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April 2026

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 parents³⁵⁵

a. Maternity leave and Special Maternity leave (responsibility of the Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights)

Length of leave

- 18 weeks: 6 weeks must be taken following the birth, while a further 8 weeks can be taken before or after birth. A further period of up to 4 weeks may be taken immediately after these 14 weeks.
- It is obligatory to take 6 weeks following the birth.
- Special Maternity leave is granted when suitable alternative work and/or work hours (in terms of health and safety during pregnancy or during the 26 weeks starting from the date of confinement) are not possible. In such instances, the mother is granted leave, up to the time limit stipulated by the statutory Maternity leave.

Payment, funding and taxation

- For Maternity leave, 100 per cent of earnings for 14 weeks with no upper limit on payment, followed by a flat-rate payment equivalent to the statutory minimum wage (€213.54 per week) for the final four weeks. During Special Maternity leave, an allowance is paid, equivalent to the rate of the sickness benefit payable under the terms of the Social Security Act.
- Women on Maternity leave or Special Maternity leave are entitled to the same rights and benefits which may accrue for other employees of the same class

³⁵⁴ Please cite as: Camilleri-Cassar, F. (2026) 'Malta country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A.A., Dobrotić, I., Kaufmann, G., Kosłowski, A. and Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2026*. Available at: <https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/>

³⁵⁵ There is a distinction between policies in the public administration - which comprises government ministries, government departments and government entities - and those pertaining to the private sector and which do not fall under the Wages Council Wage Regulation Orders (WRO). Policies under the WRO include employees engaged in a contract of service in the private sector and are outside the scope of this report.

or category of employment at the same place of work, including the right to apply for promotion. Furthermore, the mother is entitled to return to the same job. If, for a valid reason, the position is no longer available, she is entitled to equivalent or similar work and conditions of employment.

- Except for bonuses or allowances related to performance or production, all automatic or fixed allowances specifically incorporated into the pay package should not be deducted during such leave.
- Payments are taxed.
- Funded by employers (public or private), except for the final 4 weeks paid at minimum wage level, which is funded by the government, via the relevant benefit under the Social Security Act. Private employers receive a refund from the Maternity Leave Trust Fund for wages paid to women during their 14 weeks' Maternity leave.³⁵⁶

Flexibility in use

- 8 weeks of leave can be taken before or after birth.

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

- All employees and self-employed women.³⁵⁷

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 those cases where, owing to a pathological condition arising out of confinement, an employee is unable to resume duties at the end of her Maternity leave, she will be entitled to a further period of absence of up to 5 weeks, which are deducted from her paid sick leave. Any period of absence in excess of the paid sick leave entitlement is considered sick leave without pay.

³⁵⁶ The Maternity Leave Trust Fund addresses discrimination against the employment of women in the private sector. Although employment law prohibits gender discrimination at the stage of recruitment, employers in the private sector are often wary of employing women, due to the possibility of pregnancy and payment for Maternity leave. The fund is financed through contributions by private companies. The premium contribution is calculated at 0.3 per cent of the basic wage of all employees, and the amount collected goes into the fund. This policy does not change the system of payment to women on Maternity leave (i.e., full wage for the first 14 weeks paid by the employer, and a flat-rate benefit paid by the government for the remaining four weeks of Maternity leave). The calculation of the 0.3 per cent is based on the number of employed women, the annual basic wage, the probability of maternity, the probability of women who exit the labour market before/during/after pregnancy, and the number of women working in the private sector. The fund is calculated on a 3, 6 or 12 months reimbursement system (yet to be established) by the government to employers after their payment for Maternity leave.

³⁵⁷ A self-employed woman who has recently given birth is eligible for a Maternity leave benefit; this benefit is paid for four weeks, in addition to the first 14 weeks, as maternity benefit entitlement.

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)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave³⁵⁸ (public sector)³⁵⁹ (responsibility of the Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights)

Length of leave

- 10 working days.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 100 per cent of previous earnings with no upper limit on payment.
- Payments are taxed.
- Funded by the government as the employer.

Flexibility in use

- Must be taken up in one continuous period within 15 days following the birth or adoption of a child.

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

- Fathers or equivalent second parents from the date of commencement of employment.
- Same-sex couples are also eligible.

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

- None.

