



Bipartisan Policy Center

# Paid Family Leave Across OECD Countries

The U.S. is one of eight countries in the world and the only OECD<sup>1</sup> country without a national paid parental leave policy; the U.S. is also one of the few high-income countries without a national family caregiver or medical leave policy.<sup>2</sup> This factsheet provides a brief overview of OECD parental leave and family caregiver policies.

## PAID PARENTAL LEAVE

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Three types of parental leave benefits are generally available in OECD countries: maternity, paternity, and parental leave.

### Maternity Leave:

Provides paid, job-protected leave to working mothers before and after child-birth and, in some countries, after adoption. Currently, **33 out of 36 OECD countries offer paid maternity leave for an average of 16 weeks with a wage replacement rate of 55–100 percent** (Figure 1). Seventeen countries

offer mothers full compensation, while Japan and Canada provide the least generous wage replacement rates (67 and 55 percent, respectively—although low-income families in Canada can qualify for a maximum replacement rate of 80 percent).

### Paternal Leave:

Provides paid, job-protected leave to working fathers during or shortly after the birth of a child. Currently, **26 out of 36 OECD countries offer paid paternity leave for an average of 2 weeks with a wage replacement rate of 70–100 percent** (Figure 1). Because paternity leave tends to be much shorter than other types of leave, it is often well paid. Twelve OECD countries offer full compensation, while Czech Republic and Finland offer the least compensation (70 percent). In terms of length of the leave, Iceland offers the most generous paternity leave: 12 weeks, Finland offers 9 weeks of paid paternity leave, compared to 1 week in the Czech Republic.<sup>3</sup> In Belgium, same-sex partners have access to paternity leave benefits.<sup>4</sup>

### Parental Leave:

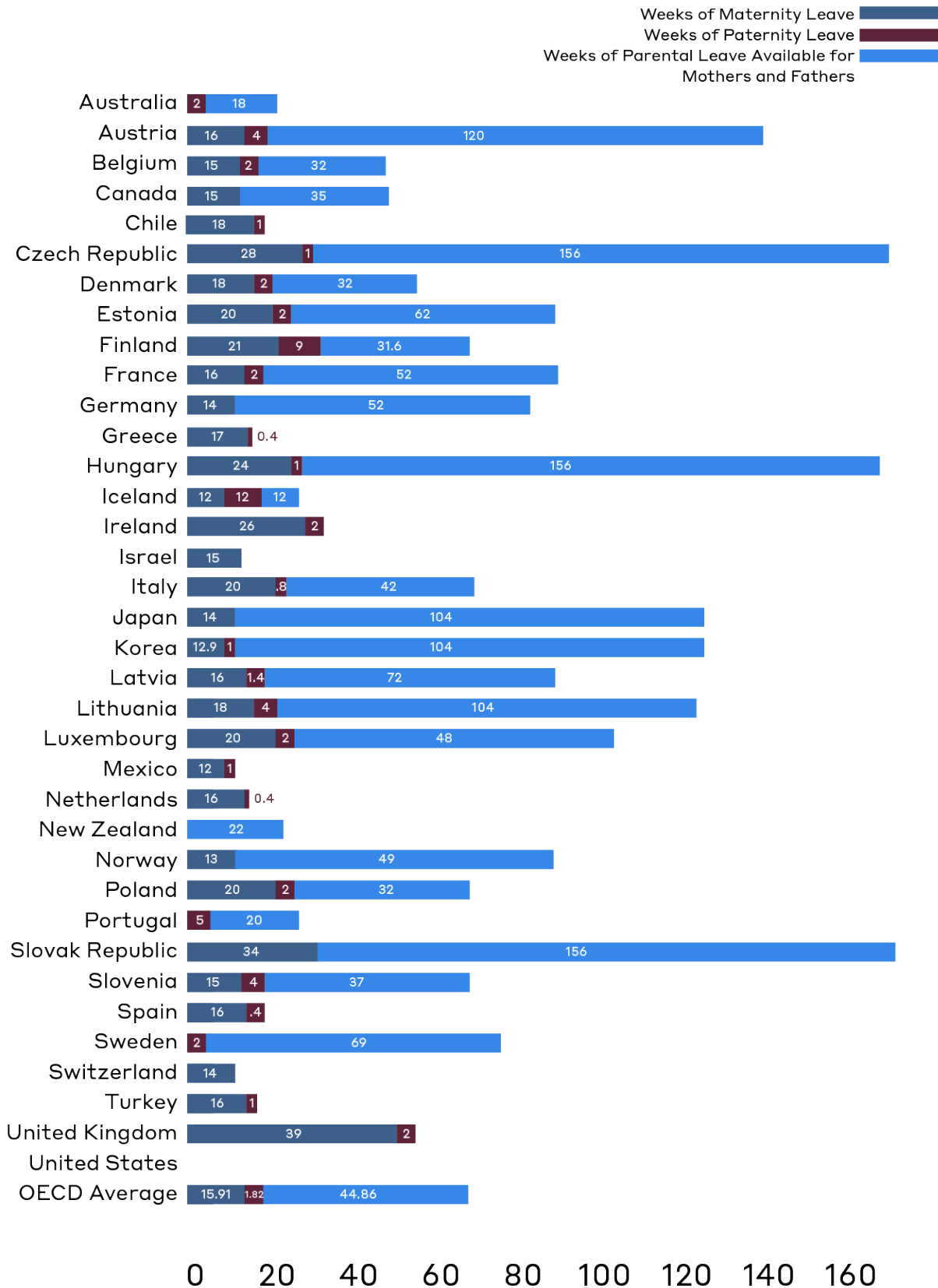
Provides paid, job-protected leave to working mothers and fathers around the time of childbirth and in some countries after adoption. Currently, **24 out of 36 OECD countries offer paid parental leave for an average of 45 weeks with a wage replacement rate of 55–100 percent** (Figure 1).

