

Italy²⁷⁸

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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 (*Congedo di Maternità*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and, for public employees, Ministry of Economy and Finance)

Length of Leave (before and after birth)

- 5 months: at least 4 weeks can be taken before the birth. However, the pregnant woman also has a choice to work up to childbirth, as long as a specialist doctor certifies that this option does not damage the health of the pregnant woman and the child. Those who choose this option are able to benefit from the 5 months of mandatory Maternity leave after the birth of the child. Absence from work can take place 2 months before the childbirth if pregnancy is certified as 'at risk,' or if the Territorial Department of Labour certifies that the job is incompatible with pregnancy.
- It is obligatory to take all the leave.

Payment, funding and taxation

- Eighty per cent of previous earnings with no upper limit for salaried workers. For home helps, self-employed workers, and temporary agricultural labourers, earnings are 80 per cent of conventional earnings determined each

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year by the law.²⁷⁹ For non-fixed term workers, Maternity leave depends on accredited contributions, though each professional sector has the potential to determine, with approval by the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies, a higher limit, taking into account income and contribution potential of the professional sector and compatibility with financial availability of the professional fund.

- Pension contributions for women taking leave are made by the INPS. Maternity leave periods outside an employment relationship are counted as social security contributions for retirement pensions, provided that the claimant has at least five years of employment and has paid social security contribution at the time of her application.
- Payments are made to the mother either directly by INPS (National Institute for Social Security) or by their employer, who is recompensed by the INPS.
- Payments are taxed.
- Funded by the INPS, which is financed by contributions from employers and employees at a rate that is related to the sector and to the type of employment contract (e.g., in manufacturing it is 0.46 per cent of earnings for employers and 0.28 per cent for employees).

Flexibility

- For employees and workers enrolled in the Separate Social Security Fund '*Gestione separata*',²⁸⁰ the 20 week period is compulsory, but there are two options for taking this Leave: (i) 4 weeks before the birth and 16 weeks after (upon presentation of a medical certificate); or (ii) 8 weeks before the birth and 12 weeks after. The allowance is accorded to autonomous female workers from 8 weeks before the birth to 12 weeks after. Maternity leave, however, is not compulsory for this category. The Jobs Act provides that, in the case of premature birth, which takes place before month 7 of the pregnancy, the amount of leave not used before birth is added to post-natal leave.
- Self-employed may also benefit from the allowance associated with a high-risk pregnancy. They are granted a daily allowance for leave periods within 2 months before childbirth in the event of pregnancy complications, ascertained by the local health authority.

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

- All employees and self-employed women with social security membership, including workers enrolled in *Gestione separata*.

²⁷⁹ Self-employed women are entitled to an allowance of 80 per cent of their average salary for 5 months. Unlike employees, self-employed women are free to continue to work and issue invoices.

²⁸⁰ By Law 335/1995, workers must contribute to a separate Italian National Institute of Social Security (INPS) fund for co-workers in order to obtain the right to a pension. They work on the basis of 'contracts of continuous and co-ordinated collaboration' or under contract for a project 'co.pro.,' that lay between employed and self-employed individuals' contracts. The Separate Management Fund (*Gestione Separata* INPS) is a pension fund to which self-employed workers and freelancers without a fund must register. Some professionals (such as lawyers, notaries, doctors) have, in fact, a pension fund dedicated to their activity.

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 multiple or premature births, the length of leave increases by 12 weeks.
- In the case of a premature birth, the mother may take unused pre-natal Leave after the birth; and if the infant is hospitalised, the mother has the right to suspend her Maternity leave, taking up the Leave again once the child is discharged.
- The mother can transfer 1 day of Maternity leave to the father, or a longer period if certain conditions prevent the mother from using the leave.

