

Statutory Parental Leave (not including additional Childcare Leave): April 2018

All EU member states must provide at least four months **Parental leave** per parent, under the terms of Directive 2010/18/EU. The directive defines this leave as enabling men and women “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. No payment or flexibility requirements are specified in Directive 2010/18/EU, but Parental leave is defined as “an individual right and in principle non-transferable”, though the directive goes on to add that “member states are allowed to make it transferable.” A draft report on a proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU is currently under consideration by the European Parliament’s Employment and Social Affairs committee.

Nine of the 15 non-EU countries in this review also provide Parental leave. The exceptions are Brazil, China, Mexico, South Africa, Switzerland (the only European country included in this review not to provide Parental leave, though not an EU member state), and Uruguay. A special case is the United States, which has a generic and unpaid ‘family and medical leave’ that is not applicable to private employers with less than 50 employees. Six countries (Australia, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal 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 for fathers only.

Parental leave varies on four main dimensions: length; whether it is an individual or family entitlement; payment; flexibility.

Broadly, countries divide into those where the **total length of Parental leave** available is less than 15 months; and those where continuous leave is available for up to three years or more. The former include Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and the UK; the latter ‘long leave’ countries includes the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Russia, Slovakia and Spain. Sweden falls in between: paid leave is expressed in days (to emphasise that it can be taken very flexibly), roughly equivalent to 16 months if taken continuously, while each parent is also entitled to take unpaid leave until a child is 18 months, this is similar in Latvia. So, too, do Australia, Austria, Korea and Romania with leave lasting potentially until a child’s second birthday. Greece is also exceptional, with eight months 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 below).

Parental leave is a **family entitlement** in 10 countries, to be divided between parents as they choose (Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Slovakia); an **individual entitlement** in 19 countries (Australia, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom); a **mixed entitlement** (part family, part individual) in six countries (Iceland, Latvia, New Zealand, Norway, Romania and Sweden); while in Malta it is a family entitlement for workers in the public sector and an individual entitlement for private sector workers. In most cases, individual entitlements are non-transferable, so if not used by a parent, these are foregone (following the ‘use it or lose it’ principle); but in the case of Croatia, Czech Republic, New Zealand, Slovenia and Sweden, some amount of unused entitlements can be transferred to a partner. In this column

of the table, only entitlement to leave is taken into consideration, and not entitlement to any payments. For example, in Latvia, there is an independent entitlement to leave for both parents, but not to the accompanying payment, which is a family entitlement.

A majority of countries (29) provide some element of **payment**; only Greece, Ireland, Israel, Malta, Netherlands, Spain and the UK make no payment. Payment policy varies considerably and can include **a ceiling on benefit payments**.

Flexibility takes a number of forms, including:

1. 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);
2. the possibility of taking leave in one continuous block or several shorter blocks;
3. the option to take longer periods of leave with lower benefits or shorter periods with higher benefits;
4. the possibility to transfer leave entitlements to carers who are not parents.
5. the possibility to use all or part of leave when parents choose until their child reaches a certain age;
6. additional leave in the case of multiple births or, in a few cases, other circumstances;
7. the possibility for both parents to take all or some leave at the same time.

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 'fathers' quotas' need to be well paid if to be widely used. Another approach is to offer some form of bonus (e.g. additional leave) if both parents take some Parental leave. Ten countries offer such a bonus. For example, Sweden has a 'gender equality bonus' that provides an economic incentive for families to divide Parental leave more equally; Germany extends paid leave by two months if fathers take at least two months of leave; Japan has a rather similar system, in which an extra two months of leave may be taken if both parents use some of their leave entitlement; and Portugal offers a bonus to families where the father shares part of the Initial Parental leave, formerly Maternity leave (it is also unique in making it obligatory for fathers to take three weeks of leave). Other countries with incentives for fathers to take leave are Austria, Croatia, France, Italy, Korea, Norway and Romania.

