THE NEW DAD:

Take Your Leave

Perspectives on paternity leave from fathers, leading organizations, and global policies

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Introduction

Among the most significant milestones in life, few compare with the birth of a child. While being a parent is a long-term, some might say lifetime, endeavor, the experience of parenting may never seem more palpable than in the days and weeks immediately following the baby's arrival. The growing importance of fathers' involvement at this time in their family's lives has been a point of discussion of late, from Buckingham Palace, where Prince William utilized the U.K.'s 2-week paternity leave policy, to the controversy over whether it is appropriate for a U.S. Major League Baseball player to miss games by using the 72-hours his contract allows.

For virtually every developed country in the world, an appreciation of the importance of this time is acknowledged and supported through paid leave for mothers and many also provide paid leave for fathers. The United States is a highly visible outlier, offering no national policy on paid leave for mothers or fathers.

Today, approximately 70 countries offer paid leave for fathers in the form of paternity leave or shared parental leave (ILO, 2014). The reasons for extending leave to fathers are numerous, but most often reflect the expression of a few consistent values: the desire for greater gender equity, a reflection of the changing roles of men and women at home and in the workplace, and the desire to allow fathers the time to immerse themselves in parenting on a full-time (albeit often brief) basis. Research suggests that early, more intense engagement in parenting for men has positive long-term effects for both father and child (Brown, Mangelsdorf, and Neff, 2012).

This report marks the Center for Work & Family's (CWF's) fifth year of providing in-depth, on-going research on the changing role of fathers under the banner of *The New Dad* series. In 2009, we began our research on issues such as how new fathers transition into fatherhood roles, how they balance their parenting role with their career priorities, how they share responsibilities with their spouses, and how confident and competent they feel in their roles as caregivers. This last issue was a particularly central theme in our 2012 report, *The New Dad: Right at Home*, which focused on the activities of the small but growing number of at-home dads.

For those who aspire to see gender roles become less rigid and hope to see men embrace a holistic view of being a man and father, our series of reports have certainly provided room for optimism. The nearly 3,000 fathers we have interviewed or surveyed have clearly demonstrated signs that things are changing. The vast majority of fathers rated their children as their top priority in life. More than three out of four expressed their desire to spend more time with their children than they do presently. More than two out of three fathers said that caregiving for their children should be a 50/50 proposition and wanted to evenly divide this responsibility with their spouses. And slightly more than half said they would seriously consider the possibility of being full-time, at-home dads (Harrington, Van Deusen, and Humberd, 2011).

While there are signs that men are becoming more active parents, it would be less than honest to suggest that we have reached a new, "utopian" state of gender equality when it comes to managing work and family. While it's true that our research has shown that men want to spend more time with their children, more than 3/4 of fathers said they were also looking for jobs with greater responsibility. While 2/3 wanted to share caregiving equally, less than 1/3 said they actually do. While more than half said they would consider being at-home dads, only 1 in 25 at-home parents is a man (Harrington et. al, 2011). It seems that we are in a period of significant transition, but the ground has not yet fully shifted.

When we ask why it is the case that most men aspire to be equal partners in caregiving but often fail to meet even their own expectations, there can be many possible explanations for this shortfall. One cause that seems clear from our work and that of other researchers is that this performance gap begins in the very first days following the birth or adoption of a new child, when the disparities between the experiences of mothers and fathers emerge immediately. In our research, the majority of fathers take only about one day of leave time to bond with their new children for every month the typical mother takes. In our earlier study, 76% of fathers went back to work after one week or less and 96% after two weeks or less off. During that time at home, fathers are seldom "flying solo" in caring for their newborns (Harrington et. al, 2011).

This failure of men to be active co-parents in the first few months of the children's lives sets a pattern in motion that is difficult to change. For three, four, six months, or even more, the mother develops a close bond with her child as well as the confidence and competence to become the primary caregiver. The father is immediately cast in the role of a supporting actor. Unless some extraordinary event occurs – for example the father takes an extended leave following the mother's return to work – there seems to be a low likelihood that the roles will be reversed or even equalized.

Global research has demonstrated benefits to families when fathers take paternity leave, including increased well-being for the new mothers. In the U.K., a father's taking paternity leave is strongly associated with mother's well-being three months after the birth (Redshaw & Henderson, 2013). In Norway, mothers' absence due to sickness is reduced by about 5–10% in families where fathers take longer leave (Bratberg and Naz, 2009). In France, when paternity leave results in more infant care by fathers, new mothers are less likely to be depressed (Séjourné, Beaumé, Vaslot. and Chabrol, 2012). In Sweden, it has been estimated that each additional month of parental leave taken by the father increases the mother's earnings by 6.7% (Johannson, 2010).

Despite these benefits, many fathers have difficulty making the time needed to bond with their children in the first year of their lives. As a result, it is not surprising that fathers' desires to be equal caregivers often do not come to fruition. The critical early days of the children's lives can set the stage for long-term caregiving. Fathers' absence from this stage may be an important reason why men's aspirations and current realities do not mesh.

In order to better understand the dynamics of leave-taking and its importance in setting the stage for long-term caregiving, we have dedicated this year's research to the topic of paternity and parental leave for fathers. We approached our research on paternity leave from a number of perspectives. First, what do fathers think about the issue of paternity leave? How important is it, how much time off do they need, and what level of pay do they expect? Second, what are employers doing to support fathers with regards to paternity leave? Third, how do government policies on leave taking differ from country to country?

More than 1,000 fathers employed by 286 different organizations across a wide range of industries responded to our survey. In addition, 30 companies responded to our request to participate in the benchmarking portion of this study, providing us with information about their current stances on paternity leave and offerings for new fathers. In this report we summarize the results of this benchmarking survey and highlight innovative practices to support fathers. Finally, we provide a broad overview of what is happening globally when it comes to paternity leave and parental leave for fathers. Throughout the report, we have "spotlighted" global policies to provide examples of how governments around the world are addressing the needs of fathers in their countries.

We now share the results of the most recent study in our on-going series: ***The New Dad: Take Your Leave.***

Global Spotlight: Sweden

In 1974, Sweden became the first country in the world to offer fathers the statutory right of taking paid leave from work to be with their families after childbirth and adoption. Today, Swedish fathers have access to some of the most generous and flexible rights to parental leave in the world, where the goal is to actively promote fathers taking leave from work to care for young children in order to develop strong relationships with children and to share parenting with mothers. Fathers' leave use has slowly increased; by 2013 75% took paid paternity leave (10 days), 88% took paid parental leave (average - 91 days), and in 2010 fathers took 36% of all days of shared paid temporary leave (leave to care for sick children).

Definitions of Important Terms

Maternity leave is generally available to mothers only. It is usually understood to be a health and welfare measure, intended to protect the health of the mother and newborn child, to be taken just before, during and immediately after childbirth.

Paternity leave is generally available to fathers only, usually to be taken soon after the birth of a child, and intended to enable the father to spend time with his partner, new child and older children.

Parental leave is available to mothers and fathers, either as an equal entitlement or to be divided as they choose. It is generally understood to be a care measure, intended to give parents the opportunity to spend time caring for a young child; it usually can only be taken after the end of maternity leave. In some cases, parents can choose to take all or part of their parental leave on a part-time basis.

Fathers' Attitudes about Paternity and Parental Leave

Description of the Fathers' Paternity Leave Study

We conducted an online survey to better understand fathers' attitudes about paternity and parental leave and to learn more about their experiences in taking time off after the birth of their children. We collected data from 1,029 fathers who had at least one child under the age of 18. The survey was distributed by nine of our Center for Work & Family member companies as well as through social media and our CWF list of contacts. All in all, fathers from 286 different organizations participated in the survey – 58% of participants came from the nine member companies that included accounting firms, healthcare product organizations, insurance companies and one university. The remaining 42% worked at a wide variety of organizations. The large majority (91%) of the respondents came from the United States. As our international sample is small and is not representative of the various countries, we have chosen to focus on the U.S. respondents for the remainder of this section.

The U.S. respondents were primarily married (97%), employed when their last child was born (96%), professional workers (95%), and well educated (95% held 4-year college degrees and more than half of those also had Master's Degrees or Doctoral Degrees).

Within the U.S. population of our study,

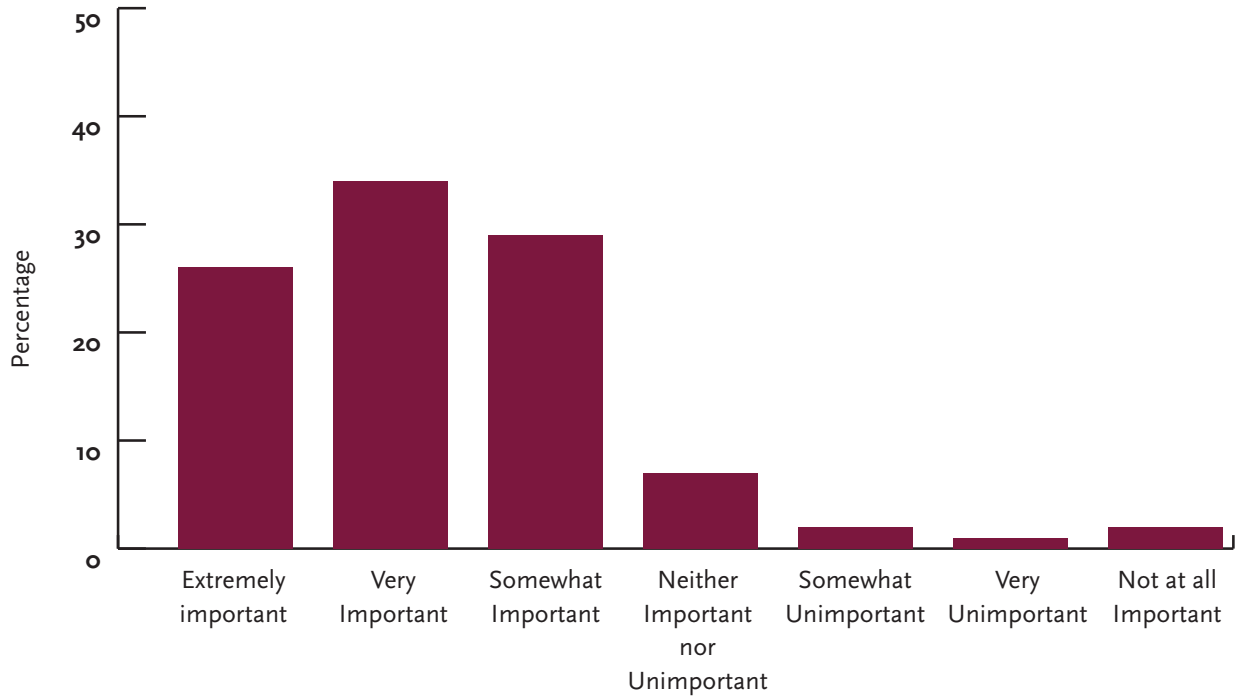
- 35% of the fathers had one child; 41% had two children; 15% had three children; 7% had four children; 3% had more than four children
- 63% of the spouses/partners were employed at the time their last child was born; 37% were not
- 29% of the fathers were in the Millennial generation (ages 15-33); 65% were Gen X (ages 34-49); 6% were Baby Boomers (ages 50-68)
- 81% were White; 7% were Asian or Pacific Islander; 5% were Black; 5% were Hispanic; and 2% identified themselves as other
- 67% had access to paid paternity leave or paid parental leave; 33% did not.

This percentage of fathers who have access to paid paternity/parental leave (67%) is much higher than one would find in a random sample, primarily due to the nine CWF member companies that chose to participate in the study. Although the majority of study participants worked for organizations that offered paid paternity or parental leave to fathers, a 2012 study for the Department of Labor reported that only 20% of employees in the U.S. worked at worksites that offered paid paternity leave to all or most of their employees (FMLA, 2012).

How important is it to offer paid paternity or parental leave in the U.S.?

We asked the fathers "**If you were considering a new job and you were considering having another child at some point in the future, how important would it be that the employer provides paid paternity leave or paid parental leave to its fathers?**"

Chart #1: Importance of paid paternity leave



In total 89% of respondents indicated it was important for employers to provide paid paternity or paid parental leave; 60% of the respondents indicated it was extremely important or very important, and 29% felt it was somewhat important. Those who currently have paternity leave felt more strongly about this than those who did not. Fathers from the Millennial generation felt most strongly about this (93% said it was extremely, very or somewhat important), Gen X fathers somewhat less (88%) and Boomers least strongly (77%).

