

Gender Equality  
in Childcare:  
Transformation  
of the Traditional  
Gender Roles  
through  
Leave Policies

Submitted by  
**Constanza Ginestra**

Submitted at  
**Department of Politics and  
Social Policy**

Supervisor  
**Univ.-Prof.<sup>in</sup> Margitta Mätzke, Ph.D.**

September 2018



Master Thesis  
to obtain the academic degree of  
Master of Social Sciences  
in the Master's Program  
Comparative Social Policy and Welfare



# Statutory Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted is my own unaided work, that I have not used other than the sources indicated, and that all direct and indirect sources are acknowledged as references. This printed thesis is identical with the electronic version submitted.

Vienna, September 2018

---

Place, Date



---

Signature



# Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to explore how leave policy designs contribute to an equal division of childcare between parents in Argentina, Finland and the United Kingdom. In order to do this, a qualitative cross-country analysis is conducted, exploring two different dimensions: (1) the Leave System dimension, which refers to payment, eligibility, funding and duration of the leave; and (2) the Gender Equality dimension, studied through different indicators such as the possibility of alternation between parents, the flexibility in use, whether a father's quota exists, and how much time each parent spend in childcare.

The study shows that Finland is the country which better contributes to creating gender equality in childcare, while Argentina and the UK present more restrictive and maternalist policies. However, despite the extremely different policy designs, these countries share one common characteristic: female dominance in childcare. Women spend much more time compared to men taking care of children.

The thesis concludes that although social, cultural and gendered expectations shape the way leaves are developed in each country, policy designs are still decisive steps towards the ideal situation where both mothers and fathers take care of their children equally.



# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Conceptualising Leave Policy in the Field of Family Policy: from the Broad to the Specifics</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1	Targeting Policies: Universalism vs. Selectivism? . . . . .	4
2.2	Theorising Family Policy . . . . .	9
2.2.1	Family Policy Typologies . . . . .	9
2.2.2	Different Dimensions to Study Family Policy . . . . .	10
2.2.3	Family or families? Addressing Diversity . . . . .	13
2.3	Childcare Policies as a Tool to Balance Work and Family . . . . .	15
2.4	Defining Leave Policies . . . . .	20
2.4.1	How Is Leave Policy Regulated Internationally? . . . . .	22
2.4.2	Maternity Leave in the World . . . . .	25
2.5	Leave Policy and Gender Equality . . . . .	27
2.5.1	Gender Equality, the Sexual Division of Labour and Gender Norms	27
2.5.2	The Gender Equality Dimension in Leave Policy . . . . .	28
2.5.3	Why Study Leave Policy in relation to Gender Equality . . . . .	32
<b>3</b>	<b>Research Question and Methodology</b>	<b>35</b>
3.1	Case Selection: Argentina, Finland and the UK . . . . .	37
3.2	Methodology . . . . .	38
<b>4</b>	<b>Different Logics in the Design of Leave Policies: The cases of Argentina, Finland and the UK</b>	<b>39</b>
4.1	ARGENTINA . . . . .	40
4.1.1	Balancing Work and Family in Latin America and Argentina . . . . .	40

4.1.2	Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leaves in Argentina . . . . .	43
4.1.3	Data on Leave Policy and Time Use in Childcare . . . . .	47
4.2	THE UNITED KINGDOM . . . . .	49
4.2.1	Maternity Leave . . . . .	49
4.2.2	Paternity Leave . . . . .	51
4.2.3	Shared Parental Leave. A Policy Intended to Generate an Equal Division of Childcare . . . . .	52
4.2.4	Parental Leave . . . . .	52
4.2.5	Adoption Leave . . . . .	53
4.2.6	Available Data on Leave Policy and Time Use in Childcare . . . . .	54
4.3	FINLAND . . . . .	58
4.3.1	Maternity Leave . . . . .	58
4.3.2	Paternity Leave . . . . .	61
4.3.3	Parental Leave . . . . .	63
4.3.4	Partial Parental Allowance . . . . .	64
4.3.5	Home Care Leave . . . . .	65
4.3.6	Adoptive Parents and LGBT+ Families . . . . .	68
4.3.7	Time Use in Childcare . . . . .	68
<b>5</b>	<b>Analysing Leave Policies</b>	<b>71</b>
5.1	Argentina: Strong Maternalist Approach where Female Dominance in Childcare is the Rule . . . . .	71
5.2	The UK: Mother-Centred Leaves and Short Well-paid Periods . . . . .	75
5.3	Finland: Gender Equality in Childcare is still a Prospect . . . . .	80
<b>6</b>	<b>Comparing Different Leave Policy Designs</b>	<b>83</b>
6.1	Leave System Dimension: Different Degrees of Maternalism . . . . .	84
6.2	Gender Equality: Shared Maternalism and Strong Gendered Expectations	87
6.3	Familiarisation vs. De-familiarisation . . . . .	88
<b>7</b>	<b>Final Remarks</b>	<b>91</b>



