

PF2.2: Use of childbirth-related leave by mothers and fathers

Definitions and methodology

This indicator presents information on parent's use of childbirth-related leave through four main measures:

- *The proportion (%) of employed mothers with a child under age 1 on maternity or parental leave, by the number of dependent children in the household.* Data concern mothers on statutory maternity or parental leave and/or contractual employer-provided leave (see PF2.1). Mothers who do not remain attached to their job while on leave or who have ceased to receive parental leave payments are not counted as “on leave”, but rather are categorised as “inactive”.
- *Recipients/users of publicly-administered paternity leave benefits or publicly-administered paid paternity leave per 100 live births,* that is, the number of fathers or other partners using publicly-administered paternity leave or claiming publicly-administered paternity leave benefits in a given year per 100 live births in the same year.
- *Recipients/users of publicly-administered parental leave benefits or publicly-administered paid parental leave per 100 live birth, by gender,* that is, the number of men and women using publicly-administered parental leave or claiming publicly-administered parental leave benefits in a given year per 100 live births in the same year.
- *Gender distribution of recipients/users of publicly-administered parental leave benefits or publicly-administered paid parental leave,* that is, the male and female share of those using publicly-administered parental leave or claiming publicly-administered parental leave benefits in a given year.

The first measure is based on data from the European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS), which contains information on parents on leave and can be used to estimate, for a given year, the proportion of parents absent from work due to maternity or parental leave. This not a measure of *take-up* as such; it captures only the proportion of parents *actively using* leave at a given point in time, which itself is influenced by international differences in the duration and coverage of leave entitlements as well as the length of leave actually taken by parents. For this reason the data from the EU-LFS are not well suited to capturing the use of leave by fathers – who, in many cases, use only a relatively short amount of leave, if they do so at all (Moss, 2015) – so data are presented for mothers only.

The remaining measures are based on administrative data, that is, national administrative records on the numbers of individuals using paid leave or claiming paid leave benefits. These records are generally available only where there is some publicly-administered paid leave scheme, so information is not available for countries without statutory paid leave or in countries with statutory schemes that are processed directly by the employer (e.g. paternity leave in Korea, maternity and paternity leave in the United Kingdom). Moreover, these data generally do not cover individuals using employer-provided schemes, so are likely to underestimate take-up even in countries with statutory schemes. Nonetheless, where available, these records can provide insight into how many men and women are making use of statutory leave schemes.

Other relevant indicators: Key characteristics of parental leave systems (PF2.1); Additional leave entitlements of working parents (PF2.3); and, Family-friendly workplace practices (LMF2.4).
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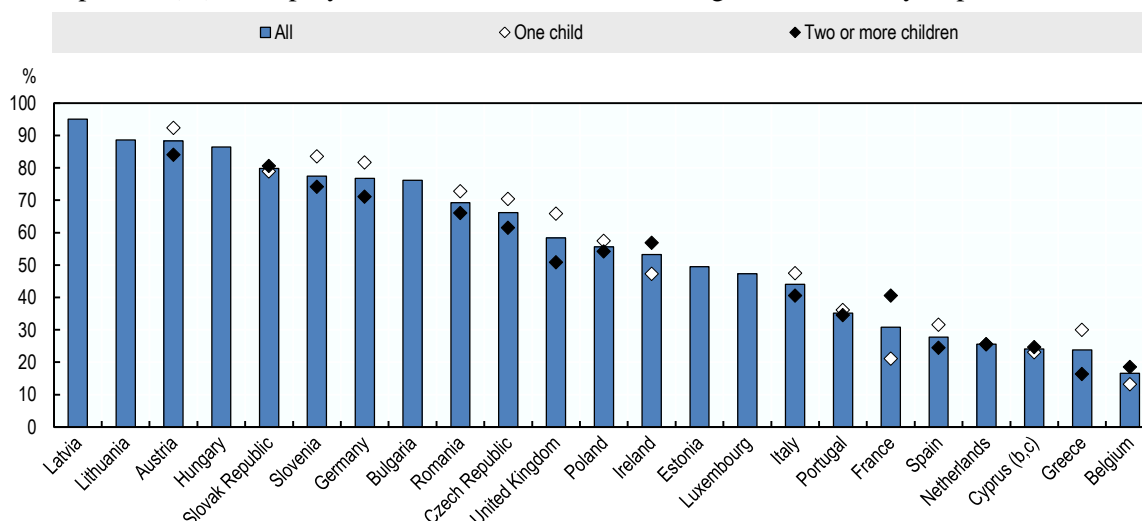
Administrative data generally come in the form of the *number* of users of the given publicly-administered leave or the *number* of recipients of publicly-administered benefits attached to a given leave, so need to be standardised before they can be compared across countries. Because information on eligible populations is not available, measures are presented here either as the number of leave users/recipients per 100 live births in the given year or, for parental leave only, through the gender distribution of leave users/recipients.