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)

- None reported.

³⁵⁸ OPM Circular No. 11/2022.

³⁵⁹ *Manual on Work-Life Balance Measures, March 2026.* Available at: https://publicservice.gov.mt/Media/PSMC%20Documents/Manual_on_Work-Life_Balance_Measures_6.pdf?v=202603131625.

b. Paternity leave (private sector)

Length of leave

- 10 working days.

Payment and funding

- 100 per cent of previous earnings with no upper limit on payment.
- Funded by the employer who claims a refund from the State Trust Fund according to the applicable rate established for the scheme.

Flexibility in use

- None. Must be taken up in one continuous period within 15 days following the birth or adoption of a child.

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

- Fathers or equivalent second parents, on the birth or adoption of a child.
- Granted irrespective of the marital status or the family status of the worker.
- Eligibility not conditional on length of service.
- Eligible also in case of still births, as provided under the maternity leave policy.

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 father

- None.

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)

- None reported.

c. Parental leave³⁶⁰ (public administration) (responsibility of the Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 12 months.
- Leave is a family entitlement.

³⁶⁰ OPM Circular No 117/92, MPO Circular No BI/6/94, MPO Circular No 28/96, OPM Circular No 15/1998, OPM Circular No 29/1998, MPO Circular No 108/2005 and MPO Circular No 3/2008, OPM Circular No 11/2022.

Payment, funding and taxation

- 2 months³⁶¹ paid at the same rate established by the sickness benefit entitlement under the Social Security Act.
- Individual right of each parent, for a period of 4 months until the child has attained the age of 8 years.
- However, child credits are awarded to parents who take a career break or terminate employment to care for their child/children under 6 years of age. Credits are due for the first three children, even if the parent does not return to employment. Any credits for the 4th child (and onwards if required) will be awarded on the condition that the parent returns to employment for the same number of years of credits to be awarded.

Flexibility in use

- Parental leave may be taken in one continuous period of 12 months or in several continuous periods of 4, 6 or 9 months.
- 4 months may be broken down into periods of 1 month at a time and taken until the child is 10 years old – they may be granted on a full-time or a part-time basis, in a piecemeal way, or a time-credit system.
- Leave may be shared between the parents if both are public administration employees.
- Parents cannot be on leave together.

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

- Every parent in employment, whether full-time or part-time, on an indefinite or fixed-term contract.
- Completion of 12 months of probationary period.
- Same-sex couples, legal guardians, adoptees and foster carers of children under 10 years of age are eligible³⁶².

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 father

- Public officers in the positions of head, director, or assistant-director are eligible for 4 months unpaid Parental leave instead of 12 months, and this leave may be taken up to the child's tenth birthday. Any period taken as unpaid Parental leave is calculated as part of the 6 years creditable performance required as an officer in the respective grade.
- None

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- None.

³⁶¹ Subsidiary legislation 452.125 The Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers Regulation, Legal Notice 201 of 2022.

³⁶² OPM Circular No 117/92, MPO Circular No BI/6/94, MPO Circular No 28/96, OPM Circular No 15/1998, OPM Circular No 29/1998, MPO Circular No 108/2005 and MPO Circular No 3/2008.

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

- None reported.

c. Parental leave³⁶³ (private sector unless covered by Wage Regulation Orders)³⁶⁴

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 4 months per parent.
- The first 2 months are an individual, non-transferable entitlement; the second 2 months are an individual but transferable entitlement.

Payment, funding and taxation

- The first 2 months for each parent are paid; the remaining period is unpaid. The payment rate is the Married rate established for the
- sickness benefit entitlement, i.e., 50 per cent of previous earnings for children under 4 years of age; or 25 per cent of previous earnings for children 4 to 8 years of age.³⁶⁵
- Payments are made to parents by the employer who claims a refund from the State up to a maximum of 2 months leave per parent.

Flexibility in use

- Leave may be taken in periods of 1 month, up to the child's 8th birthday.
- The 4 months can be taken on one continuous period if the child is between 0 and 4 years, in which case only 4 weeks of the entitlement will be paid at the applicable rate and the remainder is unpaid; if the child is between 4 and 6 years, only 2 weeks of the entitlement will be paid at the applicable rate and the remainder is unpaid; if the child is between 6 and 8 years, only 2 weeks of the entitlement will be paid at the applicable rate and the remainder is unpaid.
- Parents cannot be on leave together.

