



Paternity leave is paid or unpaid leave available to employed fathers upon the birth of a child. In some countries, paternity leave entitlement extends to same-sex partners, and to adoption of infants. It provides fathers with time away from work to help care for a new child, as well care for other children and help the mother.

Paternity leave is different to parental leave which is usually offered to both mothers and fathers and which tends to be for a longer period to care for the child, beyond the maternity or paternity leave entitlement. Fathers may also have access to parental leave or have the right to share parental leave with the mother.

Paternity leave entitlements vary by country in terms of eligibility, duration, benefit amount and responsibility for funding. Funding may be by employer contribution, employee contribution, government contribution, or a combination of any or all of these. Additional leave for multiple births, according to type of birth (natural/caesarian) and adoption may also be available. Increasingly, countries around the world at all stages of economic development either have or are developing paternity leave policies. The ILO has reported that 78 countries provide a statutory right to paternity leave.

Benefits of paternity and parental leave

All paternity leave is beneficial to fathers, but **paid** paternity leave delivers additional social and economic benefits. Research has shown that men are much more likely to use paternity leave when it is paid at an income replacement rate, is provided for fathers only (often referred to as 'ring-fenced leave', or 'use or lose' leave) and when their right to return to their job is protected.

Fathers benefit from access to paid paternity leave in a number of ways. Research shows they have lower levels of depression, they reduce risky behaviours such as smoking and drinking, and have stronger relationships with their children.

The health and well-being of babies is also improved when fathers are involved in caring from birth. There are improvements in on-time immunization, improvements in child cognitive development, lower infant mortality and prolonged breast feeding. As children grow, they benefit from the enhanced one-on-one time with fathers, through stronger relationships and increased performance at school.

Women benefit significantly from paternity leave in terms of additional time to recuperate from childbirth, time to engage in extended breastfeeding and enjoy increased emotional support.

Paternity leave has also been found to reduce parenting stress, post-partum depression, maternal mortality and intimate partner violence.

In all countries, women spend more time on unpaid work than men. Access to paid paternity leave has been found to produce a more equal distribution of unpaid work and shift social norms around shared caregiving. The sharing of unpaid work allows women more time to spend on paid labour market activities or further learning opportunities. A 2016 World Bank study found a positive relationship between paternity leave and women’s employment, including a 6.8% increase in the number of female workers at firms with mandated paternity leave.

In the workplace, changed gender norms about parenting can reduce stigma around taking time off for childcare and promote more equal hiring practices. Providing both parents with access to paid parental leave can also improve household income and economic security. Women’s improved access to employment alleviates poverty and allows for increased investment in child health and education. When mothers work, daughters are more likely to stay in school longer, seek out work and earn higher wages. McKinsey Global Institute has calculated that if women’s and men’s workforce participation were

identical, global GDP could increase by \$28 trillion by 2025.

Paternity leave Vietnam

Mandated state sponsored paternity leave came into effect in 2016, following an amendment to the 2014 Social Insurance Law.

The Vietnamese Law on Social Insurance provides employed, married fathers in Vietnam with a paid paternity leave entitlement of between 5 to 14 days. This regime applies only to male employees currently paying social insurance premiums whose wives give birth. The leave entitlement is paid through Vietnam’s Social Insurance Fund and applies to Vietnamese fathers only. Although expatriates in Vietnam are legally required to pay into the Social Insurance Fund, they receive leave entitlements through agreements with their employer.

The duration of paid paternity leave to which a Vietnamese father is entitled depends on the type of birth, number of children born and if the child is adopted, as outlined below. In the case of maternal death, a father is entitled to the full amount of unused maternity leave, which is paid at 100% until the child reaches six months of age.

| Type of Leave | Entitlement |
|--|---|
| Natural birth | 5 days |
| Surgical or premature birth | 7 days |
| Twins born naturally | 10 days |
| Twins or multiple children born via surgical birth | 14 days |
| Multiple births, from third child on | 3 additional days per child |
| Adopted children under 6 months | Leave limited to qualifying mother OR father but not both |
| Care for sick children under 3 | 20 days maximum per year |
| Care for sick children aged 3 to 7 | 15 days maximum per year |

Policy challenges

Although Vietnamese fathers are entitled to paid paternity leave, traditional gender roles, the statutory prerequisites, and working in the informal economy can pose challenges to access and its implementation.

The Vietnamese mandate to pay paternity leave entitlements through the Social Insurance Fund signals government support for gender equality, and acknowledges that women and men can balance work and family responsibilities. There is interest in shifting gender roles from some sectors of Vietnamese society and one of Vietnam's annual Family Days which is dedicated to family-oriented activities across the country, emphasises the importance of the father's role to the family and promotes fathers' involvement in childcare.

However, traditional gender roles in Vietnam continue to remain strong, with women taking on the majority of housework and childcare. While paternity leave is available and state sponsored, deeply ingrained gender roles may dissuade men from requesting and taking paternity leave. Moreover, the mandated benefit only applies to married fathers in the formal economy who have been contributing to the Fund.

Having a significant proportion of the population employed in the informal economy is also a major challenge. In Vietnam, this includes an estimated 18 million women and men. Since fathers employed in the informal sector do not pay into the Social Insurance Fund, they are not covered by the paternity leave entitlements.

As such, families relying on informal sector income do not benefit from the economic and societal gains that paternity leave provides. Extending paternity leave benefits and other public policies to these workers poses a challenge to the Vietnamese government. Paternity leave if extended, however, is a benefit that can lead to changing gender norms, leading to improvements for all.

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