Childcare leave can usually be taken immediately after Parental leave, creating a continuous longer period of leave, even if the conditions (such as benefit paid) may not be the same. It is, however, much less common than Parental leave, being available in ten countries (Belgium; Croatia; Finland; Greece; Hungary; Iceland, New Zealand; Norway, Poland and Portugal), plus in the public sector in Malta. 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 blurring the distinction with Parental leave). Childcare leave is captured in the table 'Total Statutory Leave'.

In addition to these countries, two other countries offer either a very limited period of leave for all families or an extended leave for certain types of family. Estonia offers two weeks of unpaid leave per year per parent until a child is 14 years; while in Hungary, parents with three or more children can take leave until their youngest child is eight years old, with a flat-rate benefit.

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 only one country, Belgium, with one year's full-time leave (or 24 months half-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 (care of a young child, providing palliative care, attending a training course).

Country	Summary of leave	Total amount of post-natal parental leave available to family <i>excluding</i> childcare leave (months)			Type of leave entitlement (leave only, not incl. payment)	Incentive for father to take	Flexibility
		Total	Paid	Well paid			
Australia ¹	●●	24.0	4.7	×	Individual; transferable	×	7b
Austria ²	●●●	▶▶24.0	(▶▶14.0 incl. 2 bonus to 35 incl. 7 bonus)	(▶▶14.0 incl. 2 bonus)	Family	Partnership bonus if parents share equally (60:40)	1; 2; 3; 5; 7b
Belgium	●● +	8.0	8.0	×	Individual; non-transferable	×	1; 2; 5; 6; 7a
Brazil	×						
Bulgaria	●●	12	12	×	Family	×	4
Canada ³	●●	8.1 to 14.5	8.0 to 14.0	×	Family	×	3; 7a
Québec	●●●	7.4	7.4	5.8*	Family	×	3; 5; 7a
China	×						
Croatia ⁴	●● +	8.0	8.0 to 16.0	×	Individual; partly	Additional 2	1; 2; 5; 6; 7a

¹ Australia: An individual can take a second 12 months of Parental leave subject to employer agreement, but the maximum period of leave is 24 months per family. The leave period of 12 months is an individual entitlement; but the payment is a family entitlement. Fathers entitled to additional two weeks flat-rate payment if they take leave.

² Austria: Since 2017, there is either the income-dependent parental benefit (80 per cent of earnings for 12 to 14 months) or a flexible payment scheme ('Childcare benefit account'), where parents can distribute an overall sum of about €15,449 (if both parents participate, the other parent has to take at least 20 per cent of the overall duration) or €12,366 (if only one parent participates) over a specific time span.

³ Canada: A supplement is payable to low-income families taking Parental leave, increasing payment to 80 per cent. There are significant regional variances in leave between jurisdictions. Since 2017, a longer-term (61 weeks), lower-benefit (33 per cent) Parental leave option is available.

⁴ Croatia: In the case of twins or other multiple births or for the third and every subsequent child, parents are entitled to leave until the child(ren) is 36 months old at 100 per cent of earnings; the ceiling for the period from 12 to 36 months is lower than for the first six months of Parental leave.

					transferable	months if both parents use	
Czech Republic ⁵	●●●	▶▶36.0	[6 to 48.0]	[24.0*]	Individual; transferable	✘	3; 7a
Denmark ⁶	●●●	11.1	7.4 to 14.7	7.4*	Individual; non-transferable	✘	1; 3; 5; 7a
Estonia	●●●	▶▶36.0	[▶▶36.0]	[14.5*]	Family	✘	2; 4
Finland ⁷	●●●+	6.1	6.1	6.1	Family	✘	1; 2; 6
France ⁸	●●	▶▶36.0	[▶▶36.0]	✘	Individual; non-transferable	Longer period of financial payments if both parents take some leave	1; 6; 7a
Germany	●●●	72	28 (inc.4 bonus)	14.0 (inc.2 bonus*) ⁹	Individual; non-transferable	Bonus leave if parents share	1; 2; 5; 7a
Greece ¹⁰							
Private sec	●+	8.0	✘	✘	Individual; non-transferable	✘	2; 5; 6
Public sec	●+	120 (5 years per parent)	✘	✘	Individual; non-transferable	✘	5
Hungary ¹¹	●●●+	▶▶36.0	▶▶36.0	24.0*	Family	✘	1, 4, 6

⁵ Czech Republic: Each parent can take leave until their child is 36 months but only one parent can receive Parental benefit, which is paid to all families whether or not leave is taken and until their child is 48 months. Benefit can be paid for the full period at a lower rate or for a shorter period at 70 per cent of earnings, though with a low ceiling.

