

Family Leave in Ireland

How do we compare?

Research shows children do best when cared for at home for at least the first year

BUT

Our current family leave policies don't support this.



At the moment the **ONLY** paid leave for parents is six months' maternity leave



6 Months' paid maternity leave only



NO paternity leave for fathers

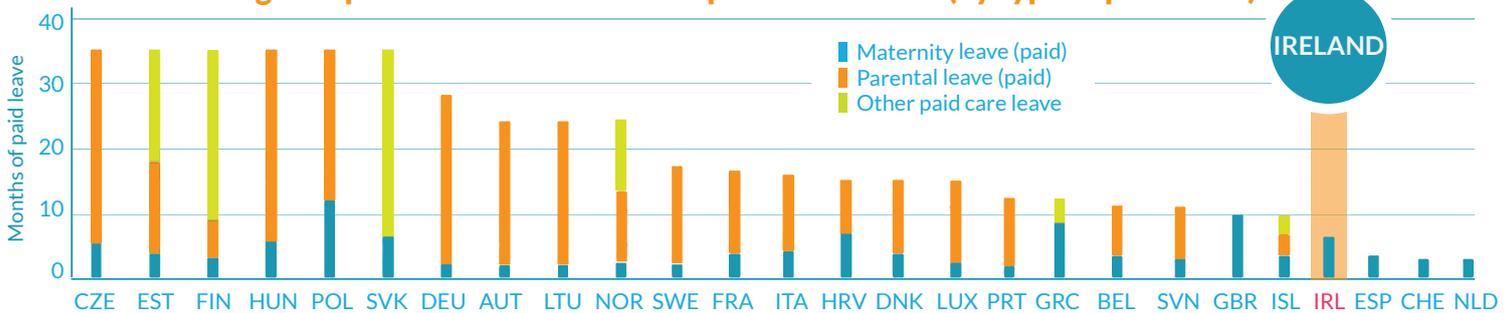


NO PAID parental leave

What do other countries do?

In most European countries, maternity leave can be combined with paid parental leave and other forms of paid family leave. The **ONLY** type of paid leave that Ireland offers is maternity leave.

Length of paid leave in months that parents can take (by type of paid leave)



Of 26 European countries, Ireland has the 4th shortest period of paid leave that parents can take.

What do we need to do?

As well as our maternity leave, we need...

2 weeks

2 weeks' paid paternity leave



Paid parental leave

Between 6 and 12 months



So a child can be cared for at home until they are at least 1 year old.



www.familyleave.net



The Family Leave Bill is due to be published in autumn 2015, offering a real chance for better Government policies to help families balance work and family life. Stronger family leave policies would give parents more time and energy for their children's care and nurture, which is good for children, families, and society as a whole.

Progress has been made in Ireland in recent years in extending maternity leave, following hard-won campaigns. As a result of EU Directives, there is also now provision for 18 weeks' unpaid parental leave, available until a child is 8 years old. However, Ireland's family leave policies still lag far behind other European countries:

Paid parental leave

Research shows that children do best when cared for at home by their parents for at least the critical first year of life. In Ireland, as the only paid leave is Maternity Benefit, a large proportion of parents return to work when their children are just 6 months old. In contrast, the large majority of countries in Europe offer paid parental leave (available to either parent), to be taken at the end of maternity leave. Many countries also offer a 'father's quota' – a period of additional paid leave only for fathers. Combining maternity, parental and other childcare leave, on average European countries provide 19 months' paid leave after the birth of a child.

Maternity leave in Ireland is also poorly paid. Ireland is one of only two European countries that have no well-paid leave for parents.¹

Paternity leave

Ireland has no paid paternity leave. Paternity leave is leave that fathers can take around the time of the birth of a child, at the same time as the mother is taking maternity leave. Most European countries offer paid paternity leave – typically around 2 weeks in duration.

Flexible work

A limited right to request flexible work or reduced hours was introduced in 2013 through the EU Parental Leave Directive, but it only applies at the time a parent returns to work from Parental Leave. To have any real benefit, it should be a right that parents with young children can exercise at any time. Most European countries provide this, and many countries go beyond the 'right to request' and give parents with young children an actual entitlement to reduce working hours.

Breaks at work for breastfeeding

Mothers in Ireland can only take breaks at work to breastfeed until a child is 6 months old, which is minimal value given that paid Maternity Leave itself lasts 6 months. Most European countries protect breaks at work for breastfeeding for much longer, in most cases 12 months or more.

Data sources:

Moss, P. (2014) 10th International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2014.

International Labour Organisation (2014) Maternity and Paternity at Work: Law and Practice Across the World.

¹ Well-paid leave is defined by the European Commission as at least 66% of previous earnings.