



Sustainability@Leave

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Parenting Leave Policies in France and Inequalities





Parenting Leaves in France: Types of Leave and Design Elements



Parenting Leave Policy in France & the Complexity of Eligibility Criteria

- **Maternity Leave:** 16 weeks: 6 weeks before the birth and 10 weeks after the birth. Payment: 100% of earnings, up to an upper limit of €4,005 per month (2026).
- **Paternity Leave:** 4 weeks, and '3 extra working days of 'birth leave'. Payment as for Maternity leave.
- **Parental Leave:** Until the child reaches 3 years. A childrearing benefit is paid to all parents, dependent on whether the recipient works and, if so, for how long. In 2025, the basic benefit is €460 per month if not working; €298 per month if working less than half of full-time hours; and €172 per month if working 50 to 80 per cent of full-time hours.



Parental Leave Policy in France: Recent Changes

- An amendment to the Labour Code, in force since June 2025, allows parents to earn extra money while maintaining their work ties. It also introduces a guarantee of return to the original job at the same workplace for employees who return from Parental leave before the child reaches the age of two years.





Inequality-Reducing and Inequality-Generating Elements of Parental Leave Design in France



Who is eligible, who not?

- Parents not eligible: Those who did not work enough before the birth.
- Eligibility for the child allowance is less restrictive as the number of children increases.
For example, with one child, parents must have completed eight quarters of pension contributions over the two years preceding the birth; with two children, over the past four years; and with three or more children, over the past five years.
- As a result of these restrictions, many parents are unable to take up a parental leave: especially those with precarious and unstable jobs (immigrants, low-qualified parents...), and those who are working illegally.



What do we know about take-up rates?

- Reliable data
- It is, however, difficult to assess
 - 1) the extent of windfall (free-riding) effects and
 - 2) the actual amount of time fathers devote to their child during parental leave

Parenting Leave Policy in France and Gender Equality

- A persistent asymmetry in the rate of take-up of the PL scheme
- Large gender gap, 97% of the beneficiaries are women and 7 out of 10 fathers who receive the related allowance work part-time.
- This PL theme contributes to perpetuating gender inequalities in the labour market.

Other

- **Maternity Leave:** In the public sector, the leave is fully paid (no upper limit). In the private sector, some employers (particularly larger companies) pay in full, others do not. A big divide between mothers working in the public sector and those working in small and medium-sized companies.
- **Parental leave:** As a result of the low level of the benefit, mothers in well-paid jobs are often reluctant to take leave
- **Parents who are more likely to take up this right:**
 - Mothers who have a stable job with an open-ended contract
 - Mothers working in the public sector or large companies





Final Discussion



Parenting Leave Policies in France and Inequalities

- Research gap /data gap:
 - Attitudes and practices of employers, windfall effects, role of the supply of subsidized childcare arrangements (availability and quality of care) in the decision-making process regarding the PL scheme (to waive or not the right to claim).
- Current problems /possible solutions:
 - Low take up rate and gender gap
 - A solution? A significant increase in the amount of the benefit but budgetary constraints limit room for manoeuvre