⁶ Denmark: Parents can opt for shorter, higher paid Parental leave or longer, lower paid leave; each parent is entitled to 32-46 weeks of Parental leave, but the total period cannot exceed 32-46 weeks per family.

⁷ Finland: Paid at 70-75 per cent of earnings, but proportion is reduced beyond a specified level.

⁸ France: If one child in family, payment made until child is 12 months old, if *both* parents share leave period; if two or more children, payment made until youngest child is 36 months old, if both parents share leave period.

⁹ Germany: Earnings-related payment varies between 65 and 67 per cent.

¹⁰ Greece: In addition to Parental leave shown here, parents can consolidate right to work reduced hours into fully-paid full-time leave of three¾ months (private sector) or nine months (public sector); also three months of leave is paid in the public sector in the case of a third or higher order child.

¹¹ Hungary: Post-natal leave includes two types of Parental leave, one with a flat-rate payment (up to three years), the other with a higher earnings-related payment (up to two years, followed by flat-rate payment for third year). In families with three or more children, a parent can take low paid leave until the youngest

Iceland	●●●● +	9.0	9.0	9.0*	Family & individual; non-transferable	×	1; 2; 5; 6; 7a
Ireland	●	8.4	×	×	Individual; non-transferable	×	2; 5; 6, 7a
Israel	●	▶▶12.0	×	×	Individual; non-transferable	×	2
Italy	●●	11 (incl.1 bonus)	11 (incl.1 bonus)	×	Individual; non-transferable	Bonus leave if parents share	1; 2; 5; 6; 7a
Japan ¹²	●●●●	▶▶14 (incl. 2 bonus)	▶▶14 (incl. 2 bonus)	12.0*	Individual; non-transferable	Leave can be taken over a longer period if parents share	2 (fathers); 7a
Korea	●●	24.0	24.0*	6.0* (but see 'incentive for father to take')	Individual; non-transferable	3 months at 100% earnings if second parent takes leave	1; 2; 5; 7a
Latvia	●●	36.0	18.0 ¹³	×	Individual; non-transferable	×	3; 5; 7a
Lithuania ¹⁴	●●	▶▶36.0	▶▶24.0	▶▶12.0*	Family	×	4; 6
Luxembourg ¹⁵	●●●●	12.0	12.0	8.0	Individual; non-transferable	×	1; 3; 7a
Malta Private sec	●	8.0	×	×	Individual; non-transferable	×	2; 5

child is eight years; this is not included in 'length of post-natal leave' column. Parents can work after the child is six months of age and still receive benefit payments.

¹² Japan: A parent who is, or whose spouse is, already on leave can take Parental leave up to 18 months of age where (1) the child needs care for a period of two weeks or more due to injury, sickness, etc.; or (2) admission to a childcare centre has been requested but denied for the time being. A parent can take Parental leave up to 24 months of age if s/he meets the above condition at the time when the child turns 18 months of age. This extension of leave is a family entitlement, i.e. only one parent can take it, and paid at 50 per cent of earnings.

¹³ Latvia: Only one parent can receive payment. If a parent chooses to receive the benefit up to a child's first birthday, payment is at 60 per cent of salary. If a parent chooses to receive the benefit until the child is 18 months, they receive 43.75 per cent of salary for this period.

¹⁴ Lithuania: 12 months of leave at full earnings up to a ceiling; or 24 months at a lower earnings-related level (70 per cent for first year, 40 per cent for second year).

