

Same-sex male couples losing out on paid parental leave^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Same-sex male couples are losing out on paid parental leave when compared to both same-sex female and different-sex couples, according to new research.

A study published in the Journal of Social Policy compared paid parental leave policies in 34 OECD countries.

In the 33 countries with national paid parental leave, researchers found same-sex female couples received equal amounts of paid leave to different-sex couples in 19, while same-sex male couples got equal amounts of leave in only four. The United States was alone in offering no national paid parental leave to new birth parents.

The team at the WORLD Policy Analysis Center looked at the countries' labour, social security and parental leave legislation, studying government websites and other trusted sources to confirm the way those laws were applied and regulated.

To determine the duration of paid leave available to people in different relationships, the study looked at 'key indicators' covering the length of maternity, paternity and shared parental leave set out in government policies and at whether those policies were worded in ways that included or excluded same-sex couples.

The duration of paid leave available varied greatly, with different-sex couples receiving between 13 and 184 weeks of paid leave. In comparison, same-sex female couples were entitled to between 12 and 164 weeks, while the duration available to same-sex male couples ranged from nothing at all to 156 weeks.

When it came to paid leave for adoptive parents, three of the 34 countries provided no paid adoption leave, while nine countries banned adoption by same-sex couples. Of the remaining 22 countries, 19 provided the same amount of paid adoption leave for parents, regardless of whether they were in a same- or different-sex partnership.

Of the 33 OECD countries offering paid parental leave for either birth or adoption, only four guaranteed equal leave for all parents regardless of their gender or partnership status.

Elizabeth Wong from the University of California, Los Angeles, who led the study, said: "Many of the differences we found may be the indirect consequences of gender-restrictive language that assumes women are the primary caregivers and that every family has one mother and one father.

"These assumptions often undervalue the importance of fathers' involvement. When they do, same-sex male couples and male partners of mothers are the most disadvantaged.

"While we didn't find any legislation that explicitly prohibits same-sex couples from receiving paid parental leave, the way policies are structured or worded can nevertheless stop them from claiming benefits. Policymakers can explicitly guarantee inclusion and equality for same-sex couples by removing gender-restrictive language and providing equal paid leave opportunities for fathers and partners as provided to mothers."

Related link: Comparing the availability of paid parental leave for same-sex and different-sex couples in 34 OECD countries^[3]

Region: International^[4]

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