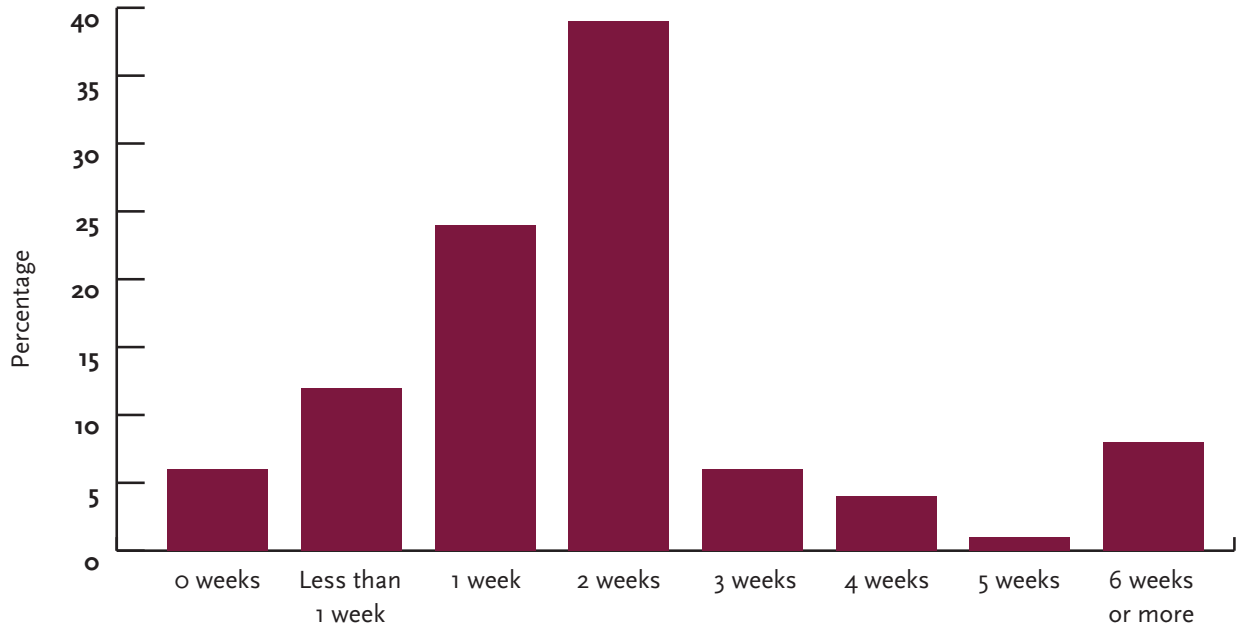
Global Spotlight: Slovenia

The vast majority of fathers take paid paternity leave in **Slovenia**, which can be seen as progressive for a country characterized by traditional attitudes toward men's absorption in work and women's primary responsibility for childcare. In 2011, 78% of fathers took up to 15 days of paternity leave; however, only 21% of fathers took additional paternity leave and only 7% of fathers took any part of the available shared parental leave.

How many weeks off do fathers actually take?

The average amount of time off taken by fathers in the survey was approximately two weeks. Chart 2 shows the distribution of different amounts of time off taken by the fathers.

Chart #2: How many weeks did you take off after the birth or adoption of your last child?



The amount of leave taken was a combination of paternity leave (54%), parental leave (13%), Vacation/PTO (51%), Holiday time (6%), and sick time or personal absence days (combined 4%).

There are strong correlations between the supportiveness of the workplace culture and immediate manager, and the number of weeks that fathers took off. On average the greater the support for fathers taking time off after the birth of their children, the more time that fathers took off. Although our pool of data for hourly workers is very limited, in general hourly workers found their workplace cultures and managers to be less supportive than salaried workers and were more likely to take no time off or less than one week off than the professional workers.

We noted several other factors that appear to influence the amount of time that fathers take off.

- Not surprisingly, there was an extremely strong correlation between pay and the amount of time off taken. Fathers were more likely to take time off when it was paid.
- Interestingly, the more children fathers had the lower the number of weeks they took off.
- On average, Millennial and Gen X fathers took more time off than Baby Boomer fathers.
- There was also a strong relationship between the duration of paid paternity leave or parental leave offered and the number of weeks that fathers actually took off.

Chart #3: Time off taken by fathers with varying amounts of available paid paternity leave

	No Paid Paternity Leave	1 Week of Paid Paternity Leave	2 Weeks of Paid Paternity Leave	4 Weeks of Paid Paternity Leave	6 Weeks of Paid Paternity Leave
Took no time off	11%	1%	4%	0%	2%
Took less than 1 week	21%	12%	5%	6%	0%
Took 1 week	34%	49%	13%	6%	2%
2 weeks	23%	26%	64%	29%	28%
3 weeks	3%	7%	7%	6%	8%
4 weeks	2%	1%	3%	41%	8%
5 weeks	0%	0%	1%	6%	3%
6 weeks	1%	0%	2%	0%	45%
Took more than 6 weeks	4%	4%	1%	6%	7%

Chart #3 shows the amount of time off taken by fathers who had varying amounts of paid paternity or parental leave available to them. For example, in the column labeled 'No Paid Paternity Leave', you can see that 11% of fathers who did not have paternity leave available took no time off, 21% took less than one week off, 34% took off a week and 23% took off two weeks. The remaining 10% took off three or more weeks. Fathers with one week of paternity leave available to them clearly took off more time on average than those who did not have any paid leave.

Those with two weeks of paternity leave available tended to take off two weeks (64% took off two weeks). Those with four weeks available tended to take off four weeks (41%), and those with six weeks available tended to take off six weeks (45%). This data strongly supports the idea that fathers will take advantage of the policies made available to them. It is also interesting to note that those with four weeks and those with six weeks of paid leave both had a common second tendency to take two weeks off – 29% and 28% respectively. Perhaps their work demands were such that taking more time off was not feasible, they felt that two weeks were sufficient, or they felt that two weeks was the most appropriate amount of time to take in their corporate culture.

How do fathers decide how much time off to take?

In addition to the amount of paid paternity or parental leave available, there are a number of other factors that influence the decision of how much time off fathers take. It seemed that the fathers were being pulled in two directions. On one side, approximately half of the survey participants said that they were affected by their desire to be active co-parents and wanting to spend as much time as possible with their families. Yet more than 40% said the decision was affected by pressures at work such as impending deadlines, current projects or the amount of time it would take to catch up when they returned to work. Half reflected on this balancing act, saying the decision was based on the amount of time they thought would be appropriate given their work and family circumstances.

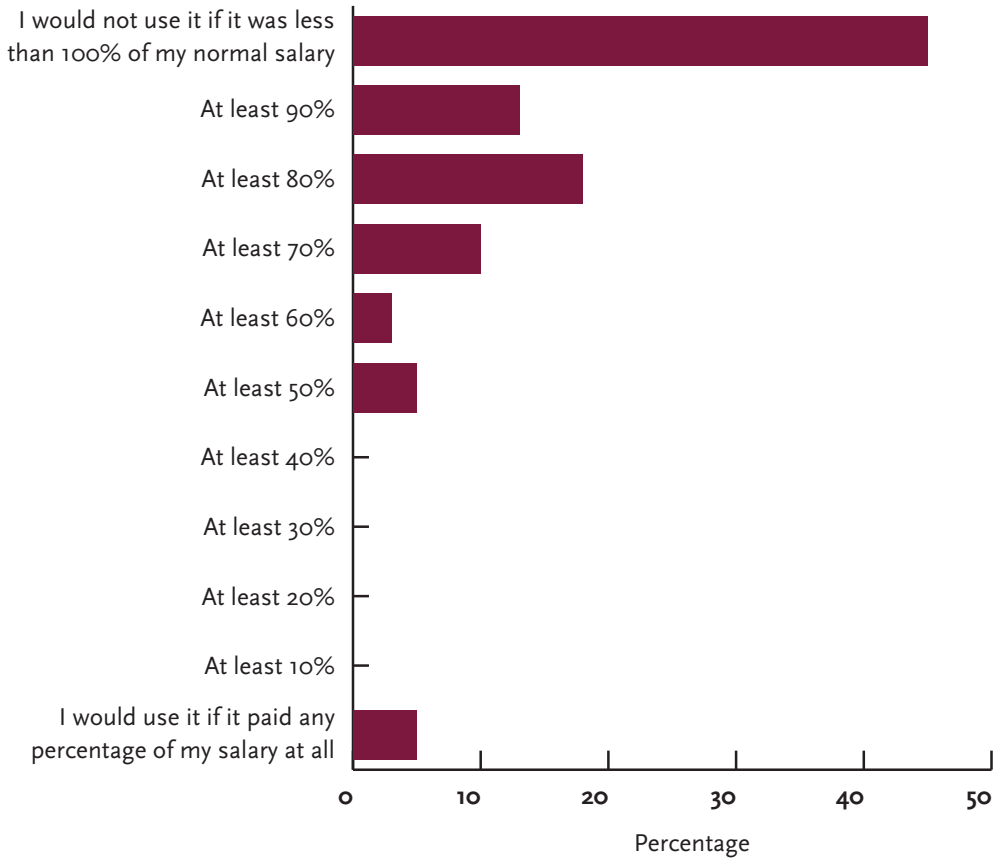
Other factors that played an important role were the amount of paid time off available (either vacation time or paid paternity/parental leave), the employment status of the spouse, the amount of family and other child care support available, and other employer factors such as the unwritten expectations for how much time off it is appropriate to take or the stigma associated with taking more time off from work.

We asked the fathers who did not have access to paid paternity or parental leave whether they would have taken more time off if they had access to these types of leave. Ninety-one percent said they would have taken more time. Of the nine percent who would not have, their primary reasons related to demands at work and the feeling that additional time off would have had a negative impact on work projects, clients or co-workers.

How important is it to be paid for the time off?

Most fathers felt it was very important to be paid for the time off they take after the birth of their children. We asked "**In order for you to make use of paternity leave or parental leave, what percentage of your normal salary would need to be paid?**"

Chart #4: Importance of pay rate in utilizing paternity or parental leave



The large majority (86%) of respondents said they would not make use of paternity leave or parental leave unless at least 70% of their salaries were paid, and 45% said compensation needed to be at 100%. Those who do not currently have paid paternity or parental leave available responded very similarly on this question to those who do.

These findings may be a reflection of the fathers' current circumstances:. In our sample, 85% of the fathers were paid for all of their time off, either through vacation pay, paid paternity/parental leave, or use of holidays or personal days. Slightly less than 6% were paid for some of the time off and just under 10% were not paid for any of the duration of the leave.

In addition to pay we asked the fathers if they received any other benefits or financial support related to the birth or adoption of their latest child. Ordered by number of responses, the list included: baby gifts, lactation support (such as breast pumps, counseling), baby showers, information related to child birth or parenting, adoption assistance, baby bonuses, and parenting and/or child birth classes. The last two items were much less common than the others.

