

France²²⁰

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For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the cross-country tables at the front of the review (also available individually on the [Leave Network website](#)). To contact authors of country notes, see the [members](#) page on the Leave Network website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*congé de maternité*) (responsibility of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Family, Solidarity and Urban Affairs)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 16 weeks: 6 weeks before the birth and 10 weeks after the birth.
- It is obligatory to take 8 weeks, including at least 6 weeks after the birth.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 79 per cent of gross salary, which is close to the net monthly salary, up to an upper limit of €104.02 per day and a minimum level of €11.12 per day. Average net monthly earnings in France are €2,440 for women and €2,820 for men.
- Self-employed workers receive a flat-rate payment of €65.84 per day during Maternity leave (approximately €1,975.20 per month). Additionally, self-employed mothers receive a flat-rate 'maternity rest benefit' of €4,005 (half paid at the start of Maternity leave, the other half at the end).
- Payments are taxed.
- Maternity leave is taken into account in the calculation of retirement rights (i.e., mothers continue to accumulate retirement rights based on Maternity leave benefits).
- Funded by health insurance,²²¹ financed by contributions from both employees and employers. The total amount of this contribution is 21 per

²²⁰ Please cite as Sponton, A. and Gaboret, G. (2026) 'France country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnaldis, A., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: <https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/>

²²¹ The present social security system, including statutory health insurance, officially came into being with the Ordinance of 4 October 1945 which aimed to cover all the so-called 'social risks'. In 1967, social security was separated into four branches: health insurance (which represents the largest share of expenditures devoted to social protection),

cent of gross pay, including all social contributions, with employees contributing 2.35 per cent and employers 13.10 per cent.

Flexibility in use

- Up to 3 of the 6 weeks of pre-birth leave can be postponed until after birth, allowing for a total of 13 weeks of post-birth leave.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employees and self-employed workers.
- There is some length of service conditionality for the self-employed (to have been working for at least six months). To qualify for full coverage, the average annual income over the past 3 years must have exceeded €4,582 in 2026. If the income is lower, the benefits will be significantly reduced (flat-rate 'maternity rest benefit' divided by ten and daily allowance of €6.584 per day).
- Jobseekers are eligible for compensation if they receive or have received unemployment benefit in the last 12 months. In this case, the duration of the Maternity leave postpones the end of their unemployment benefit.
- Leave is available for same sex parenting couples for the person giving birth.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In the case of twins, the length of leave is increased to 34 weeks (12 weeks before birth and 22 weeks after); and in the case of triplets, the length is increased to 46 weeks (24 and 22 weeks)
- In the case of the mother already having two children, the length of leave is increased to 26 weeks (eight weeks before birth and 18 weeks after).
- In case of medical complications, pregnant employees can be granted up to two weeks of 'prenatal medical leave' immediately before the start of their Maternity leave, and/or up to four weeks of 'postnatal medical leave' immediately after the end of the Maternity leave.
- If childbirth occurs more than 6 weeks before the expected due date and the child is hospitalised, Maternity leave is extended to cover the period leading up to the originally scheduled start of prenatal leave.
- If the child remains hospitalised for more than 6 weeks after birth, mothers can request to return to work and postpone the unused postnatal leave until the end of the child's hospitalisation.
- In the event of late delivery, the prenatal leave is extended, and the length of the postnatal leave remains unchanged.
- In the event of the mother's death, the father may take the mother's remaining postnatal Maternity leave and request a deferral of the 6 month period allowed for taking his Paternity leave.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

pensions, family allowances, and insurance for work-related accidents and occupational illnesses.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- In the public sector, leave is fully paid (i.e., there is no upper limit). In the private sector, some collective agreements or employers may provide longer leave in addition to statutory entitlements and/or compensate salaries that exceed social security income limits. For instance, the banking sector offers six months of Maternity leave.
- The most comprehensive information on this topic is quite outdated²²² (2005), but according to this source, 70 per cent of private non-profit institutions, and 59 per cent of institutions that are part of a group provide additional compensation or even full salary maintenance. However, only 35 per cent of independent institutions in the private for-profit sector offer this benefit. For civil servants, full salary maintenance is guaranteed.

b. Paternity leave (*Congé de naissance* – literally 'birth leave' - and *Congé de paternité et d'accueil de l'enfant* – literally 'leave for looking after a child') (responsibility of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Family, Solidarity and Urban Affairs)

Length of leave

- Four weeks, consisting of 25 calendar days of Paternity leave (*congé de paternité et d'accueil de l'enfant*) plus, for employees only, three extra working days of birth leave (*congé de naissance*).
- It is obligatory to take the 3 days of *congé de naissance* and the 4 days of *congé de paternité et d'accueil de l'enfant* together; self-employed workers must take 7 consecutive days of *congé de paternité et d'accueil de l'enfant*.

