

Key characteristics of parental leave systems ^[1]

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EXCERPTS from the Key findings

On average across OECD countries, mothers are entitled to 18 weeks of paid maternity leave around childbirth (table PF2.1.A and chart PF2.1.A). Almost all OECD countries offer paid maternity leaves that last at least three months – which is not surprising given that both the ILO convention on maternity leave and the current EU directive on maternity leave stipulate that mothers should have access to at least 14 weeks of leave around childbirth – with the United States the only country to offer no statutory entitlement to paid leave on a national basis. In some countries entitlements to paid maternity leave extend to over six months. In the United Kingdom, for example, mothers can take up to nine months paid maternity leave.

Maternity leaves are generally well paid. Most OECD countries provide payments that replace over 50% of previous earnings, with twelve countries offering a mother on average earnings full compensation across the leave. Payment rates are lowest in Ireland and the United Kingdom, where only around one-third of gross average earnings are replaced by the maternity benefit. As a result, despite lengthy paid leave entitlements, full-rate equivalent paid maternity leave in these countries lasts only nine and twelve weeks respectively.

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Region: International ^[3]

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