# List of Figures

2.1	Duration of Paid Maternity Leave in National Legislation, 2015 or Latest Available Year (weeks). Source: International Labor Organization, 2018. World Social Protection Database. . . . .	26
4.1	Overview of Available Leave Entitlements. Argentina, 2018. . . . .	43
4.2	Length of Maternity and Paternity Leave by Province. Argentina, 2018. Source: CIPPEC. . . . .	47
4.3	Average Time in Hours Devoted to Unpaid Domestic Work for People Aged 18+ by Presence of Children in Household, Argentina. 2013. Source: INDEC Encuesta sobre Trabajo No Remunerado y Uso del Tiempo. . . .	48
4.4	Overview of Available Leave Entitlements. UK, 2018. . . . .	49
4.5	Average Daily Hours of Childcare Provided by Gender of Parent, where Youngest Child Living in Same Household is of Pre-school Age, UK, 2015. Source: UK Harmonised European Time Use Survey, 2015. . . . .	56
4.6	Overview of Available Leave Entitlements. Finland, 2018. . . . .	59
4.7	Recipients of Maternity and Paternity Leave and Number of Live Births per Year. Finland, 2006-2017. Source: KELA Statistics. . . . .	62
4.8	Recipients of Parental Allowance by Gender and Number of Live Births per Year. Finland, 2006-2017. Source: KELA Statistics. . . . .	64
4.9	Recipients of Home Care Leave by Gender per Year. Finland, 2007-2017. Source: KELA Statistics. . . . .	66
4.10	Recipients of Flexible Care by Gender per Year. Finland, 2014-2017. Source: KELA Statistics. . . . .	67
4.11	Hours Spent in Childcare by Married or Cohabiting Couples with Youngest Child aged 0-6, Finland, 2009-2010. Source: Official Statistics of Finland.	69
6.1	Leave Entitlements by Country in Months. Argentina, Finland, UK, 2018. Source: CIPPEC, KELA, Gov.UK . . . . .	86

# List of Tables

- 3.1 Concept, Variables, Dimensions and Indicators. . . . . 37
- 4.1 Leave Policy Entitlements in Private and Public Sector. Argentina, 2018.  
Source: LCT. CCT. . . . . 46

# 1

## Introduction

This thesis explores leave policies for working parents in three countries: Argentina, Finland and the United Kingdom (UK). The objective of this study is to assess to what extent leave policy designs contribute to developing gender equality in the division of childcare among parents. Therefore, this thesis explores the leave policy schemes in the three countries taking into account particularly maternity, paternity and parental leaves and the time spent in childcare by both parents.

In order to study these leave entitlements, two different dimensions are introduced: (1) the Leave System dimension and (2) the Gender Equality dimension. The leave system refers to structural characteristics of the leave such as length, eligibility and payment. The gender equality dimension explores how flexible are these leaves in terms of alternation among parents, how much time women and men actually spend on childcare and the availability of exclusive entitlements for fathers.

The main hypothesis of this thesis is that, despite the different policy designs in three very different welfare states, women are still the ones who spend more time in childcare in all of them. And not only that: they are expected to do so. Social, cultural and gendered expectations shape the way leave policy is designed.

Females are considered the natural caregivers in a Scandinavian country, where gender equality is supposed to be at the top of all public policies. Also, in a Latin American country, characterized by an extreme maternalism with inexistent incentives to father's involvement in child-rearing. Likewise, in the UK, where care is a private matter and women should be responsible for arranging it.

Nevertheless, leave policies are still a crucial step towards gender equality in childcare, providing women with different opportunities to balance work and family, and in some cases, encouraging fathers to be more involved in childcare responsibilities.

The literature review indicates that there are different criteria to compare and rank leave policies and this is not easy. Hence, the objective of this study is not to classify or rank countries, but to study how certain public policy designs in the selected cases redress (or not) an unequal division of childcare between mothers and fathers.

This thesis is organized as follows: Section 2 presents a literature review of the state of research in family policy, leave policy and gender equality. Different forms of policy targeting are analysed, together with general concepts of family policy and childcare policy. This is followed by different leave policy definitions, introducing how they are regulated in the international arena and the gender equality dimension in this field. In Section 3, the research question and methodology are presented. In Section 4, the countries are ordered from the one which least contributes to gender equality in childcare to the one which does the most in this regard. In each case, maternity, paternity, parental leaves and time spent in childcare are explored, together with statistics to show how they work in each country. An analysis and comparison of cases in terms of differences and similarities is presented in Sections 5 and 6, considering not only the policy design but also the gender equality dimension in care, explaining where women can balance work and family more successfully. The thesis concludes with some final remarks in Section 7.

# 2

## Conceptualising Leave Policy in the Field of Family Policy: from the Broad to the Specifics

In order to understand how leave policy could impact on gender equality, it is important to explore what is family policy, how it can modify behaviours through its different measures and the different ways of targeting these policies.

Family policy is a broad field of social policy, which involves several dimensions. This thesis focuses specifically on leave policy, such as maternity, paternity and parental leaves. Leaves are just one of the policy components aimed at helping to reconcile work and family life including also early childhood education and care, family support services, cash benefits and flexible working time.

This chapter explores previous research on policy targeting, family policy and child-care, public policies to reconcile work and family, and leave policies.

## 2.1 Targeting Policies: Universalism vs. Selectivism?

Many scholars have researched the logic and principles under which governments select the beneficiaries of certain policies. This decision is crucial in delivering policies because it defines clearly whom the government wants to benefit (or not) with these measures.

In the leave policy field, this is particularly relevant since it will determine, among other things, who will take care of the newborn. For instance, the fact that governments decide to provide working and non-working parents with allowances during the leave it has different implications that if these policies are only offered to working parents. In the same way, if the leave is better paid for mothers than for fathers, or as it is usual, the leave is longer for mothers than for fathers, it would encourage more women to take it, and the equal division of care will be unbalanced.

