

Leave policy changes: April 2026

Table 6 gives a quick overview of **major policy changes in the included countries**. For more information about those changes, we point to the individual country notes.

Table 6 gives an overview of policy changes according to the different types of leave distinguished in our report, i.e., Maternity leave, Paternity leave, Parental leave, as well as Statutory other leave measures. We do not summarise changes in other policies at this point (e.g., early childhood education and care). Also, for more details, readers should refer to the country notes. For the four “groups” of changes, **we distinguish where a policy has newly been introduced** (marked by symbol: ✓) **or where a policy has been abolished (x)**. Regarding the reforms of existing policies, we distinguish three types of change: if a change can be quantified, such as an increase in the replacement rate of a leave benefit or a reduction of leave duration, we classify it as either **expansion (-)** or **cutback (↓)**. If a change cannot be easily quantified, such as a change in flexibility rules or a structure of leave rights, we classify it as **recalibration (o)**.

Which **types of changes** have been reported in the 2026 Review of Leave Policies? Please note that these are only policy changes enacted in the year *up to April 2026* (whereas there are often significant policy changes that are expected to be enacted later in the year).³ In this 2026 edition of the leave review, **53 countries** are included. Of those, **24 countries report some policy change** (while the rest report continuity across the different types of leave), which seems to indicate similar activity on leave reform when compared to the previous year. As in previous years, reforms continue to reflect both incremental adjustments to existing leave systems and more targeted reforms for specific groups of parents, alongside the continuing implementation and refinement of earlier reforms, including those linked to the EU Work-Life Balance Directive. Some of the enacted changes are small (e.g., adjustments in benefit levels), others target specific groups, and a few transform the main parameters of national leave systems.

For Maternity leave, 15 countries report changes; eight for Paternity leave; and 17 for Parental leave. Changes in 20 countries concern Statutory other leave measures. Compared to previous years (when there was a comparatively strong focus on reforming Paternity and Parental leave measures), reforms are spread across all four policy areas, with particularly frequent changes to statutory leave measures outside the three main leave categories.

When it comes to the nature of reforms, many changes concern increases in benefit levels, extensions of leave duration, or wider eligibility for existing rights. Other common reforms involve recalibrating entitlement rules, adapting benefit structures, or introducing greater flexibility in how leave may be taken. Newly introduced measures are less common but include, for example, France's additional paid parental leave ("additional birth leave"), Malta's pregnancy injury, neonatal care, parental bereavement and miscarriage leave,

³ Later changes that are under way but not yet enacted will be included in forthcoming review(s). In many countries, there are also on-going discussions about policy reforms, which have not been decided upon yet; these discussions are portrayed in the policy changes sections of each country note.

and Korea's new leave entitlement for fathers following miscarriage or stillbirth (effective from September 2026). Abolition of existing measures remains rare, with Bavaria's cash-for-care benefit being one example recorded in this review.

Regarding reforms to existing measures, expansions and recalibrations remain the dominant types of change, while outright cutbacks are comparatively uncommon. Where cutbacks occur, they typically involve tighter eligibility criteria, lower benefit ceilings, or restrictions on benefit receipt, as illustrated by recent reforms in Estonia, Germany and Romania. Additionally, it should be noted that the absence of policy reform may itself have important consequences if benefit levels or benefit ceilings are not regularly adjusted to compensate for inflation and changes in living costs.

Table 6: Overview of leave policy changes in 2025/26

	Maternity leave	Paternity leave	Parental leave	Statutory other leave measures
Argentina				o flexible working arrangements
Australia			↑ expanded parental leave pay duration o recalibration of the income ceiling at which parental leave payment cuts out	
Austria				
Belgium				
Bosnia and Herzegovina				
Brazil				
Bulgaria	o the maternity leave benefit is suspended if the parent receiving it works under a second employment contract	o the paternity leave benefit is suspended if the parent receiving it works under a second employment contract	o the parental leave benefit is suspended if the parent receiving it works under a second employment contract	↑ Period for requesting temporary flexible working arrangements
Canada				
Canada: Quebec				
China				