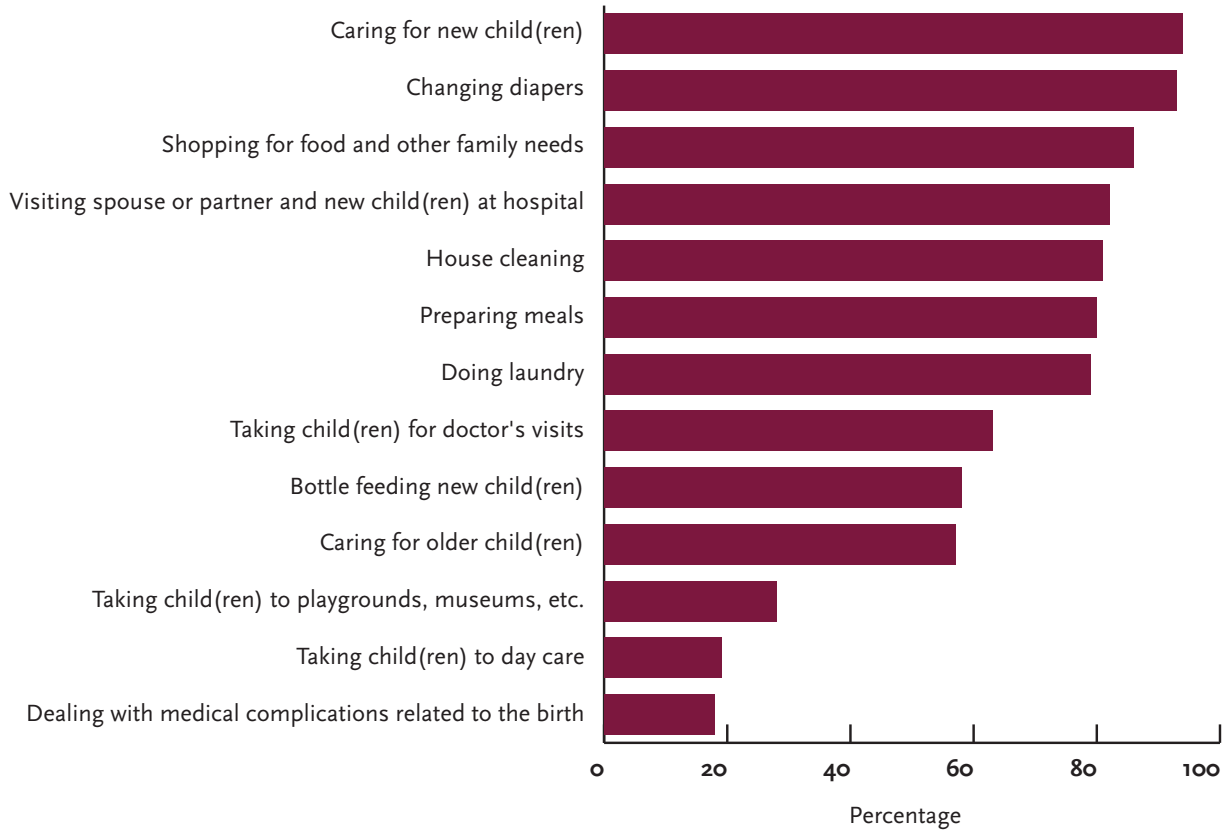
How do fathers spend their time off immediately following the birth?

With Their Families

There are often questions asked about what fathers do during their time off after the birth of their children. Are they active supporters of their families or are they taking time for themselves, perhaps playing golf or video games? We conducted a qualitative study with 49 fathers to find out the types of activities that fathers typically perform during this time. The list of activities in Chart #5 was developed based on this qualitative study and the response numbers are taken from the current quantitative study.

More than 90% of the fathers reported that they spent time caring for their new children and changing diapers. Over 80% said that they performed household tasks such as food shopping, house cleaning, preparing meals and doing laundry. Nearly two thirds of the participants have more than one child, and much of their time was also spent in attending to the needs of the older children. Well over half reported taking children for doctor's visits and caring for older children. It is clear that the fathers that we sampled are indeed taking an active role in caring for their children and doing housework.

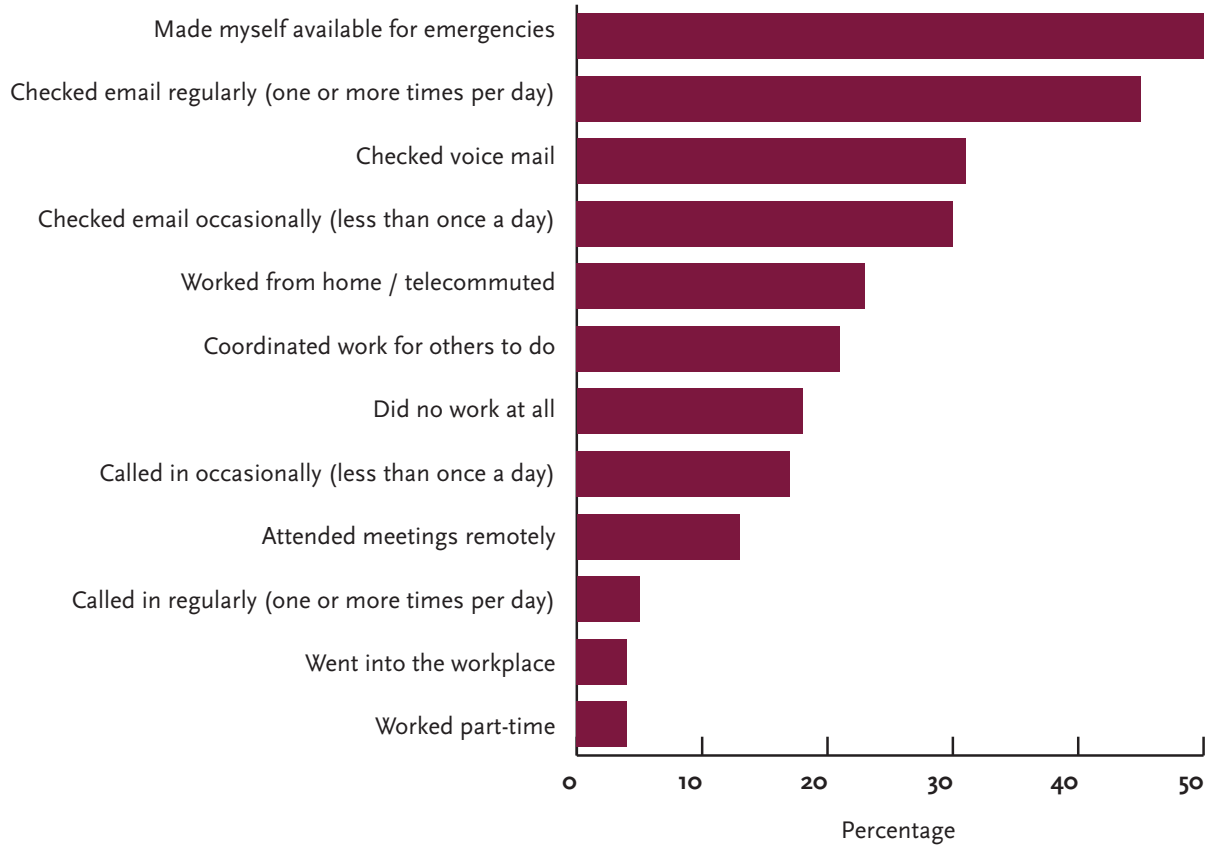
Chart #5: Fathers' family activities during time off after birth



At Work

About half of the fathers also said that they performed some work for their employers during their time off with their families. Chart #6 shows the work-related activities that they performed during this leave period. The overwhelming majority stayed connected to their employers in some way, with 50% making themselves available for emergencies and 45% checking email regularly. Only 18% of fathers reported that they did no work at all during their paternity leave.

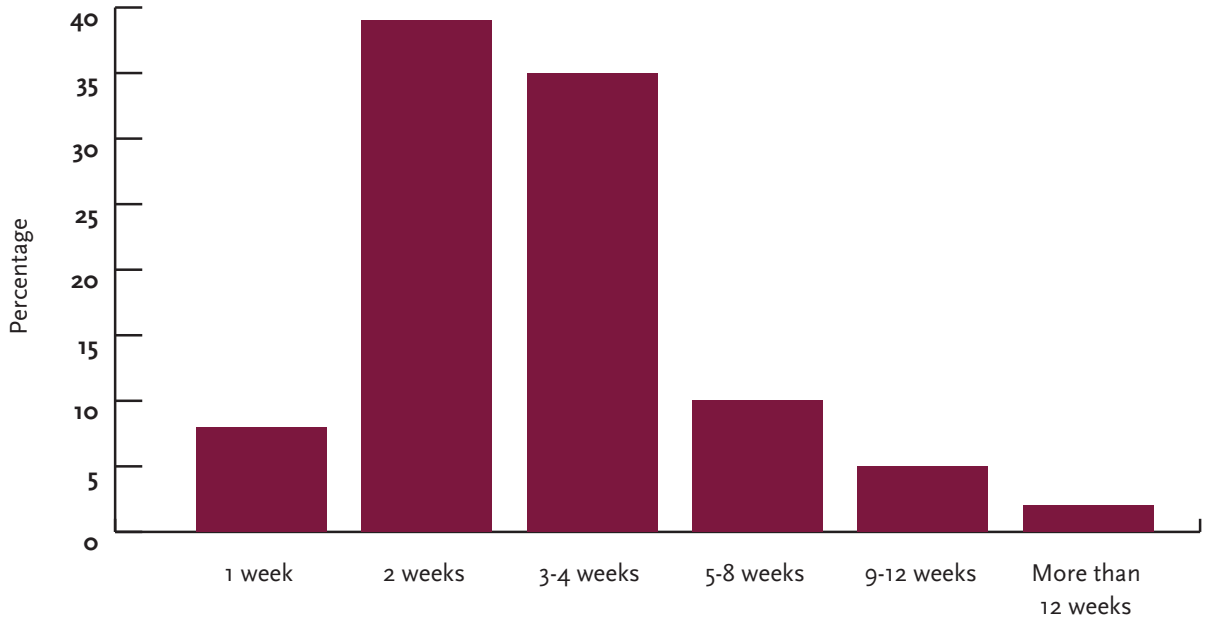
Chart #6: Fathers' work activities during time off after birth



What is the right amount of paternity/parental leave to offer to U.S. fathers?

We asked our study participants the following question. "**Balancing work and family needs, what do you feel is an appropriate amount of paternity leave or paid parental leave for employers to offer to fathers?**" Less than 1% said that it shouldn't be offered or that less than one week should be offered. Chart #7 shows the remaining 99% of responses.

Chart #7: Amount of paid paternity leave or parental leave that should be offered



As can be seen from Chart #7, 74% of the fathers in the study recommended that two weeks or three to four weeks of paid paternity leave be provided. Baby boomers were significantly lower in their expectations for how much time should be offered than Millennial and Gen X fathers.

Global Spotlight: Iceland

In Iceland fathers are granted the longest nontransferable right to family leave in the world. By 2009, 96% of fathers in Iceland took leave, for an average of 99 days. Fathers take one-third of all family leave days taken by parents, also the highest in the world. The most common pattern of leave-taking is for the parents to be home together the first month after childbirth, and then mothers are home alone for two additional months before they return to work. At that point, fathers tend to take their remaining two months of leave, although they are more likely than mothers to take leave in more than one block.

What would be the ideal arrangement for taking the time off?

Only 20% of the study participants felt that all of the time off should be taken consecutively beginning with the birth of their children. More than 75% preferred the option to take the paid time off when it was most needed after the birth, within a specified period of time such as six months. For example, over a six month period after the birth of their child, they could take two weeks at the beginning and then additional days off as needed up to the maximum amount allowed.

A number of respondents suggested that the time off should be used within one year rather than six months. One person commented that time off could be delayed and not necessarily start immediately following the birth. Several fathers suggested that it would make sense to have the time available after their wives' maternity leave ended.

A Question of Philosophy

We also asked the fathers a somewhat philosophical question. "**Do you feel fathers should have as much paid time off after their children's birth as mothers do? (excluding any time needed for medical recovery by the mother)**". Their responses were somewhat evenly distributed: 43% answered 'yes' and 57% answered 'no'.

The men's comments on their responses provide some excellent insights into their thoughts on this question, as well as how they feel about paternity/parental leave in general. Interestingly, many of the fathers who answered 'no' had quite similar thoughts to those that answered 'yes' which indicates a lot of common middle ground on this issue.

On the 'yes' side many fathers mentioned the changing role of fathers. Expectations for fathers to be highly involved with their children have increased and fathers are responding to these expectations. They see their peers being actively involved and often their spouses are looking for more equity in their relationships. There is increasing evidence that developing bonds with children at an early age improves the likelihood of a stronger relationship later in life (Lamb, 2010).

> *After taking three weeks off with my second child, the amount of bonding that occurred with my entire family started a strong foundation for our new family going forward. My wife and I still recall how wonderful the time was for everyone.*

There was broad support for paid parental leave that can be shared by both spouses. Often both parents are working professionals, and need to split the time off in a manner that maximizes time with family and minimizes impact on work and career. It was also suggested that fathers can and should play a more active and supportive role after their children are born.

> *Mothers need time for their bodies to recover. It would be nice to be home with the mother to assist during this period which work sometimes doesn't consider.*

On the 'no' side the fathers listed the important medical and physiological differences that suggest that women should have more paid time off than men, citing both the need to recover physically and emotionally as well as the requirement to breast feed. There were also some comments about the roles of mothers and fathers.

> *Mothers tend to have more responsibilities than dads when it comes to children. I think dads should have paid time, but I don't believe it has to be completely equal.*

There was clear acknowledgment on both sides that deciding which parent should have more time off depends on the situation, suggesting that a father who is the primary caregiver should have more time off. Some companies provide different amounts of time off depending on which parent is the primary caregiver. Although this is a more non-gendered approach, it can present a challenge for couples that want to share equally in the caregiving as neither would technically be the "primary" caregiver.