Certainly, the approaches to address leave policies vary from country to country. However, the literature on the topic indicates that it is possible to categorise these policy designs under different dimensions of universalism, selectivity, particularism and residualism.

Universalism is a principle to address policies characteristic of the Nordic countries. This concept means to apply the same standards to all individuals (Carey and Cramond, 2017). A high degree of universalism means that all citizens and residents are entitled to basic social security benefits and services, regardless of their position in the labour market (Mikko et al., 1999). Universal benefits are for all citizens equally. This promotes not only equality of status and equal opportunities, but also wholeness, unity, totality, and sameness (Anttonen, 2014).

The principle of universalism means also social redistribution. First, because there is a membership for all citizens, a right of inclusion without discretions. Secondly,

the benefits are distributed evenly, there is a universal allocation. Third, they are funded by taxes, hardly by contributions, there is no exclusion by means-testing measures.

Anttonen and Sipilä (2014) claims that *“universalism can only be provided by the state, access for all cannot be guaranteed without legislation. There is no voluntary road to universalism passing the state”* (Anttonen, Sipilä 2014:9). Therefore, it is necessary the explicit recognition of social needs by the government. A political and a cultural process in a democracy is also a precondition for developing universalism since citizens should agree with the idea that the state should take responsibility regarding social needs. This also refers to the citizens’ agreement to use these resources, based on government trust, democratic values, and transparency.

Anttonen and Sipilä (2014) also consider political drivers to apply this kind of policies which gain legitimacy among people in a state with good governance: *“Strength of democracy seems to be a sine qua non of citizenship-based universalism”* (Anttonen, Sipilä, 2014:11). Universalism cannot either exist without accessible public goods: good infrastructure to offer adequate social policies is a condition.

Some authors (Carey and Cramond, 2017) have identified two different approaches to universalism: general and specific. **General universalism** refers to the impartial determination of welfare state recipients. These flat-rate benefits are applied to all, irrespective of citizenship, class, means or need. On the other hand, **specific universalism** supports the free and universal availability of public services based on the citizenship, defending and extending social rights (Carey and Cramond, 2017:304).

Franzoni and Sánchez-Anchorena (2014) study universalism by focusing on policy goals and instrument, identifying two contrasting approaches. First, the **minimalist universalism** which defines universal policies taking only into account the coverage, and not how generous or equal is that coverage. A broader perspective comes from the **maximalist universalism**, which according to these authors, refers to the Scandinavian welfare states. These countries offer a set of services available to all citizens, funded by general taxes. *“A specific eligibility criterion (citizenship), the scope of services (broad) and funding mechanism (general revenues) found in these*

*countries define universal social policy as a theoretical and policy concept”* (Franzoni and Sánchez-Anchorena, 2014:4). Other authors claim that although the Nordic countries are well known for applying this policy targeting instrument, it is relevant to mention that there is no full universalism in any country (Anttonen, Sipilä; 2014). Worldwide, universalism is the exception, not the rule, when it comes to addressing social policies. Different logics appear in countries with low income and high rates of poverty or even in middle and high-income countries with different political ideas. Besides this generous principle, governments can think about how to choose the beneficiaries of policies considering different approaches, such as **selectivism, residualism, particularism, and subsidiarity**.

In the residual approach, the state appears only when the market or the family could not supply the needs. Benefits are given to the poor, and means-testing is used to identify which groups need government assistance. Under **residualism**, no universal benefits are given (Carey and Cramond, 2017).

**Selectivism** implies the provision of assistance to selected groups. Contrary to the residualism, the differentiation is not necessarily made based on economic means. The objective is to deal with social diversity, and for that reason, some authors include it in the definition of universalism (Carey and Cramond, 2017). This principle can be thought through two different categories: The **negative selectivism** refers to the provision of services using means-testing within a universal framework (conditional cash transfers developed in Latin America are an example of this principle). Critics highlight that this approach does not consider differences in needs, maintain the stigma on those who receive the assistance, and it is extremely expensive.

On the other hand, **positive selectivism** aims to provide additional services for selected groups based on needs and without means-tested measures. This approach is being more comprehensive of diversity than specific universalism, looking at the differences within categories. However, it is also criticised due to its lack of choice: it creates an unfair distinction between those who can afford to make decisions about services and those who lack market-based independence.



Moreover, **particularism** rejects universalism because it does not deal adequately with diversity. This approach aims to address policies on the basis of different needs, different moral frameworks and different social expectations (Carey and Cramond, 2017).

Universalism also differs from the **principle of subsidiarity**, where social action covers social needs at the lowest levels, such as the family or communities, based on feelings of solidarity between people. Subsidiarity prefers the private sphere to fulfil needs and it is opposite to universalism because functions from down to up and the inclusion is selective (Anttonen, Sipilä; 2014).

As already mentioned, it is possible to observe that the idea of universalism has gone much further in the Nordic countries than in any other region. *“Social policy has a particularly large positive impact on income distribution because a significant share of the transfers to the wealthy comes back to the states through direct taxes”* (Franzoni and Sánchez-Anchorena, 2014:2). This has not been possible in other regions, such as Latin America, due to the low taxes and their regressive impact.

