

# Sweden<sup>1</sup>

**Ann-Zofie Duvander** (Stockholm University) and **Linda Haas** (Indiana University)

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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 (pregnancy benefit: *graviditetsspenning*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs)

- It is obligatory for women to take two weeks Maternity leave before or after delivery; they can decide whether to take part of the paid parental insurance benefit during this period of leave. Pregnant women can take indefinite leave paid at 77.6 per cent of earnings if a job is a risk to the foetus and no other work can be made available. If a job is physically demanding and therefore hard for a pregnant woman to perform, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency is likely to grant eligibility of up to 50 days of leave during the last 60 days of pregnancy paid at 77.6 per cent of income. This benefit is called pregnancy benefit and the woman will need a physician's certificate. If she is not granted pregnancy benefit she may start using Parental leave benefit the last weeks of pregnancy (see footnote for Parental leave).

### b. Temporary leave in connection with a child's birth or adoption (*tillfällig föräldrapenning i samband med barns födelse eller adoption*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs)<sup>2</sup>

#### *Length of leave*

- Ten days. Designed to be used for other parent (or carer) to attend delivery, to care for older siblings while the mother is in the hospital, to stay over in the hospital in a family room after childbirth and/or to participate in childcare when the mother comes home. Most often this is used by the father of the child and was earlier called 'daddy days' (*pappadagar*).

<sup>1</sup> Please cite as: Duvander, A.-Z., and Haas, L., (2018) 'Sweden country note', in Blum, S., Koslowski, A., Macht, A. and Moss, P. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2018*. Available at: [http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp\\_and\\_r\\_reports/](http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/)

<sup>2</sup> Referred to as 'Paternity leave' in reviews before 2014; now revised to provide a literal translation to 'entitlement', which is considered gender-neutral.

### *Payment and funding*

- Seventy-seven point six (77.6) per cent of earnings up to an earnings ceiling of SEK341,184 [€33,676.40]<sup>3</sup> per year (see section 1c for information regarding eligibility and further details). 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 pay 2.60 per cent on all employees' earnings, while all self-employed workers pay 2.60 percent on their earnings as well<sup>4</sup>.

### *Flexibility in use*

- Leave can be used at any time during the first 60 days after childbirth.

### *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)<sup>5</sup>.
- The benefit is gender neutral and attributed to the second parent or another close person if the second parent is unknown.

*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).

## **c. Parental leave (*föräldrapenning*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs)**

### *Length of leave (before and after birth)*

- Each parent is entitled to take full-time leave from work until their child is 18 months old, regardless of whether they are using paid benefits. Each parent is also eligible for 240 days of Parental leave benefit, which can be used during the 18 months but also afterwards, so that this paid leave can be taken until a child is eight or 12-years old (see *Flexibility in use* below). There is thus one legislation concerning the right to unpaid leave (18 months per parent) and another granting paid leave (240 days per parent).
- Ninety (90) of the Parental leave benefit days are reserved and cannot be transferred to the other parent (often called *mammamånader* or a 'mother's quota' and *pappamånader* or a 'father's quota'). The remaining days for each parent can be transferred to the other by signing a consent form.

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<sup>3</sup> Conversion of currency undertaken on 13 June 2018, using: <http://finance.yahoo.com/currency-converter>

<sup>4</sup> Confederation of Swedish Enterprise. 2016. Introduction to insurance schemes on the labour market, 2016, p. 15. Accessible at <https://www.svensktnaringsliv.se>

<sup>5</sup> Swedish Inspectorate for the Social Insurance 2016. Sickness benefit qualifying income. Report 2016:10. Stockholm, at [www.inspsf.se](http://www.inspsf.se). Swedish report with English summary.