Key findings

Data from the EU-LFS indicate that the proportion of **employed mothers on maternity or parental leave** varies considerably across OECD countries (Chart PF2.2.A). In five countries (Austria, Germany, Hungary, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia) more than three-quarters of all employed mothers with at least one child under age 1 are on leave, with the rate in Hungary as high as 86% and Austria 88%. In the Netherlands and Greece, by contrast, this is only around 25%. In Belgium, only 17% of employed mothers with at least one child under age 1 are on leave.

In most OECD countries, employed mothers of children under age 1 are slightly more likely to be on leave when the child is the only child in the household than when there are two or more children in the household i.e., in most cases at least, they are more likely to be on leave when the child is the mother's first child (Chart PF2.2.A). This is particularly the case in Germany – where the proportion of employed mothers with a child under age 1 on leave is 10 percentage points higher for employed mothers with only one child in the household than for employed mothers with two or more children in the household – and in the United Kingdom, where the gap in the use of leave is 15 percentage points. The main exceptions are Ireland and especially France. In the latter, employed mothers with two or more children in the household are around twice as likely to be on leave as employed mothers with only one child in the household. This is likely related to the fact that the length of paid leave available to mothers varies and increases with the number of children (see *OECD Family Database* indicator PF2.1, Table PF2.1.C and Table PF2.1.F for more detail).

Chart PF2.2.A. Use of leave by employed mothers, 2013^a
 Proportion (%) of employed mothers with a child under age 1 on maternity or parental leave



a) Data for Bulgaria are for 2012

b) Footnote by Turkey: The information in this document with reference to « Cyprus » relates to the southern part of the Island. There is no single authority representing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot people on the Island. Turkey recognizes the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of United Nations, Turkey shall preserve its position concerning the "Cyprus issue";

c) Footnote by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Commission: The Republic of Cyprus is recognized by all members of the

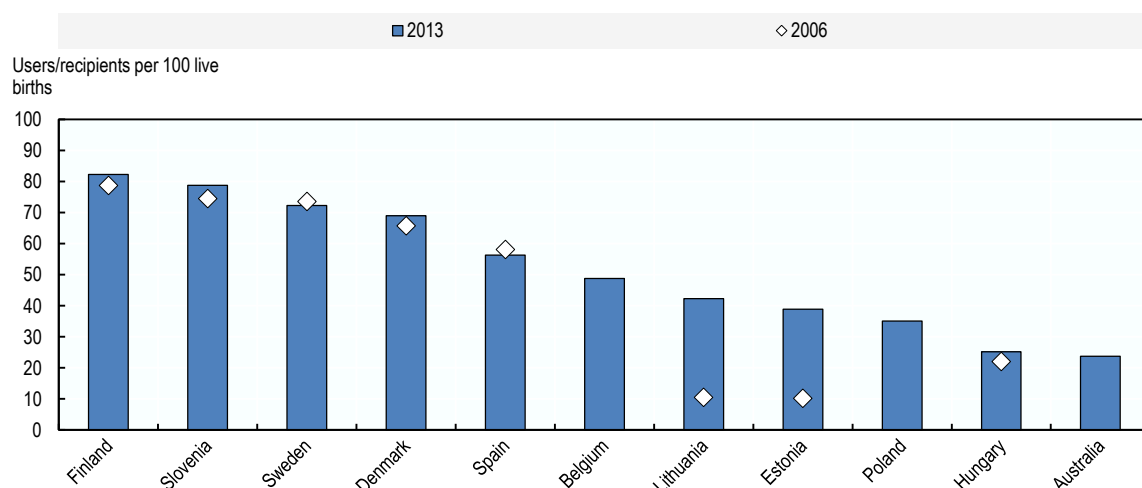
United Nations with the exception of Turkey. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

Sources: [For all countries, EU-LFS](#)