Payment, funding and taxation

- *Congé de paternité et d'accueil de l'enfant*: Payment and funding as for Maternity leave.
- *Congé de naissance*: 100 per cent of earnings, paid by the employer.

Flexibility in use

- One week must be taken immediately after the birth. The remaining days can be divided into two additional periods of at least 5 days each, within the 6 months following the birth. So, in total, Paternity leave can be divided into a maximum of three periods. For example, after the first mandatory week, fathers can take 2 more weeks 2 months later, and a last week in the 5th month.

Eligibility (e.g. related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employees are entitled to the 3 days of *congé de naissance*.
- All employees and self-employed workers are eligible for the 25 calendar days of *congé de paternité et d'accueil de l'enfant*.

²²² Lefèvre, C., Pailhé, A. and Solaz, A. (2007) 'Comment les Employeurs Aident-Ils Leurs Salariés à Concilier Travail et Famille' [How Employers Help Their Employees Balance Work and Family], *Population & Sociétés*, 440(11) : 1-4.

- For the self-employed fathers there is some length of service conditionality(to have been working for at least six months). To receive the fixed daily allowance (€65.84 per day in 2026), the average annual income over the past 3 years must have exceeded €4,582.00 in 2026. If the income is lower, the benefits will be significantly reduced (daily allowance of €6.584 per day). (Fathers are not eligible for the flat-rate "maternity rest allowance" available to self-employed mothers).
- Jobseekers are eligible for compensation if they receive or have received unemployment benefit in the last 12 months. In this case, the duration of the Paternity leave postpones the end of their unemployment benefit.
- Leave is available for same-sex parenting couples and for cohabiting couples, including if the partner is not the biological father.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In the case of twins or multiple births, Paternity leave is extended to 32 calendar days. No specific leave is granted for single fathers.
- In the case where the mother is single and has no partner, Paternity leave cannot be transferred to a close relative.
- For fathers couples, Paternity leave (not Maternity leave) is granted to the biological father. However, there are no legislative provisions regarding the partner of the biological father; their eligibility appears to be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- If the child is immediately hospitalised after birth, employees (only) are entitled to a leave of up to 30 consecutive calendar days for the entire hospitalisation period. This leave is in addition to the Paternity and Parental leave.
- See also 1e regarding bereavement.

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions, or rights to postpone)

- As for Maternity leave.

c. Parental leave (*Congé parental d'éducation*) (responsibility of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Family, Solidarity and Urban Affairs)

Length of leave

- Until the child reaches 3 years.
- Leave is an individual, non-transferable entitlement.

Payment, funding and taxation

- A childcare allowance or childrearing benefit - 'PreParE' (*Prestation partagée d'éducation de l'enfant*) - is paid to all parents and dependent on whether the recipient works and, if so, for how long. In 2026, the basic benefit is €456.05 per month if not working; €294.81 per month if working less than half of full-time hours; and €170.07 per month if working 50 to 80 per cent of full-time hours.
- A supplementary means-tested allowance, *Allocation de base*, is paid to lower income parents, depending upon the size of the family and paid either at a full rate (€196.59) or at a part-rate (€98.30).
- For parents with a single child, *PreParE* is paid for 6 months per parent after the end of the Maternity leave, i.e. to a maximum period of 12 months if both parents claim benefit, which can only be received if the parent receiving the benefit stops employment or reduces working hours. For parents with two or more children (under 20 years), *PreParE* can be paid until a child is 3 years old, but only for a maximum period of 24 months to any one parent, which means that the remaining 12 months can only be received by the other parent if he/she stops employment or reduces working hours.
- 'PreParE' is not taxed.
- *PreParE* is funded by the local CAFs (*Caisse des Allocations Familiales*), the Family Allowance funds that are part of the social security system and provide a wide range of benefits for families with children. CAFs are financed by contributions from employers only, amounting to 5.4 per cent of gross wages, and not by employees unlike the Maternity and Paternity leaves that are funded from the health insurance scheme.
- Non-employed parents (including those taking leave) receive pension credits for childrearing: *Assurance Vieillesse du Parent au Foyer* (AYPF).²²³ AYPF is paid by the local CAFs (*Caisse des Allocations Familiales*) to guarantee retirement rights to people who stop or reduce their professional activity to take care of one or several children or a person with a disability. This allowance is means-tested.