There was also general agreement that fathers deserve more paid time off then they commonly receive. Most comments on this suggested time off in the range of two to four weeks. Current business realities present constraints on what some men feel would be ideal, and are an important consideration.

> *From a business owner standpoint though how do businesses afford that? Is it possible to purchase insurance policies that cover wages during that period? It may sound silly but since a huge majority of businesses are small businesses and not F500 companies, we need to find a way to properly budget for it without negatively impacting lifestyle or competitiveness.*

The importance of flexible work arrangements was raised as well, and could provide a useful addition to paternity and parental leave that meets both business needs and the needs of the fathers. Indeed, 95% of the fathers we surveyed indicated that it is extremely, very, or somewhat important that an employer provides and actively supports flexible work arrangements, with 79% reporting that this is extremely or very important.

> *Flexible work arrangements were/are the most important factor to me. In my situation I was not needed at home full time I needed time to help my wife with the new baby and to help care for my other child, but this was not a full time need. So being able to balance those needs with continuing to fulfill my work/project obligations was key on a day-to-day basis. Reduced work hours during the first weeks of the new baby is important but complete time off is not.*

Summary of Findings

In our study 89% of the respondents indicated it was important for employers to provide paid paternity or paid parental leave. Fathers need this time to bond with their newborn or adopted children and to support their spouses and older children. About three quarters of the fathers in the study recommended that 2-4 weeks of paid paternity leave be provided, believing that was the right amount of time to balance their needs to be active co-parents with their needs to be important contributors at work.

A large majority of the respondents said they would not make use of paternity leave or parental leave unless at least 70% of their salaries were paid, and forty-five percent said compensation needed to be 100%. There was also strong support for having the ability to take the paid paternity time off when it was most needed, not necessarily in consecutive weeks immediately following the birth. This is particularly true for longer leaves. Fathers also cited the importance of flexible work options to facilitate their continued caregiving role with their children.

Based on the data presented throughout this section, it is clear that parental circumstances vary greatly, as do fathers' expectations and needs, and both company policies and governmental legislation need to be flexible enough to take these variations into account.

Let us now shift our attention to organizations and what they are doing to support the needs of fathers.

Benchmarking of Company Paternity Leave Policies

One of the goals of this study was to survey the landscape of what companies are offering to their employees in the way of paternity and parental leave. The Boston College Center for Work & Family contacted the members of our corporate partner organizations to request that they complete a survey informing us about the policies, practices, and culture of their organizations as they relate to paternity leave and parental leave for fathers. We obtained 30 responses from these organizations that represent a broad range of industries including accounting, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, hospitality, education, insurance and financial services.

The large majority of responses came from HR professionals with responsibilities focusing on the United States. We also received two responses from global partners in Brazil and Switzerland which revealed policies in their specific countries.

To provide some context for the types of companies who responded to the survey, organizations that join CWF tend to be quite committed to family-friendly workplaces. Therefore, the survey results may not be generalizable to the overall population of companies across the United States and globally. The organizations included in this study may have more extensive and generous paternity and parental leave policies than companies in general.

As a point of comparison to our survey results, it is interesting to review the results of a larger survey of employee benefits conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). 15% of the 500+ organizations in the 2013 SHRM Employee Benefits Survey offered paid paternity leave. In 2010, 74% of Working Mother's Best Companies provided paternity leave to birth fathers (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2011).

Paternity Leave Policies

In our benchmarking survey 18 organizations (or 60%) offer paid paternity leave or paid parental leave specific to fathers (in addition to FMLA), while 40% did not offer this benefit.

Among the 60% that do offer paternity leave, we asked when their policy was initially launched. Answers ranged from the mid-1990's to 2014, showing a large span of when companies decided to implement this benefit for employees. The year 2007 was most commonly cited, although the responses varied widely over the nearly 20-year span.

Duration of leave

We asked survey participants how much time is available to new fathers for paternity or parental leave and discovered **a wide range between three days and 12 weeks of paid paternity or parental leave**.

- For policies that didn't differentiate between primary and secondary caregivers, fathers were given an **average of two weeks of paid leave**
- For policies that did have designated provisions for fathers who were primary or secondary caregivers, **fathers as primary caregivers were given an average of about eight weeks, which was approximately three times as much as the leave offered to secondary caregivers**

These organizations have moved beyond seeing gender as the designation of who in a family will be the primary or secondary caregiver. They generally rely on an "honor system" of self-reporting from the father as to his caregiver status.

With regards to pay, all respondents to our survey who offered leave reported that fathers were compensated at **100% of their regular earnings** for the duration of the paternity/parental leave.

Utilization and requests

In the media, and anecdotally, we have noted an increase in conversations about the perceived acceptability of taking paternity leave. To validate this, we wanted to obtain input from the Human Resource professionals who would be monitoring these requests. Among our respondents, **nearly half indicated that they had been experiencing increased utilization of, or requests for, paternity or parental leave for fathers**. A small number noted that since the start of the program, heavy use rates have been prevalent. One respondent noted that **Millennials have been much more likely to take leave**.

Organizational Spotlight: American Express

At American Express, we recognize the challenges our employees face managing work and family, which is why we're proud to have the Parents at Amex, an employee-formed network dedicated to supporting working parents across the company. The network provides working families relevant parenting /work-life programs and resources, including the Fatherhood Breakfast Series. Through this series, employees can hear from leaders in the organization who are fathers about staying connected with their children, being involved in their activities, learning what worked for them, and hearing their personal struggles to find their work-life fit. The program is attended by both fathers and mothers, even single employees who are considering having children.

Plans to modify policy

We asked whether the responding organizations had plans to modify their paternity leave or parental leave policy for fathers in 2014 and the reasoning behind that decision. Over 80% of respondents indicated that they did not plan to modify their policies. Some had recently increased the benefits they offered, while others reported that other benefits needed to be prioritized at this time. The remaining respondents indicated that they are always reviewing their benefits, but did not specify imminent plans to alter their current policies.

Ideal amount of time identified by HR Professionals

We asked the HR professionals responding to the survey for their opinions on what they believed would be the ideal amount of time and compensation for paternity leave or parental leave for fathers at their organizations. Responses ranged from one week to eight weeks. Half of the respondents indicated that two weeks paid leave would be ideal. There were quite a few responses in the four to six week range; on average, members asserted that **between three and four weeks was appropriate**.

Organizational Spotlight: EY

In the early 2000s Ernst & Young LLP, the US member firm of the global EY organization, was first among the Big 4 professional services firms to offer paid parental leave for men and women. The firm rolled out paid parental leave benefits because the organization wanted to do more — for women and men. Today, the generous fully-paid parental leave package includes:

- 14 paid weeks off for birth moms
- 2 weeks paid for fathers, with 6 paid weeks for primary care dads and adoptive parents
- 4 additional weeks of time off beyond what the Family and Medical Leave Act requires

Dads have a range of options for how they take this time. EY finds that some men take two weeks when the baby is born, then another four weeks when mom goes back to work or school full-time. Nearly all eligible men take parental leave, as is the case for EY women. In fact, between 500 and 600 plus men at the firm take paid parental leaves each year — which is roughly consistent with the number of women who take paid parental leaves annually.

In addition to parental leave, EY supports working parents by offering formal flexible work arrangements (FWAs), day-to-day flexibility, professional networks, and its new Career and Family Transitions coaching program. The latter supports select men and women welcoming a new baby through individual and group coaching sessions held before and after the birth or adoption of their child.

Internal research suggests these efforts positively impact engagement. EY periodically conducts a Global People Survey to measure the engagement of its more than 175,000 professionals, and Ernst & Young LLP's 2013 survey included questions regarding child care responsibilities for US professionals for the first time. Results indicated the firm's working parents expressed the highest levels of engagement among all professionals, which can likely be attributed to the aforementioned programs as well as the flexible and inclusive workplace culture.

Organizational Culture

We wanted to delve further into the cultural factors that impact men's perceived abilities to avail themselves fully of paternity leave policies. We asked HR respondents in companies that provide paternity leave whether they believe their organizational culture supports men who choose to use paternity leave or parental leave.

The overwhelming number of member respondents thought their organizations were supportive of fathers taking paternity leave. This was reasoned through:

- Communication to managers about the importance of accepting paternity leave policies
- Increases in men utilizing the time off since its implementation
- Managers' support for leave policies
- Lack of requests to alter the amount of time provided

For organizations that raised issues of cultural difficulty the reasons noted were:

- Different treatment of paternity leave in different parts of the organization based on the subcultures
- Women supporting paternity leave more than men and younger people being more supportive than older workers
- Managerial issues, such as coverage and customer service
- General mixed feelings about paid time off for new fathers

We asked what barriers existed for fathers wishing to take paternity leave or parental leave. Common barriers identified were:

- general perception that it would be frowned upon despite policy
- women being seen as primary caregivers
- paying fathers while they weren't working
- heavy workload
- team expectations
- job role/ responsibilities
- time of year (e.g. accounting firms)
- difficulties of determining secondary vs. primary caregiver role.

Most respondents (85%) had not developed a "business case" for paternity leave or parental leave. One organization's rationale for the development of their policy was to provide men and women, as well as birth and adoptive parents, with a universal policy. Other respondents noted that the organization just "felt" or "recognized" that it was a necessary next step for talent retention. Respondents also noted that the policy development seemed to follow naturally from trends in fathers taking time off after births or adoptions.

Global Spotlight: Portugal

Since 2009 Portugal has embarked on an ambitious effort to actively promote women's full employment and fathers' participation in early childcare with a system that offers both a "carrot and a stick." Portugal is one of the few countries to require fathers to take paid parental leave after childbirth and offers bonus leave to couples where fathers are "home alone" for part of the family leave. Parental leave is financed two-thirds by contributions from employers and one-third by employees, all paid into the Social Security system. Portugal compensates fathers for leave-taking at a higher standard than elsewhere in the world, which removes economic barriers to fathers staying home. Before "fathers' only parental leave" was made obligatory in 2004, only 36% of fathers took this form of leave. By 2012, 81% of fathers took the obligatory portion of the leave with an additional 69% taking the optional days.

Future plans for paternity leave

For companies who do not currently offer paternity leave, we asked whether they plan to offer paternity leave or parental leave specifically for fathers in the future.

The majority of member respondents were unsure of how they would proceed in the future in regards to paternity and parental leave, while one was clear that their organization would offer paternity leave as a future benefit. Several respondents indicated that they would be reviewing the results of this report to help them determine their approach.

Half of the respondents who do not currently offer paternity leave indicated that their organizations have been receiving more inquires or requests from fathers regarding paternity or parental leave in the past two years.

When asked about what barriers prevent the organization from implementing paternity leave, organizations noted cost, workplace culture, coverage while the father is on leave, and the difficulty of creating infrastructure to deal with implementing paternity leave.

Other supports for fathers

We asked whether organizations provided any other supports for fathers, beyond paternity or parental leave. Only 13% indicated that they have father's groups at their organization. An additional 29% offer parent groups that are not specific to mothers or fathers. One respondent reported specifically that fathers were active in their parenting group, making up 50% of the total population of the group. Many of the organizations also reported that they have flexible work arrangements that allow employees to better balance their work and personal lives.

Organizational Spotlight: Deloitte Dads, Deloitte Canada

Deloitte's corporate culture and belief system has traditionally been supportive of parents, and informal interactions between senior level men advising new fathers at the firm were common. A number of fathers sought to formalize and expand on these relationships by developing an official employee network with a mandate to support fathers who want to continue their career trajectory in the practice while maintaining an active parenting role.

The group offers programming in four areas.

- **Awareness building and advocacy:** internal forums where they work with senior leaders to run sessions where senior leaders offer advice on how to be successful as a father and professional in a safe environment
- **Education:** guest speakers and industry experts on topics like parenting and time management
- **Fun:** organizing family-focused events such as viewing the Toronto Santa Claus parade from the corporate office boardroom
- **Make the world a better place:** organizing people to raise funds and goods for children's charities through the United Way

The **Deloitte Dads** have had tremendous success in the greater Toronto area, now with several hundred participants, and hopes to build on their momentum and expand to share their experience across Canada and with other global member firms.

Conclusions

The responses to our survey represent self-selected organizations that had something to say about paternity leave, and cannot be generalized to all organizations. We can make inferences about what leading companies are beginning to do in regards to paid leave policies for fathers. The trend for these organizations is to offer paid paternity/parental leave at 100% of salary for an average of two weeks, with some providing four or six weeks to fathers who are identified as primary caregivers.