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

- Each parent on the grounds of birth, adoption, child fostering or legal custody of a child.
- At least 12 months of continuous service.
- Self-employed workers and same-sex couples are not eligible.

³⁶³ L.N. 201 of 2022, Employment and Industrial Relations Act (Cap.452) The Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers Regulations, 2022.

³⁶⁴ Thirty-one sectors in the private sector fall under WROs, including hospitals and clinics, construction, private cleaning services, printing and publishing seamen, hotels and clubs, etc. Workers covered by Wage Regulation Orders have their own legal entitlements, which are amended regularly (e.g. hours of work). The reference to the 'private sector' benefits in this report covers only non-WRO workers. For more information, see: <https://dier.gov.mt/en/Legislation/Pages/Wage-Regualtion-Orders.aspx>.

³⁶⁵ L.N. 201 of 2022. Employment and Industrial Relations Act (Cap. 452) The Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers Regulations, 2022.

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 father

- None

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)

- None reported.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks (public sector)

- A 5 year career break can be taken until a child is 10 years old by employees in the public administration; in the case of female employees, they must undertake 6 months employment either after Maternity or Parental leave, or else immediately after the career break. The 5 years must be taken in one continuous period and may be reduced to multiples of 3 months; if the five years are not fully used, the outstanding leave may be taken for the care of another child/children. The career break may be shared by both parents once if both are public administration employees.

There is no payment; however, child credits are awarded to parents and legal guardians who take a career break or terminate employment to care for their child/children under 6 years of age. Credits are due for the first 3 children, even if the parent does not return to employment; any credits for the 4th child (and onwards if required) will be awarded on the condition that the parent returns to employment for the same number of years of credits to be awarded.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks (private sector)

- No statutory entitlement. Any career break is at the discretion of the employer.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working (public sector)

Adoption leave and pay

- The same as Maternity leave.
- International adoptees (i.e., persons who adopt a child from outside Malta) are entitled to additional separate periods of unpaid leave that do not exceed three months in total.

Time off for the care of dependants

- Public administration workers who have completed their respective probationary period may apply for up to 1 year of unpaid **responsibility leave**, to care for dependent elderly parents, children, spouse or partner in a civil union (renewable every year).

- Public sector employees are entitled to unpaid **carer's leave** to provide personal care or support to a relative, or to a person who lives in the same household as the public employee, and who needs care or support for a medical reason.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Women may take a maximum reduction for breastfeeding of 1 hour per working day without loss of payment, taken as 1 60 minute break, 2 30 minute breaks, or 3 20 minute intervals per day.

Flexible working for carers

- Parents are not obliged to work overtime for a period of 12 months from the birth of their child.
- Employees with 3 months of service may apply to work flexi-time for 12 months, renewable every year, with a full-time salary and other benefits. Employees may work different time schedules in winter and summer.
- Employees may apply to work reduced hours (i.e., between 20 and 35 hours per week) until their children are 16 years old, with pro-rata payment. Alternative work arrangement 'closer to home' is limited to a maximum of 26 weeks from birth confinement.
- All employees in public administration who have held their current position for at least 3 months, may apply to work: (i) a 40-hour week over 4 or 6 days for 12 months (renewable every year); or (ii) up to 20 per cent of weekly working hours remotely during usual office hours, subject to approval, and without providing justification. The approved arrangement is valid for 12 months, which may be renewed yearly.
- All employees in public administration who have held their current position for at least 3 months are eligible for 'extended remote working', if their job is suitable for remote working. Eligibility may include, but is not limited to, the following reasons: (i) public officers who have children up to sixteen years that need to be taken care of; (ii) public officers who have dependent elderly parents, sons and daughters, or spouse/partner in a civil union; (iii) public officers who have valid medical/humanitarian reasons. In any of these cases the public officer is required to produce a medical specialist's certificate certifying that for medical or serious humanitarian and/or family reasons, they may not attend their duties fully from the office.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- Pregnant women are entitled to attend ante-natal examinations during working hours, with no loss of pay or any other benefit.

