

## IN1.1: Birth-related benefit policy structures

### *Definitions and methodology*

This indicator presents information on the presence and structure of cash benefits designed to support families around the time of birth. Birth-related cash benefits are captured through five main measures:

- *Length in weeks of maternity benefits*, that is, the length of any cash benefits available to mothers while on maternity leave (employment-protected leaves of absence for mothers at or around the time of childbirth and, in some countries, adoption). In some countries (for example, Australia, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden), there is no separate regulation for maternity benefits, with stipulations instead integrated into a general parental benefit scheme. Where this is the case, any weeks of parental benefits that are given initially only to the mother or are reserved only for the mother are recorded as ‘maternity benefits’.
- *Length in weeks of paternity benefits*, that is, the length of any cash benefits available to fathers or ‘second parents’ while on paternity leave (employment-protected leaves of absence for employed fathers or ‘second parents’ at or in the first few months after childbirth or adoption).
- *Length in weeks of parental benefits available to mothers*, and *length in weeks of father-specific parental benefits*, that is, the length of any cash benefits given to or available to parents while on parental leave (employment-protected leaves of absence for employed parents, which are often supplementary to specific maternity and paternity leave periods and frequently follow the period of maternity/paternity leave). Entitlements to paid parental benefits are split here into:
  - Those that are *available* to the mother, including any weeks that are an individual entitlement or that are reserved for the mother, and those that are a sharable or family entitlement, and;
  - Those that are *reserved* for or specific to the father, including any weeks that are individual non-transferable entitlement for the father or ‘other parent’, plus any weeks of sharable benefits that are effectively ‘reserved’ because they must be used by the partner of the main leave-taker (often the father) in order for the family to qualify for bonus weeks.

In some countries, parents can choose from various paid parental leave benefit options, with higher payment rates offered for a shorter period and lower payment rates offered for a longer period. Where this is the case, the entitlement shown reflects the longest possible option. In addition, on occasion, the cash benefits associated with parental leaves can extend longer than the employment-protection offered by the leave itself. In this situation, the entitlement shown reflects the duration of the cash benefits, rather than of the leave.

- *Maternity benefit paid to inactive or uninsured*. In most OECD countries only working women are eligible for maternity benefits, but in some at least some form of maternity benefit is offered to all mothers at or around childbirth even if they are not in paid employment. This is often delivered as a low minimum- or basic flat-rate cash benefit. Entitlements are differentiated here into those that are provided as a general right to *all* women not entitled to or eligible for maternity leave, and those that are provided on a means-tested basis only.
- *Presence of a birth grant*. In several OECD countries, families with a new-born child are entitled to a (one-off, lump-sum) benefit to cover some of the expenses related to the birth and arrival of a child. These are usually delivered in the form of a cash transfer, but on occasion take the form of an in-kind benefit (a ‘layette’). In many cases birth grants exist as a general entitlement for all births, but in some cases they are means-tested and targeted at low-income or disadvantaged families only. Again, the entitlements shown here are differentiated into those that are provided as a general right and those provided on a means-tested basis only.

Other relevant indicators: IN1.2: Child benefit policy structures; IN2.1. Public spending by age of child; CO2.1. Income poverty
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*Key findings*

Almost all OECD countries provide families with at least some kind of birth-related parental cash benefit at or around childbirth, and many provide families with several different types (Table IN1.1.A). All OECD countries other than the United States have national schemes that offer employed mothers maternity benefits, and more than half now provide fathers with at least some form of paternity benefit to be used soon after the birth, too. A majority also provide families with parental benefits for use after the initial maternity/paternity benefit periods, and in several (13) this includes a least some period reserved exclusively for the father.

**Table IN1.1.A. Presence of birth-related parental benefits**  
2015

	Maternity benefit exists:	Paternity benefit exists:	Parental benefits exist:	Parental benefits: Father-specific parental benefits exist <sup>a</sup> :
Australia	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Austria	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Belgium	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Canada	Yes	No	Yes	No
Chile	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Czech Republic	Yes	No	Yes	No
Denmark	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Estonia	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Finland	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
France	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Germany	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Greece	Yes	Yes	No	No
Hungary	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Iceland	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Ireland	Yes	No	No	No
Israel (b)	Yes	No	No	No
Italy	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Japan	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Korea	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Luxembourg	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mexico	Yes	Yes	No	No
Netherlands	Yes	Yes	No	No
New Zealand	Yes	No	No	No
Norway	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Poland	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Portugal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Slovak Republic	Yes	No	Yes	No
Slovenia	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Spain	Yes	Yes	No	No
Sweden	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Switzerland	Yes	No	No	No
Turkey	Yes	No	No	No
United Kingdom	Yes	Yes	No	No
United States	No	No	No	No

