of the normal full-time hours in their respective field. The Flexible Care allowance is €179.49 per month if the weekly working hours are no more than 30 hours, or 80 per cent of the normal full-time hours, and €269.24 per month if the weekly working hours are no more than 22.5 hours, or 60 per cent of the normal full-time hours. Flexible care allowance can be paid to both parents at the same time if they take care of the child during different hours of the day or different days of the week. Parents can receive Flexible care allowance even if the child attends municipal ECEC. Flexible care allowance is paid for only one child, even if the family has more than one child entitled to the allowance. The allowance is not paid for a leave period shorter than one month.
- Employees taking Partial Childcare leave during the child's first and second year at school are entitled to Partial care allowance (*osittainen hoitoraha/partiell vårdpenning*) of €108.15 per month. Partial care allowance is paid for only one child, even if the family has more than one child entitled to the allowance. The allowance is not paid for a leave period shorter than one month.
- Partial care allowance and Flexible care allowance are taxable income.
- Partial care allowance and Flexible care allowance are funded by the municipalities.

#### *Compensation for employers for indirect leave costs*

- Employers are able to claim compensation for indirect leave costs such as finding and training a replacement for a female employee taking Maternity/Pregnancy leave. The compensation is available to employers who pay full-time employees a salary during at least one month of their leave. A prerequisite for family leave compensation is that the employee must have at least three months' service before the leave or, in the case of an adoptive parent, before the Parental leave, and that the employment must last at least one year. The amount of the lump-sum compensation is €2,500. In 2023, the Social Insurance Institution (Kela) paid compensation to over 4,250 employers for over 20,800 parents<sup>247</sup>; this is less than half of the parents taking Maternity/Pregnancy allowance in 2023.

### **3. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy**

The maximum period of paid post-natal leave is 36 months (including low paid Home-care leave). The maximum period of highly paid leave is 13.8 months after birth. As there is an entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) from the month the child turns nine months old, there is no gap between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement.

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<sup>247</sup>Social Insurance Institution, statistical data Perhevapaakorvaus [Compensation for family leaves]. Available at: <https://tietotarjotin.fi>

If a parent takes part of her/his Parental leave days after the child has started in ECEC, the child is entitled to return to the same daycare place if the leave is no longer than 13 weeks.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the [cross-country tables](#) at the front of the review.

#### **4. Changes in policy since April 2023 (including proposals currently under discussion)**

The Parental leave reform that took effect in 2022 introduced several comprehensive changes to the leave scheme – including a gender-neutral terminology, symmetrical allocation of leave quotas for each parent with a possibility to transfer part of the quota to the other parent, a longer parental leave in total and increased flexibility in use – and no new changes in policy have taken place since then.

As the other childcare allowances (Child home care allowance, Private day care allowance, Flexible care allowance and Partial care allowance) were not changed in the reform, a further reform of the childcare allowances has been proposed, including by a working group on social security and services for children and families under the Social Security Committee.<sup>248</sup> It is also stated in the government programme 2023 that the leave system will be further developed in order to acknowledge the best interest of children, promote equality in parenthood and in working life, increase families' freedom of choice and flexibility, and advance possibilities to participate in early childhood education and care.<sup>249</sup>

#### **5. Uptake of leave**

Due to the leave reform in 2022 being so recent, the following information on uptake is mainly based on the previous leave scheme. Therefore, in this section the old leave terminology is used, in which leave users are called 'mothers' and 'fathers'. However, in statistics and research the gender and the relationship to the child of the users of fathers' leave entitlements is not specified. Preliminary information on the uptake of leaves after the 2022 reform is reported at the end of the section 4c.

##### **a. Maternity leave / Pregnancy leave**

Almost all mothers use the leave. Two weeks of leave before the birth and two weeks after the birth are obligatory. Very few mothers entitled to Maternity/Pregnancy leave work during the leave period. Since the reform in 2022,

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<sup>248</sup>[https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/164687/Sosiaaliturvakomitea\\_2023\\_2.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/164687/Sosiaaliturvakomitea_2023_2.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

<sup>249</sup> Programme of the Government 2023 <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-383-818-5>

parents cannot work and receive full Parental allowance at the same time, but they may choose to work part time and receive partial Parental allowance.