In countries where maternity and paternity leave is also available, parental leave is supplementary and follows maternity and paternity leave periods. In a few countries, parental leave may be taken until the child is eight years old.

While paid parental leave is generally a shared benefit, countries often reserve specific periods for the use of mothers and fathers only. Sweden, for example, offers a total of 480 days of paid parental leave. Each parent gets a 90-day “mommy” and “daddy” quota paid at 78 percent of earnings. After that, parents have 255 days paid at 78 percent of earnings to share as they choose, followed by another 45 days paid at a flat rate.

In Japan, fathers have access to one of the most generous amounts of leave (52 weeks), but only 6 percent of eligible men working for private companies took parental leave in 2018, compared with more than 82 percent of mothers.<sup>5</sup> As a result, Japan and a growing number of OECD countries are offering shared “bonus” paid weeks if both parents take leave in an effort to normalize the idea of fathers taking parental leave, diminish potential employer discrimination, boost family bonding, and increase gender equity at home and in the workplace.<sup>6,7</sup>

# Figure 1. Paid Parental Leave Policies in OECD Countries



Note: Canada's parental leave policies exclude the province of Quebec, which provides benefits through the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan.<sup>8</sup> In Luxembourg and Norway, depending on the selected payment level, each parent can take 4–20 months of parental leave. The demonstrated number of weeks available for Norway and Luxembourg represents available leave at 100 percent of earnings.

## FAMILY CAREGIVING LEAVE:

In addition to parental leave, most OECD countries provide employees with paid, job-protected leave to care for a child at home or for an ill family member.

### Child caregiving leave:

Provides paid, job-protected leave that allows at least one parent to provide short-term care to a sick child or care to an infant at home (often referred to as home care leave). Currently, **30 out of 36 OECD countries offer paid child caregiving leave benefits for children under 12 years of age with varying amounts of pay and leave periods** (Table 1).<sup>9</sup> Greece, Israel, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland, and Spain provide child caregiving benefits until the child turns 18 years of age.