Flexibility in use

- Parents taking leave may work between 16 and 32 hours per week. Employers can refuse to let parents work part time if they can justify this on business grounds.
- Parents can take full-time leave simultaneously. They can also take part-time Parental leave simultaneously and receive benefit at the same time from the *PreParE*, but the total amount of payment cannot exceed €456.05 (unless eligible for the *Allocation de base*).

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- All employees are eligible for Parental leave if they have worked at least 1 year for their employer before the birth of a child. Eligibility for the child allowance *PreParE* becomes less restrictive as the number of children increases. For example, with one child, parents must have completed 8 quarters of pension contributions over the 2 years preceding the birth; with two children, over the past 4 years; and with three or more children, over the past 5 years.

²²³ See <http://www.caf.fr/aides-et-services/s-informer-sur-les-aides/petite-enfance/assurance-vieillesse-du-parent-au-foyer-avpf>.

- Self-employed workers are also eligible for the child allowance *PreParE* if they can demonstrate a partial or full suspension of their professional activity and have completed the required number of pension contribution quarters. Leave is available to same-sex parenting couples.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents)

- Where a child is seriously ill or disabled, Parental leave (regulated by the Labour code) can be extended by a year.
- Single parents are entitled to the full period of *PreParE*

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements, employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- For adoptive parents the same regulations for Parental leave apply as for other parents.

Time off for the care of dependants

- Parents are entitled to annual **sick leave to care for their child**. The duration of sick leave is generally 3 days per year, or 5 days per year if the child is under 1 year or if the parents have three or more dependent children. Some collective agreements provide additional sick days (for instance, in the public sector, employees can take 14 days a year).
- Every employee is eligible for an '**Parental presence leave**' (*Congé de présence parentale*) to care for a sick child under the age of 20 years whose health condition requires continuous presence and demanding care. The leave is granted for a maximum of 310 working days per child over a three year period, based on the duration of the child's treatment. It can be taken on a part-time basis. Parents may be eligible for an additional Parental presence leave, extending the total to 620 days, once the initial three year period ends.

Although this leave is unpaid, employees can receive a Daily Parental Presence Allowance (*Allocation Journalière de Présence Parentale (AJPP)*). The allowance is paid for a maximum of 310 days over the 3 year period, and the level of the allowance depends on the duration of work in the

enterprise and on the family structure; in 2026, in couples, the amount is €66.4 per day if one parent stops work completely.

- **Leave to care for a dependent relative** (*Congé Proche Aidant*): employees may temporarily stop working to care for a person with whom they have close and stable ties who is disabled, incapacitated, experiencing a loss of autonomy or elderly. Unless otherwise stipulated by contract, the maximum duration of the leave is 3 months, renewable for up to 1 year. The leave is unpaid, but employees may receive an allowance of €66.64 per full day or €33.32 per half-day, up to 22 days per month and 66 days per person cared for.
- **Leave to care for a close relative at the end of life due to a serious or incurable illness** (*Congé de Solidarité Familiale*): all employees are entitled to three months of leave, renewable once. The leave is unpaid, but employees may receive an allowance of €64.41 per full day or €32.21 per half-day.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- After returning to work, employed mothers are eligible to take 1 hour off per day to breastfeed (30 minutes in the morning and 30 minutes in the afternoon). If specific breastfeeding facilities are provided, the time is reduced to two 20 minute breaks. The break is not paid.