## **b. Paternity leave<sup>250</sup>**

Before the 2022 reform, Paternity leave of nine weeks included one to 18 days of leave which could be taken while the mother was on Maternity or Parental leave, and the remaining days (54 days minus the days taken when the mother was on Maternity/Parental leave) were to be taken after the Parental leave. Statistics allow for a different review of the uptake of these two different types of Paternity leave. Similarly, since the 2022 reform, up to 18 days of Parental leave can be taken during the other parent's Parental leave.

A majority of fathers have taken the one to 18 days of Paternity leave during the time when the mother was on their leave. On the basis of the statistics on recipients of maternity allowances and father's Parental leave allowances, 70-74 per cent of fathers have taken this leave<sup>251</sup>. This percentage describes the uptake of Paternity leave (simultaneously with the mother) in relation to started Maternity leaves for children born between 2011 and 2021. The proportion of fathers who took this section of Paternity leave fell from 74 per cent in cohorts born in 2011 to 69 per cent in cohorts born in 2018, but since then it increased again to 74 per cent in cohorts born in 2021. Although the statistics on maternity allowances do not cover all children born in Finland, a Kela study based on fathers' leave uptake on children's birth cohort basis, the percentages were about the same.<sup>252</sup>

Since 2008, the average length of the leave taken while the mother is on Maternity or Parental leave has been 15 working days (15.6 days in 2022<sup>253</sup>).

According to a survey in 2022, just before the leave reform, the take-up of Paternity leave (simultaneously with the mother) was quite common among fathers except for those not in employment or with very low income who less typically took the leave compared to other fathers.<sup>254</sup> The reasons for not taking the short Paternity leave have, in previous studies, most often been the father's work situation, the family finances, or the father not having a job.<sup>255 256</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> One to 18 days which can be taken while the mother is on leave.

<sup>251</sup>The Social Insurance Institution, statistical database (Kelasto): Vanhempainrahojen kertymätiedot [Cumulative information on parental leave allowances].

<sup>252</sup> Miettinen, A. and Saarikallio-Torp, M. (2020) 'Isälle kiintiöidyn vanhempainvapaan käyttö ja sen taustatekijät' [Trends and socioeconomic determinants in the use of father's quota], *Yhteiskuntapolitiikka*, Vol.85, 4

<sup>253</sup> *Statistical Yearbook of the Social Insurance Institution 2022*. Helsinki: Kela 2023.

<sup>254</sup> Saarikallio-Torp, M., Lammi-Taskula, J. and Närvi, J. (2024) 'Isien perhevapaiden käyttö' [Fathers' use of parenting leaves], in Kinnunen, A., Lammi-Taskula, J., Miettinen, A., Närvi, J. and Saarikallio-Torp, M. (eds.) *Perhevapaat ja työn ja perheen yhteensovittaminen muuttuvassa työelämässä* [Parenting leaves and the reconciliation of work and family in changing working life]. Helsinki: Kela.

<sup>255</sup> Lammi-Taskula, J., Salmi, M. and Närvi, J. (2017) 'Isien perhevapaat' [Fathers on family leave], in Salmi, M. and Närvi, J. (eds.) *Perhevapaat, talouskriisi ja sukupuolten tasa-arvo* [Family leave, economic crisis and gender equality]. *Raportti 4/2017*. Helsinki: THL.

<sup>256</sup> Närvi, J. (2018) *Isä hoitaa – vai hoitaako?* [Daddy takes care – or does he?]. Working paper 1/2018. Helsinki: THL.

**c. Parental leave and fathers' individual leave** (i.e., the days of Paternity leave to be taken after the Parental leave)

Parental leave, which before the 2022 reform was 158 days and could be used by either parent, has been mostly taken by mothers. Before the reform, almost all mothers took all days of Parental leave, whereas only a small and slowly growing share of fathers has taken Parental leave<sup>252</sup>. Calculated on the basis of started maternity allowances, the share of fathers taking Parental leave has grown from four per cent in children born in 2014 to almost seven per cent among fathers of children born in 2021.<sup>251</sup> The average length of fathers' Parental leave has been about 57-61 days.<sup>257</sup> Fewer than four per cent of mothers were working to any extent during their leave period. Since the reform in 2022, working while receiving full Parental allowance is not allowed.