### Family Caregiving Leave:

Provides paid, job-protected leave to provide care for a family member with a short-term, non-serious illness, or longer-term serious and/or terminal illness. Currently, **19 out 36 OECD countries offer paid family caregiving leave benefits with varying amounts of pay and leave periods**. In Austria for example, workers can take a week of leave per year to care for a sick family member, while in other countries—e.g., Estonia, Spain, and Sweden—leave can be taken “per episode” throughout the course of a lifetime.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 2. Paid Family Caregiving Leave Policies in OECD Countries**

Country	Child Caregiving	Family Caregiving
Australia	10 working days a year per worker to care for a family member	
Austria	2 weeks a year per worker to care for a sick child under 12	1 week a year per worker to care for a family member needing care
Belgium	52 weeks per worker’s lifetime to care for a child under 8	52 weeks per worker’s lifetime to care for a severely ill family member and 2 months to provide palliative care

Chile	Working mothers have 10 days a year to care for a child between 1-18 years of age with a serious illness (i.e. cancer, organ transplant, or terminal disease)	10 days a year per worker to care for a disabled person for whom they are responsible
Czech Republic	Unlimited 9 days increments per worker to care for an ill child under 10	0
Denmark	1 day per worker per episode to care for a sick child	0
Estonia	14 calendar days per worker per episode to care for a sick child under 12	7 calendar days per worker per episode to care for an adult family member
Finland	Parents can take child caregiving leave from the end of parental leave until the child's third birthday; worker also has 4 days per episode to care for a child under 10.	0
France	44 weeks per worker per episode to care for a child with a serious illness or disability under the age of 20	3 weeks per worker to care for a family member with a terminal illness
Germany	10 days a year per child (max of 25 days per parent) to care for a child under 12	10 days over the lifetime of the family member in need of care to care for a family member with an unexpected illness
Greece	Parents can take 15 weeks of child caregiving; 10 days a year to care for a seriously ill child under 18 years of age	0
Hungary	Parents may take child caregiving leave. Length of leave depends on the age of the child: under one year, unlimited; 12-35 months, up to 84 days per child a year; 36-71 months, 42 days; six to 12 years, 14 days.	0
Iceland	0	0
Ireland	3 days a year per worker to care for a sick dependent	
Israel	Parents may use up to 8 days a year of their sick leave to care for a sick child under 16	6 days a year per worker to care for a parent over 65

Italy	2 years per worker over the course of their lifetime to care for a seriously ill family member	
Japan	93 days per subject family member and can only be taken 2 weeks at a time	
Korea	0	0
Latvia	14 days per worker per sickness episode to care for a child 14 or younger, and 21 days if child has been admitted to hospital	0
Lithuania	0	0
Luxembourg	12 days per worker to care for a sick child under 4; 18 days for a child 4-13; 5 days for a child 13-18 and is in the hospital; for exceptional circumstances such as a disabled or terminally ill child (e.g. cancer) 52 weeks in a reference period of 104 weeks are available	0
Mexico	0	0
Netherlands	Up to a maximum of two times a year the number of working hours per week to care for a sick child living at home, a sick partner or parent, other household members, family members, or friends.	
New Zealand	5 days of sick leave can be taken a year per worker to care for a sick partner, dependent, or spouse.	
Norway	10 working days a year per parent to care for a sick child under 12	0
Poland	144 weeks can be taken by parents as childcare leave up until the child turns 18	14 days a year per worker to care for a sick family member
Portugal	30 days a year per family can be taken to care for a sick child under the age of 12, with no age limit in the case of a child who is chronically ill or disabled; an additional 15 days a year per worker can be taken to care for a sick child above the age of 12	0
Slovak Republic	10 days a year per worker to care for a family member	
Slovenia	15 working days per worker per episode to care for a sick child up to 7 years of age	7 working days per worker per episode to care for a sick family member

Spain	Parents have an undetermined time to care for a seriously ill child under 18	2 days per worker per episode to care for a seriously ill child or family member
Sweden	120 days a year per child to care for a child under 12	100 days per worker per episode to care for a seriously ill family member or other close relatives
Switzerland	3 days per worker per episode to care for a sick child	0
Turkey	0	0
United Kingdom	0	0
United States	0	0

### Funding:

Most OECD countries pay for parental leave programs using social insurance funds that are supported by employer, worker, and government contributions. Poland is the only country that relies solely on worker contributions, including contributions from self-employed workers.<sup>11</sup> Sweden relies on equal contributions from employers and self-employed workers only. No OECD country finances benefits solely through employer contributions. Some countries fund parental leave through general taxes or health insurance.