Flexible working for carers

- Employees in the public and private sector are entitled to work part time for family reasons. Parents therefore have a right to request or to reduce their working time if the child is under 3 years, but under the condition that the request is made in the context of being on a statutory Parental leave and that the parent has been working with the company for at least 1 year. Parents have the right and are guaranteed to return to work afterwards on full-time or part-time basis.
- All employees (not specifically parents) have a right to (request to) work (a certain percentage) from home. The most common arrangement is to combine one or two days of telework with 3 or 4 days in the office during the week. Under such an agreed arrangement their employment contract cannot be broken by employers.
- The 'family tax credit' (*Crédit d'Impôt Famille*, CIF), introduced in 2004, is a financial incentive provided to companies to encourage them to develop family-friendly initiatives for their employees. The CIF stipulates that 25 per cent of related expenses are deductible from taxes paid by the company up to an upper limit of €500,000 per year and per company.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- During pregnancy, employed mothers are entitled to time off for the 7 mandatory medical exams as required by health insurance. After childbirth, employed mothers are entitled to time off for the mandatory postnatal check-up. These absences are considered as working time for the calculation of paid leave and seniority and do not result in a reduction of salary.
- The person with whom the employee lives in a couple (marriage, PACS, or common-law partnership) is also entitled to time off to attend 3 of these mandatory medical exams.

- In case of assisted reproductive technology (ART), employed mothers are also entitled to time off for necessary medical procedures. These absences are considered as working time for the calculation of paid leave and seniority and do not result in a reduction of salary.

Other provisions of leave

- **Death and bereavement leave.** Grieving parents have a right to (i) a 'death leave' of 7 working days (for employees only) to be taken around the time of the child's death. In practice, mothers' partners are usually the beneficiaries, as mothers are often on Maternity leave during this period; (ii) a 'bereavement leave' of 8 days, which can be taken in separate periods over 1 year, funded by social security. This applies to all working parents who had actual responsibility for the child, including private-sector employees, the self-employed, non-salaried agricultural workers, job seekers, and civil servants. In the event of the child's death after birth (provided the birth occurred after 22 weeks of amenorrhea or the foetus weighed at least 500 grams), postnatal Maternity leave and Paternity leave remains in effect.
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2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is three years, but most of this is low paid; leave paid at a high rate lasts for less than four months. There is an entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) from three years of age: the French Education code states that 'every child upon reaching the age of three has the right to attend a nursery school located as close as possible to his or her residence if her or his family claims a place'; attendance is also compulsory from three years. There is no gap, therefore, between the end of leave and an ECEC entitlement, but a substantial gap of more than two and a half years between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the [cross-country tables](#) at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

An 'additional birth leave' (*congé supplémentaire de naissance*) will be available from July 2026, entitling each parent to 1 or 2 additional months of paid leave following Maternity or Paternity leave, to be taken before the child turns 9 months. This will include all parents of children born or adopted on or after 1 January 2026 (including those born prematurely with a due date on or after that date). The leave will be paid at 70 per cent of net salary for the 1st month and 60 per cent of net salary for the 2nd month, up to an upper limit of €4,005 per month; this will be taxed and funded by health insurance.

All employees and self-employed workers are eligible. Although the exact arrangements are still being discussed, it is currently planned that self-employed workers receive a flat-rate benefit equivalent to 70 per cent of the standard daily allowance during the 1st month of leave (about €46 per day, or €1,380 per month), and 60 per cent during the 2nd month (about €39 per day, or €1,170 per month).

The leave may be taken in two separate 1 month periods, and parents may take the leave either simultaneously or alternating with the other

4. Take-up of leave

a. Maternity leave

Almost all mothers take up Maternity leave, a period of which is obligatory, although the length of leave taken varies, with women in higher status employment taking less leave.

b. Paternity leave

The take-up rate of paternity leave has gradually increased since its introduction in 2002 (around 70 per cent), reaching 81 per cent in 2024^{224,225}. The proportion of fathers taking paternity leave in the absence of the mother has also risen following the 2021 reform which extended the leave from two to four weeks, reaching 8 per cent compared to around 4 per cent previously.

However, take-up varies significantly depending on fathers' labour market situation. In 2024²²⁶, 39.7 per cent of self-employed fathers took Paternity leave, compared with 90 per cent of those on permanent contracts. Take-up also differs according to income level. In 2017²²⁷, take-up ranged from 58 per cent among fathers in the lowest income quintile to 79 per cent among those in the highest quintile, and reached 92 per cent among fathers in the middle-income groups (€2,500 to €2,999 per month). The take-up rate is also higher in large firms with more than 200 employees (88 per cent) than in firms with fewer than ten employees (75 per cent).

c. Parental leave and childrearing benefit (*PreParE*)

Statistics are limited to childcare allowance (essentially *PreParE*) provided by the National Family Allowance Fund, and it is not possible to find out how many recipients are also on Parental leave without receiving any allowance.