Administrative data suggest that the use of **statutory paternity leave** is generally quite high across countries (Chart PF2.2.B). In a majority of those OECD countries for which data are available, paid paternity leave recipient rates are above 50 per 100 live births—in other words, there are more than 50 individuals claiming publicly-administered paternity benefits or using publicly-administered paternity leave for every 100 children born. In Slovenia and Sweden this rises to above 70 recipients per 100 live births, while in Finland the rate is a little over 82 per 100 live births. Given that a number of new fathers will not be eligible for statutory paid paternity leave – and that in some countries (e.g. Australia) fathers may also be using employer-provided leave rather than low-paid statutory leave – these rates reflect reasonably widespread take-up of statutory paternity leave across most countries.

Chart PF2.2.B. Users of paid paternity leave

Recipients/users of publicly-administered paternity leave benefits or publicly-administered paid paternity leave^a per 100 live births, 2006^b and 2013^c.



a) Data refer to recipients/users of publicly-administered paternity leave benefits or paid paternity leave only, and do not include individuals using only employer-provided paternity leave or unpaid leave. Data for Australia, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Poland, Spain, Sweden and Lithuania refer to the number receiving paternity benefits or equivalent. For Australia, data refer to the number of fathers and other partners who received the full two weeks of 'Dad and Partner Pay'. For Finland, data refer to the number receiving the portion of the paternity allowance that is available while the mother is on maternity or parental leave, only. For Sweden, data refer to the number using the 10-day 'temporary parental benefit in connection with the birth of a child or adoption', only. For Belgium, Estonia, and Slovenia, data refer to the number using paid paternity leave or equivalent. For Slovenia, data refer to the number using the initial 15 day paid paternity leave only.

b) For Spain, 2008

c) Data for Australia refer to 2013-14, for Belgium to 2008, and for Poland to 2014

Source: OECD calculations based on information from national ministries and statistical offices; Moss, P. (2015) International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2015. Available at: http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/

Paid parental leave recipient rates vary more, and differ considerably between men and women (Chart PF2.2.C, panel A). Female parental leave recipient rates are generally fairly high. In most countries with available data female recipient rates are around or above 100 per 100 live births, and only four countries (Canada, Italy, Luxembourg and Korea) have a rate below 50 per 100 live births. In some countries the female recipient rate well exceeds 100 per 100 live births. In Estonia and the Czech Republic, for example, there are more than 200 women claiming publicly-administered parental benefits or using publicly-administered parental leave for every 100 children born. In Sweden the rate is as high as 366 recipients per 100 live births. These exceptionally high rates reflect both high take-up and the ability of parents to take leave over several years and/or in multiple blocks¹.