### *Payment and funding*

- For parents eligible for earnings-related benefit (see below), 195 days of leave are paid at 77.6 per cent of earnings, up to an earnings ceiling of SEK455,004 [€44.910.95]<sup>6</sup>; the remaining 45 days are paid at a flat-rate payment of SEK180 [€17.77] a day.
- Parents who are not eligible for earnings-related leave receive a flat rate of SEK250 [€24.68] a day for 240 days.
- All Parental leave benefit, income related and flat rate, offers pension credits.
- Funding is the same as for Temporary leave in connection with birth and adoption.
- There is an extra pension supplement for the parent who earns the least income during the child's first four years. This supplement to the pension-qualifying amount for years with small children is aimed to compensate the parent who takes the largest responsibility for childcare and therefore has to reduce work, or who temporarily exits the labour market<sup>7</sup>.

### *Flexibility in use*

- The length of leave is counted in calendar days (rather than weeks or months) to enhance flexibility of use. It is thus 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, half-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 half-time leave and four days of quarter-time leave). Parents cannot work while on paid or unpaid leave unless they are taking the leave part-time.
- 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.
- Starting with children born from 1 January 2014, paid leave can be used 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.
- 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 wage-based days that each are entitled to if they want to stay home at the same time.

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

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<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> 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>

- 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 [€24.68] a 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.

*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, an additional 90 days at 77.6 per cent of earnings and an additional 90 days at a flat rate of SEK180 [€17.77] a day). For each additional child in a multiple birth, parents are entitled to an additional 180 days at 77.6 per cent of earnings.
- In case of sole custody, the parent with custody receives all 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.

*Additional note (e.g. 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 ten per cent extra under the ceiling (i.e., workers receive 90 per cent of earnings) or up to 90 per cent of income above the ceiling<sup>8</sup>.

## **e. Other employment-related measures**

*Adoptive leave and pay*

- Cohabiting adoptive parents get five days each of Temporary leave in connection with a child's birth or adoption (see section 1b) at the time of adoption. A single adoptive parent gets ten days. Benefits are conditional on the child being under ten years old at adoption, and leave can only be used up

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<sup>8</sup> Lindquist, G. S., Wadensjö, E. (2005) *Inte bara socialförsäkringar – Kompletterande ersättningar vid inkomstbortfall, Rapport till expertgruppen för studier i samhällsekonomi [Not only social insurance – complementary income replacement at loss of income. Report to the expert group for studies in national economy, 2005:2]*. Stockholm: Regeringskansliet, Finansdepartementet. Available at: [www.regeringen.se/sb/d/5225/a/52073](http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/5225/a/52073)

until the child is ten years old, or 12 years old if in the parents' obtained custody from 2014 and onwards.

#### *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 years, 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 SEK341,184 [€33,676.40] 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 1b) also come under this category of Temporary Parental leave.
- Parents whose children are sick or functionally disabled for more than six months can apply for care allowance (*vårdbidrag*) from the birth of the child until the child reaches the age of 19 years. Parents may receive a maximum of SEK9,333 [€921.21] per month for extra care obligations, such as paying for a caregiver or as compensation for reduced work hours. In addition, parents can receive a maximum of SEK28,000 [€2,763.73] yearly for extra costs, such as equipment or medicine.

#### *Flexible working*

- Until a child reaches the age of eight years 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.

#### *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, how long and so on).

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

The maximum period of paid post-natal leave available in Sweden is around 16 months, with 13 months paid at a high rate. There is an entitlement to ECEC from one year of age, available on a full-time basis in centres or at licensed family day carers to employed parents (or part-time if parents are not employed). Consequently, there is no gap between the end of leave and an ECEC entitlement. Levels of attendance at formal services for children under and over three years are above the average for the countries included in this review and for OECD countries. For actual attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' on [cross-country comparisons](#) page.

### **3. Changes in policy since April 2017 (including proposals currently under discussion)**

In December 2017 a major commission on Parental leave published proposals for changes in Parental leave legislation<sup>9</sup>. The commission proposals included: 1) increasing the amount of each parent's quota from three to five months, with five months to be shared between parents; 2) stricter age limits for when Parental leave can be used; 3) abolishing the speed premium and temporary leave in connection to a child's birth or adoption; 4) providing for the possibility to transfer two months of leave to someone other than the two primary parents. No new laws have yet been enacted.