The popularity of the fathers' individual leave (that part of Paternity leave which could be taken after Parental leave) increased gradually since its introduction in 2003. Before the 2013 reform, about 30 per cent of fathers of children born in 2012 took this leave, then called fathers' month. Since the 2013 reform, the share of fathers taking this leave has grown from 42 per cent in children born in 2013 to 56 per cent among fathers of children born in 2021.<sup>251</sup> The percentages are calculated in relation to started maternity allowances. Annual statistics show that the average length of leave taken by fathers after Parental leave rose from 28 days in 2014 to 33 days in 2022.<sup>253</sup>

Statistics indicate that one in four fathers have not taken either Paternity or Parental leave, not even the one to 18 days' leave while the mother is on leave. In the birth cohort-based analysis, the proportion of non-users was 29 per cent in 2006, decreasing gradually to 23 per cent in the 2016 birth cohort.<sup>252</sup>

Since 2013, it has been possible to postpone taking Paternity leave until the child turns two years of age. Analysis of the uptake statistics suggests that during the following ten years, a shift towards leave uptake nearer the child's second birthday took place.<sup>252</sup> A study based on survey data collected in 2013 indicated that for most fathers (71 per cent), the possibility to postpone uptake was important for their taking of the leave, and for a third it was a decisive factor.<sup>255</sup> According to a survey in 2022, half (52 per cent) of the fathers using Paternity leave after Parental leave period took the opportunity to postpone the take-up, and 61 per cent took the leave in several parts.<sup>254</sup>

While the fathers' individual leave, (the part of Paternity leave to be taken after Parental leave before 2022, and the 'fathers' month' before 2013, which was intended to be taken when the child's mother is not on leave), has become more and more popular, also its contribution in strengthening fathers' independent care responsibility has grown: in 2013, in the majority of families the mother, even if not on leave, stayed at home during at least part of the father's Paternity leave weeks, whereas in 2022, only one in four mothers stayed at home and most were either working or studying.<sup>254</sup> Significantly more fathers thus now seem to use the leave to care for the child alone, without the mother being present.

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<sup>257</sup> *Statistical Yearbook of the Social Insurance Institution 2021*. Helsinki: Kela 2022.

According to a register-based study and a survey in 2022 (on fathers with children born in 2016 and in 2019–2021), fathers of a first- or second-born child as well as fathers with high education level or a good income, and especially those whose partners have a high education level and a good income were more likely to take the Paternity leave after Parental leave, whereas the leave was less typically taken by self-employed or unemployed fathers or young fathers under the age of 25.<sup>252</sup>  
<sup>254</sup> Among employed fathers, the take-up of this leave was more common if the father worked in a female-dominated workplace, or in a workplace with a large number of employees.<sup>258</sup>

The most common reason that fathers gave, in a survey in 2022, for using the Paternity leave after Parental leave was to be able to spend more time with the child; this was mentioned by nearly all fathers who took the leave (fathers with children born in 2019–2021). Other commonly mentioned reasons (by more than 60 per cent of fathers) were that taking Paternity leave felt right and self-evident, that parenthood was considered as a joint responsibility, and that it is fathers' job to take care of young children. Slightly less than half of fathers also mentioned that they wanted to help the child's mother. The two most common reasons that fathers gave for not taking the Paternity leave after Parental leave were that their spouse was taking care of the child supported by the Child home-care allowance, or that they thought the family's finances did not allow it. The spouse not having a job as well as work-related obstacles such as the nature of work, the work situation or pressure also hindered fathers from taking their leave quota, but these reasons were mentioned significantly more rarely. Very few fathers mentioned negative attitudes at their workplace as an obstacle.<sup>254</sup> Work-related reasons for not taking the leave could be explained by how fathers' work tasks are generally organized during leave or other absence from work: fathers have reported that a substitute is seldom hired, and work tasks are most commonly shared between fellow workers or, among white-collar employees, are left to be taken care of by the father himself, even when taking leave.<sup>256 258</sup>

According to the above-mentioned 2022 survey, besides fathers' individual leave, the Parental leave that could be used by either of the parents was more typically taken by highly educated fathers, fathers of first-born children, and those with a spouse who had a higher education level and income<sup>254</sup>.