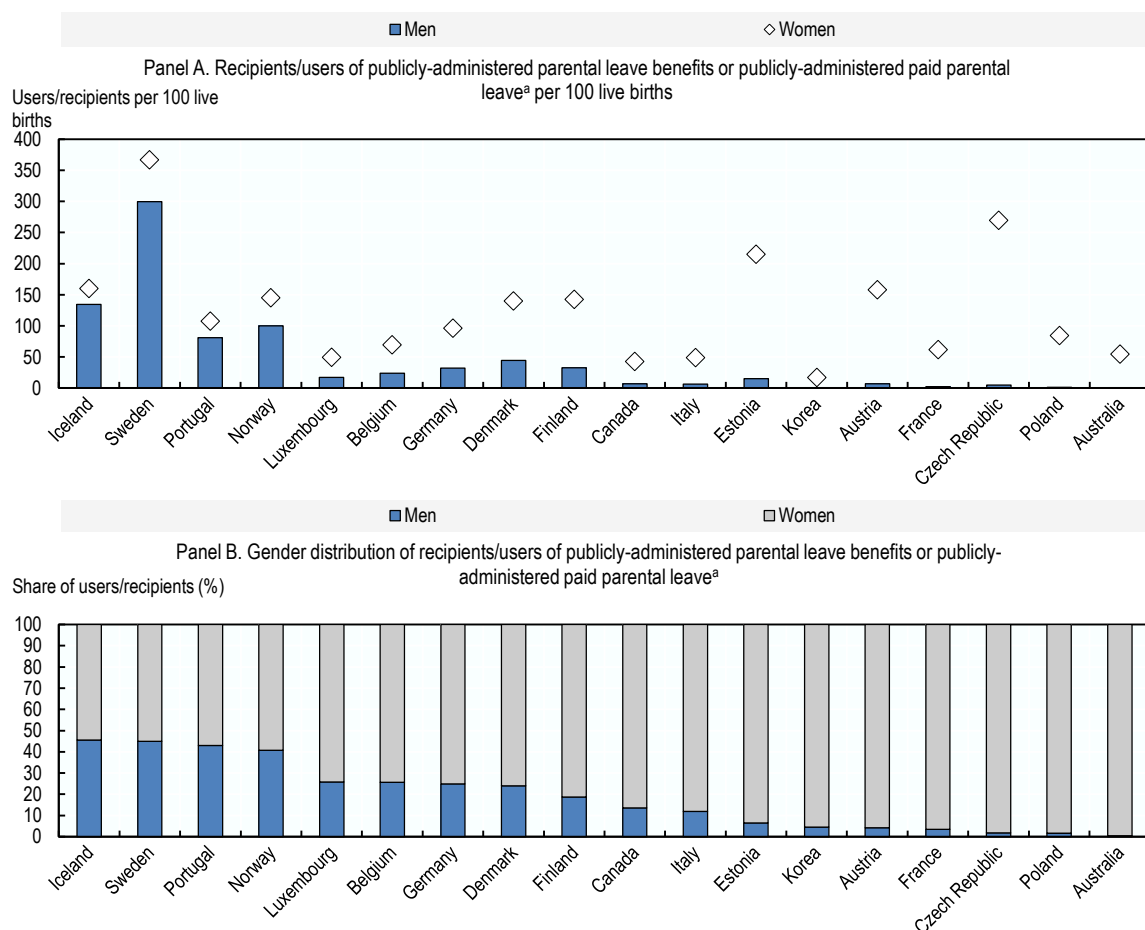
Paid parental leave recipient rates are generally much lower for men (Chart PF2.2.C, panel A). In some of the Nordic countries male recipient rates continue to exceed 100 - in Sweden, for example, there are just under 300 male recipients of publicly-administered parental leave benefits for every 100 children born. But in most OECD countries fewer than 50 men claim publicly-administered parental leave benefits or use publicly-administered parental leave per 100 live births. In eight OECD countries (Australia, Austria, Canada, the Czech Republic, France, Italy, Korea, and Poland) the rate is below 10 per 100 live births.

And regardless of *how many* men take leave, they are always less likely to take **paid parental leave** than women (Chart PF2.2.C, panel B). In some countries the disparity is only small - in Portugal, for instance, around 43% of those claiming publicly-administered parental leave benefits are men, while in both Iceland and Sweden this is 45%. In most other countries, however, men make up only around one in five of those parents using paid publicly-administered parental leave. In Australia, the Czech Republic and Poland this falls to no more than one in fifty.

¹ In Sweden, for example, parents can take leave in multiple separate blocks—limited only at up to three blocks per year—until the child turns 12 years old. The very high recipient rate likely reflects mothers (and fathers) taking leave multiple times over multiple years.

Chart PF2.2.C. Users of paid parental leave

Recipients/users of publicly-administered parental leave benefits or publicly-administered paid parental leave^a, by gender, 2013^b



a) Data refer to recipients/users of publicly-administered parental leave benefits or publicly-administered paid parental leave, and do not include users of maternity or paternity leave unless the country in question does not make a distinction between the different leaves (e.g. Iceland, Portugal). Data for Belgium and Korea refer to users of statutory paid parental leave (or equivalent). For Korea, data cover private sector employees only. Data for Australia, Austria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland and Sweden refer to recipients of statutory parental leave benefits (or equivalent). For Australia, data refer to recipients of 'Parental Leave Pay' only. For Austria, data refer to recipients of 'Kinderbetreuungsgeld' (childcare allowance). For Denmark, data refer to recipients of benefits for the 32 week 'common leave' period only. For Finland, data refer to the male share of recipients of the parental allowance only, and do not include recipients of the paternity allowance (either that available during or after the parental leave period). For France, data refer to recipients of CLCA (Complément de libre choix d'activité). For Germany, data refer to recipients of 'Elterngeld' (parental allowance) for those with children born in the given year. For Iceland, data refer to recipients of any benefits in relation to maternity/paternity (i.e. benefits paid during either the mother or father-quota or during the sharable period of parental leave). For Portugal, data refer to recipients of benefits for 'Initial Parental Leave' only. In all cases data refer only to those using statutory schemes and do not include individual's using only employer-provided parental leave or parental leave pay.