Historically, this system in the Nordic countries was strongly supported by many groups because of his stability, administrative rationality, fast and equitable decisions, no stigmatization without negative behavioural effects, basic security and opportunities with low cost. It turned out to be not so expensive when compared to means-tested programs. The promotion of this model has also been based in that it increases social solidarity and inclusion. There is also a normative assumption about its desirability *“universal benefits are there because people have a right to welfare. They do not lose that right if their situation changes”* (Danson, 2012: 3 cited in Franzoni and Sánchez-Anchorena, 2014:4).

In general terms, the model has performed well in the past and has been conducive to good economic results in terms of social goals, equality, economic sustainability and fulfilment of social demands. However, in the last years, there were critical voices.

Critics have been addressed to the universalism itself: easy inclusion, uniformity and

same threat to all citizens. At the same time, it is criticised for being paternalistic and not considering the diversity of situations (Anttonen, Sipilä; 2014). In this way, the major challenge for the universalism and the Nordic model is to take into account diversity. Currently, most demands are around meeting specific needs from specific groups.

According to Anttonen and Sipilä (2014), universalism should be redefined so that it must include freedom of choice. The role of middle classes is extremely important in this redefinition since they are the key players. Not only because they are the biggest part of the population but also because of their growth and their ideas of participation and free choices. Additionally, the increased presence of private providers should also be under consideration in the redefinition of the Nordic model.

As it is possible to note, the way of addressing leave policies could imply very contrasting approaches and results. While Nordic countries seek for universalism in terms of policy access, giving the same opportunities to both mothers and fathers to take care of the child, liberal and conservative countries usually apply more restrictive policies under the selectivity or residual principles, exalting gendered roles and the breadwinner model, creating an imbalance between parents in terms of housework and childcare.

## 2.2 Theorising Family Policy

Since leave policy is part of the enormous field of study that is family policy, in this chapter main concepts of this research field are presented as well as some of the current debates within the area. This is followed by definitions of childcare policy and discussions around policies to reconcile work and family.

Scholars have defined family policy in different ways through the years. According to Zimmerman (1995) *“Family policy constitutes a collection of separate but inter-related policy choices that aim to address problems that families are perceived as experiencing in society”* (Zimmerman, 1995:3) This includes: parenthood, poverty, unemployment, childcare, health, among others.

Kaufmann (2002) recommends to *“restrict the term family policy to positive intentions and/or outcomes and impacts of political measures towards the family”* (Kaufmann, 2002:431). In this way, the family policy might be understood as *“a particular kind of social policy, a set of political interventions explicitly aiming at or implicitly operating to improve the life situation of individuals in the context of their family rights and obligations”* (Kaufmann, 2002:434).

### 2.2.1 Family Policy Typologies

The literature on family policy typologies is very extensive. Several authors have tried to design classifications using different criteria in order to study the diverse models of family policies. Kaufmann (2002) defines the typological method as quite appropriate, in principle, for the classification of phenomena in the social sciences since they are constructions that highlight certain aspects of the reality related to one configuration.

However, the author states two relevant points. First, to what extent does the analysis of family and gender policies conform to the types emerging from general welfare state analysis? The author does not agree with the approach that many other scholars have taken, trying to fit family policy types in the Esping-Andersen

classical typology of the welfare states. Esping-Andersen did not study family policies explicitly and, therefore, there are many other different classifications that are more suitable (Kaufmann, 2002).

Secondly, is the typological method itself the best way to elucidate issues of family policy? In response to that, Kaufmann mentions that *“a typology makes sense only if reasons can be given why such exclusive relationships exist. Family issues are far from being clear-cut so first the researcher should define the type of family policy and its dimensions, before searching for subtypes”* (Kaufmann, 2002:457).

It is possible to find many typologies throughout the literature. An example of this is Kaufmann’s classification (Kaufmann, 2002). Using Walter’s distinction of families of law (Walter, 1997), the author establishes four clusters: 1) Anglo-Saxon countries based on the Common Law, Britain and the Common Law countries; 2) West European Family Law that adopted the French Code Napoleon, France, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain; 3) Central European group under the influence of the civil legislation of Prussia and the German Reich, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Greece and Turkey and 4) Scandinavian states with their own tradition in family law with a distinctive pattern of welfare policies, Sweden, Denmark, Finland. It is important to mention that most of these typologies are European-centred, not including Asian or American countries.

### **2.2.2 Different Dimensions to Study Family Policy**

The study of the family policy has a particular significance because it is the study of the state intromission in one of the most intimate spheres in a person’s life. In this way, a family policy can redistribute resources, regulate and modify behaviours, create or modify procedures, create or reorganizes structures, and define terms related to the above functions (Wiggins and Browne, 1986; Zimmerman, 1991a, 1992a; Zimmerman and Owens, 1989).

Taking into account the consequences that family policies have, Zimmerman (1995) suggests some policy dimensions in order to facilitate their study:

1) **Explicit** or **implicit** policies are related to the policy goals. An explicit policy might be one that enabling parents to care for their children while working outside the home. An implicit measure would be a health care reform - this means changes in other policy domains that affect indirectly the family. In the same line of thought, Kaufmann (2002) defines that a policy is explicit under two conditions: a certain degree of institutional autonomy (e.g. a ministry where family policy is concentrated) and a political discourse focusing on family issues, this means that the measures are legitimized by family issues and not by individual concerns. On the contrary, an implicit family policy lacks the legitimisation of the measures by the political discourse.