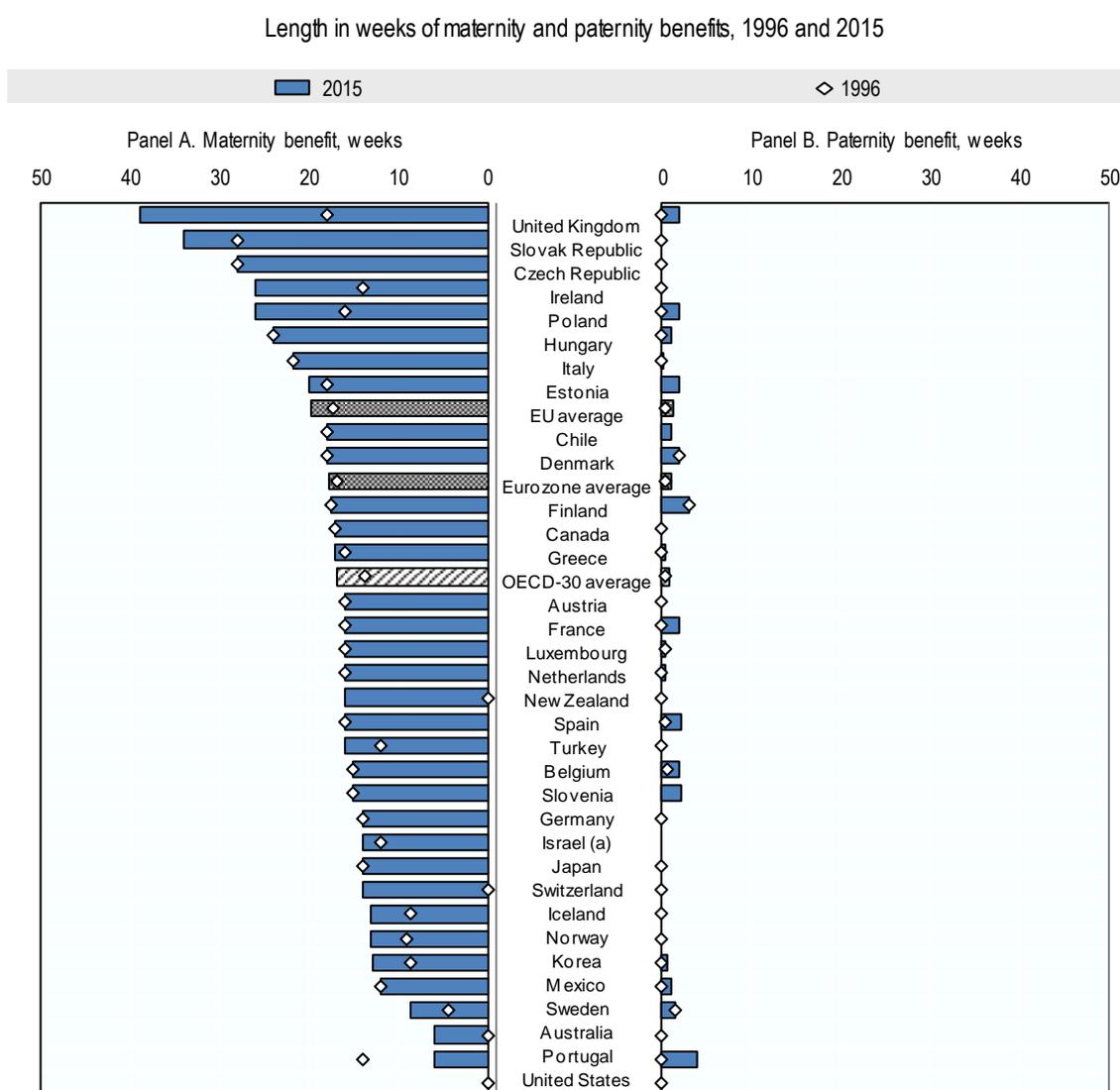
Note: The table refers to entitlements in place as of April 2015. Information reflects statutory entitlements at the national or federal level only. In some countries, regional or local governments may provide alternative entitlements and additional benefits. These entitlements are not reflected here.

