

Statutory Parental leave (not including additional childcare leave): April 2024

All EU member states must provide at least four months' **Parental leave** per parent (2 months non-transferable, paid leave), under the terms of Work-Life Balance Directive. 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. The Directive also requires: ten working days of Paternity leave, paid at no less than the level of sick pay; five days of annual carer's leave; and flexible working arrangements for parents and carers.

Around one-third of the non-EU countries in this review also provide Parental leave. The exceptions are Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Mexico, Serbia, South Africa, Switzerland, Türkiye, Vietnam 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).

Seven countries (Australia, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, 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 fathers only.

Parental leave varies on 4 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 that where continuous leave is available for up to 3 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, the UK, and Uruguay. The latter ('long leave' countries) include the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, 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. 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 Table 4).

Parental leaves as a time right are a **family entitlement** in seven countries, to be divided between parents as they choose (Canada, Estonia, Hungary, Malta – public sector, New Zealand, Russia, and Uruguay). Five countries **combine family entitlement with individual non-transferable entitlement** (Austria, Norway, Poland, Portugal, and Romania). Nineteen countries have individual – fully non-transferable entitlement, and an additional 7 individual – partially transferable entitlement (see Table 3). In cases where (parts of) individual entitlements are non-transferable, if not used by a parent, these are foregone (following the 'use it or lose it' principle). In some countries individual non-transferable leave rights entitlements can be used within the same time period (e.g.

until the child turns 3 years), and are typically combined with one benefit right (e.g. see Czech Republic in Table 3), meaning that parents are entitled to more time right than benefit right and that 'quota' months may not serve the same function. In Bulgaria, Parental leave is still defined as primarily the mother's right, which can be transferred to the father. The same is the case for Parental benefits in New Zealand.

Most countries in the review (36) provide some element of **payment**; only Israel, Spain, and the UK make no payment. Payment policy varies considerably and can include **a ceiling on benefit payments**.

Flexibility takes many forms, including: (i) additional leave in the case of multiple births or, in a few cases, other circumstances; (ii) 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); (iii) the possibility of taking leave in one continuous block or several shorter blocks; (iv) the possibility for both parents to take all or some leave at the same time; (v) the possibility to use all or part of leave when parents choose, until their child reaches a certain age (see Table 3). There are also some other forms of flexibility, such as the option to take longer periods of leave with lower benefits or shorter periods with higher benefits (e.g., Austria, Czech Republic, Norway) or the possibility to transfer leave entitlements to carers who are not parents. It should be noted that where leave can be taken part time, the length of leave may be extended when this option is used; the length of leave shown below is based on full-time leave taking, so does not take account of this part-time option, which is widely used in some countries (e.g., the Netherlands).

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. 'Quotas' have been increasingly introduced in recent years, in particular in the EU countries, to align with the demands from the Work-Life Balance Directive asking for two non-transferable paid Parental leave months. Twenty-five countries have quotas, within the Parental benefits system, ranging from 30 days (Portugal) to 12 months (e.g. Korea; see Table 3). Another approach is to offer some form of bonus (e.g. additional leave) if both parents take some Parental leave. Eight countries offer such a bonus. For example, Japan extends paid leave by two months if fathers take at least two months of leave;² 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, Italy, Korea, and Slovakia.

² An extra 2 months become shorter according to the length of the leave a father takes. Given a mother take full entitlement until a child become 1 year old, only a father can take leave after the child become 1 year old. If he takes 10 days of leave after the child's 1st birthday, the extra period for the family is only 10 days, not 2 months. The maximum of the extra after a child's 1st birthday is 2 months.

Childcare leave (not presented in Table 3, but included in the total length of leave in Table 4) 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. 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 an exception in that childcare leave is available after Maternity leave, and as Parental leave is mostly unpaid or paid at a low rate, 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 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). Unpaid career breaks can be also found in Croatia and Serbia (until the child turns three).