Other provisions of leave

- **Marriage and civil union leave.** 3 consecutive working days no later than the first working day following the marriage or civil union.
- **Miscarriage Leave.** This leave supports parents and prospective parents who experience the loss of a pregnancy before the 22nd week, whether this occurs naturally, due to medical complications, or through a necessary medical procedure. If the pregnancy ends later, the entitlement shifts to Maternity leave. All employees, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, or

type of contract are entitled to this leave, including part-time and probationary workers. Miscarriage Leave provides 7 working days of full paid leave, to be taken immediately following the miscarriage. Both the person who experienced the miscarriage and the other expectant parent may take this leave, and no minimum service period is required.

- **Neo-natal care leave.** State-funded leave for parents whose newborns require intensive medical care immediately after birth.
- **Bereavement leave.** All employees are entitled to bereavement leave on the death of a wife, husband, mother, father, son, daughter, brother or sister of the employee. The entitlement may vary depending on the Wage Regulation Order. Employees in work which not regulated by any Work Regulated Order are entitled to 1 working day as stipulated in L.N. 432 of 2007 – Minimum Special Leave Entitlement Regulations.
- **Special parental beareavement leave.** This leave **is** granted to working parents who experience the loss of a child under the age of eighteen years, who can take 7 working days away from work to grieve and manage personal matters following such a loss. This entitlement is being introduced as a separate form of leave under the law, ensuring that parents have specific protection and support in such difficult circumstances. Like other forms of statutory leave, Special Parental Bereavement Leave will be paid, with payment based on the employee's basic wage. The cost will be shared between employers and the government. Depending on the sector, the employer will cover the first 1 or 2 days, while the remaining days, up to the full 7 days will be funded by the Department for Social Security. Part-time employees or those working reduced hours will also be entitled to this leave, calculated on a pro-rata basis according to their working hours.
- **Medically assisted reproduction (IVF) leave.** Fully paid leave for 60 hours to the receiving person and 60 hours to the other may be taken for every assisted reproductive procedure, up to three times. Leave may be taken by both parents concurrently. The entitlement to 60 hours of paid leave is granted one time for the human oocyte process, who is not a prospective parent, irrespective of the entitlements to the receiving person. Eligibility is for a prospective parent, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, who have attained the age of majority and is a receiver or user of the medically assisted procreation techniques regulated under the Embryo Protection Act.
- **Special leave.** Unpaid 3 months leave in any period of 12 months for a special reason, including work-life balance reasons.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working (private sector)

Adoption leave

- An employee who is the parent of an adopted child is entitled to an uninterrupted period of 18 weeks' leave when the child is adopted and such leave commences from the date on which the child passes into the care and custody of the adoptive parent or parents by a court judgment in the country of origin. An employee on adoption leave is entitled to the first 14 weeks of adoption leave on full pay but if the employee elects to avail themselves of any additional adoption leave in excess of 14 weeks, the employer is not be obliged to pay for those weeks of adoption leave in excess of the 14 weeks,
- In the case of a single parent, adoption leave is taken by that parent. In the case of more than one parent: if one parent is employed on the date of the child's adoption, the leave is taken by that parent; and if both parents are

employed, whether with different employers or with the same employer, on the day of the child's adoption, each parent is entitled to a portion of the adoption leave as agreed between them by written agreement.

Time off for the care of dependants

- **Unpaid carer's leave** of 5 working days per year, to provide personal care or support to a relative or person in the same household for a serious medical reason.
- **Urgent family leave.** The employer is bound by law to grant every employee a minimum total of 32 hours with pay per year as time off for urgent family reasons. Such urgent leave has to be related to cases of sickness or accident to members of the immediate family of the employee. Out of the 32 hours urgent family leave to which a full-time employee is entitled, the first 16 hours taken as urgent family leave are deducted from the annual vacation leave entitlement of the employee. The second 16 hours taken as urgent family leave are deducted from the annual paid sick leave entitlement of the employee.

Specific provision for breastfeeding

- None.

Flexible working for carers

- Carers and employees with children up to the age of 8 years are entitled to request flexible working arrangements.

Time off for antenatal appointments and care

- None.

Other provisions of leave

- **Miscarriage Leave; Neo-natal care leave; Bereavement leave; Special parental bereavement leave; Medically assisted reproduction (IVF) leave.** As for public sector above.