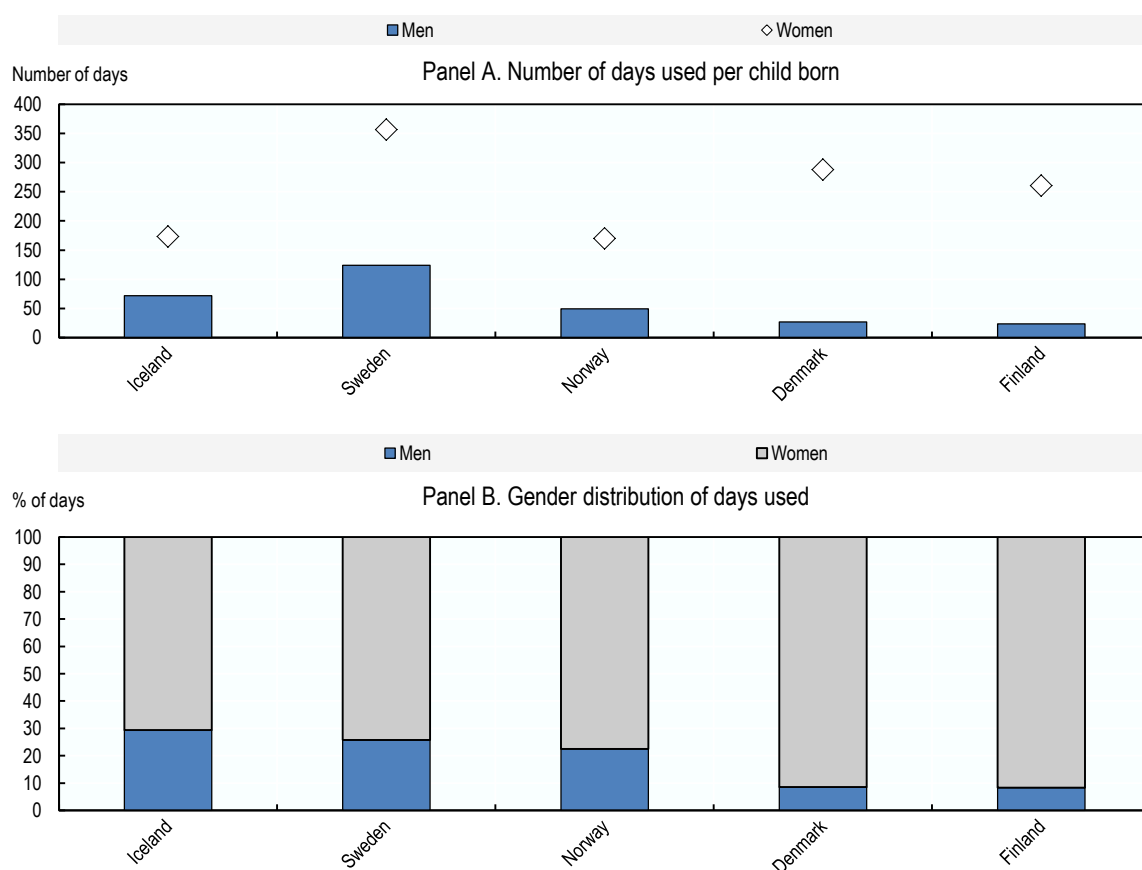
b) Data for Australia refer to 2012-13, for Belgium to 2012, for France to 2011, and for Korea and Poland to 2014

Source: OECD calculations based on information from national ministries and statistical offices; Moss, P. (2015) International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2015. Available at: http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/

Moreover, even when the *incidence* of leave-taking is fairly evenly shared between women and men, the *intensity* of use is much higher for women (Chart PF2.2.D). Comparable information on the length of paid parental leave taken by men and women is available for only a few OECD countries, but where it exists, it suggests that men account for less than one-third of days used. Of those countries for which data is available, the highest male share of days used is in Iceland, where men account for just under 30% of the days for which parental benefits are drawn. In Denmark and Finland this falls below 10% with men making up 8.6% and 8.3% of days used, respectively.