Table 3: Post-natal Parental leave (statutory; post-natal per couple, employment-based, full-time, the first child entitlements): leave length, type of entitlement, leave transferability and flexibility (April 2024)

Country	Post-natal leave (in months per couple)			Type of entitlement ²		Additional leave time ³		Leave flexibility ⁴			
	Total	Paid	Well-paid ¹	Leave [nontransferable months]	Benefit [nontransferable months]	Fathers' use	Other reasons	Part-time	In blocks	Simultaneous use	Until a child is (year):
Argentina	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Australia	24	4.7	0	Individual transferable	Individual transferable	–	–	–	+	[+]	2
Austria	24	14.2–35.4	14.2*	Family & individual nontransferable [2 months]	Family & individual nontransferable [2 months]	– [partnership bonus]	–	+	+	[+]	7
Belgium	8	8	0	Individual nontransferable [4 months]	Individual nontransferable [4 months]	–	+	+	+	+	12
Bosnia and Herzegovina	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Brazil	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Bulgaria	24 [‡]	24 [‡]	0	Primary mothers', transferable	Primary mothers', transferable	–	–	–	–	–	2
Canada	8.1-14.2	8.1-14.2	0	Family	Family	+ [3 to 5 weeks]	–	–	–	+	:
Canada Quebec	7.4	7.4	5.8*	Family	Family	+ [3 to 4 weeks]		+	+	+	:
Chile	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
China	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Colombia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Croatia	8	8	8*	Individual partially transferable [2 months]	Individual partially transferable [2 months]	–	+	+	+	+	8
Cyprus	8.4	1.4	1.4	Individual partially transferable [16 weeks]	Individual partially transferable [2 weeks]	–	+	–	+	+	8
Czech Republic	36	6.5-36	6.5*	Individual nontransferable [36 months]	Family	–	+	+	–	+	3
Denmark	6.5	6.5	6.5*	Individual partially transferable	Individual partially transferable	–	+	+	+	+	9

Country	Post-natal leave (in months per couple)			Type of entitlement ²		Additional leave time ³		Leave flexibility ⁴			
	Total	Paid	Well-paid ¹	Leave [nontransferable months]	Benefit [nontransferable months]	Fathers' use	Other reasons	Part-time	In blocks	Simultaneous use	Until a child is (year):
				[9 weeks]	[9 weeks]						
Estonia	36	15.8	15.8*	Family	Family	–	–	–	+	[+]	3
Finland	12.4	12.4	12.4*	Individual partially transferable [16,2 weeks]	Individual partially transferable [16,2 weeks]	–	+	+	+	[+]	2
France	36 [↓]	12 [↓]	0	Individual nontransferable [36 months]	Individual nontransferable [6 months]	–	+	+	–	+	3
Germany	72 [↓]	14 [↓]	14 [↓]	Individual nontransferable [36 months]	Individual partially transferable [2 months]	–	+	+	+	+	8
Greece (private)	8	4	0	Individual nontransferable [4 months]	Individual nontransferable [2 months]	–	+	+	+	–	8
Greece (public)	60	4	0	Individual nontransferable [60 months]	Individual nontransferable [2 months]	–	+	+	+	–	8
Hungary	36 [↓]	36 [↓]	24 [↓]	Family	Family	–	+	+	–	–	3
Iceland	12	12	12*	Individual partially transferable [4.6 months]	Individual partially transferable [4.6 months]	–	+	+	+	+	2
Ireland	15	3.3	0	Individual nontransferable [33 weeks]	Individual nontransferable [7 weeks]	–	+	=	+	+	12 [paid leave until 2]
Israel	12	..	..	Individual nontransferable [12 months]	..	–	–	–	+	–	1
Italy	10	10	2	Individual nontransferable [6 months]	Individual nontransferable [6 months]	+	+	+	+	+	12
						[1 bonus paid month]					
Japan	12 [↓]	12 [↓]	12*	Individual nontransferable [12 months]	Individual nontransferable [12 months]	+	–	+	+	+	1.2
						[2 bonus paid months]					
Korea	24	24	24*	Individual nontransferable [12 months]	Individual nontransferable [12 months]	+	–	+	+	+	8