Common barriers to implementing a paternity or parental leave policy for fathers included: cost, work coverage for the father while he is on leave, and in some instances cultural factors. We also observed a trend toward more gender-neutral framing of parental leave, using terms like "primary caregiver" and "secondary caregiver" in place of mother and father.

We appear to be at a transition point where many organizations (as well as governments) are evaluating the need for and feasibility of offering paid leave to fathers. The next section of the report presents a global perspective on paternity leave, looking at what other countries offer and what the implications of their policies have been on employees, families, organizations and society.

Organizational Spotlight: Herman Miller

Herman Miller is a recognized innovator in contemporary interior furnishings, solutions for health-care environments, and related technologies and services. The company is known for its people-centric employment policies and family-supportive work culture that offers flexible working options to its more than 5,000 employees.

In the past decade the company has been listed as one of Fortune's "Most Admired Companies" and "100 Best Companies to Work for in America." Most recently the company was named to Working Mother's magazine "100 Best Companies" list. The company offers a competitive benefits package; a focus on health and wellness that includes on-site clinics and on-site fitness centers; family friendly events like a company picnic; and other unique perks and benefits.

Herman Miller's paid paternity leave benefit allows new fathers to take up to two weeks of time off, paid at 100% of salary, following the birth or adoption of a child. The benefit is available to all employees upon hire, and is offered to both exempt and non-exempt employees who work more than 20 hours per week.

Global Approaches and Policies

In spite of its wealth and spirit of innovation, the U.S. has failed to adopt any form of national paid leave program for parents. In fact, it was not until 1993 that the Family and Medical Leave Act (or FMLA) was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Clinton. While this legislation was a step forward in the policy landscape for working parents in America, it was a modest step at best. But even this small step came with a number of caveats – for example the individual has to have worked for at least one year for his/her employer and must be employed at a worksite with 50 employees or more. This rule alone limited the universality of the law to approximately 60% of American workers (FMLA p.21).

To counter the effects of the lack of national policy on parental leave in the U.S., some leading companies have created more favorable leave policies as benefits for their working parents. Companies that offer paid paternity leave for fathers, currently estimated at 15-20% of companies nationally, generally offer leave ranging from 1-2 weeks. In the past decade, there have been a handful of states that have enacted mandatory paid leave policies for mothers and fathers. Rhode Island recently joined California and New Jersey as the third state in the nation to adopt paid parental leave. See the U.S. section in Appendix 2 for additional information.

The United States stands in stark contrast to its global peers, many of whom have legislated both paid maternity and paternity leave. In this section, we explore the policies outside of the United States and their varying success in encouraging fathers to take their leave. We examine both trends that are effectively promoting leave-taking but also acknowledge how different countries have been able to implement policies with varying rates of success. Consequently, while there are fundamental needs for adequate paternity and parental leave, the ways in which policies encourage fathers to participate are numerous and flexible.

A Review of Global Approaches

The International Leave Network conducted a study of 34 developed nations and their leave policies (Moss, 2013). See the appendices at the end of this report for additional details. Among these cases, the United States was one of two countries that failed to offer some form of paid leave for fathers through statutory paternity or parental clauses, the other being Switzerland. Of the countries that did offer paid paternity leave, best practices emerged that resulted in increased take-up by new dads. Using data drawn from the International Leave Network and the Council of Europe's Family Policy Database we can examine global trends in paternity leave legislation and fathers' participation (Council of Europe).

This analysis includes countries that provide paternity leave as well as countries that have father-specific clauses in their parental leave, functioning similarly to statutory paternity legislation. For example, Portugal recently redefined paternity leave as a new clause within parental leave. It is important to note that take-up rates by fathers are specific to leave provided by the government and not those provided by individual employers. We analyzed these data to explore which legislative policies led to higher participation rates.

Chart #9: Who Funds Father's Parental Leave?

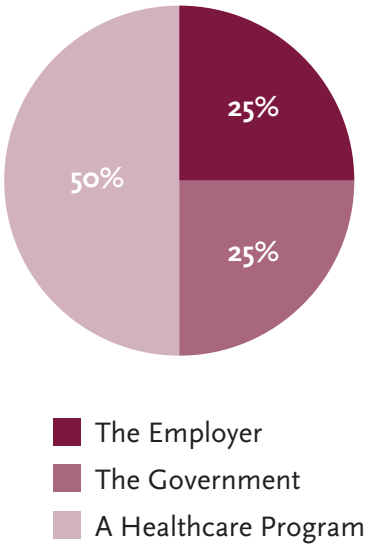
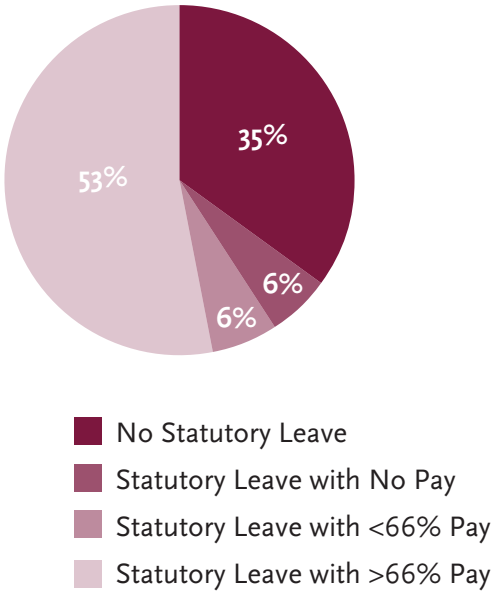


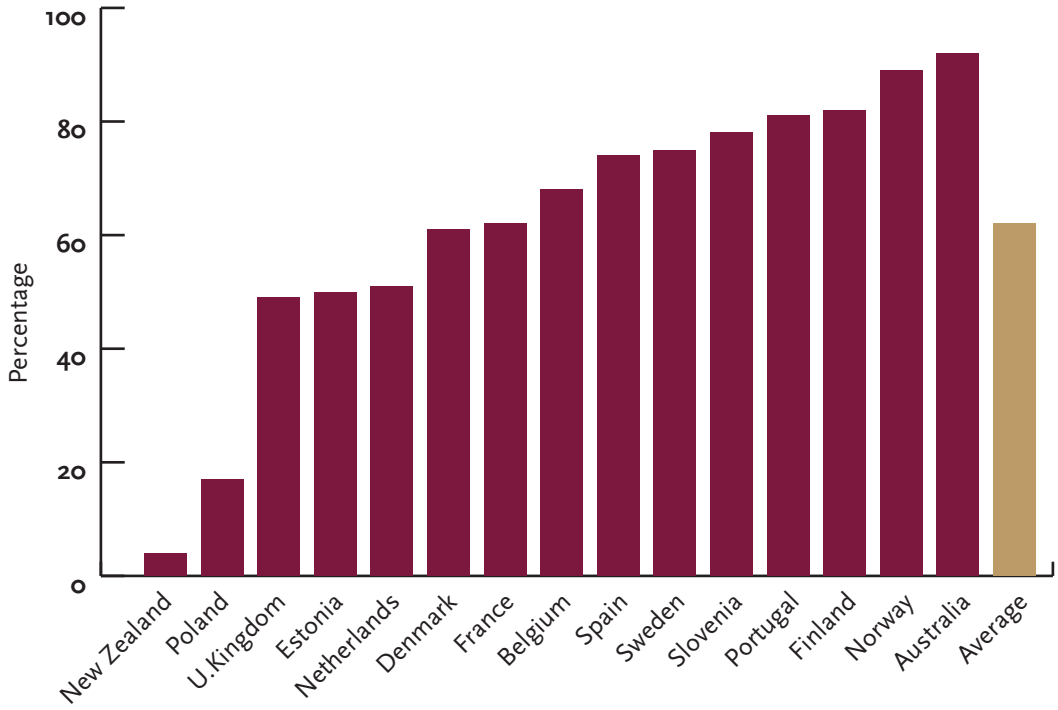
Chart #8: Paternity Legislation in 34 Countries



Across the 34 countries, the majority provided paternity leave with a high pay rate, defined by the Leave Network as greater than 66% of normal salary (Moss, 2013). Countries with less than 66% compensation still saw notable fathers' participation, however, it was significantly less than those with a high pay rate. Among those that provided paternity leave, the most common source of funding was a healthcare program comprised of employer and employee contributions as well as general taxation funds. Paternity leave funded fully by the employer or the government were less common. The average legislated paternity leave was 1.8 weeks. However, fathers across the countries took an average of 2.2 weeks. This is similar to the average time taken by United States fathers in our own paternity leave survey. On average, 62% of eligible fathers took paternity leave or father-specific parental leave, showing that a little over half the men eligible for paternity leave are taking advantage of it. These participation rates may indicate that legislative regulation may not be enough to overcome cultural and workplace issues associated with paternity leave.

Chart #10: The Percentage of Men Using Statutory Paternity Leave

A high participatory rate doesn't indicate that fathers are readily using all the leave available. For example, with 82% participation, Finland has one of the highest take-up rates of all the countries and is known for particularly generous paternity and parental leave legislation (Haataja, 2009). Finland offers nine weeks of paternity leave and 6.1 weeks of pooled family leave. However, on average, Finnish fathers only take three weeks of paternity leave and are hesitant to use the shared parental leave (Moss 2013; Haas & Rostgaard, 2011). This is consistent with previous research that found that fathers felt uncomfortable taking time that mothers could have taken in order to be with the newborn and



consequently, avoid taking family-assigned time (McKay & Doucet, 2010). The Leave Network data indicate a similar trend with fathers reluctantly using family leave as compared with those in countries with legislative language that targets and specifically assigns leave for fathers within a parental leave clause. Similarly, low participation can be informative but misleading. New Zealand fathers were five times more likely to take paid employer leave than legislated unpaid leave, showing the importance of financial support in encouraging dads to use leave policies (Moss, 2013).

There is a significant correlation between the United Nations Gender Inequality Ranking for Countries and fathers' take-up of paternity leave or father-specific parental leave (Gender Inequality Index 2012). Countries with higher rankings of gender equity tend to see greater use of paternity or parental leave by fathers.

Government policies that directly encourage fathers to take more leave by providing well paid leave that is available only to fathers have seen increased participation. A variety of different approaches have been successful in encouraging leave-taking, demonstrating the flexible means through which effective policies can be implemented. For details on global paternity and parental leave clauses in more than 30 different countries, please see Appendix 1. For more detailed information on seven spotlighted countries, please see Appendix 2.

Global Spotlight: Japan

Japan is well-known as a nation where fathers work long hours to support mothers and children. Since the turn of the millennium, however, policymaking has taken a dramatic turn, in response to a plummeting birth rate. Policies now enable couples to follow a new model of family life, where fathers work fewer hours and mothers of young children are in the labor market. The government's 2010 Plan for Gender Equality includes specific goals for public sector fathers to take parental leave; the law also prohibits all fathers from working more than 150 hours per year overtime. Annual surveys are conducted on companies and individuals to trace progress in work-family reconciliation. Under the Act on the Advancement of Measures to Support Raising the Next Generation of Children (2003), employers are obliged to establish annual action plans for improving the employment environment to support balancing work and child-raising. The majority of employers now offer family-friendly benefits to fathers as well as mothers, including 1-5 days of paid paternity leave, reduced and flexible work hours.

Summary and Recommendations

Perhaps the most important point to be drawn from this study relates to the first question we reported on: How important is paid paternity or parental leave when considering a future employer? Of the more than 900 responses we received from the U.S. fathers who participated in the study, **89% rated paternity leave as somewhat, very or extremely important (with 60% rating it in the latter two categories.)** The fact that today's fathers rate this benefit as so crucial speaks to the changes we are seeing as they re-imagine their caregiving roles. From the company benchmarking study, we learned that many organizations see offering paternity leave as an important factor in retaining men in their organizations. About half of respondents indicated that they had been observing an increase in requests for paternity leave and that interest in and utilization of paternity leave by Millennials was particularly high.

The second important message from our data is that **being paid for the time off is extremely important to fathers**. Five out of six fathers in the U.S. said that they would only take time off if they were paid at least 70% of their salary and 45% wanted full salary during their leave. We found similar results internationally. In countries where the rate of pay for the time off was low, the use of these programs was also much lower. However, many countries that provided less than 100% but more than 66% compensation reported impressive participation rates by fathers.