2) **Manifest** or **latent** policies refer to content and objectives. Manifest family policies are obvious or apparent, whilst in latent policies, the family element is obscured by other objectives.

3) **Direct** or **indirect** policies are related to the outcomes and consequences. Social security affects family directly, while cuts in funding for women impact indirectly.

4) **Intended** or **unintended** policies imply the purpose, the intentionality of the policy. An intended policy implies a statement of explicit family objectives (an example could be the conditional cash transfers, where the beneficiary needs to accomplish certain conditions e.g baby medical checks to receive the cash transfer). On the contrary, unintended policies concern those which generates unexpected effects, for example, a nuclear test that affects family health (Zimmerman, 1995:3).

Diverse motives drive these policies with different aims. Some governments would need to increase female participation in labour markets, while others would require raising the fertility rate. Clearly, actions to achieve these objectives will be dissimilar, and consequently, governments should follow different paths.

Placing the analysis in Europe, Kaufmann (2002) summarises in seven groups the main logics under which family policies are developed in this region.

1) The **institutional motive**; guided by the family as a value itself, therefore the need to preserve it is highlighted. The breadwinner-homemaker model is encouraged

as a natural division of roles;

- 2) The **natalist motive** focuses on the importance of the demographic reproduction, concerned specifically about low birth-rate;
- 3) The **economic motive**, stresses the family's macroeconomic role;
- 4) The **societal motive**, concerned with the role of the family in the whole society, it considers the family as an important element of the reproduction of society;
- 5) The **socio-political motive**, focuses on the need and equality, highlighting the opportunity cost resulting from the restrictions of the mother in the labour market;
- 6) The **women's issue motive**, which centres its attention on the economic and social disadvantages of being in charge of the family for women;
- 7) The **children's welfare motive**, aiming attention at the children's well-being, especially regarding the public provision of children's need.

Certainly, each group responds to particular cultural and social factors which also play a crucial role in the design of family policy. Hence, countries are characterised by a combination of these diverse motives, pure models do not exist.

Like in others public policy fields, policy measures could affect people in many ways. In family policy, these measures usually take place as (1) legal or (2) economic regulations, (3) social services and (4) individual services.

1. **Status Policy (legal intervention)**: measures affecting the legal status of persons in terms of their role in the family. These laws address the family structure (e.g divorce regulations) or oblige third parties to respect the circumstances of parenthood (e.g. the right to parental leave).
2. Policies that bear upon the economic situation of the family household (**economic intervention**): tax laws and cash transfers referred to child and family allowances. Labour market and employment policies are also crucial in this group.
3. Policies that have an impact on the opportunities for families and children (**ecological intervention**): interventions in the house environments such as urban planning (children areas recreation), housing policies and social services, such

as day-care centres.

4. Policies that promote or restore capacities (**personal intervention**), concerning especially education and healthcare facilities (Kaufmann, 2002).

Usually, a combination of these different interventions is present across countries, developed in distinct degrees according to their family policies aims. Countries that wish to offer mothers the possibility to return soon to work, would provide them with public care services in order to alleviate mother childcare “duties”. On the other hand, governments that want to preserve the traditional idea of the family would provide mothers with generous cash transfers and allowances in order to incentivize them to stay at home. This shows how crucial policy designs are in shaping traditionally gendered behaviours.

### 2.2.3 Family or families? Addressing Diversity

The family policy field is currently facing some debates that strongly challenge the traditional notions of family that have been sustained through the years. Family policy has been changing across countries significantly (Saraceno, 2011) and, for that reason, new approaches are required to study this field. These conceptual debates within the family policy need to be discussed not only to enrich the research but also to include different kind of family arrangements, encouraging gender equality in childcare.

First, it is important to reflect on the target of this research area: family or families? Are the policies intended to the family as a unit or to the family members as individuals? Should the government intervene in family matters?

The perspective on these topics vary widely: (1) the welfare state position, which claims explicit government responsibility for the protection and support of the family; (2) the minimal state intervention, for which families are private spheres; and (3) the position of a selective state responsibility, which focus the intervention on the weakest families of society (Kaufmann, 2002).

Another important consideration in these debates should be to reflect on the (out-

dated) family ideal. Currently, there is a huge variety of family arrangements that governments need to take into consideration when it comes to target policies. What family should be is changing over the time. *“Mothering and fathering retain strong heterosexual meaning, so a more gender-neutral interpretation of these roles would allow fathers (as single parents or in gay couples) to be more widely acknowledged as legitimate primary carers”* (Atkinson, 2017). Additionally, the progressive erosion of the breadwinner model also imposes new challenges in the field of family policy since women are increasingly taking part in the labour market.

These debates are reflected in the way that leaves policies are designed. Some countries include these new forms of family in the childcare public services, offering the same benefits for adoptive and biological parents, as well as equal rights to same-sex couples. Simultaneously, other countries assume only the existence of the traditional family, designing policies which enforce the idea of the mother the main carer and the father as the economic provider.



## 2.3 Childcare Policies as a Tool to Balance Work and Family

The emerging post-war welfare states created social policies around the male breadwinner model, in which men were supposed to work and sustain the family economically, while women were considered as homemakers, in charge of taking care of children. Crucial changes not only in the economy but also in the family structure have been challenging this model for decades, and consequently, governments are facing new responsibilities towards family policies.

