

Paid leave for fathers globally

What's available where, and how many take it?

For a summary of how the UK's statutory paternity offer compares to other developed countries, see our [Paid leave for fathers global table](#) – which shows the equivalent number of weeks of 100% paid leave earmarked for fathers, in 43 countries.

Countries' paid paternity offers differ in various ways, but they break down into two distinct types of leave:

Paid paternity leave

Most OECD member countries provide statutory rights to *paid paternity leave* directly around childbirth. The average length of leave is 2.3 weeks.

At the top end of the scale, Spain offers fathers up to 16 weeks of paid paternity leave, with full income replacement for the average earner.

Across OECD countries that base payments on gross earnings, fathers are on average entitled to 1.4 full-rate equivalent weeks. Four OECD countries don't provide more than a week of paid birth leave to fathers, and nine offer no paid paternity leave at all¹.

The UK offers two weeks' (ten working days) paternity leave to eligible fathers, paid at a low statutory rate – this equates to 0.4 full-rate equivalent weeks (see the [Paid leave for fathers global table](#)).

Official data on men's take-up of paternity leave is patchy, but in the 18 OECD countries with available data, an average of 57 men per 100 live births took leave. In seven countries, take-up was greater than 70 men per 100 live births².

Among the top ten countries for paternity leave take-up, eight also feature in the top 20 of the international league table for the overall amount of paid leave earmarked for fathers³.

In the UK, HMRC data suggests a take-up rate for paternity leave of 32 men per 100 live births: just over half the OECD average.

¹ Fluchtmann, J. (2023). Supporting equal parenting: paid parental leave in *Joining Forces for Gender Equality What is Holding us Back?* OECD. Available [online](#)

² [OECD Family Database, p3](#)

³ Luxembourg, Netherlands, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden, Spain, Latvia, Lithuania

Paid parental leave

In addition to paid leave entitlements for fathers and mothers directly around childbirth, many countries also grant parents *paid parental leave* and/or home-care leave, enabling parents to take longer periods of paid employment-protected leave to care for their children during their first years of life.

The average entitlement to paid parental leave and/or home-care leave in the OECD is about 39 weeks, while 11 countries – including the UK⁴ - don't provide for parental leave/home-care leave at all.

Paid parental leave is usually a family-based entitlement, meaning that at any given time, only one parent is entitled to income support.

Estonia and Slovenia fully replace the previous gross income of average earners on the parental leave portion. In Belgium and France, parents receive a flat rate payment that's less than a quarter of previous income for average earners. Untargeted entitlements like this tend to discourage take-up of paid parental leave by fathers, who typically earn higher wages⁵.

Paid parental leave take-up rates are generally much lower for fathers than for mothers, but in some countries the disparity is quite small: for example in Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Portugal and Sweden around 45% of recipients of publicly administered parental leave benefits are men.

To encourage increased parental leave take-up by men, some countries (especially in Scandinavia) use reserved non-transferable periods of parental leave for exclusive use by mothers and/or fathers on a "use it or lose it" basis⁶. Other countries, such as Austria, Canada and Germany, have introduced "bonus" weeks, which offer additional weeks of paid leave if both parents use a certain portion of the family entitlement.

⁴ The UK is an outlier here, because it provides a very long maternity leave (52 weeks, including 39 paid weeks) for mothers only, and no specified parental leave. The so-called 'shared parental leave' is in fact transferable maternity leave

⁵ In the UK, for example, fathers contribute 50% + of the income in two-thirds of families where both parents work

⁶ For example Sweden offers 90 days' parental leave for each parent, plus 300 days that can be taken by either, and has more men taking leave per 100 live births than any other country: [OECD Family Database, p5](#)