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)

- Public sector employees receive 100 per cent of earnings.
- In general, national collective agreements guarantee 100 per cent of earnings, with employers paying an additional 20 per cent.

b. Paternity leave (*congedo di paternità*) (Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies)

Length of Leave

- 10 working days.
- The leave is supposed to be compulsory but, differently from the prohibition to work during the Maternity leave, Paternity leave in Italy is a potestative right that can be waived
- A further 1 day of optional Leave is available if the mother transfers part of her Maternity leave.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of earnings with no upper limit; covered by imputed pension contributions.
- Paid, taxed and funded as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility

- Leave can be used from 2 months preceding the expected date of childbirth until 5 months after childbirth.
- Leave can be taken as separate days, but cannot be used on an hourly basis.
- In the case of multiple births, leave can be extended up to 20 working days.
- The employee must give a written notice on the intention to use the leave to the employer, at least 5 days in advance.

Eligibility

- All employees.
- Mandatory paternity/parental leave may also be taken by a female employee who is the intentional mother in female same-sex couples recognised as parents in the civil registry (Constitutional Court, judgment no. 115/2025 of 21 July 2025 and INPS Circular no. 3322 of 5 November 2025).

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)

- Employed fathers, including those who are self-employed and enrolled in *Gestione separata*, may take 3 months' paid leave after the birth in the following circumstances: (i) the mother's death or severe illness; (ii) the child being left by the mother; or (iii) the child being in the sole care of the father. An important verdict by the Tribunal of Florence extends the possibility of obtaining Paternity leave, paid at 80 per cent of earnings, to 2 months before childbirth. This means that the father can take the whole period of Maternity leave in certain circumstances, i.e., if the mother is a housewife, ill or, alternatively, if she is a self-employed worker who cannot take the leave. The Tribunal is a civil court and its decision acts as an important precedent for other Tribunals, but is not automatically binding. Conditions are the same as for Maternity leave.

c. Parental leave (*Congedo Parentale*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies and, for public employees, the Ministry of Economy and Finance)

Length of Leave (before and after child's birth)

- 10 months per parent, but the total leave per family cannot exceed this duration unless the father takes leave for a period in which case the duration of leave can be extended to 11 months.
- Leave is an individual, non-transferable entitlement.

Payment, funding and taxation

- Both the father and the mother may claim Parental leave benefit for a child under 6 years of age, non-transferable to the other parent; 3 months of leave is paid at 80 per cent of earnings, 6 months at 30 per cent, while 2 months are unpaid (this assumes the father takes at least 3 months leave so giving the family 11 months leave). The higher rates of payment can be shared between both parents or taken by only one as long as the period of higher payment falls within the first 3 months of non-transferable leave.
- After 9 months of paid Parental leave, Parental benefit is means-tested, i.e., it is paid only if the worker's individual income is less than 2.5 times the amount of the minimum pension or in cases when parents use extended

Maternity leave for severely disabled children within 12 years of the child's birth.

- Leave is unpaid if taken when a child is 6 to 14 years of age.
- Pension contributions for parents taking leave are made by the INPS.
- Paid, taxed and funded as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be taken at any time until a child is 14 years old.
- Leave can be taken as a single continuous period up to a maximum of 6 months; or as shorter periods, each amounting to a maximum of 6 months.
- Leave can be taken on an hourly basis, up to half of the daily hours worked during the month immediately preceding the start of Parental Leave; but this 'hourly-based leave' cannot be combined with another kind of permitted absence from work on the same day.
- Parents can take leave at the same time.
- Single parents are entitled to 11 months of Parental leave, out of which 9 months are paid.