The process of globalization and the post-industrial employment generated a higher incorporation of women into the labour force, which produces more demands regarding work-family balance policies, such as public childcare and child allowances. Families cannot provide full-time care nor afford to rely exclusively on markets. Women are considered now as earners themselves - there is a shift from the male breadwinner model to a dual (or one and a half) breadwinner/carer, and this requires more responses from the welfare states.

Changes in the family ideals also played a relevant role in the development of childcare policies. More divorces, more cohabitation, lone parenthood, the decline in marriage rates, delayed marriages and smaller families are just some of the factors that require different responses from states and, consequently, new family policies adapted to these new features. Since more and more women decide to have children at an older age and there is more control of childbirth, there are also important changes in fertility patterns, such as decreasing fertility rates and declining fertility aspirations (Ostner and Schmitt, 2008).

Childcare policies are a crucial dimension of the family policy field and particularly, a key element of policies to reconcile work and family. In addition, they are also central to promote equal gender equality in the division of care.

Several international human rights documents recognize the importance of childcare for both children and parents. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

mandates the states should provide appropriate assistance to parents in order to perform their child-rearing responsibilities and ensure working parents have access to childcare services. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) requires states to provide supportive services to parents and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) affirms that everyone has equal right to work and being promoted, which has been interpreted as including childcare services (David, 2005).

In order to define what exactly childcare policy is, it is possible to begin mentioning what it actually encompasses. Childcare policy includes the whole range of government actions designed to influence the supply and/or demand childcare and the quality of care provided (Kamerman, 1993). This kind of policies includes a combination of child-rearing policies as well as childcare services. This means mainly two options: 1) Direct or indirect cash transfers e.g. child allowances or tax allowances, and 2) Services and time allowances, such as maternity, paternity and parental leaves.

The objectives of these policies vary widely across different countries, but in some cases, they are a basic entitlement mainly for all working parents in order to enable the family to adapt to a new baby without significant loss of income (Kamerman, 1993).

Work-family balance is a central issue not only for employed parents but also for employers. The duty of taking care of the child sometimes clashes with a highly competitive work environment which demands employees work more hours and to be more and more efficient. Therefore, having a child is an important event that impacts on the professional career, especially for women, since it implies a career break that could percuss in future career opportunities. Therefore, it is extremely important how leave policies are designed because it affects how women can reconcile their work with the family life.

When focusing on reconciling work and family, an important term that appears in the reviewed literature is familiarisation/de-familiarisation. De-familiarisation refers to the *“the degree to which households welfare and caring responsibilities are*

*relaxed, either via welfare state provision or via market provision*” (Esping-Andersen, 1999). Therefore, it is the degree to which family members are cared for by non-family institutions. On the contrary, familiarisation tends to crystallize the gender division of labour, but it may be also an instrument to acknowledge the desire to care and to change the traditional division of labour (Saraceno, 2011). Mahon (2002) affirms that the de-familiarisation of care resulting from women rising labour force participation rate is one of the new challenges for welfare states. In this way, public childcare policies are an integral component of welfare state redesign.

Knijn and Smit (2009) claim that there are 3 different paradigms regarding the reconciliation of family and work could be found in the European Union: the **Social Investment Approach** of Esping-Andersen, the **Transitional Labor Model** of Schmid, and the **Individual Life-course Perspective** of Bovenberg. Respectively, these models propose investing, facilitating and individualizing concerning the resolution of the tensions regarding family-work balance.

The three paradigms differ not only regarding the main preoccupation and the causes of the problem, but also concerning policy goal and instruments, and who are responsible to face the new social risks.

The **Social Investment Approach** relies on good-quality public childcare and education, with generous parental leaves as the most effective policy instrument to tackle these issues. From a different perspective, the **Transitional Labor Model** supports flexicurity measures, lifelong learning, and activation policies, in order to combine market flexibility with social protection. Finally, the **Individual Life-course Perspective**, characteristic of a liberal model of the welfare state, focuses on private savings schemes and self-insurance against human capital risks (Knijn and Smit, 2009). There are traces of the three paradigms in the European family policies, and no particular model dominates.

In the Latin American context, Blofield and Martinez Franzoni (2014) also differentiates family policies regarding work and life balance. Since these are much less developed welfare states, with a relevant informal economy, these authors evaluate policies according to their equity-enhancing effects. Until recently, the belief that

caregiving was a private matter in charge of a stay-at-home mother stated the no need of the state playing a role in care provision. However, the region was also part of the economic and family changes mentioned before, which obliged to take actions in these matters. Focusing on how policies alter the relationship family work, these authors identified three clusters:

**-Sequential policies:** sequencing work and care responsibilities while maintaining care provision in the family. They are primarily focused on women and maintain the care related tasks within the family.

**-De-familiarising policies:** refers to benefits (transfers or services) that shifts care responsibilities from family towards markets or states (direct public or private provision, laws for employer's provisions, tax incentives, subsidies). They started focusing on female workers, but currently, men are eligible too.

**-Regulatory policies:** concerns specifically with government regulatory policies towards home-based care occupations, regulating labour standards where the household is the workplace (Blofield and Martinez Franzoni, 2014). This is important especially for Latin America where there is an extensive informal female workforce.

Blofield and Martinez Franzoni (2014) also devote attention to the distinction between maternalist and co-responsibility policies. The latter involves governments and men promoting women's recognition as workers and not only as mothers. State co-responsibility refers to the provision of care centres available for both full working parents, while paternal co-responsibility encourages father's involvement and sharing in caregiving, reducing the gender gap.

