

Paternity, parental and adoption leave

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KEY MESSAGES

- Access to family leave for the care of newborn and young children is important for a worker's ability to reconcile work and family life.
- Fathers' leave, take-up of family responsibilities and early interaction with their children are directly related to successful child development.
- Recognition of men's right to parenthood, as well as their responsibility to share unpaid care and household work, will help to break down traditional social attitudes, resulting in greater equality for both men and women at work and at home.
- In 1994, statutory paternity leave provisions existed in 40 of the 141 countries for which data were available at the ILO. By 2013, legislation on paternity leave was provided in 79 countries of the total (167).
- Paternity leave is paid in 71 countries, although employer liability is the prevalent source of funding. As with maternity leave, risk pooling through social insurance or public funds can help to mitigate potential discrimination against or disadvantages to men with family responsibilities at work and can boost fathers' leave take-up rates.
- Since partner presence and support have an important influence on a mother's decision to breast-feed, parental leave, which is available to fathers, can have significant benefits for maternal and child health.
- Although few countries currently provide the type of parental leave that meets the EU Directive, which requires four months of leave to be allocated to fathers, countries are moving towards more gender-inclusive policies of paid entitlement.
- Some positive changes in leave policies occurred despite the economic crisis, including in middle-income countries, although a number of Developed Economies that were hardest hit by the economic crisis cut some of their supports to families or postponed announced reforms as part of austerity measures.

In addition to maternity leave, access to other kinds of family leave for the care of newborn and young children is important for a worker's ability to reconcile work and family life. Such leave provisions include paternity leave, parental leave and adoption leave. Paternity leave is usually a short period of leave to care for the child and the mother around the time of childbirth. Parental leave tends to be a longer period of leave to care for the child beyond maternity or paternity leave and is

typically available to one or both of the parents, with some countries now making available non-transferable portions of parental leave to each parent. Adoption leave provides time for parents to care for their adopted children. Each type of leave will be discussed separately in this section. Information on these issues comes from the ILO Working Conditions Laws Database – Maternity Protection and additional sources (see Appendix IV for a table of indicators by country).