Chart PF2.2.D. Duration of paid leave for men and women

Number of days of maternity, paternity and parental leave benefits used by gender, 2014

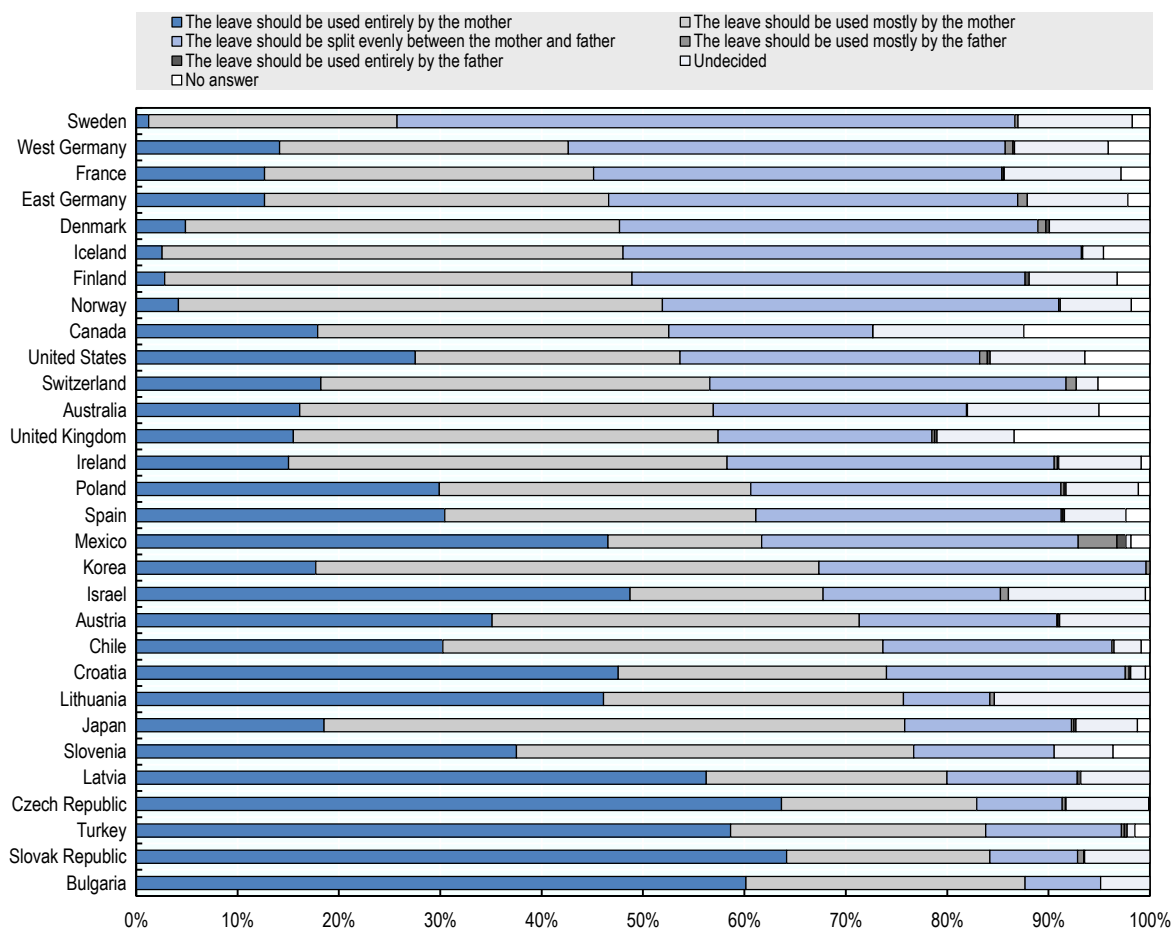


Source: Nordic Social Statistical Committee (NOSOSCO)

Isolating the drivers behind cross-national differences in the use of childbirth-related leave and in particular men's use of parental leave is not straightforward, at least in part because decisions around childcare and who does what at home are private decisions that are taken by families themselves. Prevailing social norms and societal attitudes towards the roles of mothers and fathers are likely to contribute to women rather than men taking leave. Attitudes in line with traditional gender roles still prevail in many OECD countries, and in most many people continue to believe that parental leave should be used mainly by the mother (Chart PF2.2.E). According to data from the International Social Survey Programme, in all but 6 OECD countries at least 50% of people who believe that paid leave should be available to parents also believe that the leave should be taken 'entirely' or 'mostly' by the mother. In some countries (such as the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic and Turkey) this is as high as 80%.