a) 'Father-specific parental benefit' refers to 'father quotas' or periods of parental benefits that can be used only by the father and cannot be transferred to the mother, and any weeks of parental benefits that must be taken by the father or 'second parent' in order for the family to qualify for 'bonus' weeks of parental benefits.

b) The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.  
 Source: [Mutual Information System on Social Protection \(MISSOC\), 1996-2015](#); [Mutual Information System on Social Protection of the Council of Europe \(MISSCEO\), 1996-2015](#); [Social Security Programmes Throughout the World, 2002-2016](#); [OECD Benefits and Wages country chapters, 2000-2015](#); national sources

The length of maternity and, to a lesser extent, paternity benefits differs considerably across OECD countries (Chart IN1.1.A). In most OECD countries maternity benefits last for somewhere between three and five months, but in some, like the Czech and Slovak Republics, they extend for over six months. In the United Kingdom, mothers can claim maternity benefits in some form for as long as nine months. Paternity benefits, where they exist, are generally shorter. In Portugal, fathers are entitled to four weeks of paternity benefits, with two weeks obligatory. In most cases, however, paternity benefits last for somewhere between one and two weeks, with the duration in five countries (Greece, Italy, Korea, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) only a few days.

**Chart IN1.1.A. Duration of maternity and paternity benefits, 1996 and 2015**



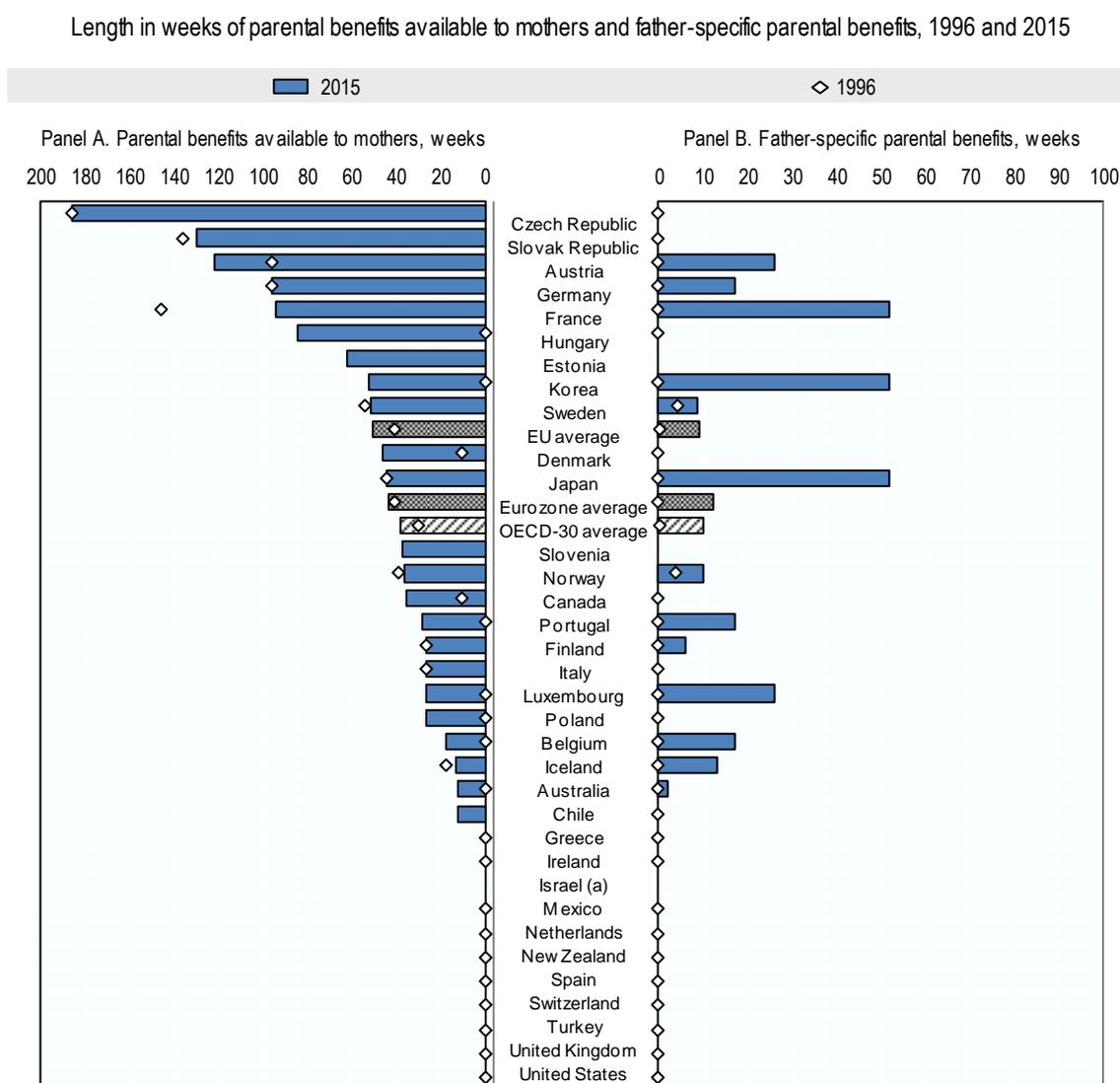
Note: The OECD average, EU average and Eurozone average include only those with a complete time series over the whole period. The OECD-30 average excludes Chile, Estonia, Israel and Slovenia, and the EU and Eurozone averages exclude Estonia and Slovenia.