¹⁵ Luxembourg: Based on full-time employed parents taking option of full-time leave (there are other options available). Paid at a relatively generous flat rate (not as wage replacement).

Public sec	● +	12.0	×	×	Family	×	2; 5
Mexico	×						
Netherlands ¹⁶	●	12.0	×	×	Individual; non-transferable	×	(2); 5; 6; 7a
New Zealand ¹⁷	●●● +	4.2	4.2	4.2*	Family	×	4; 6
Norway	●●● +	13.0	13.0 ¹⁸	13.0*	Family & individual; non-transferable	'father's quota': 10 weeks, non-transferable	1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7b
Poland	●●● +	7.4	7.4	7.4 ¹⁹	Family	×	1; 2; 3; 4; 7a
Portugal ²⁰	●●● +	13.0	13.0	7.0	Family & individual; non-transferable	Bonus month; obligatory days	1; 3; 5; 7b
Romania	●●●	12.0 to 24.0	12.0 to 24.0	12.0 to 24.0 ²¹	Family & individual; non-transferable	1 month must be transferred to the other parent	5; 6; 7b.
Russian Fed.	●●	▶▶36.0	▶▶18.0*	×	Family	×	1; 3; 4; 6
Slovak Rep.	●●	▶▶36.0	[▶▶36.0]	×	Family	×	3; 6
Slovenia	●●●	8.6	8.6	8.6*	Individual; transferable	×	1; 2; 4; 5; 6; 7b.
South Africa ²²	×						
Spain ²³	●	▶▶36	×	×	Individual; non-	×	2; 6; 7a

¹⁶ Netherlands: parents are entitled to 26 times their weekly working hours; figure of 12 months based on both parents in a full-time job of 38 hours a week, which gives a leave period of 988 hours (=26 weeks or six months).

¹⁷ New Zealand: 22 weeks of paid leave in total are an individual entitlement for either parent, who may transfer all or part of the leave payment to their partner.

¹⁸ Norway: As of 1 January 2017, non-employed women receive a flat-rate payment of NOK61,120[€6,427] per child per month.

¹⁹ Poland: The level of payment during Parental leave can be 80 per cent or 60 per cent of earnings, depending on choices made by the mother during Maternity leave; if a mother opts for 100 per cent payment during Maternity leave, Parental leave payment is 60 per cent; but if she opts for 80 per cent payment during Maternity leave, then Parental leave payment is also 80 per cent. Access to Parental leave also depends on the full six months of Maternity leave being taken.

²⁰ Portugal: The leave in this table corresponds to what is referred to Initial, Father's only, and Additional Parental leave in the country note.

²¹ Romania: Parents (usually mothers) can choose either a period of 12 up to 24 months of Parental leave (assuming no penalty month and thus that the other parent takes at least one month of leave in the first 12 months), both paid at 85 per cent of earnings; for a child with a disability this extends to 36 months. Both mothers and fathers can benefit from a labour market insertion incentive, which aims to reduce leave length.

²² The South African Parliament passed a bill in 2017 for the introduction of at least 10 days of Parental leave for employees who are also parents, and for at least ten consecutive weeks of Parental leave for an employee who is a commissioning parent in a surrogate motherhood agreement.

					transferable		
Sweden ²⁴	●●●	▶▶18	15.9	12.9*	Family & individual; partly transferable		1; 2; 3; 5; 6; 7b
Switzerland	×						
U. Kingdom ²⁵	● ²⁶	4.2	×	×	Individual; non-transferable	×	5; 6; 7a
USA ²⁷	●	2.8	×	×	Individual; non-transferable	×	4; 7a
Uruguay	×						

Key:

Summary of leave: ×: no statutory entitlement; +: period of additional ‘childcare’ or other leave available after end of Parental leave; this leave is not included in subsequent columns but is included in later table on ‘total statutory leave’; ●: statutory entitlement but unpaid; ●●: statutory entitlement, some period paid, but either at a flat rate or (if income-related) at less than 66 per cent of earnings for all or most of period; ●●●: statutory entitlement, paid for all or most of period at 66 per cent of earnings or more, the latter being an indicator used by the European Commission in monitoring member states’ progress in meeting Employment Guidelines (European Commission (2010) *Indicators for monitoring the Employment Guidelines including indicators for additional employment analysis, 2010 compendium*, Table 18.M3. Available at:

<http://www.nbbmuseum.be/doc/seminar2010/fr/bibliographie/risque/compendiumjul2010.pdf>

²³ Spain: Each parent is entitled to take leave until a child’s third birthday.

