



**Sustainability@Leave**

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# Parenting Leave Policies in the Netherlands and Inequalities





## Parenting Leaves in the Netherlands: Types of Leave and Design Elements



# Parenting Leave Policy in the Netherlands

- Work and Care Act (*Wet Arbeid en Zorg*)
  - Maternity Leave (*zwangerschaps- en bevallingsverlof*)
  - Paternity Leave (*geboorteverlof*)
  - Parental Leave (*ouderschapsverlof*)
  - Other leave forms: Adoption leave (also for fostering); short and long-term care leave



# Maternity Leave (zwangerschaps- en bevallingsverlof)

- 16 weeks, with some flexibility in take up
  - 4-6 weeks prior to birth and at least 6 weeks after birth
- 100% paid (up to 100 per cent of the ‘daily maximum wage’; €290.67 in 2025); paid through Employee Insurance Agency.
- All female employees are eligible; self-employed women as well (at least 1,225 hours worked; paid 100% of minimum wage)

# Paternity Leave (*geboorteverlof*)

- 6 weeks
  - 1<sup>st</sup> week within the first four weeks after birth; remaining 5 weeks within six months after birth
- 1 week paid at 100% (no limit); 5 weeks paid at 70 per cent of the 'daily maximum wage'.
- All *employees* who are the partner or who acknowledge the child are eligible (including same-sex parents if the child is legally recognized as their); self-employed parents are *not* eligible



# Parental Leave (*ouderschapsverlof*)

- 26 weeks (26\*weekly work hours), very flexible in take up
  - Can be used until a child's 8<sup>th</sup> birthday
- 9 weeks paid (also up to 70 per cent of the 'daily maximum wage') and paid through Employee Insurance Agency
- All *employees* are eligible (including same-sex parents, those on temporary contracts); self-employed parents are not eligible



# Parenting Leave Policy in the Netherlands: recent changes

- Increased flexibility through the Modernisation of Arrangements for Leave and Working Time (2016; *Wet modernisering regelingen voor verlof en arbeidstijden*)
- Legislation to ensure transposition of EU Work-Life Balance Directive:
  - Payment of paternity leave for fathers and partners (*Geboorteverlof; Aanvullend geboorteverlof*)
  - Payment of individual, non-transferrable parental leave (9 weeks)



# What do we know about take-up rates?

- 2023: 96.7% mothers with child < 1 year; 5.5% supplemental leave for the birth of multiple children
- 2023: 89 % of eligible fathers took birth leave directly after birth; 89% took at least some leave immediately following birth. The percentage of fathers taking the full six weeks of leave is growing. 53% of fathers took all 6 weeks of leave; 14% took 5 weeks
- Data on (paid) parental leave up-take limited; evaluation to follow in 2026; between 27% (fathers) and 32% (mothers) in 2023





# Inequality-Reducing and Inequality-Generating Elements of Parental Leave Design in the Netherlands



## In relation to eligibility:

- Maternity leave: work qualification for self-employed women
- Parental and paternity leave: excludes self-employed; multi-parent families not recognized (can exclude some same-sex parents)

# Parenting Leave Policy in the Netherlands and Gender Equality

- Leave policies partially aimed at improving gender equality, but:
  - Financial disincentives for fathers/partners
  - Further work-care context → barriers to gender equality
    - Expensive childcare
    - Relatively short leave periods
    - Together → attractiveness of part-time work (supported by part-time leave uptake)



## Final Discussion



# Parenting Leave Policies in the Netherlands and Inequalities

- A dynamic policy field → effects of recent changes unknown
- Research gap /data gap → short- and long-term changes in uptake paternity/parental leave; reliable and detailed uptake data
- Current problems /possible solutions → Inaccessible for low-income fathers/families; higher payment targeting certain groups? Implementation difficulties?





Thanks for listening!

