



The MenCare Parental Leave Platform

10 ways to leave gender inequality behind and give our children the care they need

We believe that true equality between men and women will not be reached until men and boys take on 50 percent of the caregiving and domestic work. Equal leave policies for both parents – policies that are well-paid and non-transferable – have been gaining global attention in recent years, for good reason. They have proven to be some of the most effective policies in encouraging men’s caregiving and promoting greater equality in the household, workplace, and society as a whole, particularly when embedded within broader strategies to reduce and redistribute care work.

However, while maternity leave is now offered in nearly all countries, new fathers are only given leave in 92 countries, and in half of these, it is less than three weeks. Now is the time to ensure the right of all parents to be able to care for their children and families.

Leave for fathers — in conjunction with leave for mothers and additional structural solutions, and when enshrined in national policies — has the power to contribute significantly to the recognition and redistribution of care work and to transform deeply rooted inequalities between men and women. These policies can be an effective mechanism for changing the gendered dynamics of caregiving at home and elevating the status of caregiving more broadly. Leave for fathers promotes women’s equal pay and advancement in the workforce and men’s connectedness at home. It boosts employees’ morale and productivity, and reduces turnover. It allows governments to send a clear signal that all parents matter in the lives of their children.

MenCare is calling on governments and employers to adopt parental leave policies that are:

1. Equal for women and men: Leave should be guaranteed for both women and men in equal amounts. Anything less reinforces gender inequality, perpetuates women's lower pay, inhibits their career advancement relative to men's, and deprives men of the opportunity to be caregivers.

2. Non-transferable between parents: Leave policies should be allotted as individual entitlements — designated for each parent — and offered as “use it or lose it.” This helps to encourage both men's and women's caregiving and supports a diversity of family structures.

3. Paid according to each parent's salary: To support new parents and families, and in particular, to increase men's uptake of leave, it must be adequately paid, and ideally, paid in full through social security benefits. When leave is not paid (whether for mothers or fathers), many individuals simply cannot afford to take it. In countries that may not have social security systems in place, other public financing options should be proposed and supported.

4. Adequate in length for each parent, with a minimum of 16 weeks for each: We endorse the European Union's recommendation of 16 weeks as the minimum length of leave necessary to adequately support parents in their roles as caregivers and in developing lifelong patterns of equality in caregiving.

5. Offered with job protection: No one should be forced out of his/her job, or suffer discrimination in pay or promotion, for taking leave to care for a child.

6. Encouraged and incentivized: Even if a leave policy exists, if employers, peers, and society in general discourage its use, men (and many women) will not take it. Employers and governments should ensure that both women and men feel supported to take existing leave.

7. Inclusive for workers of all kinds: Leave is often designed for and extended to the full-time, formal work force. Leave and other supportive policies must also be available for other types of workers, including those who work part-time, seasonally, short-term, or under contracts.

8. Combined with subsidized, high-quality childhood education and care, and other policies to ensure equity in all caregiving, particularly in low-income settings: Paid, equitable parental leave must be combined with access to high-quality early childhood education and care for all children, as well as other measures to alleviate the burden of care and to change norms around caregiving.

9. Supportive of diverse caregivers and caregiving: Leave should be offered to all caregivers, including same-sex, opposite-sex, adoptive, and single parents and parents of children with disabilities.

10. Enshrined and enforced in national law and in international agreements: Leave should not just be left to employers and individuals; it should be government-mandated, included within existing or new employment benefits or social insurance, and internationally backed.

Who does leave for fathers benefit?

Leave policies that offer paid, non-transferable leave for men and women help to advance gender equality, social justice, and the well-being of women, children, and men.

Women: When men take leave, it helps women keep their jobs, their employability, and their prospects in the labor market; decreases women's care and domestic burden; and improves women's health and well-being.

Children: Globally, an overwhelming amount of evidence confirms that men's engaged and responsive participation in their children's lives has positive effects.

Men: Men who are involved in their children's lives have longer, healthier ones themselves. They experience better mental health, better relationships, and more personal satisfaction.

Employers: Paid leave is increasingly shown to be good for business, improving retention of employees, increasing morale and productivity, reducing absenteeism and turnover, and reducing training and staff-replacement costs.

Societies: Leave for fathers has benefits at all levels of society, contributing to the recognition and redistribution of care work, and to the transformation of deeply rooted inequalities between men and women.

Learn more. Read the full MenCare Parental Leave Platform [here](#).