### **4. Take-up of leave<sup>10</sup>**

#### **a. Maternity leave**

In 2016, 27,210 women received Maternity leave benefits for an average of 41 days. Since there were 117,245 births in 2016, this suggests that 23 per cent of pregnant women took Maternity leave.

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

In 2016, 87,405 individuals took temporary Parental leave at the birth or adoption of a child. Approximately 75 per cent of fathers, same-sex partners or other designated persons took this leave. Of all leave users, only 1.1 per cent were women. Men took on average 9.6 of the ten eligible days.

#### **c. Parental leave and childrearing benefit**

Almost all families use paid Parental leave in Sweden. For children born until the end of 2013 it has been possible to use this benefit until a child reaches the age of eight years or after the first school year has ended. In 2016, most Parental leave days were taken by women during the child's first year of life, while men tended to take leave when the child was between one and three. However, most of leave days are taken before children reach the age of two years; all children are entitled to an ECEC place from 12 months of age.

In 2016, the majority of women (88 per cent) and men (96 per cent) who took Parental leave were entitled to benefits at the earnings-related compensation level as opposed to the low flat-rate level. 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 SEK651 [€62.26] per day in 2016, while the average mother received benefits of SEK499 [€49.25].

For children born in 2001, parents used 92 per cent of the 360 days that are paid at a high earnings-related rate, and 69 per cent of the days that are paid at a low flat-rate level. Parents of foreign background are less likely than native Swedes to use all

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<sup>9</sup> Jämställt föräldraskap och goda uppväxtvillkor för barn – En ny modell för föräldraförsäkringen [Gender-equal parenthood and good conditions for childrearing – a new model for Parental leave] *Statens Offentliga Utredningar* 2017:101).

<sup>10</sup> All take-up statistics from Social Insurance in Figures 2017 Accessible in English at <https://www.forsakringskassan.se>

their days. The great majority of fathers of children born in 2004 (88.3 per cent) took Parental leave at some stage before their child's eighth birthday, mainly starting when their children were 13 to 15 months of age<sup>11</sup>. Fathers of children born in 2008 took on average 106 days of Parental leave during the eight years they could use the leave, while mothers took 342 days (76 per cent).

In 2016, 45 per cent of Parental leave benefit recipients were men, compared to 55 per cent who were women; on average, mothers took 86 days and fathers 40 days during that year. For children born in 2013, fathers had taken on average 69 days by the time their children were two, while mothers had taken 276<sup>12</sup>. 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 2016 it had increased to 27 per cent. The percentage of couples that are sharing Parental leave equally (40-60 per cent) is also slowly increasing. For children born in 2013, 14.1 per cent of couples equally shared leave that year<sup>13</sup>.

Fathers with higher education take more Parental leave, as do fathers whose partners have higher levels of education. For children born in 2013, by 2015, fathers whose jobs required higher education had taken an average of 112 days of Parental leave while mothers had taken 108. An important exception is men in management jobs who took an average of only 58 days, but this has increased more for men in this job than most others<sup>14</sup>. 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 27 fewer leave days than wage-earning fathers. Mothers who are self-employed take 46 fewer days than wage-earning mothers, but the proportional difference is much less for mothers than fathers. Groups who take little or not leave include those born outside Sweden and unemployed fathers (who typically have low benefit levels)<sup>15</sup>.

The introduction of a father's quota in 1995 (one month) and its extension in 2002 (to two months) both led to more fathers taking more leave; though the second month had a less dramatic effect than the first<sup>16</sup>. Still, only 44 per cent of fathers had taken their two reserved months by 2015, for children born in 2013<sup>17</sup>. No study has so far investigated the effect on use by the introduction of the third reserved month in 2016.