Chart PF2.2.E. Attitudes towards the gender distribution of leave-taking

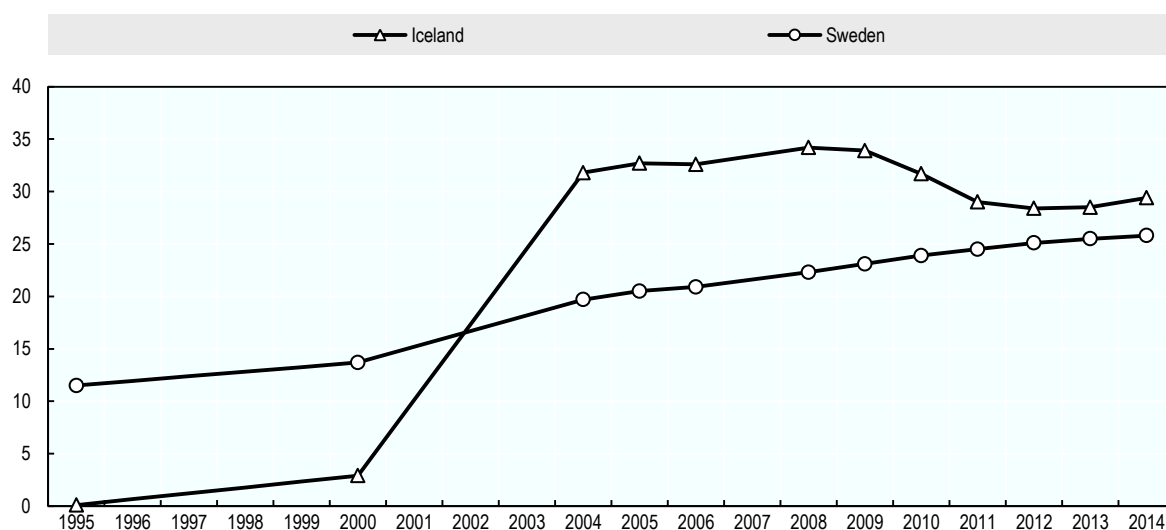
Distribution of responses to the question "Consider a couple who both work full-time and now have a new born child. Both are in a similar work situation and are eligible for paid leave. How should this paid leave period be divided between the mother and the father?", 2012



Note: distribution of responses among those who believe that paid leave should be available
 Source: International Social Survey Programme 2012

Yet policy and policy design can still play a role. Father-specific paid parental leave entitlements – periods of leave that are reserved or effectively reserved for use by the father only (see *OECD Family Database* Indicator PF2.1) – have been successful in encouraging fathers’ use of paid leave in several OECD countries. In Sweden, for instance, the introduction of a one-month “daddy quota” in 1995 was followed not only by an increase in the number of fathers using *any* leave, but also a steady and consistent increase in the share of days of paid leave used by men (Chart PF2.2.F; Duvander and Johansson, 2012; Ekberg et al., 2013). Similarly, in Iceland, the introduction in 2001 of three-month parent-specific periods of parental leave saw the share of paid leave days taken by fathers increase from around 3% to just over 34% at its peak in 2008 (Chart PF2.2.F). Other forms of parent-specific entitlement have been successful too. In Germany, the proportion of children with a father that used parental leave increased dramatically— from 8.8% for children born in 2007 to 32% for all children born in 2013—following the introduction in 2007 of the two-month “bonus period” when both parents take at least two months of leave (Reich, 2010; Destatis, 2015).

Chart PF2.2.F. Evolution of the male share of paid leave days in Iceland and Sweden
 Male share of number of days of maternity, paternity and parental leave benefits used, 1995-2014



Source: Nordic Social Statistical Committee (NOSOSCO)

Providing well paid leave also appears important (O’Brien, 2009; Haas and Rostgaard, 2011), especially when combined with some form of father-specific entitlement (Moss, 2008; 2015). The seven countries (Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Portugal and Sweden) with the highest male parental leave recipient rates (Chart PF2.2.C, panel A) – plus also the four with the most gender-equal distributions of parental leave users (Iceland, Norway, Portugal and Sweden; Chart PF2.2.C, panel B) – all offer leave benefits that replace over 50% of previous earnings for an average earner for at least part of the parental leave period (see *OECD Family Database* Indicator PF2.1, Table PF2.1.F for more detail). Many of those countries with the lowest number or share of male users (e.g. Australia, the Czech Republic, France, Italy, and Korea), in contrast, provide parental leave benefits that replace less than 50% of previous earnings for an average earner. In France, the payments available under CLCA replace less than 15% of average earnings. This may help to explain why so few men take leave despite generally favourable attitudes towards fathers’ use of parental leave (Chart PF2.2.E).