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

- All employed parents, except domestic workers and home helps. Self-employed workers are generally entitled to 3 months, which can be taken only during the 1st year after a child's birth.
- The father is entitled to leave even if the mother is not employed, for example, if she is a housewife. Circular letter B/12-5-2009 from the Department of Labour, Health, and Social Policies extends the right to fathers to make use of the Leave indicated in the act if the mother is a housewife;²⁸¹ previously this right was limited to fathers where the mother was self-employed. This change gives equal financial value to domestic work as labour outside of the home.
- Working parents registered with the separate management scheme are entitled to paid Parental leave as employees, under the following eligibility criteria:
 - parents must be enrolled in the separate management scheme as project workers, professionals and assimilated categories and must not be simultaneously receiving a pension or be enrolled in another form of compulsory social security;
 - there must be a valid professional employment relationship during the period of Parental leave;
 - a parent must have paid at least 1 month of contributions in the 12 months preceding the start of the qualifying period.
- Parental leave is also provided for self-employed persons, i.e., entrepreneurs, artisans, freelancers, cooperative members, agents and sales representatives. Since there is no payroll, the 30 per cent allowance in this case is calculated on the conventional daily wage that the law establishes each year for each of these categories. Fathers are also entitled to this period of paid leave from work. For self-employed persons, however, Parental leave is shorter than for employees and subject to more constraints:
 - each parent is entitled to 3 months of leave for each child;

²⁸¹ Art. 40c, Act of Law n. 151/2001: right to work reduced hours with full earnings compensation for the first 12 months after childbirth.

- these 3 months can be requested within the first year of life or entry into the family (and not within the first 14 years);
- women can take Parental leave after the end of Maternity leave;
- the parent must have paid contributions in the month preceding the request;
- only those who do not actually work (and therefore do not invoice) during the leave period can receive Parental benefit.
- Same-sex couples are eligible.
- Unemployed women are eligible for the maternity allowance granted by the National Social Security Institution for five months in place of the unemployment benefit. The maternity benefit payable is 80 per cent of the average daily global remuneration received in the last month of work.

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

- As the leave is per child, each parent is entitled to additional leave in the case of multiple births (e.g., the length is doubled for twins, and tripled for triplets).
- A single parent may take 10 months of leave.

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)

- Public sector employees receive 100 per cent of earnings during the first 30 days of leave.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- For adoptive and foster parents, the same regulations for Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave apply as for other parents. The period of Maternity leave does not depend on the age of the child adopted and must start within 5 months of them entering the family; in the case of international adoption, the leave can also be taken for overseas visits in connection with adoption. Paternity leave can be taken within five months of a child's entry into the family or into Italy, in the case of national or international adoption. Parental Leave for adoptive and foster parents can be taken within 8 years of the child entering the family but not after their 18th birthday; payment, generally, is 100 per cent of earnings for the first 30 days and 30 per cent of earnings for the subsequent 5 months, if taken within 3 years of the entry of the child into the family.

Time off for the care of dependents

- **Unpaid leave** can be taken with no limit for a child under 3 years, and 10 working days per year per parent for a child aged 3 to 14 years.
- Employees are entitled to 2 years of leave over the course of their entire working life in the case of a **serious need in their family**, e.g., the disability of a child or other relative, even if not co-resident. The order of priority for taking leave is spouse, parents, children, then siblings of the person who needs care. During the period of leave, the applicant is entitled to receive an allowance of 100 per cent of their previous earnings, up to an upper limit of €47,351 per year.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Until a child is 12 months old, female employees are entitled to work reduced hours for breastfeeding, with full earnings compensation (1 hour less per day if working 6 hours per day or less; 2 hours less per day if working longer than 6 hours). Fathers are entitled to use this benefit in certain conditions, e.g., if the mother is self-employed or a freelancer; if the mother opts not to use it; if the mother is not employed; or if the father has sole custody of the child. Home helps, domestic workers, and autonomous workers are not entitled to reduced hours, but in this case too the father can work reduced hours.

Flexible working for carers

- Employees with caring responsibilities for (i) a child up to 12 years, (ii) a child with a disability, or (iii) providing care to cohabiting relatives with severe disabilities have a statutory right to request flexible working arrangements, although there is no general entitlement to obtain them. They may request a reduction of working hours (e.g., transition to part-time work), a change in working time arrangements (e.g., changed schedules) or remote working arrangements (i.e., so-called *lavoro agile* or smart working). Employers are required to consider such requests, and can only refuse or postpone them for justified organisational or business grounds; they are generally expected to provide a reasoned response, in line with EU work-life balance principles.
- Under Legislative Decree No. 81/2015, workers with care responsibilities benefit from priority access to part-time arrangements. Employees who have converted to part-time have a priority right to return to full-time employment. They also have precedence over new hires for equivalent positions

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- Pregnant employees are entitled to paid time off for antenatal examinations, medical check-ups and clinical tests, where these must take place during working hours. The time off is fully paid and considered as working time. Employees are required to provide prior notice and, afterwards, a medical certificate confirming attendance.

