



Sustainability@Leave

CA21150

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Parenting Leave Policies in Ireland and Inequalities





Parenting Leaves in Ireland: Types of Leave and Design Elements

Irish departmental campaign 2016



Parenting Leave Policy in Ireland

- **Maternity Leave (1981)**
 - Maternity Benefit
 - 26 weeks paid leave from work
 - Paid at flat rate (€299 weekly), ~35% average wage (2015)
- **Paternity Leave (2016)**
 - 2 weeks, paid at maternity flat rate.
 - Within 26 weeks of child's life
- **Parental Leave (unpaid), since 1998**
 - 26 weeks
 - At least 6 consecutive weeks or shorter if employer supports it
 - Up to child's 12 years of age
- **Parents' Leave and Benefit (since 2019)**
 - 9 weeks, paid at maternity flat rate.
 - For each parent, individual and non-transferable



Parenting Leave Policy in Ireland: recent changes

- **Maternity Leave:** extended to councilors (2022) and parliamentarians (2024), ministers are not eligible
- **Parental Leave:**
 - Flexibility to take as one week
 - Extended from 18 to 26 weeks (2019)
 - Child's age limit increased from 8 to 12 years (2019)
- **Paternity Leave:** first introduced 2016
- **Parent's Leave and Benefit**
 - Extension from 2 to 9 weeks (2019-2024)
 - Child's age limit from 12 (2019) to 24 months (2021)





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



Who is eligible, who not?

- Unpaid leave: Every employee is eligible 3 months after employment
- Paid leave: 12 months of social insurance contributions
- Self-employed, same-sex parents, migrants/refugees are eligible if work conditions are met
- Unemployed / inactive are not eligible
- State officials like parliamentarians, councilors, ministers are not eligible to paternity/parental leave

Who gets paid and how much?

- The flat rate benefit is insufficient for wage replacement (~35% in 2015), but occupational top-ups are available
- Public sector: full wage replacement for maternity/paternity leave
- private sector: top-ups are available in some companies: 52% paternity, 19% parental
- Self-employed: rely on statutory benefit only



Table 4.3 Replacement rates

Replacement Rate Band	Fathers – Paternity Benefit only %	Mothers – Maternity Benefit only %	Mothers – Maternity Benefit + top-up %
<30%	50	51	4
30-50%	33	23	9
50-70%	10	11	14
70-90%	3	5	17
90%+	4	10	56
Total	100	100	100
Average %	36	44	90

Keane, C., Alamir, A., McGinnity, F., O'Shea, R., & Russell, H. (2025). *Child Related Leave: Usage and Implications for Gender Equality*. ESRI and Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.26504/jr12>

What do we know about take-up rates?