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

The maximum period of post-natal leave is just under 76 months for public administration workers who use Parental leave and career breaks; or just over 11 months for private sector workers. In both cases, most of the leave period is unpaid, with leave paid at a high rate for just over three months. There is an entitlement to free attendance at Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) for children from 3 months of age who have a parent in full-time education or employment. There is, therefore, no gap between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement for children with parents in employment or studying. However, all children are entitled to attend ECEC from 3 years, irrespective of whether the parent is economically active or a stay-at-home parent.

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)

The following new policies were introduced for public and private sectors:

- Miscarriage Leave. As from 1 January 2026, Miscarriage Leave is a new legal entitlement that supports parents and prospective parents who experience the loss of a pregnancy before the 22nd week, whether this occurs naturally, due to medical complications, or through a necessary medical procedure. If the pregnancy ends after the 22nd week, the entitlement shifts to Maternity leave.
- Special parental bereavement leave. As from 1st January 2026, Special Parental Bereavement Leave is a new type of entitlement granted to working parents who experience the loss of a child under the age of 18 years. This leave allows parents to take 7 working days, away from work to grieve and manage personal matters following such a loss. Previously, parents were entitled to only 1 or 2 days of leave depending on the sector, but this new measure significantly extends the period to 7 days.
- Neo-natal care leave. In 2026, a new, fully state-funded leave was introduced for parents whose newborns require intensive medical care immediately after birth.

4. Uptake of leave (public sector)³⁶⁶

There has been no update to the Family Friendly Report since 2020.

a. Maternity leave

In 2020, a total of 769 women took their entitlement of the first statutory 14 weeks Maternity leave on full pay; 597 took the remaining low-paid 4 weeks.

b. Paternity leave

In 2020, 196 men took up their entitlement to Paternity leave, an increase of almost 50 per cent over the leave uptake in 2019.

c. Parental leave

There is a clear gender gap in the uptake of unpaid Parental leave. In 2020, women's share of the uptake was 98 per cent.

d. Childcare leave and career breaks

In 2020, women were predominantly the largest number of takers of the career break with a total of 229 (98 per cent) women compared with 4 men.

³⁶⁶ *Family Friendly Measures Research Report 2020*. Malta: People and Standards Division, Office of the Prime Minister. Available at: <https://publicservice.gov.mt/en/people/Documents/People-Support-Wellbeing/Reports/FFM - 2020.pdf>

A study of social policy in Malta finds that unpaid family leave is synonymous with career regression, and interruption in national insurance contributions. This, in turn, perpetuates women's financial dependence on men and increases the feminisation of poverty in old age (see Camilleri-Cassar, 2005).³⁶⁷ Until leave-to-care policies can offer financial compensation for loss of earnings and are modified to allow time for the equal sharing of care between women and men, gender inequality will persist, both in the workplace and domestic sphere in Malta (Camilleri-Cassar, 2005).³⁶⁸ The findings from this 2005 study seem to persist today.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working³⁶⁹

In 2018, out of the total number of employees who used the IVF leave, 65 per cent were women and 35 per cent were men. Data on same-sex couples who took up the leave is unavailable.

In 2020, a total of 1,317 public officers chose to work Reduced working hours, 94 per cent of whom were women. Teleworking is a popular measure for both women and men. In 2020 and 2021, in the fifteen months of the pandemic, workers were strongly encouraged to telework to contain the spread of the virus. Others worked on a rota basis. No data is available as to the increase in the number of teleworkers over this time.

Flexitime seems to be the most preferred measure by both women and men. In 2020, of a total number of 1,418 public officers working flexitime, 816 (58 per cent) were women, compared with 602 men.

4. Uptake of leave (private sector)³⁷⁰

No information available.

³⁶⁷ Camilleri-Cassar, F. (2005) *Gender Equality in Maltese Social Policy? Graduate Women and the Male Breadwinner Model*, Malta: Agenda Publishing.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ *Family Friendly Measures Research Report 2020*. Malta: People and Standards Division, Office of the Prime Minister. Available at: <https://publicservice.gov.mt/en/people/Documents/People-Support-Wellbeing/Reports/FFM - 2020.pdf>

³⁷⁰ Based on personal communication with the Department of Industrial and Employment Relations, Malta: <http://dier.gov.mt/en/Pages/home.aspx>