Perhaps two important factors "carry the day" here, one biological and the other sociological. First, obviously women give birth, not men. As such, there is an undeniable, medical need for women to take time off for childbirth. For men, taking time off is still a matter of choice. Perhaps almost as importantly, men are still the primary breadwinners in the majority of two-parent households. Therefore, their salaries are seen as perhaps more necessary, especially if the mother is taking time off. So while men today show a greater desire to take time off with their newborns, they do not see taking that time off and losing a paycheck as viable, especially at a time when their partner is often not earning any income.

Nearly three quarters of the fathers believed that the most appropriate amount of time for fathers to have off for paternity leave is between two and four weeks. It seemed that two weeks was a timeframe that was in many fathers' minds as reasonable when balancing out the competing needs and desires of their home and their workplace. Even in organizations which offered four or six weeks of paid leave, a significant number of fathers took only two weeks off, feeling that was an appropriate timeframe or that the demands of their work made taking more time undesirable. There seems to be an implied social acceptance of a two-week leave (similar in length to a long vacation) that makes men more inclined to use it.

In our survey, **95% of dads rated flexibility as important, with 79% indicating that it is extremely or very important that their employer provides and actively supports flexible work arrangements**. While paternity leave is highly desirable in the initial months of a child's life, it is the availability of workplace flexibility that will allow fathers to continue the high level of engagement with their children over the years.

In our benchmarking study, organizations that offered paid leave provided fathers an average of two weeks at full salary. Some progressive organizations offered additional time (six to 8 weeks) if the father was named the "primary caregiver" in the family (most often after the mother returned to work).

It was interesting to note that **76% of fathers would prefer the option of not taking all their time off immediately following the birth of their children** when there are often other "pairs of hands" available to offer assistance. Fathers felt taking some of their time later would be more beneficial to their families.

A second benefit might also be allowing men to spend more time providing solo-care, an important way to develop men's caregiving skills. Delaying their time off could also ease the transition of their wives back into the workplace.

Our review of global policies indicates a growing support for paternity leave and the acknowledgment of the increased involvement of fathers as caregivers across the world. There is a wide variety of different paternity and parental leave legislation worldwide, but we were able to discern some common threads.

- Although some countries provide very generous paternity and parental leave policies, the average amount of paternity leave time that fathers actually take off is fairly similar to the U.S., 2.2 weeks.
- Among those countries that provided paternity leave, the most common source of funding was a healthcare program comprised of employer and employee contributions as well as general taxation funds. Paternity leave funded fully by the employer or the government were less common.
- On average, 62% of eligible fathers in the 34 countries studied took paternity leave or father-specific parental leave, showing that somewhat over half the men eligible for paternity leave are taking advantage of it.
- Countries with higher rankings of gender equity tend to see greater use of paternity or parental leave by fathers.

Recommendations for Fathers

It is quite clear from our various studies that most fathers want to be more involved in bringing up their children and in having more equitable child care arrangements with their spouses. Taking time off when children are born is a very important way to follow through on that commitment. With that thought in mind, here are our recommendations for fathers.

- **Take your leave!** Become familiar with the policies at your organization and discuss benefits and options with your manager and Human Resources. Take as much time as is feasible for your circumstances. Prepare for your leave in advance by working with your manager and colleagues to ensure coverage and a successful transition. Even if other fathers in your department or team have not taken leave, by taking full advantage of this benefit, you can lead the way for other fathers to feel more comfortable in spending the important first days with their own children. Consider a reduced or flexible schedule that will allow you to spend more time with family.
- **Be a proud father, in words and actions.** Although men may face a stigma for being vocal about their caregiving role, it is important that they make their voices heard both as parents and as leaders. As parents, fathers need to be vocal and active in terms of helping their employers know more about the important role they play in child rearing at home. Societal norms are changing, but it is still difficult for men to be open about how important being an active father is to them. The more we discuss these issues in the workplace and our lives, the more we "normalize" the important caregiving roles that fathers play.
- **Establish a parenting partnership with your spouse or significant other.** Men who seek to be shared-caregivers with their spouses or significant others should understand the critical role the earliest days of a child's life plays in bonding with their children, building confidence in their child care skills, and establishing their role as an equal partner in parenting. Spend as much time

bonding with and caring for your children as you are able to. Be willing to set traditional gender norms aside and negotiate new family roles with your partner. Have early and frequent conversations about how caregiving and household tasks can be accomplished as a team. Consider taking time off when your spouse/partner returns to work to ease the transition. Discuss your joint career goals and your parenting goals and how you can work together to accomplish them.

- **Start a father's group at your organization.** Whether a formal Employee Resource Group, or an informal monthly lunch gathering, developing relationships with other dads and parents in your organization can provide a forum to share ideas and support one-another. Inform expecting and new dads about the forum and invite them to join. Request that Human Resource representatives join one of the group's meetings to discuss enhancing current benefits and policies for fathers.

- **Be a supportive leader.** Men play an important role in setting the tone and culture within their organizations. Demonstrating that they support employees' full lives, including their commitment to their families, can contribute to a culture that allows employees to thrive.

- **Advocate for change** In the U.S., the lack of paid parental leave has been a problem that working families, and specifically working mothers, have struggled with for many years. Adding your voice to those who support more family-friendly workplace policies will influence not only individual employers but also state and national policies in this area, which are currently receiving renewed interest.

Recommendations for Organizations

It is clear that changing demographics are necessitating the increased involvement of fathers in caregiving for their children. As more of these involved fathers enter leadership roles, we would expect them to not only spend time with their own children, but also to recognize the importance of other fathers needing to do this. The traditional model of executive, fully career-centric man with a stay-at-home wife is no longer the image of most couples today.

Men are more and more likely to marry a woman who has a higher level of education and career aspirations than they do. Fathers are becoming the primary caregiver for their families more frequently than in the past. We envision that this trend will continue as women's success in higher education and climbing ladders in their organizations continues. Organizations that acknowledge and respect the multiple roles that fathers play today will reap their rewards in terms of loyalty, productivity, and long-term retention.

- **Offer paternity leave as part of your talent management strategy.** Organizations that offer parental leave policies and flexibility for fathers, recognizing that dads are parents too, will have advantages when it comes to attracting and retaining talented employees. In highly competitive fields such as the accounting industry and high technology (Silicon Valley) where the war for talent and the need for Millennial aged workers rages on, increasingly generous policies are being offered. Paid paternity leave is one way to stand out as an employer of choice. In the two surveys conducted in this study, fathers and HR practitioners generally agree that between two to four weeks is an appropriate amount of paternity leave for fathers who are not primary caregivers.

- **Build a business case for adding or expanding paid paternity leave.** Track and analyze current utilization of paternity leave policies, and use of PTO/vacation/sick leave by men after the birth of a child. Analyze your employee demographics; look at turnover data and exit interviews for evidence of men departing for reasons related to work-family balance. Consider a pulse survey or adding questions to your general employee satisfaction survey to better understand the needs

of your employees related to parental leave and flexibility. Consider what your competitors are doing to support their working fathers. Seek out executive champions who will vocally support and advocate for policies that better reflect the current and future needs of your workforce.

- **Make the paternity leave policies flexible.** Parental circumstances vary greatly, as do fathers' expectations. Policies that take these differences into account will likely be the most successful. Providing a basic amount of paid paternity leave, for example, two to four weeks, with the potential for additional time off based on family circumstances, would seem to meet most needs. This additional time off could be in the form of parental leave or reduced work hours. Allow fathers the flexibility to choose the time frame when taking leave that best meets their family needs (for example: right after birth, or when their spouse returns to work).

- **Embrace flexible work as a business strategy.** Paternity and parental leave are highly valued and important benefits for families in the short term, when a new baby arrives. Parental responsibilities remain as children become older and schedule control and flexibility assist parents in meeting both their professional and personal goals. Working from home, or staggering start and end times of the workday as needed, can alleviate some of the stresses of balancing work and family life. Leverage technology and results-focused performance goals to make flexible work options available to as many employees as possible, not just parents.

- **Understand the impact of men on women's advancement.** It is important for any organization that is truly committed to women's advancement to recognize that women's growth into roles of greater responsibility will be dependent not only on what happens in the workplace, but also at home. In order for women to achieve parity at work, it is critical that men be not just allowed, but encouraged to take a greater role in the raising and caring for their children. Until this is the case, mentoring, executive education targeted for women, and exhortations to "lean in" will not have their intended effect in developing women and tomorrow's organizational leaders.

- **Develop a supportive culture.** Finally, establishing a culture that respects employees as whole persons with full lives promotes a healthy, productive work environment. Given the demanding nature of most jobs, workplaces need to become more proactive and creative at work redesign so that work doesn't suffer when an employee is absent. Workplaces that are flexible, have more cross-training, more team-based work sharing, and an attitude that they can learn something from having to rearrange work (help develop new people for example) will be more father-friendly.

Global Spotlight: U.K.

U.K. fathers gained the right to paid paternity leave in 2003. Recent legislation has set the stage for what in the U.K. is regarded as a dramatic change in fathers' rights to parental leave. Currently, mothers are entitled to 39 weeks of maternity leave paid at 90% of their average earnings for the first 6 weeks and thereafter at $118 a week. To allow fathers to play a greater role in childrearing, in 2015 a more flexible form of parental leave is being established, called "shared parental leave." Mothers may transfer up to 37 weeks of leave to fathers (with the same pay structure as before). Fathers may take leave only in week-long blocks of time (i.e., not on a part-time basis). Parents will be able to take leave at the same time. One interesting feature of this system is that parents have access to "keep in touch days," whereby they can return to work for up to 10 days each while on parental leave without giving up their leave so that they can stay informed about workplace developments.

Recommendations for Legislators

While we note in the report that legislation is not a panacea for creating gender equity, attaining work-life balance, or increasing organizational acceptance of fathers as caregivers, there can be little doubt that effective legislation enables and ratifies fathers' active involvement in caregiving. As can be seen in the Appendices of this report, there is a wide range of national policies that address the issue of paternal leave. It is clear that an increasing number of developed nations are moving forward on this issue of paid parental leave for fathers.

The U.S. presents a special case and a special challenge on this front. No major economic power has been as slow to recognize the importance of providing leaves and financial support to parents, both mothers and fathers. Perhaps the model of "one state at a time" will be the way that the balance toward more family-friendly government policies builds toward a national movement (Milkman & Appelbaum, 2013).

As U.S. states and the federal government debate legislation like the Family Act and other paid leave statutes, the important role of fathers must be considered. When addressing the economic success of women and families, as many recent discussions and forums are striving to do, bringing men and fathers into the conversation is crucial. Many lessons can be learned from other countries that have developed paternity leave and parental leave policies (Haas & Rostgaard, 2011).

- We learn that statutory rights (government-provided) leave for fathers is needed so that leave is not restricted just to fathers whose employers are family-friendly. This is the only way to get wide coverage.
- In nations where there are statutory rights, employers often build upon those by offering higher compensation to attract and retain talent.
- Leave needs to be paid for fathers to take it, at least 2/3 of their normal salary.
- Fathers are more likely to take parental leave if they have individualized rights to this leave that cannot be transferred to mothers.
- Leave rights needs to be well advertised and communicated as a "normal" part of the transition to fatherhood.

Conclusion

As with all our research to date on the changing role of fathers, we realize that while we are moving forward with men's evolving roles, gender is still a primary determinant of who plays what role in family life. One step toward increasing men's impact and involvement at home is providing effective and attractive parental leave policies for women and men. Once such policies become the norm for all employers, it is critical that men who choose to be more engaged fathers understand the importance of the exhortation – TAKE YOUR LEAVE!

Appendix 1

The following information on **countries that provide statutory leave for fathers** was obtained from the International Network on Leave Policies & Research. The Leave Network was established in 2004 and has members from 35 countries – mostly in Europe, but some from beyond including Australia, Canada and the United States. They share an interest in and knowledge of leave policies and research into these policies.

