

France²⁷¹

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For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the [Leave Network website](#)). To contact authors of country notes, see the [members](#) page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*Congé de maternité*) (responsibility of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Family, Solidarity and Urban Affairs)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- Sixteen weeks: 6 weeks before the birth and 10 weeks after the birth. It is obligatory to take at least 8 weeks in total, including 6 weeks after the birth.

Payment and funding

- One hundred per cent of earnings, up to an upper limit of €3,864 per month. In the public sector, the leave is fully paid (i.e., there is no upper limit). In the private sector, some employers (particularly larger companies) pay in full, others do not.
- Payments are taxed.
- Funded by health insurance²⁷², financed by contributions from both employees and employers. The total amount of this contribution is 15.45 per cent of gross pay, including all social contributions, with employees contributing 2.35 per cent and employers 13.10 per cent.

²⁷¹ Please cite as Sponton, A. (2024) 'France country note', in Dobrotić, I., Blum, S., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2024*. Available at: <https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/>

²⁷² The present social security system, including statutory health insurance, officially came into being with the Ordinance of 4 October 1945 which aimed to cover all the so-called 'social risks'. In 1967 social security was separated into four branches: health insurance (which represents the largest share of expenditures devoted to social protection), pensions, family allowances, and insurance for work-related accidents and occupational illnesses.

Flexibility in use

- Up to 3 of the 6 weeks of pre-birth leave can be postponed until after birth, allowing for a total of 13 weeks of post-birth leave.

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

- All employees and self-employed workers. There is some length of service conditionality for the self-employed (to have been working for at least six months).
- Jobseekers are eligible for compensation if they receive or have received unemployment benefit in the last twelve months. In this case, the duration of the Maternity leave postpones the end of their unemployment benefit.
- Leave is available for same sex parenting couples for the person giving birth.

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

- In the case of twins, the length of leave is increased to 34 weeks (12 weeks before birth and 22 weeks after); and in the case of triplets, the length is increased to 46 weeks (24 and 22 weeks)
- In the case of the mother already having two children, the length of leave is increased to 26 weeks (8 weeks before birth and 18 weeks after).

b. Paternity leave (*Congé de naissance* – literally 'birth leave' - and *Congé de paternité et d'accueil de l'enfant* – literally 'leave for looking after a child') (responsibility of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Family, Solidarity and Urban Affairs)

Length of leave

- Four weeks, consisting of 25 calendar days of '*congé de paternité et d'accueil de l'enfant*' plus, for employees only, 3 extra working days of '*congé de naissance*'.

Payment and funding

- ***Congé de paternité et d'accueil de l'enfant***: Payment and funding as for Maternity leave (see 1a).
- ***Congé de naissance***: paid by the employer.

Flexibility in use

- It is obligatory to take at least one week immediately after the birth. Employees must take the 3 days of *congé de naissance* and 4 days of *congé*

de paternité et d'accueil de l'enfant together; self-employed workers must take 7 consecutive days of *congé de paternité et d'accueil de l'enfant*.

- After the first mandatory week, the remaining days can be divided up to two additional periods of at least 5 days each, within the 6 months following the birth. So, in total, Paternity leave can be divided into a maximum of 3 periods. For example, after the first mandatory week, fathers can take 2 more weeks 2 months later, and a last week in the fifth month.

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

- All employees are entitled to the 3 days of *congé de naissance*, without seniority requirement.
- All employees and self-employed workers are eligible for the 25 calendar days of *congé de paternité et d'accueil de l'enfant*. There is some length of service conditionality for the self-employed, e.g., to have been working for at least 6 months.
- Jobseekers are eligible for compensation if they receive or have received unemployment benefit in the last 12 months. In this case, the duration of the Paternity leave postpones the end of their unemployment benefit.
- Leave is available for same-sex parenting couples and for cohabiting couples, including if the partner is not the biological father.

c. Parental leave (*Congé parental*) (responsibility of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Family, Solidarity and Urban Affairs)

Length of leave

- Until the child reaches 3 years of age.
- Leave is an individual, non-transferable entitlement.

Payment and funding

- A childcare allowance or childrearing benefit - 'PreParE' (*'Prestation partagée d'éducation de l'enfant'*) - is paid to all parents and is income-related and dependent on whether the recipient works and, if so, for how long. The basic benefit is €428.71 per month if not working; €277.14 per month if working less than half of full-time hours; and €159.87 per month if working 50 to 80 per cent of full time hours; a supplementary means-tested allowance, *Allocation de base*, is paid to lower income parents, depending upon the size of the family and paid either at a full rate (€184.81) or at a part-rate (€92.40).
- For parents with *a single child*, *PreParE* is paid for six months per parent after the end of the Maternity leave, i.e. to a maximum period of 12 months if both parents claim benefit, which can only be received if the parent receiving the benefit stops employment or reduces working hours. For parents with *two or more children* (under 20 years of age), *PreParE* can be paid until a child is three years old, but only for a maximum period of 24 months to any one parent, which means that the remaining 12 months can only be received by the other parent if he/she stops employment or reduces working hours.