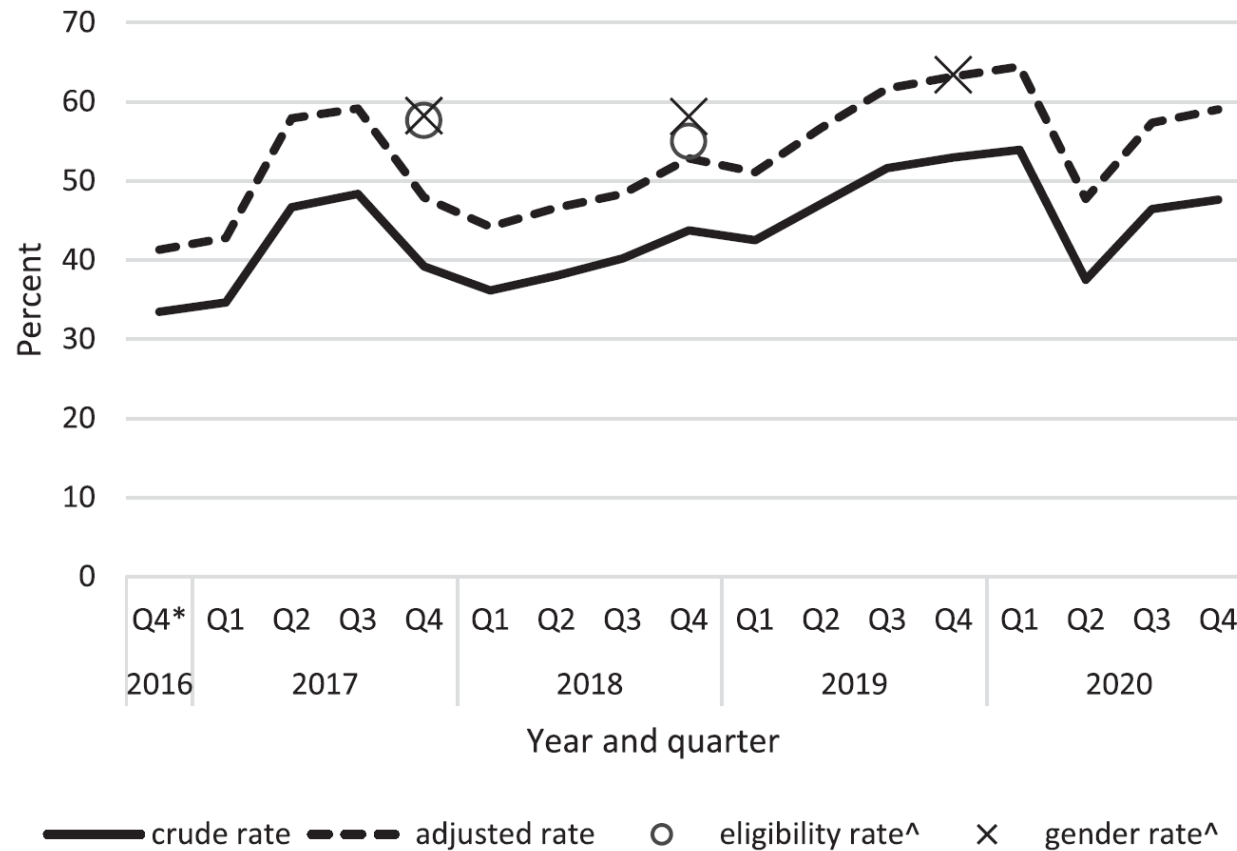


Figure 1. Paternity Benefit take-up rates by quarter.

- Paternity take-up stabilised around 50% of eligible population since 2020

Köppe, S. (2023). Ireland's Paternity Leave: Sluggish Benefit Take-up and Occupational Inequalities. *Journal of Family Studies*, 29(6), 2524–2539. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2023.2179527>



What do we know about take-up rates?

Table 4.1 Take-up rate estimates 2019-2022

Benefit	Take-up Rate % 2019	Take-up Rate % 2020	Take-up Rate % 2021
Paternity Benefit	53	53	53
Parent's Benefit (Father)	n/a ^u	26	26
Parent's Benefit (Mother)	n/a ^u	64	69

Keane, C., Alamir, A., McGinnity, F., O'Shea, R., & Russell, H. (2025). *Child Related Leave: Usage and Implications for Gender Equality*. ESRI and Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.26504/jr12>



Parental leave - effects vary by policy & SES group (Zumbyte/Szelewa, under review)

Take up rates

Maternity leave: 90%

Paternity leave: 50%

- Depends on sector/ pay (employer top-ups):
 - In finance and insurance - 70%
 - In agriculture or construction - 30–40%