Other provisions of leave

- **Bereavement leave.** Employees are entitled to 3 days of paid leave per year in the event of the death or serious illness of a spouse (including cohabiting partner), a close relative (within the second degree), or a member of the same household. Collective agreements may provide more favourable conditions.
- **Leave for female victims of gender-based violence.** Victims of gender-based violence (as certified by municipal social services or anti-violence centres) employed in the public or private sectors, and who have care responsibilities, may request leave from work for 3 months, with a right to full pay. For the same period, they are also entitled to switch from full-time to part-time employment.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave is 15 to 16 months (depending on bonus months if the father takes Parental Leave); however, there is only 5 months of well-paid leave entitlement. There is no entitlement to ECEC, though nearly all children attend ECEC from 3 years of age.

Despite being recognised as a social right for children and working mothers by Law 1044/1971, provision of ECEC for children under three years of age is much lower and very variable between different regions.

The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) includes a specific line (Mission 4) on investing in ECEC infrastructure that is bound to increase ECEC availability in Italy.

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)

Recent policy developments in Italy have focused mainly on enhancing financial incentives and support measures, rather than redesigning the leave system itself. There have been no major changes to the core design of leave policies. The duration of Maternity leave and Paternity leave remains unchanged. The system continues to be characterised by a relatively limited role for fathers and a strong reliance on mothers' leave

The 2026 Italian Budget Law (Law No. 199/2025) changed Parental leave by extending, from January 2026, the age limit of the child during which leave can be taken from 12 to 14 years for employees. Moreover, sick leave for parents of children aged 3 to 14 years increased from 5 to 10 days per year. The budget law confirmed the working mothers' bonus and extended it from €40 to €60 per month for working mothers with at least two children and income up to €40,000.

On 24 February 2026, the Chamber of Deputies rejected the opposition's joint proposal for equal Parental leave. The proposal provided for 5 months (during the

first 18 months of a child's life) of compulsory, non-transferable leave for each parent, paid between 80 and 100 per cent, and the inclusion of self-employed workers and VAT-registered individuals. The estimated cost was approximately €4–4.5 billion. The proposal received a negative opinion from the State General Accounting Office, with funding deemed 'inadequate'.

4. Take-up of Leave

a. Maternity leave

Maternity leave is obligatory for employees. The most recent data (INPS, 2025) on 2024 for the private sector shows there were 171,698 beneficiaries, of whom 17,563 were fixed-term employees, 1,384 seasonal workers and 152,751 permanent workers.²⁸²

b. Paternity leave

In 2024, according to INPS data, 181,777 fathers in the private sector took Paternity leave (i.e., about 1,084 beneficiaries more than the previous year).²⁸³

c. Parental Leave

The most recent INPS data²⁸⁴ for the private sector, including agriculture, show that there were 124,140 male beneficiaries for 2,771,988 days and 289,230 women for 15,409,095 days, giving a total of 413,370 beneficiaries and 18,181,083 days. There were 975 beneficiaries among self-employed, for 62,787 days.²⁸⁵

²⁸² INPS Consiglio di indirizzo e vigilanza (2026) *Rendiconto di genere 2025*. <https://www.inps.it/>

²⁸³ INPS Consiglio di indirizzo e vigilanza (2026) *Rendiconto di genere 2025*. <https://www.inps.it/>

²⁸⁴ INPS Consiglio di indirizzo e vigilanza (2026) *Rendiconto di genere 2025*. <https://www.inps.it/>

²⁸⁵ <https://servizi2.inps.it/servizi/osservatoristatistici/13/41/o/426>