

it is generally women who take parental leave after maternity leave.²¹ In general, there are very limited data on the take-up of leave and comparisons between countries are not possible (see INLPR, 2013 for more on the challenges of cross-national, or even within-country cross-group comparisons of existing data). Studies of higher income countries have shown that fathers with higher incomes, full-time work, higher levels of education and other indicators of socio-economic advantage were more likely to take parental leave than their less advantaged national counterparts (Huerta et al., 2013; O'Brien, 2009).

When parental leave is unpaid, take-up is low among both women and men – for example, in Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom, where, in 2005, only 11 per cent of mothers had taken parental leave, two-thirds of which took less than one week (INLPR, 2012). When schemes do not compensate for the loss of income while on leave, it is difficult for lower paid workers to participate. High take-up rates are strongly related to the level of compensation for loss of earnings while on leave and availability of job protection (Grimshaw and Rubery, forthcoming). The experience in the Netherlands underscores the importance of compensation for encouraging use of parental leave: take-up rates of parental leave were much higher in the public and health-care sectors, where parental leave is paid at 75 per cent of previous earnings and available to almost 80 per cent of employees compared to only 25 per cent of private sector workers (den Dulk, 2013).²²

When parental leave is a shared entitlement, fathers' take-up is also low; fewer than 3 per cent of fathers take leave in Austria, Finland or Poland (INLPR, 2012, p. 41). Efforts to increase men's take-up of parental leave through non-transferable allocations of leave have shown some success. In Norway, for example, since July 2013, 14 of the 49 weeks of fully paid parental leave are reserved for the father. If he does not take these weeks, cash benefits are not payable for this period. Of fathers eligible for the non-transferable parental leave allocation (60 to 65 per cent of fathers), 75 to 90 per cent take some leave. However, take-up of parental leave is highly gendered, with fathers taking considerably less time than mothers, at just 9.3 per cent of all parental leave days taken (Ellingsæter, 2009). In Sweden, where fathers enjoy longer individual entitlements to parental leave and around 90 per cent take some leave, fathers

take 20.5 per cent of all leave days and, in Iceland, which divides parental leave into three months for mothers (maternity leave), three months for fathers (paternity leave) and three shared months of parental leave, fathers take 32.7 per cent of leave days (Broomhill and Sharp, 2012; Ellingsæter, 2009). The shifts in fathers' participation rates with these policy reforms can be seen over time in Iceland, where the number of leave days taken by fathers doubled between 2001 and 2008 when father-only leave was extended. In Norway, the proportion of fathers taking parental leave went from 4 to 89 per cent, after fathers' quotas were introduced; in Germany, where just 3.3 per cent of fathers took leave in 2006 before the 2007 leave reforms dedicated two months of leave to fathers, to 25.7 per cent by 2010 (although fathers seldom take more than the two months: INLPR, 2012). In Portugal, where a proportion of paternity leave was made compulsory in 2004, take-up by fathers increased from 11 per cent in 2000 to 45 per cent in 2008. After reforms, in 2009, made ten out of 20 days compulsory for fathers, take-up increased to 68 per cent for the compulsory days and 57 per cent of non-compulsory days by 2011 (INLPR, 2012).

Flexible leave arrangements and other innovative policies

Parental leave systems sometimes make it possible for parents to choose how and when to take the leave. In some countries, the parental leave should be taken as a continuous period directly after maternity or paternity leave; in others, it can be split over the period when the child is young. This permits the parents to choose to take parental leave as it suits them. Research shows that men and women tend to take their leaves differently: women as continuous leave, even when flexible leave is available, while men more often take it flexibly and in shorter chunks (Hegewisch and Gornick, 2011). Therefore, availability of flexible arrangements for parental leave uptake can act as an incentive for men's participation. In Malta, for example, an eligible employee is entitled to an unpaid leave of up to three months to care for a child until the child reaches 8 years of age. The leave may be shared by both parents in periods of one month each on a full-time or part-time basis, piecemeal or in the form of a time credit system as agreed between the employer and the employee. In Latvia,