The part-time option for taking Parental leave was not popular before the 2022 reform. Statistics show that in 2003 (the first year that it was available), 37 parents received the Partial Parental allowance and in 2022, still only 463 parents used

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<sup>258</sup> Närvi, J., Saarikallio-Torp, M. and Miettinen, A. (2024) 'Vanhempien työmarkkina-asema, työn laatu ja perhevapaiden käyttö' [Parents' position in the labour market, quality of work and the use of parenting leaves], in Kinnunen, A., Lammi-Taskula, J., Miettinen, A., Närvi, J. and Saarikallio-Torp, M. (eds.) *Perhevapaat ja työn ja perheen yhteensovittaminen muuttuvassa työelämässä* [Parenting leaves and the reconciliation of work and family in changing working life]. Helsinki: Kela.

it.<sup>259</sup> Although the number of parents using this option was in slight increase, taking part-time Parental leave was still very rare.

#### *Information on the take-up of Parental leave after the 2022 reform*

As the 2022 leave reform introduced a longer leave quota for fathers as well as more flexibility in taking Parental leave on a part-time basis or in several segments, changes are also expected in the patterns of take-up of these types of leave in the coming years.

Preliminary information suggests that fathers have increased the amount of Parental leave they take. In 2022, fathers had used 12.6 per cent of all Parental leave days paid between January and September (before the reform), and in 2023, their share of all Parental leave days paid between January and September had grown to 15.2 per cent. However, the majority of fathers have also used the possibility to transfer a part of their leave to the mother. The information on fathers' take-up of Parental leave while the mother is using her leave for those parents who were eligible to the new Parental leave scheme is not yet available<sup>260</sup>.

#### **d. Childcare leave or career breaks**

Almost all families (87 per cent in 2020<sup>261</sup>) take advantage of the Child home care allowance (HCA) at least for some time after Parental leave. Since 2006, statistics are available regarding its use by parents, showing that HCA is used almost entirely by women. Only 6 to 9 per cent of the recipients of HCA per year (2006-2021) have been men. In 2022, 8.5 per cent of the recipients of HCA were men.<sup>259</sup>

In the long run, HCA has become less popular; the proportion of children aged zero to two years taken care of at home supported by HCA has dropped from 58 per cent in 2000 to 36 per cent in 2022.<sup>253</sup> The overall decreasing popularity matches the growing proportion of young children attending childcare services from 2000 to 2021: while the proportion of children under the age of one in these services has dropped to less than one per cent, the proportion of children aged one has risen to 38 per cent (and children aged two to 70 per cent).<sup>262</sup>

Annual statistics also enable an assessment of uptake periods of HCA. In families receiving this allowance at some point before their child turns three years of age<sup>263</sup>, periods taken have divided rather evenly: in 2020, 31 per cent took fewer than seven months; 29 per cent took between seven and 12 months; 28 per cent took between 13 and 24 months; and 12 per cent took longer than 24 months (the

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<sup>259</sup> *Kelan Lapsiperhe-etuustilasto 2022* [Social Insurance Institution Statistics on Family Benefits, 2021] Official Statistics of Finland, Social Security 2023.

<sup>260</sup> <https://tietotarjotin.fi/uutinen/839248/perhevapaaauudistuksen-voimaantulosta-vuosinain-isat-ovat-kayttaneet-vapaita-tahan-menessa>

<sup>261</sup> Statistical Yearbook of the Social Insurance Institution 2020; Take-up of child care subsidies before the child's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday. Helsinki: Kela 2021.

<sup>262</sup> Säkkinen, S. and Kuoppala, T. (2021) *Varhaiskasvatus 2020* [Early childhood education 2020] Helsinki: THL Statistical Report 32/2021.