	Maternity leave	Paternity leave	Parental leave	Statutory other leave measures
Chile	↑ increase in the minimum daily subsidy floor (link to the minimum wage rise)			
Colombia				
Costa Rica				
Croatia	↑ additional pension insurance period			↑ sickness leave benefit
Cyprus	↑ increase in maternity leave benefit, which depends on the number of dependents in the family		↑ increase in the number of weeks of paid parental leave, depending on the number of children	✓ cash-for-care benefit
Czech Republic			↑ multiple births: parental benefit doubled, replacing the previous 1.5 multiplier	
Denmark			o hospitalised newborn extension (paid parental leave can be extended up to 12 months) ↑ benefit ceiling increase	↑ bereavement benefit eligibility o sick-child leave (CA) o DA Barsel ceiling
Estonia	↑ upper ceiling on maternity leave benefit introduced	↑ upper ceiling	↑ upper ceiling ↑ full parental benefit if a parent is working	
Finland				
France			✓ introduction of an additional paid parental leave of one to two months for each parent ("additional birth leave"; effective in June 2026)	

	Maternity leave	Paternity leave	Parental leave	Statutory other leave measures
Germany	↑ extension of maternity protection to miscarriages		↓ further reduction of the income limit (eligibility criterion) ↓ restriction of simultaneous receipt of benefits for full-time leave for both parents	x cash-for-care benefits in Bavaria
Greece	↑ expansion of post-natal portion for foster mothers		o benefit level due to minimum wage increase o tax-exempt and non-seizable	✓ leave for public sector employees who have the exclusive care of a child
Hungary	↑ personal income tax is not paid on leave benefit		↑ personal income tax is not paid on leave benefit	
Iceland			↑ extension of leave in case of multiple births	
Ireland				
Israel				↑ fathers can use sickness leave if a newborn is hospitalised
Italy		✓ mandatory leave for an intentional parent in a same-sex couple	✓ mandatory leave for an intentional parent in a same-sex couple O the extension in the age limit	O the extension in the age limit and in the number of days of unpaid leave for sick children
Japan				
Korea	↑ benefit height	↑ benefit height o prolongation of the taking-up period		✓ 5 days for miscarriage and stillbirth for fathers (from September 2026)
Kosovo	↑ benefit height			

	Maternity leave	Paternity leave	Parental leave	Statutory other leave measures
Latvia			↑ benefit payment period extended for parents with preterm children O additional eligibility criteria ↑ increase in childcare allowance	
Lithuania				
Luxembourg				
Malta				✓ pregnancy injury leave ✓ special parental bereavement leave ✓ neo-natal care leave ✓ miscarriage leave ↑ flexible working
Mexico				
Netherlands				
New Zealand				
Norway				
Poland				
Portugal				
Romania			↓ 10% health care contribution needs to be paid on parental benefits	
Russian Federation				
Serbia				
Slovakia	↑ benefit level	↑ benefit level	↑ benefit level	↑ benefit level (sickness leave – to take care of a sick

	Maternity leave	Paternity leave	Parental leave	Statutory other leave measures
				relative, long-term care benefit)
Slovenia			↑ 15 days of leave for foster parents of a child 8-15	
South Africa				
Spain	↑ leave length (3 weeks; 13 weeks for lone parents) ↑ flat rate benefit for all employed women who do not meet eligibility requirements extended in case of adoption and foster care	↑ leave length (3 weeks; 13 weeks for lone parents) ↑ flat rate benefit for all second parents who do not meet eligibility requirements extended in case of adoption and foster care		
Sweden				
Switzerland				
Türkiye				
United Kingdom		o 'day one' right for employees to leave (but not payment)	o 'day one' right for employees to leave (but not payment)	
United States			↑ availability at the state level	↑ made permanent an employer PFML tax credit and expanded the definition of qualified employee, allowing increased access
Uruguay		↑ lenght		
Vietnam	↑ leave length for the 2nd child (1 week) ✓ maternity allowance for voluntary social insurance contributors	↑ leave length for the 2nd child (1 week)		↑ benefit for stillbirths or fetal death after a 22-week pregnancy

Key: ✓ introduction, x abolishment, ↑ expansion, ↓ cutback, o recalibration