Comparability and data issues

Both types of data used here have their limitations. The data from the EU-LFS, for example, allow only for a rough estimate of the numbers currently using leave. As outlined in *definitions and methodology*, these data reflect only the proportion of individuals *actively using* leave during the time specific by the relevant survey, so may miss those who used leave at other times of the year. Furthermore, parents on a prolonged (over one year) leave may be identified as inactive in many countries (especially when the leave is unpaid), while parents on part-time leave will be counted as employed and not on leave. For both of these reasons, the estimates shown in Chart PF2.2.A may underestimate the number of people actually taking maternity and parental leave in a given year.

The administrative data used in Charts PF2.2.B, PF2.2.C, PF2.2.D and PF2.2.F also face limitations. As noted in *definitions and methodology*, administrative data are available in the first instance only where there exists some publicly-administered paid leave scheme, but they are also limited by what countries actually record and publish. Relatively few countries issue statistics on the number of individuals taking maternity leave or claiming maternity leave benefits, for example, perhaps because in many countries (e.g.

Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and Slovenia) it is obligatory for the mother to take at least some of her maternity leave entitlement (Moss, 2015). More (although still not all) countries publish statistics on the number of people using paternity leave and particularly the numbers using paid parental leave or receiving parental leave benefits. However, in some countries (e.g. Hungary) numbers on parental leave are available only for the total number of recipients with no disaggregation between men and women. In others (e.g. Japan), the use of leave is monitored through specific government-run surveys with their own individual samples and definitions. This places limits on the number of countries that can be included in this indicator.

Moreover, even where data are available differences between countries in the structure and design of leave programmes can hamper comparability. In some countries paid maternity leave (e.g. Australia, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal and Sweden) and, on occasion, paid paternity leave (e.g. Iceland) do not exist as separate entitlements but rather are integrated into an overall parental leave system (see *OECD Family Database* Indicator PF2.1 for more detail). In others (e.g. Austria and France) parental leave is theoretically unpaid, with benefits instead available through ‘child-raising allowances’ that are paid to all who meet eligibility conditions whether or not parents are technically on leave². These differences may influence the composition of those individuals taking paid leave or claiming the associated paid leave benefits. The notes to the various charts provide descriptions of the exact leave or benefits schemes covered by the data, with more information on cross-national differences in the design of leave programmes available in *OECD Family Database* Indicator PF2.1.

Sources and further reading: Destatis (2015), *Statistik zum Elterngeld Beendete Leistungsbezüge für im Jahr 2013 geborene Kinder: Januar 2013 bis März 2015*, Statistisches Bundesamt, Wiesbaden https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Thematisch/Soziales/Elterngeld/ElterngeldGeburtenJ_5229201139004.pdf?__blob=publicationFile; Duvander, A-Z & M. Johansson, (2012), What are the effects of reforms promoting fathers' parental leave use?, *Journal of European Social Policy*, 22(3), 319-330; Ekberg, J., R. Eriksson, & G. Friebel (2013), Parental leave—A policy evaluation of the Swedish “Daddy-Month” reform, *Journal of Public Economics*, 97, 131-143; Haas, L., & Rostgaard, T. (2011). Fathers' rights to paid parental leave in the Nordic countries: consequences for the gendered division of leave. *Community, Work & Family*, 14(2), 177-195; Moss, P. (2008). Making parental leave parental: An overview of policies to increase fathers' use of leave. *International review of leave policies and related research 2008*, 79-84; Moss, P. (ed.) (2015), *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2015* http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/; Reich, N. (2010), Who Cares? Determinants of the Fathers' Use of Parental Leave in Germany, *HWWI Research Paper 1-31*, Hamburg; http://www.hwwi.org/fileadmin/hwwi/Publikationen/Research/Paper/Wirtschaftliche_Trends_und_HH/HWWI_Research_Paper_1-31.pdf

² Although typically one parent has to stop working in order to care for the child, or at least work under a certain number of hours, to become eligible (Moss, 2015; see *OECD Family Database* Indicator PF2.1 for more detail)