<sup>263</sup> These statistics exclude families receiving home-care allowance where the person taking care of the child is not a parent; however, these families only comprise 2 to 3 per cent of all recipients.

maximum length being 26 to 27 months)<sup>261</sup>. However, the proportion taking the longest period of leave has declined from 25 per cent (2003) to 12 per cent (2020), while the proportion taking the shortest periods rose from 26 to 31 per cent. In the long run, from cohorts of children born 2010 to 2018, the median lengths of HCA periods have decreased from 14 months to 11 months, and the proportion of mothers using HCA for 13 months or more has decreased from 54 per cent to 40 per cent.<sup>264</sup>

The proportion of fathers taking HCA has remained low. The (few) male recipients of HCA took much more often the shortest periods than their female counterparts (71 per cent in 2020), and of all men taking HCA, 9 per cent took it for more than 12 months.<sup>261</sup>

A survey in 2022 with parents who had a child between 2019–2021 shows that HCA was more typically taken by fathers with a high education level and high income on one hand, and by fathers outside the labour force or with low income on the other hand. The use of HCA was also more common among those fathers whose spouses had a high education level and a high income.<sup>254</sup>

According to the same survey, fathers' main reasons for not taking Home-care leave with HCA were family finances and that the mother was taking care of the child at home, which slightly less than half of the surveyed fathers said hindered them from taking Home-care leave. Additionally, one in four fathers did not consider taking the leave to be necessary, and one in five fathers thought that the child was ready to start at day care. Work-related reasons such as the nature of their work or work pressure were mentioned by only one in ten fathers.<sup>254</sup>

Mothers' take-up of child-care leave or HCA is related to their education and position in the labour market as well as their family type. A study using Kela's register data on parents of children born 2010-2018 found that highly educated mothers and those with high income (before the birth of the child) were more likely not to use HCA at all, or used it for shorter periods than lower-educated/low-income mothers. Longer periods of HCA were also more common among mothers with many children, with immigrant background, if the mother was a single-parent or had been unemployed before the childbirth.<sup>264</sup>

Findings from a survey in 2022 to parents with a child born between 2019–2021 show that while the use of HCA among mothers was almost equally common despite their socioeconomic or demographic background, longer HCA periods were more often taken or planned by single mothers, mothers with low education level, low income, who were unemployed, or by those who did not have an effective employment contract (and were not working as entrepreneurs) at the time of the

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<sup>264</sup> Miettinen, A. and Saarikallio-Torp, M. (2023) 'Äitien kotihoidon tukijaksot lyhentyneet - väestöryhmittäiset erot yhä suuria' [Mothers' home care allowance periods have become shorter - large differences between population groups], *Yhteiskuntapolitiikka*, Vol.88, 2.

birth of their child (one fourth of the respondents).<sup>265</sup> <sup>266</sup> However, an insecure position in the labour market can have a twofold effect as mothers who had experienced several periods of unemployment or even a threat of unemployment in their job also more typically than other mothers did not use HCA at all. Among mothers who had been employed before the birth of their child, longer HCA periods were taken among those working in the municipal sector and in female-dominated workplaces.<sup>258</sup>

Statistics show that education is crucial for employability and there are major differences in the share of employed mothers according to their level of education. In 2018, 65 per cent of highly educated mothers with a one to two year old child had returned to paid employment, compared to only 21 per cent of mothers with no secondary education.<sup>267</sup> Research findings suggest that the length of leave periods taken by women depends on their level of education, employment status, and their possibilities and experiences in the labour market, as well as how easy it is to find employment, especially for those with a low level of education. The HCA, therefore, has partly become an income source for unemployed women with low employability, even if HCA is lower than the basic unemployment benefit, while at the same time it still functions as an alternative to the use of childcare services for parents with an employment contract. However, values and attitudes also play a role as especially longer periods of HCA seem to be taken by women who identify strongly with the role of mothers as caregivers, instead of the less socially valued identity of the unemployed. In the 2022 survey, the most common reasons for mothers to use HCA were the wish to spend more time with the child and to care for the child longer at home, that the mother considered the child too young to start in early childhood education and care and that she considered home care as important for the child.<sup>265</sup> As for a suitable age for a child to start in ECEC, mothers in the survey commonly reported it to be between 1.5 to 2 years, fathers between 1 to 2 years. Parents' views have also changed in recent years; especially mothers are now more positive than a few years ago towards younger children participating in ECEC.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Miettinen, A. and Närvi, J. (2024) 'Äitien kotihoidon tuen käyttö' [Mothers' use of home care allowance], in Kinnunen, A., Lammi-Taskula, J., Miettinen, A., Närvi, J. and Saarikallio-Torp, M. (eds.) *Perhevapaat ja työn ja perheen yhteensovittaminen muuttuvassa työelämässä* [Parenting leaves and the reconciliation of work and family in changing working life]. Helsinki: Kela.