a) See note b) to Table IN1.1.A

Source: [Mutual Information System on Social Protection \(MISSOC\), 1996-2015](#); [Mutual Information System on Social Protection of the Council of Europe \(MISSCEO\), 1996-2015](#); [Social Security Programmes Throughout the World, 2002-2016](#); [OECD Benefits and Wages country chapters, 2000-2015](#); national sources

The length of maternity benefits has remained relatively stable in most OECD countries over the past couple of decades (Chart IN1.1.A). On average across OECD countries with available information, the average length of maternity benefits increased from about 13.7 weeks in 1996 to just under 17 weeks in 2015, but much of this increase is due to the introduction of benefits in three countries (Australia, New Zealand and Switzerland) that previously had no national statutory provision. Most OECD countries did not modify provisions over the period between 1996 and 2015, with only Ireland, Poland, Portugal and the United Kingdom making major reforms to the length of existing benefits. Changes to paternity benefits are more common. Of the 16 OECD countries to offer paternity benefits in 2015 and with information available for 1996<sup>1</sup>, only four (Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg and Sweden) did not modify the length of the entitlement over the period. The remainder either introduced (France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, and the United Kingdom) or extended (Belgium, Spain) entitlements between 1996 and 2015.

**Chart IN1.1.B. Duration of parental benefits, 1996 and 2015**



Note: The OECD average, EU average and Eurozone average include only those with a complete time series over the whole period. The OECD-30 average excludes Chile, Estonia, Israel and Slovenia, and the EU and Eurozone averages exclude Estonia and Slovenia.

a) See note b) to Table IN1.1.A

Source: [Mutual Information System on Social Protection \(MISSOC\), 1996-2015](#); [Mutual Information System on Social Protection of the Council of Europe](#)

<sup>1</sup> Information for 1996 missing for Chile, Estonia and Slovenia

(MISSCEO), 1996-2015; Social Security Programmes Throughout the World, 2002-2016; OECD Benefits and Wages country chapters, 2000-2015; national sources

The duration of parental benefits also varies considerably across OECD countries (Chart IN1.1.B). In some countries, like Australia, Belgium, Chile, and Iceland, parental benefits available to mothers last for around three to four months. In others, such as Austria and the Slovak Republic, they continue for over two years, while in the Czech Republic mothers can claim the benefit associated with parental leave until the child's fourth birthday, should they choose the 'long option'. Periods of parental benefit reserved exclusively for the father are generally shorter, and in most countries last for between two and six months. However, in Japan, Korea and – for those in families with at least two children – France, up to one year of parental benefits are reserved for fathers or 'second parents'.

Modifications and reforms to parental benefits are fairly common (Chart IN1.1.B). This applies especially to parental benefits reserved exclusively for fathers – in 1996, only two OECD countries (Norway and Sweden) offered a father-specific period of parental benefits, with the remaining 11 countries that offer father-specific parental benefits in 2015 introducing the entitlement over the period in-between. But parental benefits in general have also seen modifications and, generally, expansion over the years between 1996 and 2015. On average across OECD countries with available information, the average length of parental benefits available to mothers increased from just under 30 weeks in 1996 to over 38 weeks in 2015, with ten countries (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Hungary, Korea, Luxembourg, Poland and Portugal) introducing or extending provisions over the period. Four countries (France, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) have reduced the length of parental benefits available to mothers since 1996, in all cases because part of the period formerly available to mothers has since been reserved for fathers.

