

'Not good enough': Paternity leave 'significantly stalling' gender equality, research suggests ^[1]

Experts call on organisations to capitalise on 'appetite for change' and offer longer, better-paid leave for new fathers as poll finds half take just two weeks off

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Excerpts

Almost half (47 per cent) of new fathers take just two weeks off work with newborns – the statutory maximum – research by Zurich has revealed, bolstering calls for longer and better-paid paternity leave.

The survey of 1,000 dads of children aged four and under found that 43 per cent took one to two weeks off work, while 4 per cent took no time off at all.

A separate poll by People Management on LinkedIn found that 58 per cent of fathers took one to two weeks of paternity leave, with a fifth (21 per cent) of those polled saying they did not take any leave at all.

In addition, 8 per cent took three to four weeks of leave, with just 13 per cent having more than four weeks off as a new parent.

Is the two weeks' statutory paternity leave enough?

Unless they receive extra company paternity pay, employed new fathers and new adoptive fathers are entitled to two weeks' statutory paternity leave, paid at £184.03 per week or 90 per cent of weekly earnings, whichever is lower.

A third (34 per cent) of fathers surveyed by Zurich used annual leave to extend the time they could take off, while a quarter used government statutory paternity leave and 12 per cent took unpaid leave.

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When asked how long they would like to take off work, 29 per cent of fathers wanted three to four weeks, while 17 per cent wanted five to six. A further 14 per cent said they would ideally take seven to eight weeks of leave, and 11 per cent wanted 11 to 12 weeks.

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Some reform of paternity leave has recently taken place – the government introduced the Paternity Leave (Amendment) Regulations 2024, which came into force on 6 April this year.

The changes mean employees can now separate the two-week entitlement into two separate blocks, and they can take their paternity leave any time in the 52 weeks after the birth or adoption of their child.

Nearly a third (30 per cent) of those surveyed had split their leave. Of these employees, almost half (43 per cent) said they did so to support their partner as the baby grew more active, while 36 per cent aimed to bond with the baby at different stages in their development.

In addition, a quarter (24 per cent) split their paternity leave to support the mother's return to work.

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/24/07/%E2%80%98not-good-enough%E2%80%99-paternity-leave-%E2%80%98significantly-stalling%E2%80%99-gender> [2] <https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/article/1877479/not-good-enough-paternity-leave-significantly-stalling-gender-equality-research-suggests> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/20/09/paternity-leave-taking-and-father-engagement> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/europe> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/gender-equality> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/paternity-leave>