

Which countries guarantee that new dads get paid paternity leave?^[1]

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EXCERPTS

What do China, India, South Sudan and the United States have in common?

They are among the 92 countries where there is no national policy that allow dads to take paid time off work to care for their newborns.

According to a data analysis released on Thursday by UNICEF, the U.N. children's agency, almost two-thirds of the world's children under age 1 — nearly 90 million — live in countries where dads are not entitled by law to take paid paternity leave. In these countries, this policy is typically decided by employers.

The data, mapped in an interactive chart^[3] produced by World Policy Analysis Center at UCLA's Fielding School of Public Health, allows users to scroll over a country to see its policy on paid paternity leave: no paid leave, less than three weeks (for most countries, that means one week or less), three to 13 weeks or 14 weeks or more. Users can also compare this data with paid maternity leave around the world. According to the center, 185 countries guarantee paid leave for mothers, with at least 14 weeks of leave in 106 countries.

For Jody Heymann^[4], founding director of World Policy Analysis Center, the data draws attention to a glaring gap in expectations on gender roles. "To achieve gender equality both in the workplace and the home, it's essential for men to have an equal chance to be there with their newborn babies," she says.

Here are some highlights from the findings — and insights on paid paternity leave from researchers at World Policy Analysis Center and UNICEF.

Asia leads in paid paternity leave

Japan and South Korea have some of the most generous policies in the world. One year of paid leave is available for the father, but very few dads take advantage of it, according to the OECD.^[5]

The U.S. is a global outlier

The U.S. — home to 4 million newborns^[6] — is one of eight countries — along with Papua New Guinea, Suriname and five small Pacific Island states — where there is no national law guaranteeing paid parental leave for either moms or dads.

But a growing number of states in the U.S. have introduced paid leave policies, according to UNICEF. "The decision to provide paid paternity leave is not a just a question of income," says Heymann. "It's the decision of valuing the roles that fathers are playing with their infants."

Some low- or middle-income countries give fathers their due...

"[Countries in] every income group offers some kind of paid paternity leave," says Heymann.

That includes countries with high infant populations like Brazil, an upper middle-income country, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, a low-income country, which offer less than three weeks of paid paternity leave.

One low-income country, Tajikistan, and some lower-middle-income countries, like Uzbekistan and Mongolia, offer more than 14 weeks of paid leave for dads.

"As you go up the income level, you do see more countries providing more generously," says Heymann. "Among middle-income countries, there are 14 countries that provide 14 weeks or more, and in high-income, 28 countries."

...and other developing countries are catching up

Momentum is building for family-friendly policies across the developing world. Over the past decade, a handful of countries in Africa have introduced paid paternity leave. In 2008, Mauritius introduced one week. In 2010, Rwanda introduced four days, and the Gambia

introduced two weeks.

And currently, India, which has one of the highest infant populations in the world, is proposing the Paternity Benefit Bill for consideration in the next session of parliament. This could allow fathers up to three months of paid paternity leave, according to Dr. Pia Britto, chief of early childhood development at UNICEF.

Region: International [7]

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