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<sup>11</sup> Försäkringskassan [Swedish Social Insurance Agency] (2010) *Outnyttjad föräldrapenning [Unused Parental leave]*. Socialförsäkringsrapport 2010:14. Available at: [www.forsakringskassan.se](http://www.forsakringskassan.se)

<sup>12</sup> Försäkringskassan [Swedish Social Insurance Agency] (2016). *Föräldrapenning och yrke. Korta analyser 2016:1*. [Parental leave and occupation – Short analyses].

<sup>13</sup> Försäkringskassan [Swedish Social Insurance Agency] (2013:8) *De jämställda föräldrarna [Equal parents]*.

<sup>14</sup> Försäkringskassan [Swedish Social Insurance Agency] (2016). *Föräldrapenning och yrke. Korta analyser 2016:1*. [Parental leave and occupation – Short analyses].

<sup>15</sup> Anxo, D., Ericson, T. (2015) Self-employment and Parental leave. *Small Business Economics* 45 (4), 751-770).

<sup>16</sup> Duvander, A. and Johansson, M. (2012) Ett jämställt uttag? Reformen inom föräldraförsäkringen [Equal use? Reforms within Parental leave insurance] Rapport 2012:4. Inspectorate of Social Insurance. Available at: <http://www.inspsf.se/>. See also Duvander, Ann-Zofie, and Mats Johansson (2014) Parental leave use for different fathers. A study of the impact of three Swedish Parental leave reforms, pp. 349-369 in Rostgaard, T. and Eydal, G. (Eds.) *Fatherhood in the Nordic Welfare States - Comparing Care Policies and Practice*. Policy Press, and Duvander, Ann-Zofie, and Mats Johansson (2012) What are the effects of reforms promoting fathers' Parental leave use? *Journal of European Social Policy*, 22, (3):319-330.

<sup>17</sup> Försäkringskassan [Swedish Social Insurance Agency] (2016). *Föräldrapenning och yrke. Korta analyser 2016:1*. [Parental leave and occupation – Short analyses].

#### **d. Other employment-related measures**

Mothers are more likely than fathers to work (long) part-time hours (34 hours or less per week); 22 per cent of all mothers with children from birth to 17 worked part time in 2012, compared to only five per cent of employed fathers<sup>18</sup>. In 2015, 21 per cent of women ages 20-64 who worked part-time reported doing so in order to care for children, compared to 10 per cent of men<sup>19</sup>. Part-time employment among mothers has declined during the last 10 years. No official statistics are kept concerning how many parents working part-time are doing so by exercising their entitlement to work reduced hours.

Temporary Parental leave to care for sick children, is used somewhat more by mothers, who took 62 per cent of all days taken in 2016. On average mothers took 8.5 days and fathers 6.8 days, this being highly dependent on the age of the child, as most days are used during the first years, and after regular Parental leave has ended.

### **5. Research and publications on leave and other employment-related policies since April 2017**

Please be aware that this is not intended to be a comprehensive list of all publications or research in this area for this country. If you are aware of a publication or research that could be listed in this section, please contact the country note author(s) so that they can include it for the following year

#### **a. General overview**

The research conducted during the three decades of Swedish Parental leave has mainly focused on comparing mothers' and fathers' use of Parental leave, and explaining gender differences, as a major issue has been the unequal sharing of Parental leave days between women and men. Over time, the impact of Parental leave on various outcomes, notably fertility and women's employment, has received attention, as has the use of leave by specific groups of men, including separated and immigrant fathers.

#### **b. Selected recent publications**

Duvander, A-Z. and Korsell, N. (2017) 'Whose days are left? Separated parents' use of Parental leave in Sweden', in: R. Niewenhuis and L. Maldonado (eds.) *Triple Bind of Single Parent Families*. Bristol: Policy Press, pp. 263-283.

