



Sustainability@Leave

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Parenting Leave Policies and Social Inequalities





Aims of Parenting Leave Policies and Types of Leave



Aims of Parenting Leave Policies

Parenting leave policies have served as key instruments to

- protect the health of pregnant and birth-giving parents
- enable parents to care for their child at home during the early stages of life
- protect the health of babies
- support child development
- support development of family relationships
- promote gender equality in the labour market and in unpaid care responsibilities
- support work-family reconciliation
- enhance both child and parental well-being.

Maternity leave

Legally protected period of absence from paid employment granted to birth-giving parents before and after childbirth to

- recover from childbirth
- protect the health of the mother and newborn child
- support early mother-child bonding
- ensure job security.

Paternity leave

Legally protected period of absence from paid employment granted to fathers following the birth or adoption of a child to

- support the birth-giving parent during recovery
- encourage shared childcare responsibility between parents
- support early father-child bonding.

Parental leave

Legally protected period of (longer) absence from paid employment granted to parents after birth or adoption of a child to support

- parent-child relationship
- work-family reconciliation
- shared childcare responsibility between parents.



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



Parenting Leave Policy Elements

- Eligibility (e.g. minimum period of employment / residence)
- Duration (number of days/weeks/months)
- Compensation (paid/unpaid; income-related/flat-rate; ceiling)
- Quotas (transferable/non-transferable)
- Flexibility (part-time; splitting into segments)

Cross-country perspective on inequalities

National systems differ significantly in the design of leave scheme and accessibility of childcare infrastructures, reflecting e.g.

- variations in welfare regimes
- labour market structures
- cultural gender norms
- levels of state investment in care services.

Eligibility: parental leave

	Who is eligible?	Employment criteria
Finland	All parents	none
Germany	employees, self-employed	employed at date of birth
UK	employees	26 weeks with the employer
France	employees, self-employed	1 year with the employer
Poland	employees, self-employed	employment contract valid during leave

Duration and compensation: paternity leave

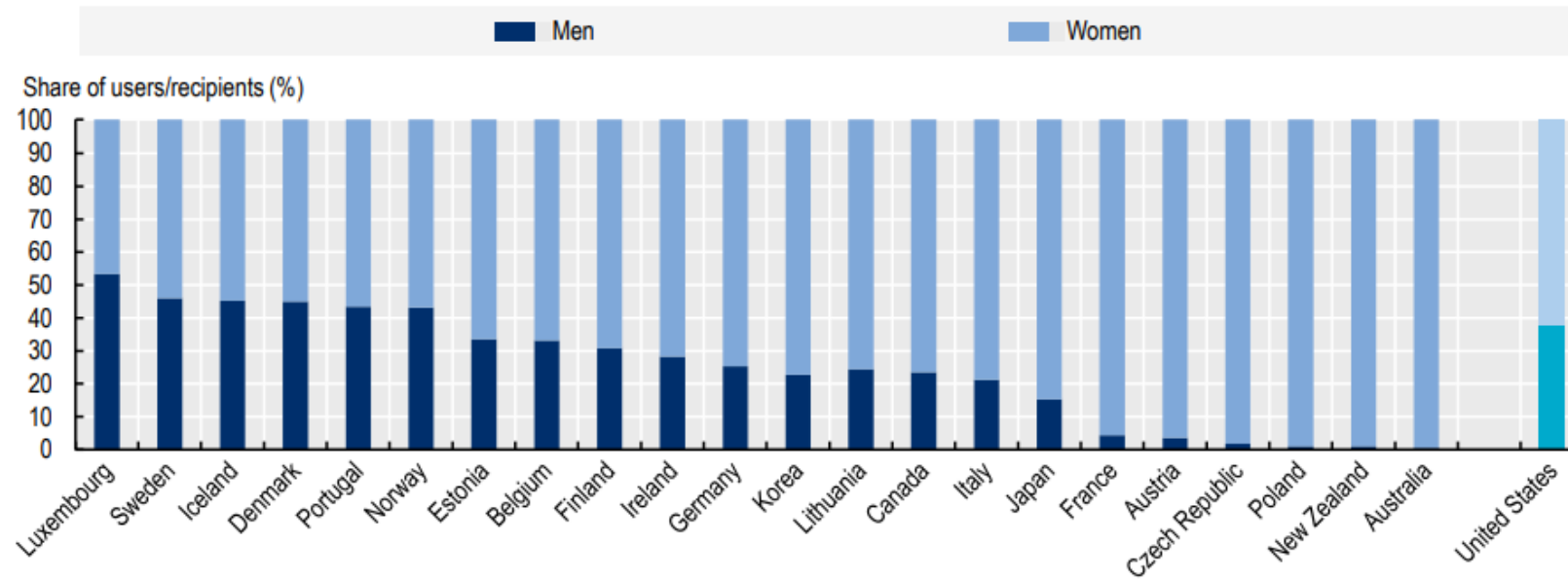
	Length	Benefit	Note
Finland	0	Income-related 75 %, no ceiling	6 months' quota of parental leave, 3 weeks simultaneously with the mother
Germany	0	Income-related 65 %, max €1800/month	2 months' quota of parental leave, 1 month simultaneously with the mother
UK	2 weeks	Flat-rate €216/week or 90 % of income if lower	
France	4 weeks	Income-related 100 %, max €3864/month	One week mandatory after birth
Poland	2 weeks	100 % of average 3 months' pay, no ceiling	