In addition to parental benefits for working parents, many OECD countries provide other cash benefits designed to support families around the time of birth (Table IN1.1.B). Some countries (Iceland, Finland, Norway, Slovenia, and Sweden) offer maternity benefits to inactive or uninsured women, so that all mothers receive financial support around childbirth regardless of employment status. These usually take the form of flat-rate benefits provided on a monthly basis, although in Norway it is offered as a lump-sum cash payment. Italy and Portugal also provide maternity benefits to non-working women, although they are targeted at low-income families and offered on a means-tested basis only. Many other OECD countries provide families with a one-off birth grant at or around childbirth, either in the form of a cash lump sum or through a 'layette' – a package of goods, such as clothing and toiletries, for a new-born child. In some countries (Australia, the Czech Republic, Poland and the United Kingdom) the birth grant is means-tested, but in most it is provided on a universal basis for all births. Finland, notably, offers both a birth grant and maternity benefits to non-working women on a universal basis.

**Table IN1.1.B. Additional birth-related benefits**  
2015

	Birth grant:			
	No	Yes	Means-tested	
Maternity benefits paid to inactive or uninsured:	No	Austria, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Korea, Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, United States	Belgium, Estonia, France, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Slovak Republic	Australia, Czech Republic, Poland, United Kingdom
	Yes	Iceland, Norway, Sweden	Finland	Slovenia
	Means-tested	Italy, Portugal	-	-

a) See note b) to Table IN1.1.A

Source: [Mutual Information System on Social Protection \(MISSOC\), 1996-2015; Mutual Information System on Social Protection of the Council of Europe](#)

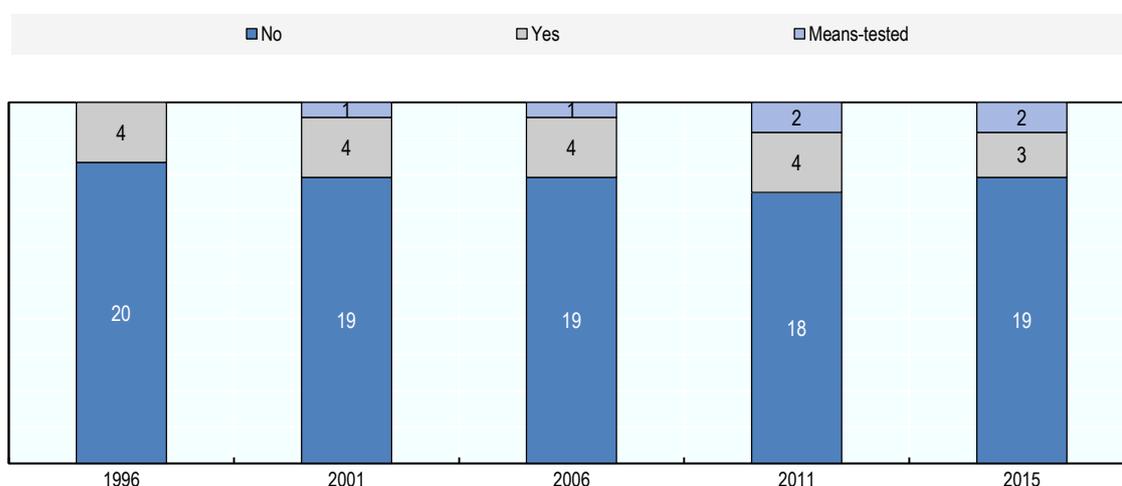
(MISSCEO), 1996-2015; Social Security Programmes Throughout the World, 2002-2016; OECD Benefits and Wages country chapters, 2000-2015; national sources

The number of OECD countries offering these additional birth-related cash benefits has remained fairly stable over the past two decades, although there is a trend towards increased means-testing (Chart IN1.1.C). Among the 24 OECD countries with complete information over the years between 1996 and 2015, the number providing maternity benefits to inactive women has increased by one from four to five since 1996 – having peaked at six, before Luxembourg abolished their offer of maternity benefits to inactive women in 2015 – while the number offering birth grants has remained constant at ten over the entire period. In both cases, however, there has been at least a slight shift towards increased means-testing, particularly for birth grants. In 1996, only one country (the United Kingdom) offered a birth grant on a means-tested basis, but since then three countries (Australia, the Czech Republic and Poland) have introduced some form of income-test.