On the other hand, maternalist policies exalt the women's capacity as a mother, recognizing the importance of caregiving beyond the gender gap. These policies claim that the woman is only responsible for the child rearing.

The authors make a distinction with the so-called "maternalistic floor" policies which acknowledge the role of the women giving birth and breastfeeding, such as the maternity leave, that helps women to recover physically.

There are various measures to reconcile work and family, but childcare policies have

a strong role especially because they also help to solve the demographic problem of low fertility rates and ageing society. With adequate paid parental leaves, flexible labour market and child allowances, parents might be encouraged to have more children. In addition, throughout different options for childcare, women are able to choose and decide if they want to stay at home taking care of the kid or return to work.

Public support for the provision of care is crucial in order to address this crisis of care and pursue gender equality. It is also indispensable for women's economic independence since it encourages and enables both parents to combine breadwinning and caregiving equally (Mahon, 2002). Furthermore, early childcare is an essential mean of reducing social inequalities among children in cognitive development. This should be considered as a social investment for states, and accessibility and quality should be provided to all. The level of equality of early care affects a wide range of child dimensions, such as cognitive, social, and health outcomes (Ceglowski and Bacigalupa, 2002).

The advantages of increasing policies to balance work and family generate not only an increase of women participation in the labour market, and consequently, equal opportunities for men and women. Furthermore, the contributors to the social security increase too, which is imperative in an ageing society (Saraceno, 2011). Responding to the need of working parents has become a must in contemporary social policy. *"It is the attempt to kill two birds with one stone: to increase flexible labour forces as well as the birth rate"* (Ostner, and Schmitt, 2008:1).

Leave policy is a crucial element to reconcile work and family especially for women. Whether these policies contribute or not to establish gender equality to the division of care between parents depends absolutely on how they are designed.

## 2.4 Defining Leave Policies

Leaves for childcare are a central part of the policies for reconciling work and family for both men and women. There are different types of leaves, such as maternity, paternity, parental and home care leave. Each of them serves different objectives, but the most important point is that they provide employment protection for those parents who need to be absent from work to be in charge of a newborn. Several scholars have defined leave types in different ways. This thesis includes the definitions given by the International Network on Leave Policies and Research (2018).

The **maternity leave** is the leave that is generally available only to mothers. It is understood to be a health and welfare measure, intended to protect the health of the mother and the newborn. This leave is usually taken before, during and immediately after childbirth. Sometimes a period of pre-birth leave is mandatory as it is also a period following birth (Leave Network, 2018). Although this leave is typically provided only to the mother, in some countries it could be transferred to the father or other carers under certain conditions.

The **paternity leave** is the leave that is available only to fathers, usually to be taken soon after the birth of the child, and intended to enable the father to spend time with his partner and his new child (Leave Network, 2018). It is usually shorter than the maternity leave.

The **parental leave** is generally provided to both employed parents, and it is usually taken after the maternity leave. It is intended to be a care measure, giving both parents equal time to share with the child. According to the Leave Network (2018), this type of leave can take diverse forms. It can be (1) a non-transferable individual right where both parents have an entitlement to a certain amount of leave; (2) an individual right that can be transferred to the other parent; or (3) a family right that can be divided between parents according to their preferences.

The **home care leave** is the leave of absence that follows the parental leave and allows parents to take care of the child at home until she/he is 2 or 3 years old. This leave is less common than the other ones, and not all countries offer this possibility.

In addition, they are often unpaid, with a few exceptions like Norway or Finland (OECD, 2017).

Leave policy is a multidimensional field of research because it is at the intersection of the economics, the social and the demographics. *“Parental leaves policies incorporate responses to multiple concerns, including economic support from families with very young children; protection of maternal and child health; pregnancy and childbirth; promotion of maternal employment; gender equality in the labor market and home; support for parental time with children (both fathers and mothers); involvement of parents in infants’ care; and efforts to ensure that babies start their growth and development in decent circumstances”* (Moss and Kamerman, 2009:259).

In advanced industrialised countries, leaves policies were developed since 1883. From this year to the 1960s, the maternity leave rights (paid or unpaid) were introduced justified on health and safety grounds for both mother and child. Germany was the first in implementing this type of policy in 1883 under a new social insurance system.

From the 1970s to the 1990s, the childcare leave appeared for the first time in Hungary (1967) and then expanded to other former Soviet countries. Parental leaves also emerged in this period, implemented for the first time in Sweden in 1974 and then extended to other Nordic and European countries, justified on social care grounds rather than on health reasons.

From the 1990s to the present, longer leaves are being developed, along with the growing concern about the father’s involvement in childcare and how to increase male take-up of leaves (Moss and Kamerman, 2009).

The movement from the maternity leave to parental leaves demonstrates a wider concern about not only health but also gender equality and female labour market participation. This progress was influenced, as previously mentioned, by the need to respond to the growing female rate participation during the 1960s and 1970s in industrialised countries (Moss and Kamerman, 2009). Also, by the acknowledgement of different work and family arrangements together with the need to incentivise

fathers to take part in the childcare.

Nowadays, all these types of leaves vary considerably across countries in terms of length, eligibility, payment, funding, flexibility in use and the number of parents served. For instance, it is possible to find countries like the UK which offers 52 weeks of maternity leave, Portugal which provides 6 weeks, and the US which does not recognize any.