Source: P. Moss (Ed.), *Review of Leave Policies and Related Research 2013*. www.leavenetwork.org

Definitions and Symbols

Lowly paid: provides less than 66% of full salary

Highly paid: provides more than 66% of full salary

^ there is a maximum ceiling
** only one parent can be paid at a time*

COUNTRIES THAT PROVIDE STATUTORY FATHER'S LEAVE

Country	Paternity Leave	Parental Leave
Australia	2 weeks, minimum wage	12 months unpaid
Austria		Share 12-36 months lowly paid
Belgium	3 days, 100% paid + 7 days, 82% ^	4 months lowly paid
Brazil	1 week, 100% paid	
Canada	Quebec provides up to 5 weeks at 70% or 3 weeks at 75%	
Croatia		3 months, national average income
Czech Republic		24 months, 70% of pay* ^
Denmark	2 weeks, up to 107 Euros/day	32 weeks, 107 Euros/day*
Estonia	2 weeks, 100% paid ^	Share 14.3 months, 100% ^
Finland	9 weeks, up to 70% paid ^	Share 158 days, up to 70-75% paid* ^
France	2 weeks, wage-based ^	36 months, lowly paid*
Germany		Share 12 months, 67% of pay ^
Greece	2 days, paid by employers	4 months, unpaid
Hungary	1 week, 100% paid	Share 18 months, 70% paid ^
Iceland	3 months, 80% paid ^	Share 3 months, 80% paid ^

Country	Paternity Leave	Parental Leave
Ireland		18 weeks unpaid
Italy	1 day, 100% + 2 days if mother gives up from maternity leave	Share 10 months, 30% paid up to a maximum of 7 months
Japan		12 months, 50% ^ + 2 months if shared
Lithuania	1 month, 100% paid ^	Share 6-8 months, 100% ^ + share 12 months, 70% + 12 mos. unpaid
Luxembourg		12 months, 1778 euros/mo., parents cannot take leave at same time
Netherlands	2 days, 100% paid	26 weeks unpaid
New Zealand	1-2 weeks unpaid	14 weeks paid if transferred by the mother + 38 weeks unpaid
Norway	2 weeks unpaid	10 weeks, 80% paid (transferred) + share 18-28 weeks, 80-100%
Poland	2 weeks, 100% paid	Share 36 months, very low paid
Portugal	20 days, 100% paid	75-105 days, 80-100% if transferred + 105-135 days 83-100% paid if father home alone for at least 30 days + 3 months, 25% if mother not home
Russia		3 years, 40% if mother surrenders it
Slovakia		3 years, 200 euros/mo. if mother surrenders it
Slovenia	15 days, 90% paid ^, + 75 days at minimum wage	Share 260 days, 90% paid ^
Spain	15 days, 100% paid ^	12 months unpaid
Sweden	10 days, 80% paid ^	60 days, 80% ^ + 135 days, 80% ^ + 45 days low paid
U.K.	2 weeks, low paid ($220/week)	Share 26 weeks unpaid
U.S.		12 weeks unpaid

Appendix 2

In this appendix we explore in more depth the **paternity and parental leave policies in seven different countries**. We selected Iceland, Japan, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States to review, in order to provide a breadth of interesting newly developed policies as well as more established policies.

ICELAND

In 2000, based on a strong government commitment to children's welfare and gender equality in the labor market and in the home, Iceland embarked on the world's most ambitious attempt to promote fathers' participation in early childcare. They granted fathers the statutory right to the longest non-transferable family leave offered to fathers in the world and despite severe economic setbacks, this program has become well-institutionalized in Icelandic culture and society.

Fathers' statutory rights to paid leave in 2014

Family leave is financed by the Iceland government and by an insurance levy on employer payrolls. Some unions have negotiated added compensation. Fathers have the same leave rights whether they are married, cohabiting or not living with their children's mothers; fathers in same-sex relationships have the same rights as others. Leaves can be taken part-time or full-time until the child reaches two years of age. Fathers can take leave at the same time as mothers and have access to two types of leave:

- Paternity leave - three months paid at 80% of wages to a ceiling
- Parental leave - the right to share with partners three additional months of parental leave at the same compensation level.

History

Before 2000, public policy spending on families was far less than that in other Nordic countries. Parents had the right to six months of paid parental leave but the father could take 30 days of this leave only if the mother signed over her entitlement. Left-oriented political parties, labor unions, employers and feminists lobbied for more attention to be paid to the development of family policy that would support the dual-carer/dual-earner model in Iceland. By 2000 all political parties were on board determined to promote more opportunities for children to be cared for by both parents and for both parents to reconcile paid work with family life. In 2000, a dramatically different parental leave system was phased in over three years, "3+3+3," with three months of maternity leave, three months of paternity leave and three months of parental leave to share. Iceland provided fathers with their own rights to leave by gradually extending family leave from six to nine months, rather than "taking away" leave time formerly awarded mothers. This was a much more popular alternative than that used in Sweden for the first "father's month," where they reduced mothers' leave by a month.

The 2008 economic crisis hit Iceland harder than other nations. This led to a temporary reduction in the amount of wages fathers would be reimbursed (through lowering income ceilings) but it notably did not reduce the government's resolve to encourage fathers' leave-taking. By 2013, former compensation levels were reinstituted and a new law was passed that will gradually increase fathers' paternity leave length to five months by 2016.

Implementation

The spectacular effects of what nontransferable leave rights can do for fathers' participation in leave is strongly evident in the Icelandic case. Before 2000, almost no Icelandic fathers took paid family leave; by 2001, over 80% did. By 2009, 96% took leave, for an average of 99 days (the highest in the world). Fathers take one-third of all family leave days taken by parents, also the highest in the world. The most usual pattern of leave-taking is for the parents to be home together the first month after childbirth, and then mothers are home alone for two additional months before they return to work. At that point, fathers tend to take their remaining two months of leave, although they are more likely than mothers to take leave in more than one block. It is therefore typical that fathers are not "home alone" with solo responsibility for young children for as long as fathers in countries where the policy permits less simultaneous leave-taking (e.g. Sweden).

Implications

The Icelandic example suggests that public policy can have a dramatic effect on the social construction of fatherhood. Iceland, arguably more than other Nordic countries, has balanced a strong concern for gender equality, work-family integration and children's welfare, as the rationale for policymaking and has prioritized public spending in support of these goals at an impressive level, considering their past economic difficulties.

JAPAN

Japan is well-known as a nation where fathers work long hours to support mothers and children, in support of a booming post-industrial economy. Since the turn of the 21st century, however, policymaking has taken a dramatic turn, in response to a plummeting birth rate. Policies now enable couples to follow a new model of family life, where fathers work fewer hours and mothers, even of young children, are in the labor market. By 2010, the government had established its third Plan for Gender Equality, which includes specific goals for public sector fathers to take parental leave; the law also prohibits all fathers from working more than 150 hours per year overtime. The government is taking an increasingly assertive role in encouraging workplaces to be more responsive to working fathers. Annual surveys are conducted on companies and individuals to trace progress in work-family reconciliation. Under the Act on the Advancement of Measures to Support Raising the Next Generation of Children (2003), employers are obliged to establish annual action plans for improving the employment environment to support balancing work and child raising. The majority of employers now offer family-friendly benefits to fathers as well as mothers, including 1-5 days of paid paternity leave, reduced and flexible work hours.

Fathers' statutory rights to paid leave in 2014

"Child care leave" is financed by the employment insurance system, with contributions from employers, employees and the state. Some employers provide additional benefits; government benefits are reduced if employer benefits exceed 80% of earnings. Fathers have rights to the following leaves:

- "Child care leave" – an individual right to 12 months of leave paid at 50% of salary to an income ceiling; fathers can take this usually only in two periods – 8 weeks during the mother's maternity leave and the remainder in one block until the child becomes 12 months old; fathers can also use this leave to care for a sick child under 18 months of age or one who lacks childcare; they can be home at the same time as mothers

- "Bonus child care leave"– two months of paid leave that can be taken until the child is 14 months old if the father has taken regular child care leave, also paid at 50%
- "Family care leave" – up to 93 days per child in their lifetime, to care for a child because of illness or injury for two weeks or more, paid at 40% of earnings

History

Unpaid child care leave was instituted as a family entitlement in 1992; leave became compensated at 25% in 1995, increasing in percentage over time; fathers could take leave only if the mother was back at work. In 2010 paid childcare leave became an individual entitlement, allowing fathers to take leave when mothers are home.

Implementation

Only 2% of fathers in the private sector and 4% of fathers in the public sector take child care leave. Over half of fathers, however, take advantage of employer-provided paid paternity leave (1-5 days). Research shows that when fathers' perceive more company support for leave-taking, they are more likely to take child care leave. There is often a gap between companies' formal and informal policies toward fathers; only when fathers perceive there is informal support do they take leave. Fathers' participation in childcare is greater in small and medium size companies that offer accommodation to employees in regard to their needs for family caregiving, while fathers in larger firms still face considerable work pressure that reduces their involvement in family life.

Implications

The Japanese approach to providing fathers with paid family leave combines government benefits with encouragement to companies to provide additional benefits. So far, fathers are more likely to take advantage of employer-provided benefits, which provide them with much shorter leaves, but which they might feel safe in taking since the employer obviously endorses the program. The government continues to take steps to encourage fathers to take statutory child care leaves, focusing first on supporting men who work in government jobs. Efforts to enable fathers' leave challenge the persistence of a "presenteeism" work climate, which is deeply rooted in Japanese culture.

PORTUGAL

Portugal has not been as well known as the Nordic countries for promoting gender equality and the development of a strong family policy. Nevertheless, since 2009 it has embarked on an ambitious effort to actively promote women's full employment and fathers' participation in early childcare with a system that offers both a "carrot and a stick." Portugal is one of the few countries to require fathers to take paid parental leave after childbirth ***and*** offers bonus leave to couples where fathers are "home alone" for part of the family leave.

Fathers' statutory rights to paid leave in 2014

Parental leave is financed two-thirds by contributions from employers and one-third by employees, all paid into the Social Security system. Fathers have rights to several forms of leave:

- Obligatory "fathers' only parental leave" – 10 days paid at 100% of wages with no income ceiling, five days of which must be taken immediately after childbirth and the rest within the child's first month
- Voluntary "fathers' only parental leave" – 10 additional days paid similarly taken within the child's first month

- Non-shared "initial parental leave"–75 days at 100% to 105 days at 80% (depending on chosen compensation level, with no income ceiling) but only if the mother relinquishes her rights
- Shared "initial parental leave" – the right to share 105-135 days of leave with mothers (compensated at 100-83%) if fathers take at least 30 days of parental leave to be home alone. This in effect offers parents a bonus 30 days of leave when they share leave, over the arrangement when one parent takes all leave.
- "Additional parental leave" – 3 months of individual entitlement, paid at 25% of earnings if taken immediately following initial parental leave; can be taken part-time or full-time. Both parents cannot be compensated for this at the same time, creating an additional possibility for fathers to be "home alone" caring for children.
- "Time off to care for dependents" – the right to share with mothers up to 30 days per year to care for sick children 12 years of age and younger, and 15 days per year per child for children ages 12-15, paid at 65% of earnings; also the shared right to take six months of leave per year for four years, paid at 65% of earnings to care for a severely handicapped or chronically ill child.
- Temporary leave – the right to attend three pre-natal appointments and to visit schools four hours per term.

History

Fathers first received the right to fathers' only parental leave (once called paternity leave) in 1999 for five days. By 2004 this period was made obligatory; the first nation in the world to do this. Today, the obligatory length is 10 days; only Belgium and Italy obligate fathers to take parental leave (for 3 days and 1 day respectively). Before 2009, fathers could share 2.5 months of "maternity leave" only if mothers relinquished it. Parental leave reforms in 2009 extended the length of leave that could be shared and also provided an incentive for couples to share leave by extending it further by 30 days for parents who share. The 2009 reforms occurred in the midst of an economic crisis with a center-right government, demonstrating how strongly supported the reform was.

Implementation

Before "fathers' only parental leave" was made obligatory in 2004, only 36% of fathers took this form of leave. By 2012, 81% of fathers took the obligatory portion of the leave with an additional 69% taking the optional days. The lack of 100% participation is explained by security occupations being excluded and the lack of close government monitoring. Mothers take most of the "initial parental leave," but approximately 79% of fathers take the one month of leave alone that offers couples bonus time. Fathers in 2011 took only 17% of the "additional parental leave" days.

Implications

The case of Portugal suggests that a quick way to accustom fathers to participate early in the care of young children is to require them to take two weeks of fully paid parental leave in the month after childbirth. This experience, along with offering parents bonus leave, seems to motivate fathers to take additional time off from work. Portugal compensates fathers for leave-taking at a higher standard than elsewhere in the world, which removes economic barriers to fathers staying home. Their parental leave program, relatively brief in length, reinforces a pattern that is a strong policy goal: parents of young children both working full-time. The Portuguese rate for families with children under age 3 is 66%, second highest in the EU.