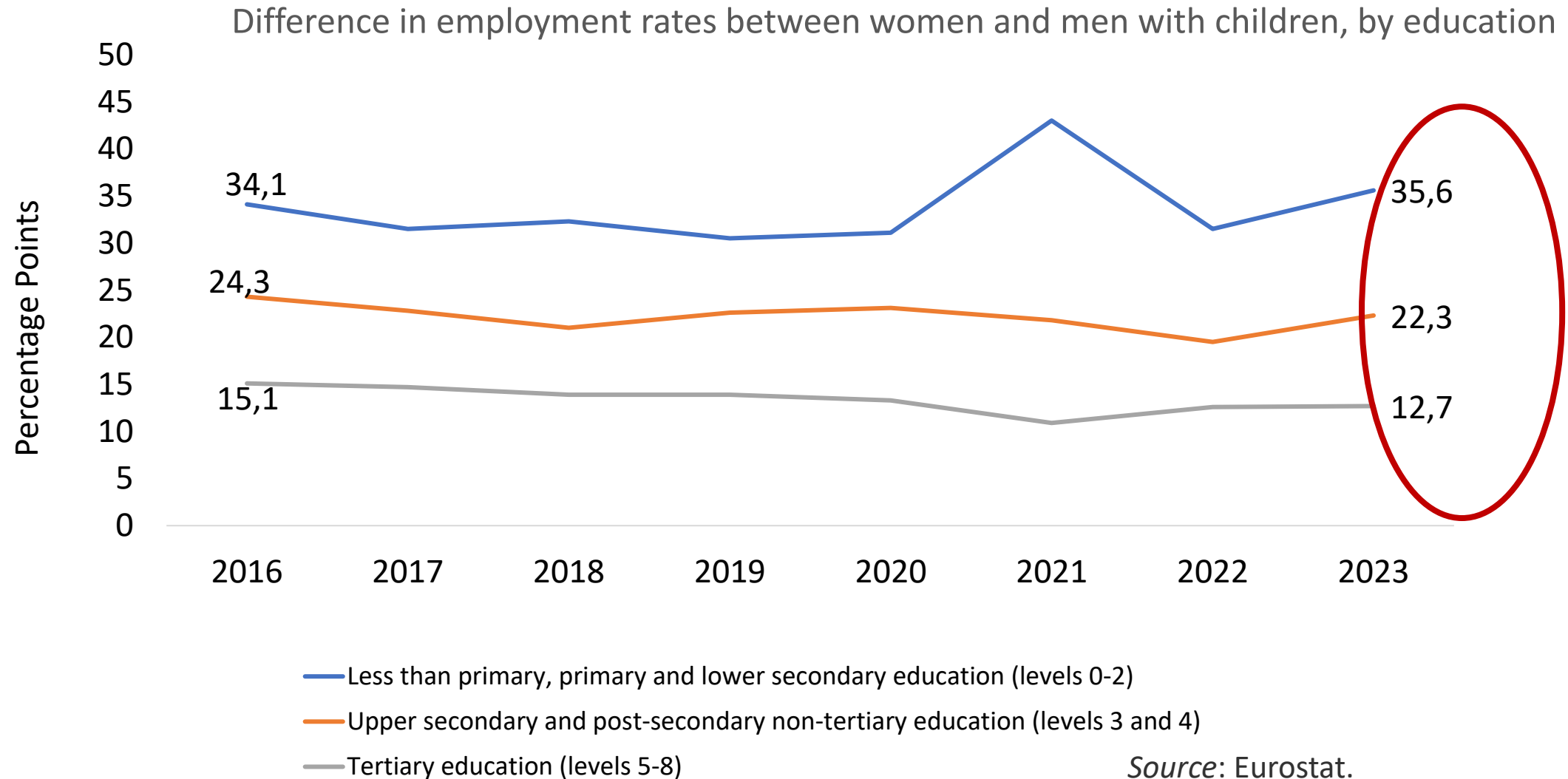
*Inequalities in access to paternity leave:
stratified gender equality*

Paid parent's leave:

- Mothers: 69%
- **Fathers: 26%**
 - Take-up declines with income (from regression results; opposite to paternity leave)

*The effects are reverse for parent's
leave use (so far!) – also due to low
level of top-ups*

Gender gap in employment expanded for the lowest educated





Thank you!

