

Trends between 1994 and 2013 in the duration of maternity leave

The following section describes trends in the duration of maternity leave over the past 20 years at the global and regional levels. These comparisons will be based on the subset of 139 countries for which information is available in 1994 and 2013.⁴

There has been a gradual global shift towards maternity leave periods that meet or exceed the ILO standard of 14 weeks. Between 1994 and 2013, 35 of the countries studied increased the duration of maternity leave and more than half now provide at least 14 weeks. More importantly, as figure 2.2 shows, the proportion of countries providing less than 12 weeks of leave has decreased from 19 to 12 per cent during the period from 1994 to 2013. Indeed, more countries are now providing longer leave periods, as the percentage of countries providing between 14 and 17 weeks of leave has increased from 29 to 37 per cent, and the proportion providing at least 18 weeks of leave has increased from 9 to 14 per cent.

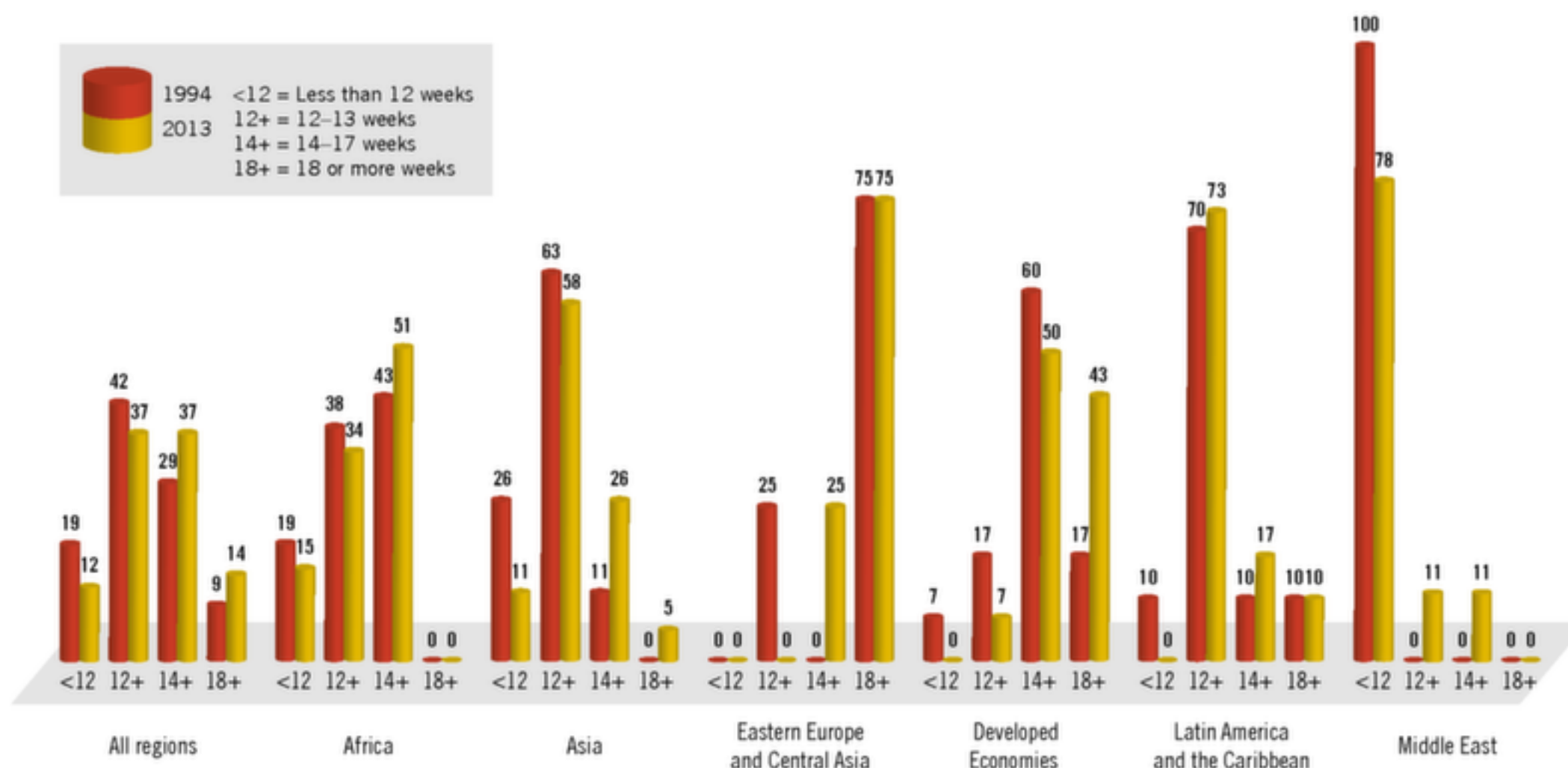
In most African countries the duration of maternity leave in 2013 was the same as in 1994. However, seven countries have increased the duration of maternity leave: Egypt increased leave from 50 to 90 days; Kenya increased leave from two to three months;

Libya increased leave from seven to 14 weeks in 2010; Morocco increased leave from 12 to 14 weeks; South Africa from 12 weeks to four months; Uganda increased leave from eight weeks to 60 working days (ten weeks); and Zimbabwe from 90 to 98 days. The percentage of countries in this region providing 14 to 17 weeks of leave has increased from 43 to 51 per cent.⁵

In Asia, the period of leave increased in six countries out of the 19 where information was available in both reference years. It increased from 12 weeks to 16 weeks in Bangladesh and from 101 days to 120 days in Mongolia. Leave also increased in China (from 13 to 14 weeks in 2012), the Republic of Korea (from 60 to 90 days), Singapore (from eight to 16 weeks) and Viet Nam, where a new law took effect in early 2013 extending leave from 17 to 26 weeks. The percentage of countries providing less than 12 weeks' leave decreased from 26 to 11 per cent, while the percentage of countries providing at least 14 to 17 weeks increased from 11 to 26 per cent.⁶

The length of leave remained constant in most of the Latin American and Caribbean countries analysed. The number of countries providing at least 14 weeks of leave increased from six to eight between 1994 and 2013, after Belize and Colombia (in 2011) increased leave entitlements from 12 to 14 weeks. The Bahamas

Figure 2.2 Statutory duration of maternity leave, by region, 1994 and 2013 (139 countries) (%)



Source: *Conditions of work digest: Maternity and work* (Geneva, ILO, 1994); ILO Working Conditions Laws Database – Maternity Protection. Available at: <http://www.ilo.org/travdatabase> [25 Mar. 2014].