²²⁴ Pailhé, A., Solaz, A., Sponton, A. and Tô, M. (2026). Fathers Have Embraced Longer and More Flexible Paternity Leave. *Population & Societies*, 640(1), 1-4. Available [online](#).

²²⁵ Guedj, H. and Le Pape M.-C. (2023) 'Premiers jours de l'enfant : un temps de plus en plus sanctuarisé par les pères via le congé de paternité' [The child's first days: a time increasingly protected by fathers through paternity leave], *Etudes et Résultats*, 1275.

²²⁶ Pailhé, A., Solaz, A., Sponton, A. and Tô, M. (2026), *Ibid*.

²²⁷ Sponton, A. (2023) 'Reluctant Fathers? A Mixed-Methods Approach to Grasp the Diversity of Mechanisms Behind Paternity Leave Non-Take-Up', *Population*, vol.78, 1: 83-116.

In 2024, 192,000 families received a childcare allowance (*PreParE*).²²⁸ Among the beneficiaries receiving the *PreParE*, 53 per cent were stopping their work, 47 per cent worked part-time. The number of beneficiary families has been decreasing over the last decade, especially after the 2015 reform²²⁹, and in parallel with the decline in birth rates in France.

Research provides evidence that women make up 94 per cent of parents taking leave,²³⁰ and there has been little change since the introduction of *PreParE*.²³¹ Research also suggests that mothers who were in employment just before taking Maternity leave are more likely to claim *PreParE* if they are entitled to Parental leave because they have a job guarantee (Labour Code). With high unemployment, most working mothers who are not entitled to Parental leave cannot take the risk of losing their job unless their partner has secure employment.

A number of factors help to explain why fathers are so reluctant to claim Parental leave, including: the unequal gender distribution of domestic and child-raising tasks within the family still persisting in France; traditional value systems; in most couples, the man earning more than the woman; and a workplace culture in the private sector that makes it difficult for a man, in particular at management level, to take Parental leave. The small number of fathers who take childcare allowance full time are mostly blue-collar workers or employees with a stable job beforehand. Compared to fathers who do not take Parental leave, they are more likely to work in the public sector or female-dominated sectors and to have partners with a higher level of education, a higher status job and higher earnings. Besides, the majority of fathers on Parental leave take it on a part-time basis.²³²

This strong segmentation as far as the behaviour of mothers with young children is concerned is partly the result of the inconsistencies between the Parental leave scheme (part of employment legislation detailed in the Labour code) and the allowance provided under strict eligibility conditions by the Social Security.

²²⁸ National Office for Family Allocations (CNAF) (2025), *L'accueil des jeunes enfants edition 2025* [Report by the National Observatory for Early Childhood (ONAPE)]. Available [online](#).

²²⁹ See Périvier H., Verdugo G., 2024, 'Where Are the Fathers? Effects of Earmarking Parental Leave for Fathers in France', *ILR Review*, Vol.77, 1: 88-118. Prior to 2015, a parent was entitled to Parental leave allowance for one year for a first child, and up to three years for subsequent children. The reform designated 6 months of paid leave for first-time fathers and one year for subsequent children, while concurrently reducing the maximum duration of paid leave available to mothers. The reduction in the number of mothers receiving benefits was not compensated, likely due to the low amount of the allowance.

²³⁰ National Office for Family Allocations (CNAF) (2024) *L'accueil des jeunes enfants edition 2024* [Report by the National Observatory for Early Childhood (ONAPE)]. Available [online](#).

²³¹ Périvier, H. and Verdugo, G. (2024) 'Where Are the Fathers? Effects of Earmarking Parental Leave for Fathers in France', *ILR Review*, Vol.77, 1: 88-118.

²³² Guergoat-Larivière, M. and Narcy, M. (2024) 'La réforme du congé parental de 2015 : un impact hétérogène sur les mères et les pères selon les groupes sociaux et le contexte local' [The 2015 parental leave reform: a heterogeneous impact on mothers and fathers according to social groups and the local context], *Revue d'économie politique*, Vol.134, 2: 329-363.