²⁴ Sweden: Paid Parental leave is for 480 days, the denomination in days intended to indicate and encourage flexible use (e.g. a parent can take five paid days of leave for every one calendar week). In addition, each parent is entitled to take unpaid leave until a child is 18 months. In December 2017 a major commission on Parental leave published proposals for changes in Parental leave legislation – please see country note for details.

²⁵ United Kingdom: This does not include the recently introduced ‘Shared Parental leave’, which is actually a form of transferable Maternity leave, whereby the mother can transfer most of her Maternity leave to a partner, if she so chooses. Only actual Parental leave is included, i.e. leave that is an individual and non-transferable right for each parent.

²⁶ United Kingdom: Leave entitlement is 18 weeks per parent, but only four weeks of leave can be taken per year, i.e. to take the full 18 weeks means taking four weeks leave per year for three years. The newly introduced ‘Shared parental Leave’ is not included here as it is actually Maternity leave that the mother can choose to transfer to the father; it is included as such in the comparative table on Maternity leave.

²⁷ USA: There is no separate Parental leave, but parents may take up to 12 weeks unpaid leave for childbirth or for the care of a child up to 12 months as part of the federal Family and Medical Leave Act; employers with less than 50 employees are exempt. Five states and Puerto Rico provide some benefit payments to parents missing work at around the time of childbirth.

Total amount of post-natal parental leave available to family: leave may be awarded as *either* (i) a period of time (e.g. 12 months) *or* (ii) until a child reaches a certain age (e.g. until a child's third birthday). In the 'total amount' column, ► indicates (ii), e.g. in Austria leave is until a child reaches 24 months; in these cases, where the entitlement is 'individual', then each parent may take leave until the child reaches this age. Where there is no ► indicated, then leave is (i) and the total amount of leave available to both parents is given. Paid: payment may be flat rate and/or earnings-related. The generosity of flat rate payments relative to individual earnings varies across and sometimes within countries. See country notes for more detailed information. Well paid: earnings-related payment at 66 per cent of earnings or above. ✕: not paid or not well paid. ✱: ceiling on earnings-related payment. Square brackets – [] indicates all parents with a young child get a payment whether on leave or not. Type of leave: there are two dimensions here. First, leave can be a 'family' or an 'individual' entitlement; and an 'individual' entitlement can be non-transferable (i.e. if the individual does not use her/his entitlement, it is lost) or 'transferable' (i.e. the individual can transfer part or all of his or her entitlement to someone else, usually the other parent). Incentive for father to take: 'Father's quota' indicates a basic individual entitlement that only fathers can use (i.e. non-transferable) and which is 'well paid' (see above for definition). 'Bonus months' indicates a period of paid leave additional to the basic paid entitlement, and which becomes available if the basic paid leave is shared by both parents (i.e. if each parent takes at least some of the basic paid leave); ✕: no incentive. Flexibility: 1 – leave can be taken full time or part time (i.e. option to work part-time or other reduced hours); 2 – leave can be taken in one block of time or several blocks; 3 – leave can be taken for a shorter period with a higher benefit paid or for a longer period with a lower benefit; 4 – leave can be transferred to a non-parent; 5 – all or part of leave can be taken at any time until a child reaches a certain age; 6 – other, including additional leave in case of multiple births or serious illness/disability; 7a – both parents can take all leave at the same time; 7b – both parents can take some leave at same time. Brackets indicate option requires employer agreement. Bracketed numbers indicate an option that can be taken with the employer's agreement.