- 'PreParE' is not taxed.
- *PreParE* is funded by the local CAFs (*Caisse des Allocations Familiales*), the Family Allowance funds that are part of the social security system and provide a wide range of benefits for families with children. CAFs are financed by contributions from employers only, amounting to 5.4 per cent of gross wages, and not by employees unlike the Maternity and Paternity leaves that are funded from the health insurance scheme.
- Non-employed parents (including those taking leave) receive pension credits for childrearing: '*Assurance Vieillesse du Parent au Foyer*' (AYPF) (see <http://www.caf.fr/aides-et-services/s-informer-sur-les-aides/petite-enfance/assurance-vieillesse-du-parent-au-foyer-avpf>). AYPF is paid by the local CAFs (*Caisse des Allocations Familiales*) to guarantee retirement rights to people who stop or reduce their professional activity to take care of one or several children or a person with a disability. This allowance is means-tested.

Flexibility in use

- Parents taking leave may work between 16 and 32 hours per week.
- Parents can take full-time leave simultaneously. They can also take part-time Parental leave simultaneously and receive benefit at the same time from the *PreParE*, but the total amount of payment cannot exceed €428.71 (unless eligible for the *Allocation de base*).

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

- All employees are eligible for Parental leave if they have worked at least one year for their employer before the birth of a child.
- Eligibility for *PreParE* becomes more restrictive the fewer children a parent has: e.g., with 1 child it is necessary to have worked without break for 2 years preceding birth, with 2 children for 2 of the 4 years preceding birth, and with 3 children for 2 out of the 5 years preceding birth.
- Leave is available to same-sex parenting couples.

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

- Where a child is seriously ill or disabled, Parental leave (regulated by the Labour code) can be extended by a year.
- Single parents are entitled to the full period of *PreParE*.

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

- Employers can refuse to let parents work part time if they can justify this on business grounds.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- For adoptive parents the same regulations for Parental leave apply as for other parents.

Time off for the care of dependants

- Every employee is eligible for an unpaid leave (*Congé de présence parentale*) to care for a sick child under the age of 16 years. Legally, periods of leave cannot exceed three days per year (or five days in specific cases), but this is a minimum and most collective agreements have special arrangements, as in the public sector where employees can take 14 days a year to care for a sick child.
- *Allocation Journalière de Présence Parentale (AJPP)*: in cases of a serious disability or illness of a child under 20 years, every employee with at least one year of employment with an employer is entitled to paid leave to care for her/his child, or to work part time, for a period of up to three years. The allowance is paid for a maximum of 310 days over the 3 year period, and the level of the allowance depends on the duration of work in the enterprise and on the family structure; in couples, the amount is €64.54 per day if one parent stops work completely. A similar period of leave is possible for employees who need to care for a relative at the end of life, either a child or a parent living in the same house.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- None.

Flexible working

- The 'family tax credit' (*Crédit d'Impôt Famille, CIF*), introduced in 2004, is a financial incentive provided to companies to encourage them to develop family-friendly initiatives for their employees. The CIF stipulates that 25 per cent of related expenses are deductible from taxes paid by the company up to an upper limit of €500,000 per year and per company.
- Employees in the public and private sector are entitled to work part time for family reasons. Parents have therefore a right to request or to reduce their working time if the child is aged under three years but under the condition that the request is made in the context of being on a statutory Parental leave and that the parent has been working with the company for at least one year.
- Parents have the right and are guaranteed to return to work afterwards on full-time or part-time basis.

- All employees (not specifically parents) have also a right to (request to) work (a certain percentage) from home. The most common arrangement is to combine one or two days of telework with three or four days in the office during the week. Under such an agreed arrangement their employment contract cannot be broken by employers.

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

The maximum period of post-natal leave is three years, but most of this is low paid; leave paid at a high rate lasts for less than 4 months. There is an entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) from three years of age: the French Education code states that 'every child upon reaching the age of three has the right to attend a nursery school located as close as possible to his or her residence if her or his family claims a place'; attendance is also compulsory from 3 years. There is no gap, therefore, between the end of leave and an ECEC entitlement, but a substantial gap of more than 2½ years between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement.