Analysis of register data of first-born children found that separated fathers use fewer leave days than partnered fathers. Fathers who separate tend to have used the same amount of leave days as other fathers before separation; it is after separation that the traditional division of labor for childcare becomes more evident.

Hagvist, E., Nordenmark, M., Perez, G., Aleman, S. and Gådin, K. (2017) 'Parental leave policies and time use for mothers and fathers: A case study of Spain and Sweden', *Society, Health & Vulnerability*, Vol. 8, No.1. Available at: DOI:

<sup>18</sup> Statistiska Centralbyrån (2013) *Allt fler mammor jobbar heltid*. Article 2013:31. Available at: [www.scb.se](http://www.scb.se)

<sup>19</sup> Statistiska Centralbyrån (2016) *Lathund – Gainful Employment Table LF09*.

10.1080/20021518.2017.1374103

This study of Sweden and the Basque country in Spain finds that changes in leave policies over two decades are associated with mothers and fathers spending a more even share of time in childcare.

Kaufman, G. and Almqvist, A-L. (2017) 'The role of partners and workplaces in British and Swedish men's Parental leave decisions', *Men and Masculinities*, Vol. 20, No.5: 1-19.

Interviews found that mothers have considerable influence on fathers' leave use; however, in the UK this makes leave less equal while in Sweden it makes it more equal. Workplace opposition was reported as a larger barrier to men's leave use in Britain compared to Sweden.

Suweda, K. (2017) "It was necessary at the beginning to make this whole revolution": men's attitudes to Parental leave in Sweden and Poland', *Men & Masculinities*, Vol. 20, No.5. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X17727571>  
In-depth interviews of Swedish and Polish parents of young children found that the institutional and cultural context is related to men's leave attitudes, with Swedish men being more interested and supportive of fathers' leave-taking. Poland was described as supporting "orthodox masculinity," while Sweden was described as supporting "caring masculinity."

Tervola, J., Duvander, A.Z., and Mussino, E. (2017) 'Promoting Parental leave for immigrant fathers', *Social Politics*, Vol. 24, No.3: 269-297.

Immigrant fathers in Sweden were found to take advantage of Parental leave more often than those in Finland, likely because the Swedish policy provides non-transferable and flexible leave. Use of leave immediately after childbirth was, however, similar in both countries, where the policies are similar.

Viklund, I. and Duvander, A.-Z. (2017) 'Time on leave, Timing of preschool: the role of socioeconomic background for preschool start in Sweden', in: H. Blossfeld, N. Kulic, J. Skopek and M. Triventi (eds.), *Childcare, early education and social inequality*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, pp. 67-88.

Swedish parents have the option of placing children in subsidized preschool immediately after one year of paid Parental leave. This longitudinal study examines preschool start times and finds that over time, children are starting preschool earlier and that lower-income families place children in school earlier than higher-income families.

Brandén, M, Duvander, A-Z. And Ohlsson-Wijk, S. (2018) 'Sharing the caring: attitude-behavior discrepancies and partnership dynamics', *Journal of Family Issues*, vol. 39, 771-785.

Men who wish they had shared Parental leave more reported less relationship satisfaction, fewer children and a greater likelihood of breaking up with partners

Valarino, I, Duvander, A.-Z., Haas, L. and Neyer, G. (2018) 'Exploring leave policy preferences: A comparison of Austria, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States', *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, Vol. 25, No.1: 118-147.

This study finds that the institutional dimension, individual self-interest and individuals' values are all correlated with leave policy preferences. It also reveals significant mismatches between what individuals would like policy to be and what it is in their countries.

#### **d. Ongoing research**

Research related to Parental leave in Sweden is conducted in a variety of fields. Please contact authors for specific area. Ann-Zofie Duvander can be reached at [ann-zofie.duvander@sociology.su.se](mailto:ann-zofie.duvander@sociology.su.se) and Linda Haas can be reached at [lhaas@iupui.edu](mailto:lhaas@iupui.edu).