Country	Post-natal leave (in months per couple)			Type of entitlement ²		Additional leave time ³		Leave flexibility ⁴			
	Total	Paid	Well-paid ¹	Leave [nontransferable months]	Benefit [nontransferable months]	Fathers' use	Other reasons	Part-time	In blocks	Simultaneous use	Until a child is (year):
						[higher benefit for 6+6 months]					
Latvia	36	15-19	0	Individual nontransferable [18 months]	Individual partially transferable [2 months]	–	–	+	+	+	8
Lithuania	36	24	18*	Individual nontransferable [18 months]	Individual partially transferable [2 months]	–	–	+	+	+	3
Luxembourg	12	12	12*	Individual nontransferable [6 months]	Individual nontransferable [6 months]	–	–	+	+	+	6
Malta (private)	8	4	0	Individual partially transferable [2 months]	Individual partially transferable [2 months]	–	–	–	+	–	8
Malta (public)	12	4	0	Family	Individual partially transferable [2 months]	–	–	+	+	–	10
Mexico	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Netherlands	12.1	4.2	4.2*	Individual nontransferable [26 weeks]	Individual nontransferable [9 weeks]	–	+	+	+	+	8
New Zealand	12	6	0	Family	Primary mothers', transferable	..	+	–	+	+	1
Norway	13	13	13*	Family & individual nontransferable [19 weeks]	Family & individual nontransferable [19 weeks]	–	+	+	+	[+]	3
Poland	9.5	9.5	9.5	Family & individual nontransferable [9 weeks]	Family & individual nontransferable [9 weeks]	–	+	+	+	+	6
Portugal	12	12	5	Family & individual nontransferable [30 days + 3 months]	Family & individual nontransferable [30 days]	+	+	+	+	[+]	6
Romania	24	24	24*	Family & individual nontransferable	Family & individual nontransferable	–	+	–	+	[+]	2

Country	Post-natal leave (in months per couple)			Type of entitlement ²		Additional leave time ³		Leave flexibility ⁴			
	Total	Paid	Well-paid ¹	Leave [nontransferable months]	Benefit [nontransferable months]	Fathers' use	Other reasons	Part-time	In blocks	Simultaneous use	Until a child is (year):
				[2 months]	[2 months]						
Russian Federation	36	18	0	Family	Family	..	–	+	+	–	3
Serbia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Slovak Republic	36 [↓]	36 [↓]	6	Individual nontransferable [36 months]	Family	+ [6.5 months of Maternity benefit]	+	+	+	+	3
Slovenia	10.7	10.7	10.7*	Individual partially transferable [2 months]	Individual partially transferable [2 months]	–	+	+	+	+	8
South Africa	0.3	0.3	0.3	Family	Family	..	..	+	..	..	..
Spain	39.7	..	..	Individual nontransferable [36 months + 8 weeks after child turns 3]	..	–	–	+	+	+	8
Sweden	18	18	13*	Individual nontransferable [18 months]	Individual partially transferable [3 months]	–	+	+	+	[+]	12
Switzerland	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Türkiye	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
United Kingdom	8.4	..	..	Individual nontransferable [4.2 months]	..	..	+	–	+	+	18
United States	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Uruguay (private)	6	3	2.7	Family	Family	–	–	+	+	–	0.5
Uruguay (public)	6	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Vietnam	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

Notes: Only **statutory** leave entitlements regulated at the national level are included, that is, regional or occupational (variations in) provisions topping up state-level defined statutory rights are excluded. For all the variations in leave entitlements see country notes which contain more detailed information.

Key: ..=no statutory leave or payment; *=ceiling on payments; ↓=if the person had the right to paid Maternity leave, Parental leave duration is reduced by the duration of paid Maternity leave (see Table 1); :=no data; **1**=earnings-related payment at 66 per cent of previous earnings or above (based on legal replacement rate; but note that in some countries benefits are taxed or may count towards income base for social security contributions, meaning that actual amounts received by the individuals may differ); **2**=in brackets, the part of the leave or benefit time ('quota') that is NOT transferable to the other parent is indicated (if both parents have individual entitlement on, for example, 12 months, but they both have to use the leave time until the child turns one, this is marked as "simultaneous"; however, if they can use their entitlement until the child turns 8, this is counted as 24 months of entitlement per couple); **3**=additional leave in case of father's use of leave or additional leave time for premature birth, multiple births, higher order births, in the case of disability of the child or medical complications; **4**=leave can be used part-time, in several blocks, simultaneously by both parents (fully if +, or partially if [+]) or until the child reaches a certain age.