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

3. Changes in policy since April 2023 (including proposals currently under discussion)

Since 20 August 2023, the self-employed are entitled to Maternity and Paternity leave benefits if they have been working over the past 6 months, instead of 10 months previously.

In January 2024, the government announced a leave reform, to be implemented in 2025. Details are currently under discussion. At the time of writing (April 2024), this reform plans the replacement of the 2 years Parental leave with a shorter leave (each parent could stop their activity in the six months following the birth). The compensation rate could be 50 per cent of the wage, with a ceiling at €1,800 per month. This proposed reform is vulnerable to political changes.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

Almost all mothers take up Maternity leave, a period of which is obligatory, although the length of leave taken varies, with women in higher status employment taking less leave.

b. Paternity leave

Take-up rate of Paternity leave is stable^{273,274} (70 per cent) but varies greatly according to the father's labour market situation: only 34 per cent of self-employed fathers take the leave, compared with 80 per cent of fathers on permanent contracts.²⁷⁵

Take-up also varies according to the level of income: from 58 per cent among fathers belonging to the first quintile of the income scale to 79 per cent among the most well-off fathers, while this rate rises to 92 per cent among fathers in the middle-income quintiles (€2,500 to €2,999 per month).

On the other hand, take-up rate is higher in large companies with more than 200 employees (88 per cent) than in companies with less than 10 employees (75 per cent).

c. Parental leave and childrearing benefit (*PreParE*)

It is impossible to calculate the number of parents on Parental leave because employers are not required to provide information about take-up. Statistics are limited to childcare allowance (essentially *PreParE*) provided by the National Family Allowance Fund, and it is not possible to find out how many recipients are also on Parental leave.

In 2022, 222,700 families received a childcare allowance (*PreParE*). Research provides evidence that women make up 94 per cent of parents taking leave, and there has been little change since the introduction of *PreParE*; Research also suggests that mothers who were in employment just before taking Maternity leave are more likely to claim *PreParE* if they are entitled to Parental leave because they have a job guarantee (Labour Code). With high unemployment, most working mothers who are not entitled to Parental leave cannot take the risk of losing their job unless their partner has secure employment.²⁷⁶

A number of factors help to explain why fathers are so reluctant to claim Parental leave, including: the unequal gender distribution of domestic and child-raising tasks within the family still persisting in France; traditional value systems; in most couples, the man earning more than the woman; and a workplace culture in the private sector that makes it difficult for a man, in particular at management level, to take Parental leave. The small number of fathers who take childcare allowance full time are mostly blue-collar workers or employees with a stable job beforehand. Compared to fathers who do not take Parental leave, they are more likely to work in female-dominated sectors and to have partners with a higher level of education,

²⁷³ Gosselin, H., and Lepine C. (2018) *Évaluation du congé de paternité*, Inspection générale des affaires sociales (Igas), 2018-022R.

²⁷⁴ Guedj, H. and Le Pape M.-C. (2023) 'Premiers jours de l'enfant : un temps de plus en plus sanctuarisé par les pères via le congé de paternité' [The child's first days: a time increasingly protected by fathers through paternity leave], *Etudes et Résultats*, 1275.

²⁷⁵ Sponton, A. (2023) 'Reluctant Fathers? A Mixed-Methods Approach to Grasp the Diversity of Mechanisms Behind Paternity Leave Non-Take-Up', *Population*, vol.78, 1: 83-116.

²⁷⁶ [Onape, 2023](#)

a higher status job and higher earnings. Besides, the majority of fathers on Parental leave take it on a part-time basis.²⁷⁷

According to the ONAPE (2022)²⁷⁸, the number of mothers and fathers receiving the *PreParE* (not working at all or working on a part time basis) has been continuously decreasing over the last ten years, with a decrease of 3.3 per cent between 2022 and 2021. Among the beneficiaries receiving the *PreParE*, 54 per cent were stopping their work, 46 per cent worked part-time.

This strong segmentation as far as the behaviour of mothers with young children is concerned is partly the result of the inconsistencies between the Parental leave scheme (part of employment legislation detailed in the Labour code) and the allowance provided under strict eligibility conditions by the Social Security.

²⁷⁷ Onape Reports (2004-2021) [Observatoire national de la petite enfance \(Onape\) | Bienvenue sur Caf.fr](#)

²⁷⁸ Observatoire National de la Petite Enfance (2022) *La lettre de l'observatoire national de la petite enfance, decembre 2022*. Paris: CNAF. Available at: [Lettre de l'Observatoire | caf.fr](#)