SLOVENIA

Little known is the fact that Slovenia first offered fathers the right to share paid leave with mothers just after Sweden (in 1975), therefore being among the first nations to do so. The same concerns that have driven policymaking in the Nordic countries – a concern for fertility and economic well-being – have also spurred legislative developments in Slovenia. Indeed, Slovenia was inspired to follow the Nordic model, having benefitted from the visits of Swedish policymakers in the 1970s. However, unlike Sweden and Iceland, Slovenia's policy tends to enable willing fathers to participate in early childcare rather than actively encouraging them to do so.

Fathers' statutory rights to paid leave in 2014

Family leave is paid partly from a special fund for parental leave insurance with equal contributions from employees and employers; however, this fund is sufficient to pay for only 11% of actual costs, so the rest is paid out of the national budget.

- **Paternity leave** – 90 days, 15 days paid at 90% of earnings up to a ceiling (lowered during the financial crisis) and an additional 75 days paid at the national minimum wage. 75 days can be taken up until the child becomes 3. Leave can be taken in individual days rather than a block but if so, the total amount is reduced to 75 (from 90).
- **Parental leave** – the right to share 260 days of a family entitlement, part-time or full-time, until a child reaches 8 years of age, paid at 90% of earnings up to a ceiling; parents ordinarily cannot take the leave at the same time unless they both work part-time or have two children below eight years of age or children in need of special care. At least 185 days must be taken in a continuous block.
- **Time off to care for dependents** – the right to take 7 days of leave to care for a sick child (up to 30 days in extreme cases) for one illness, compensated at 80% of earnings with no ceiling.

History

Slovenia offered paid maternity leave to mothers as early as the 1920s. Unlike many other central European countries, however, they have kept this leave relatively short, so that women are encouraged to return to the labor market. This helped to establish a structural and ideological foundation for women's labor force participation and the dual-earner family. Fathers gained the right to paid paternity leave in 2003, which has been extended in length over time. They gained the right to share paid parental leave with mothers in 1975 (up to 141 days); the leave was extended (to 260 days) in 1986.

Implementation

78% of fathers took up to 15 days of paternity leave in 2011; however, only 21% of fathers took additional paternity leave and only 7% of fathers took any part of the shared parental leave. There appear to be several reasons for this low take-up. The Slovenia economy is characterized by precarious work and work intensification, and the long-hours culture is well-established. This likely makes Slovenian men hesitate requesting leave from work. Slovenians are likely to say work and earning money are the most important things in life (rather than family) and half of fathers in a recent survey indicated that they did not take parental leave because it would mean some lost wages. The dominance of work over family and traditional attitudes toward the domestic division of labor appear to constrain men's interest in early childcare.

Implications

The vast majority of fathers take paid paternity leave in Slovenia, which can be seen as progressive for a country characterized by traditional attitudes toward men's absorption in work and women's primary responsibility for childcare. Fathers who would like to take more family leave have access to this but there appears to be little social support for them to do so at this time.

SWEDEN

In 1974, Sweden became the first country in the world to offer fathers the statutory right of taking paid leave from work to be with their families after childbirth and adoption. Today, Swedish fathers have access to some of the most generous and flexible rights to parental leave in the world, where the goal is to actively promote fathers taking leave from work to care for young children to develop strong relationships with children and to share parenting with mothers.

Fathers' statutory rights to paid leave in 2014

Family leave in Sweden is financed by a social tax on all employers' payrolls. Some unions have negotiated added compensation. Fathers have the same leave rights whether they are married, cohabiting or not living with their children's mothers; fathers in same-sex relationships have the same rights as others.

There are several types of father leave paid at approximately 80% of wages up to a generous income ceiling:

- "Temporary leave" –10 days off work to be taken within the first 60 days after childbirth or adoption.
- Parental leave – There are 480 days of paid leave per family that can be used up to the end of the child's first school year. Sixty days are reserved for each parent and cannot be transferred. Of the remaining 360 days, half are reserved for each parent; if days are transferred from one parent to another, the parent giving up his or her days must sign a consent form.
- Temporary parental leave–the right to share with partners 120 days of leave per year per child to care for a sick child age 12 and under.
- Care allowance – the right to six months of compensation ($18,000) a year, to care for a chronically ill or disabled child.

History

Sweden offered fathers the right to take parental leave in 1974 at a time when policymakers were concerned that women would be handicapped in the labor market if fathers did not participate more actively in childcare. However, the right to share leave meant that fathers were obligated to negotiate with mothers what had essentially been mothers' exclusive right. Not surprisingly, relatively few fathers took leave under these circumstances. In 1995, a stronger law (following Norway's) was enacted that set aside one month for fathers to take leave that did not need to be negotiated with mothers and which provided fathers some leverage in the workplace to request time off. In 2002, they extended this to two months. Since 2008, to spur more sharing, the government provides a bonus up to $1900 to couples where fathers take more than the quota.

Implementation

Fathers' leave use has slowly increased; by 2013 75% took paternity leave, 88% took parental leave (average - 91 days), and in 2010 fathers took 36% of all days of temporary leave. In 2012, over half of new parents received the equality bonus because fathers took more than their quota. When fathers take more parental leave, they participate more actively in childcare; this positive result is likely a consequence of how the policy is structured – except for one month when they can be at home with mothers, fathers are expected to be home alone providing solo care for young children. However, equal sharing of parental leave is still far off; fathers take only one-fourth of all parental leave days and only 12% of couples shared leave equitably (60/40) for children born in 2003. While there has been very substantial progress in changing cultural norms about men being active fathers, the workplace (especially in the private sector) remains an important barrier to fathers' greater use of leave. Although Swedish workers work fewer hours than most workers elsewhere, there are still norms around the "ideal worker" that make it difficult for fathers to negotiate as much leave as they might otherwise like to take. Co-worker and supervisor support remains only lukewarm, since companies fail to institute more dramatic changes in work practices to accommodate leave-taking fathers.

Implications

The Swedish example provides strong evidence that fathers need well-paid leave that is their individual right if they are to use it. The requirement that they need to be "home alone" caring for children also likely provides fathers with valuable experience in childrearing so that they can more equally share parenting. Even when leave is a statutory right, company support remains a substantial barrier to fathers' leave use.

UNITED KINGDOM

Historically the U.K. lagged behind Western Europe in terms of cultural support for the dual-earner/dual-carer model of family life. When the European Union (EU) proposed that unpaid parental leave be mandated for member nations in 1983, the U.K. blocked this proposal. In 1991, the U.K. refused to sign the Maastricht Treaty mandating parental leave because it disapproved of policy supporting mothers' employment. It was at this stage in EU history that the community decided to become more active in terms of social policy designed to support a strong economic market and insisted that member nations had to sign all agreements. In 1997, all member states signed the Amsterdam Treaty granting three months of unpaid parental leave to both men and women workers as an individualized right. This treaty governs all 27 EU nations today. Although the U.K. was pushed unwillingly into support for the dual-earner family because of its membership in the EU, the U.K. in recent years is making small advances toward enabling fathers to participate more in early childcare.

Fathers' statutory rights to paid leave in 2014

Paternity leave – two weeks to be taken in a child's first two months, paid at $220 a week. Employers are reimbursed by the government through the fund that employers contribute to for National Insurance Contributions. The vast majority of employers offer additional compensation; e.g., in 2009, 42% offered full pay for at least two weeks. Larger companies are more likely to offer full compensation than smaller companies.

History

U.K. fathers gained the right to paid paternity leave in 2003. Recent legislation has set the stage for what in the U.K. is regarded as a dramatic change in fathers' rights to parental leave. Currently, mothers are entitled to 39 weeks of maternity leave paid at 90% of their average earnings for the first

6 weeks and thereafter at $118 a week. To allow fathers to play a greater role in childrearing, in 2015 a more flexible form of parental leave is being established, called "shared parental leave." Mothers may transfer up to 37 weeks of leave to fathers (with the same pay structure as before). Fathers may take leave only in week-long blocks of time (i.e., not on a part-time basis). Parents will be able to take leave at the same time. One interesting feature of this system is that parents have access to "keep in touch days," whereby they can return to work for up to 10 days each while on parental leave without giving up their leave so that they can stay informed about workplace developments.

Implementation

A 2009 survey revealed that 74% of U.K. fathers took some statutory paternity leave. Fathers were more likely to take leave if they worked in the public sector or worked in private workplaces known for having family-friendly arrangements.

Implications

After having a conservative approach toward supporting dual-earner families, the U.K. has recently begun to provide more support for them in the form of paid maternity and paid paternity leaves. Although the paid paternity leave offered fathers is modest, future plans to transform maternity leave into parental leave that fathers can share promises to offer fathers more opportunities to be home with children. U.K. policymakers have discussed but have so far rejected the concept of fathers having individualized rights to paid parental leave. However, the fact that a "father's quota" is even a matter of discussion in the U.K. suggests that in time this nation may eventually follow its European neighbors in offering more support for fathers' participation in early childcare.

UNITED STATES

National Coverage

In the U.S. the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides leave for a variety of reasons including: childbirth or the care of a newborn child up to 12 months in age; for the placement and care of an adopted or foster child; for the care of a seriously ill child, spouse or parent; or for a serious health condition of the employee that makes him/her unable to work for more than three consecutive days. FMLA covers all employees that work for covered employers (employ more than 50 people) and that have worked for the employer for at least one year and at least 1250 hours over the past year. It provides unpaid leave of up to 12 weeks in a 12 month period for men and women and it may be taken in one continuous period or divided into several blocks of time.

Implementation

Because of the qualifying conditions, only about 58 per cent of workers in private firms are eligible for FMLA, with lower coverage for low wage workers, workers with young children, and working welfare recipients. About 80 per cent of working parents between the ages of 18 to 54 years have access to at least some paid leave either through statutory provision, collective agreements or individual workplace policies, especially older workers. But as FMLA does not include any payment, workers who are eligible for the leave often do not take it. Thus though the law provides de facto parental leave entitlements, studies have found that it has had generally small effects on leave usage by new mothers and little or no effect on leave usage by new fathers. The fact that the law extended coverage but had so little impact on usage suggests that there are limits to the extent to which families are willing and able to use unpaid leave.

State Coverage – Paid Benefits

Over the last ten years, several states have stepped in to provide paid family leave benefits to mothers and fathers. Family leave is the concept of taking time off from employment in order to care for a family member during a major life event, including a serious illness, the birth of a baby, or adoption or foster placement of a child. The states listed below have enacted programs that provide paid benefits to parents.

- *California* was the first state to enact a comprehensive paid family leave law. Beginning in July 2004, the state provided all workers covered by the state's Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) program with up to six weeks of a partially paid leave (55-60 per cent of earnings up to a maximum of $1,067 a week in 2013) following childbirth, adoption or care of a seriously ill child, parent, spouse or domestic partner. These benefits are funded by employee-paid payroll taxes, and benefit levels are adjusted annually as wages increase. It costs a minimum wage-earner an additional $11.23 a year for this benefit, while the estimated average additional cost is $46. While employers in California did not initially support the introduction of paid leave, employer surveys conducted five years after the leave found that program initiation had no effect or a positive effect on productivity, profitability, performance, turnover and worker morale within their organizations (Milkman & Appelbaum, 2013).

- The *Rhode Island* Temporary Caregiver Insurance Program provides four weeks of paid leave for the birth, adoption or fostering of a new child. The program is funded by employee payroll taxes. It provides a minimum of $72 and maximum of $752 per week, based on earnings.

- *New Jersey* has also enacted a paid family leave. The legislation extends the state's existing Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) system to provide workers with up to six weeks of TDI benefits at two thirds of prior wages up to $584 a month in 2013, to bond with a newborn or newly adopted child or to provide care for a seriously ill family member. The measure is financed by employee payroll deductions that cost every worker in New Jersey a maximum of 64 cents a week, or $33 a year, in 2009. All workers who contribute to the program have the opportunity to draw benefits.

- The State of *Washington* enacted a paid family leave law in March 2007, granting workers in firms with 25 or more employees up to five weeks of paid leave annually to care for a newborn or adopted child, funded by worker payroll contributions; however, this program has never been funded or implemented.

- *Minnesota*, *Montana* and *New Mexico* have active At-Home Infant Care policies providing low-income working parents who choose to have one parent stay home for the first year of a newborn or adopted child's life, with a cash benefit offsetting some portion of the wages forgone.

A number of states are continuing to discuss possible paid family leave programs. Paid sick leave programs are also under discussion at both the state and city level.

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