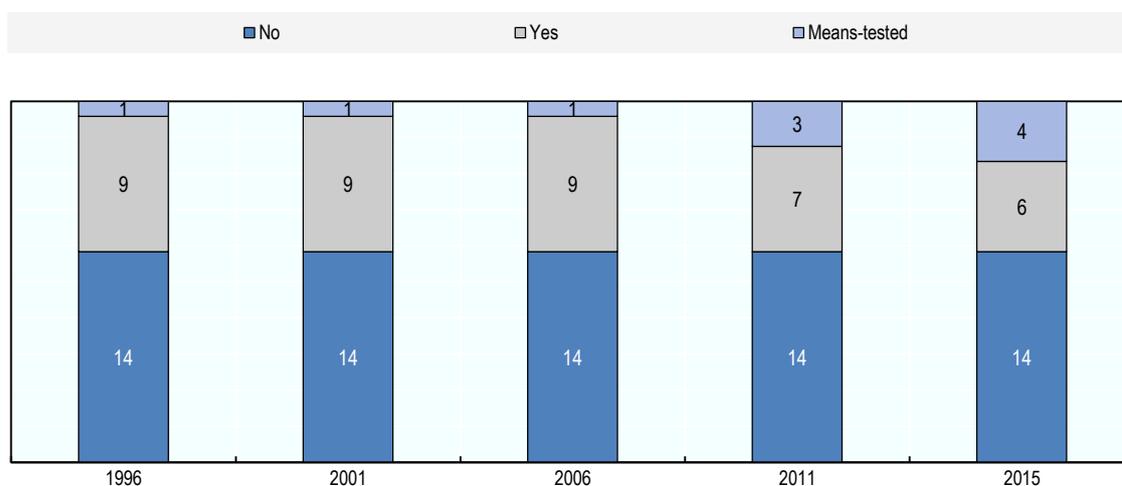
**Chart IN1.1.C. Countries providing additional birth-related benefits, 1996-2015**

Number of countries paying maternity benefits to inactive or uninsured and with and without birth grants, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2015<sup>a</sup>

Panel A. Maternity benefits paid to inactive or uninsured



Panel B. Birth grant



Note: Only countries with a complete time series over the whole period are considered (24 countries; Chile, Estonia, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Slovenia, Sweden and the United States are omitted)

Source: [Mutual Information System on Social Protection \(MISSOC\), 1996-2015; Mutual Information System on Social Protection of the Council of Europe \(MISSCEO\), 1996-2015; Social Security Programmes Throughout the World, 2002-2016; OECD Benefits and Wages country chapters, 2000-2015; national sources](#)

### *Comparability and data issues*

The information used in this indicator comes from a range of cross-national sources, including the MISSOC and MISSCEO databases, the biennial *Social Security Programs Throughout the World* reports from the U.S. Social Security Administration, the annual *International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research* reports from the Leave Network, and the OECD Benefits and Wages Country Chapters – country-specific reports based on questionnaires sent to national authorities that provide detailed overviews of tax and benefits systems and policies in OECD countries. Information has been cross-checked between sources where possible with any inconsistencies checked against additional national sources, where available.

Parental leave and benefit systems are diverse and individual systems do not always fit neatly into classifications suitable for international comparison. For example, in some OECD countries (e.g. Australia, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden) maternity and parental benefits are provided together under one integrated scheme, rather than separately through individual regulations and provisions. In order to ensure the various measures are consistent and comparable across countries and time, it is necessary to make a number of assumptions about the situation, intentions and behaviours of parents and, in some cases, to simplify certain features of national parental leave and benefit systems. For detailed notes on the assumptions and definitions used when classifying parental leave and benefit systems and for country-specific notes on the treatment of specific policies, please see the [OECD Family Database](#), Indicators PF2.1 (Key characteristics of parental leave systems) and PF2.5 (Trends in leave entitlements around childbirth).

Sources and further reading: Mutual Information System on Social Protection in the EU and EEA (MISSOC) (2016), *Table IV – Maternity/Paternity and Table IX – Family Benefits*, <http://www.missoc.org/MISSOC/INFORMATIONBASE/COMPARATIVETABLES/MISSOCDATABASE/comparativeTableSearch.jsp>; Mutual Information System on Social Protection of the Council of Europe (MISSCEO) (2016), *Table 4. Maternity and Table 9. Family Benefits*, <http://www.coe.int/en/web/turin-european-social-charter/missceo-comparative-tables>; Moss, P. ed. (2005-2016), *International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research*, <http://www.leavenetwork.org/>; U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA) (2016) *Social Security Programs Throughout the World*, <https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/progdesc/ssptw/>; OECD (2016) Benefits and Wages Country Chapters, <http://www.oecd.org/els/soc/benefits-and-wages.htm>