Child and family caregiving leave, if not included in a social insurance fund, is generally paid through public, long-term care insurance.<sup>12</sup>

### Small Business Exemptions:

Most OECD countries do not exempt small businesses. However, several countries do attempt to address the disparate impact on small, medium, and large businesses. For example, Japan and Korea allow businesses with fewer than five employees to opt out of insurance plans for parental leave benefits.<sup>13</sup> The UK allows small business owners to claim back 103 percent of payments, compared to only 92 percent for medium and large employers.<sup>14</sup> In France, companies that develop family-friendly initiatives for their workers can qualify for a “family tax credit.”<sup>15</sup>



# Endnotes

- 1 The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has 36 member countries, including most of the world's more developed economies.
- 2 World Policy Analysis Center. "Is Paid Leave Available to Mothers and Fathers of Infants," 2019. Available at: <https://www.worldpolicycenter.org/policies/is-paid-leave-available-to-mothers-and-fathers-of-infants/is-paid-leave-available-for-both-parents-of-infants>.
- 3 International Network on Leave Policies and Research. "Iceland," 2018. Available at: [https://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/k\\_leavenetwork/country\\_notes/2018/FINAL.Iceland2018.pdf](https://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/user_upload/k_leavenetwork/country_notes/2018/FINAL.Iceland2018.pdf).
- 4 International Network on Leave Policies and Research. "Belgium," 2018. Available at: [https://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/k\\_leavenetwork/country\\_notes/2018/FINAL.Belgium2018.pdf](https://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/user_upload/k_leavenetwork/country_notes/2018/FINAL.Belgium2018.pdf).
- 5 Motoko Rich, "A Japanese Politician Is Taking Paternity Leave. It's a Big Deal." The New York Times, January 15, 2020. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/15/world/asia/japan-koizumi-paternity-leave.html>.
- 6 Parental Leave: Where are the Fathers?" March 2016. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/policy-briefs/parental-leave-where-are-the-fathers.pdf>.
- 7 International Network on Leave Policies and Research. "Japan," 2018. Available at: [https://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/k\\_leavenetwork/country\\_notes/2018/FINAL.Japan2018.pdf](https://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/user_upload/k_leavenetwork/country_notes/2018/FINAL.Japan2018.pdf).
- 8 Government of Canada. "Employment Insurance Maternity and Parental Benefits, 2018." Available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/ei/ei-list/reports/maternity-parental.html>.
- 9 OECD. "Additional Leave Entitlements for Working Parents," 2016. Available at: [https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF2\\_3\\_Additional\\_leave\\_entitlements\\_of\\_working\\_parents.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF2_3_Additional_leave_entitlements_of_working_parents.pdf).
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 International Network on Leave Policies and Research. "Poland," 2018. Available at: [https://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/k\\_leavenetwork/country\\_notes/2018/FINAL.Poland2018.pdf](https://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/user_upload/k_leavenetwork/country_notes/2018/FINAL.Poland2018.pdf).
- 12 International Network on Leave Policies and Research. "Germany," 2018. Available at: [https://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/k\\_leavenetwork/country\\_notes/2018/FINAL.Germany2018.pdf](https://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/user_upload/k_leavenetwork/country_notes/2018/FINAL.Germany2018.pdf).
- 13 World Policy Analysis Center. "Paid Parental Leave: A Detailed Look at Approaches Across OECD Countries," 2018. Available at: [https://www.worldpolicycenter.org/sites/default/files/WORLD%20Report%20-%20Parental%20Leave%20OECD%20Country%20Approaches\\_0.pdf](https://www.worldpolicycenter.org/sites/default/files/WORLD%20Report%20-%20Parental%20Leave%20OECD%20Country%20Approaches_0.pdf).
- 14 International Network on Leave Policies and Research. "United Kingdom," 2018. Available at: [https://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/k\\_leavenetwork/country\\_notes/2018/FINAL.UK2018.pdf](https://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/user_upload/k_leavenetwork/country_notes/2018/FINAL.UK2018.pdf).
- 15 International Network on Leave Policies and Research. "France," 2018. Available at: [https://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/k\\_leavenetwork/country\\_notes/2018/FINAL.France2018.pdf](https://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/user_upload/k_leavenetwork/country_notes/2018/FINAL.France2018.pdf).