Social Inequalities and Parenting Leave Policies

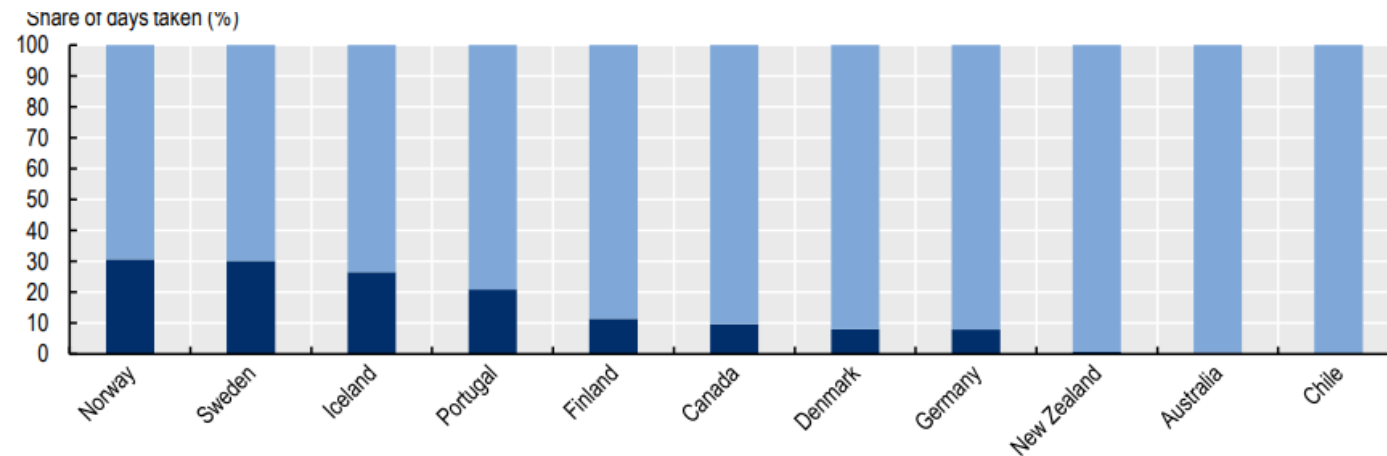


Gender (in)equality: How to measure take-up of leave?



Recipients of leave benefits irrespective of length of leave taken

Gender division of leave benefit days taken



(OECD database)



Intersectional inequalities

- While **gender** inequality has been the central focus of much research on parenting leave, other dimensions of inequality such as **socioeconomic status** also play a decisive role in shaping leave uptake.
- Existing research has primarily focused on **employed** parents, leaving notable gaps concerning the self-employed, students, migrants, and unemployed parents (Dobrotić & Blum, 2020).
- Moreover, persistent differences remain in how diverse **family structures** (e.g. lone-parent, adoptive, or same-sex families) are recognised and supported in leave-policy design (Picken & Janta, 2019; Jou et al., 2020; Nygård & Duvander, 2021).





Knowledge Gaps and Recommendations for Future Research



Parenting Leave Policies and Inequalities: Knowledge Gaps

- intersections of several dimensions of inequalities in leave possibilities, leave use and consequences of leave uptake;
- perspectives of marginalized groups such as migrant workers and refugees, LGBTQ+ parents;
- family negotiations, power relations and leave practices;
- managerial and HR attitudes and practices related to parenting leave in work organisations; role of trade unions;
- impact of parenting leave systems on overall individual and family wellbeing as well as specific wellbeing components (e.g., job satisfaction, life satisfaction, relationship quality, and mental health);
- effects of parenting leave on child well-being visible in the short, medium and long term.