<sup>266</sup> Kinnunen, A. and Miettinen, A. (2024) 'Yhden vanhemman kotitaloudet ja perhevapaat' [Single parent households and parenting leaves], in Kinnunen, A., Lammi-Taskula, J., Miettinen, A., Närvi, J. and Saarikallio-Torp, M. (eds.) *Perhevapaat ja työn ja perheen yhteensovittaminen muuttuvassa työelämässä* [Parenting leaves and the reconciliation of work and family in changing working life]. Helsinki: Kela.

<sup>267</sup> Statistics Finland, Labour force study, Families and Work 2018.

<sup>268</sup> Saarikallio-Torp, M., Närvi, J., Miettinen, A. and Kinnunen, A. (2024) 'Neuvottelu lapsen hoivan jakamisesta' [Negotiations on child-care arrangements], in Kinnunen, A., Lammi-Taskula, J., Miettinen, A., Närvi, J. and Saarikallio-Torp, M. (eds.) *Perhevapaat ja työn ja perheen yhteensovittaminen muuttuvassa työelämässä* [Parenting leaves and the reconciliation of work and family in changing working life]. Helsinki: Kela.



The Flexible Care allowance, available from the beginning of 2014, has gradually increased its popularity. In 2014, 15,766 families, and in 2022, 19,837 families received Flexible Care allowance, although the proportion of children under three years old being taken care of by this allowance is low, about seven per cent.<sup>259</sup> Flexible Care allowance has been more popular among highly educated mothers and those whose spouse has high income level, although, compared to the previous Partial Care allowance with a lower benefit, the new allowance has increased the take-up also among mothers with lower education levels.<sup>269</sup> In 2022, 12 per cent of the Flexible Care allowance recipients were men.<sup>259</sup>

In 2018, one in four women with children aged one to two years old worked part-time.<sup>267</sup>

In 2022, Partial Home-care allowance during the child's first and second years at school was used by 15,686 families, to take care of seven per cent of children seven and eight years of age. 11 per cent of the recipients of Partial Home-care allowance were men.<sup>259</sup>

The use of the Private Day Care allowance for children under the age of three is relatively rare. Altogether 11,561 families received Private Day Care allowance in 2022 for children aged zero to seven years. Two per cent of one-year-olds and three per cent of two-year-olds were taken care of supported by this allowance in 2022.<sup>259</sup>

### **e. Other types of leave and flexible working**

There are no annual statistics available on the uptake of temporary childcare leave to care for an ill child. In the Quality of Work Life Survey (2018),<sup>270</sup> 72 per cent of employed women and 61 per cent of employed men with children under ten years of age had taken temporary childcare leave during the past 12 months – this is compared to 67 per cent of women and 52 per cent of men in 2013. In families where both parents have full-time employment, 76 per cent of mothers and 69 per cent of fathers have taken temporary childcare leave, compared to 71 per cent of mothers and 60 per cent of fathers in 2013. Although women still take temporary childcare leave more often than men, the gender gap has decreased over the past years.

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<sup>269</sup>Pekkarinen, T. and Tuomala, J. (2019) 'Joustavan hoitorahan työllisyysvaikutusten arviointi' [An assessment of the effects of the Flexible care allowance on employment]. *Valtioneuvoston selvitys- ja tutkimustoiminnan julkaisusarja 2019:46*. Helsinki: Valtioneuvoston kanslia.

<sup>270</sup> Sutela, H., Pärnänen, A. and Keyriläinen, M. (2019) *Digiajan työelämä – Työolotutkimuksen tuloksia 1977–2018* [Working conditions Surveys 1977–2018]. Helsinki: Statistics Finland.