### **2.4.1 How Is Leave Policy Regulated Internationally?**

Several international legal instruments recognize the importance of maternity leave. It is not only a matter of health for both mother and child, but also it implies the protection of women's employment. Women need adequate time to give birth, recover and nurse the child ensuring the continuation of their income. This encourages women's equal access to employment, avoiding discrimination between women and men at work, and it enables women to reconcile work and family without significant reductions in their income (ILO, 2017).

Among the international conventions that acknowledge the right of the child to be cared and the mother's right to be access to the leave are: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the American Convention on Human Rights (1969), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). However, the International Labor Organization (ILO) provides the oldest agreements in this matter, dating from 1919.

Nowadays, the Maternity Protection Convention number 183 (2000) is the most updated international labour standard on maternity protection. It states that women should benefit from 14 weeks of maternity leave and at least 2/3 of her previous income, prohibiting employers to terminating the work contract during pregnancy, maternity leave and when she returns to work (with the exception to causes unrelated to the pregnancy). Before taking the leave, women should not perform any



risk tasks that could put her or the baby in danger. In addition, when returning to work, women must maintain the same position or one equivalent with the same pay, having the right to have breaks to breastfeed the child (ILO, Convention 183). Although the ILO Convention is recognized worldwide, only 34 countries have ratified it.

It is imperative to remark that paternity leaves are not taken into consideration in any international legal instrument. This marks a maternalist perspective regarding the childcare in the international law, posing the women as the main caregiver. However, the ILO Resolution concerning gender equality at the heart of decent work (2009) recognizes that measures to balance work and family concern both women and men, encouraging governments to take new steps (such as paternity and parental leaves) in order to equal sharing responsibilities between males and females. Nowadays, 46,7% of the countries have paternity leaves entitlements, varying across regions.

Parental leaves are not present in any international agreement either, but it is possible to find a chance of having a longer period after maternity/paternity leave in ILO Resolutions 191 and 165, in which the employee keep her/his work, leaving to the governments the task to define length, type, and eligibility.

Maternity protection is also an important component in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and it is essential to achieve multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) such as: prevent and reduce poverty, promote good health and well-being of mothers and children, gender equality at the workplace, decent work and economic growth for both women and men and reduced inequalities.

Furthermore, the European Union has been made significant progress in leave policies and family-work reconciliation. This is explicitly recognised in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, providing the right to paid maternity and parental leave. The Treaty on the Function of the EU (TFEU) also focuses on the protection of pregnant workers' rights.

In terms of directives, there are three legal documents dealing with these matters: the Pregnant Workers Directive (92/85/EEC), the Parental Leave Directive (2010/18/EU) and the Recast Directive (2006/54/EC) on equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation.

The Pregnant Workers Directive adopted in 1992 states the leave duration should be at least 14 weeks, having 2 mandatory weeks before or after the childbirth. It also prohibits night work for pregnant workers. Additionally, it establishes that pregnant workers should not be dismissed, except in exceptional cases unconnected to their condition and permitted under national legislation (Prpic, 2017).

The Parental Leave Directive Parental declare that this type of leave is granted to either of the parents (biological or adoptive) for a minimum period of 4 months until the child is 8 years old. To ensure equal division of childcare between parents, the directive establishes that at least one of the 4 months is provided on a non-transferable basis. In addition, this legal instruments mandates that workers have the right to return to the same or equivalent job after the end of the parental leave period. It is important to mention that member states stipulate the condition of access and the application rules, which creates big differences among countries.

The Recast Directive is extremely important too because it guarantees mothers returning from the leave to return to their previous jobs or to an equivalent post. The EU legal framework should be modernized and adapted to the new challenges of the labour market. Therefore, the European Commission is working on a proposal of a work-life balance package (Directive on Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers) that incentivizes women's participation in the labour market, introducing at least 10 days of paternity leave, better paid and non-transferable parental leave with the possibility to part-time mode, and also extension of the right to request flexible working arrangements to working parents of children up to 12 years old, among other legal and non-legal measures.

## 2.4.2 Maternity Leave in the World

According to ILO (2017), worldwide only 41% of women with newborns receive a maternity benefit, contributory or non-contributory, with large variations across countries. The low income during and after maternity forces women to work until the last stages of the pregnancy or return to work earlier, especially those in the informal economy. This implies significant health risks for both child and mother.

While more than 80% of women giving birth receive a maternity benefit in Europe and Central Asia, only 16% of women have this right in Africa.

Among 123 countries, only 22 provide close to universal maternity benefit for more than 90% of employee women; 25 countries cover 67% to 89%, 23 countries cover 33% to 66%, 18 countries 11% to 33%, 32 countries less than 10% and only three countries where the leave is unpaid (ILO, 2017).

Universal maternity coverage has been mostly developed in high-income countries; however, it has been also implemented in Mongolia, Ukraine and Uruguay.

Figure 2.1 shows the duration of paid maternity leave in the world according to national legislations. Red-coloured countries provide less than 14 weeks of maternity leave, while light-blue-coloured countries provide mothers with more than 14 weeks. Green-coloured countries offer exactly 14 weeks.

According to ILO (2017), 98 countries (53%) of the 185 countries provides at least 14 weeks or more; 60 countries (32%) offer between 12 and 13 weeks, and 27 countries (15%) provides less than 12 weeks (ILO, 2014).

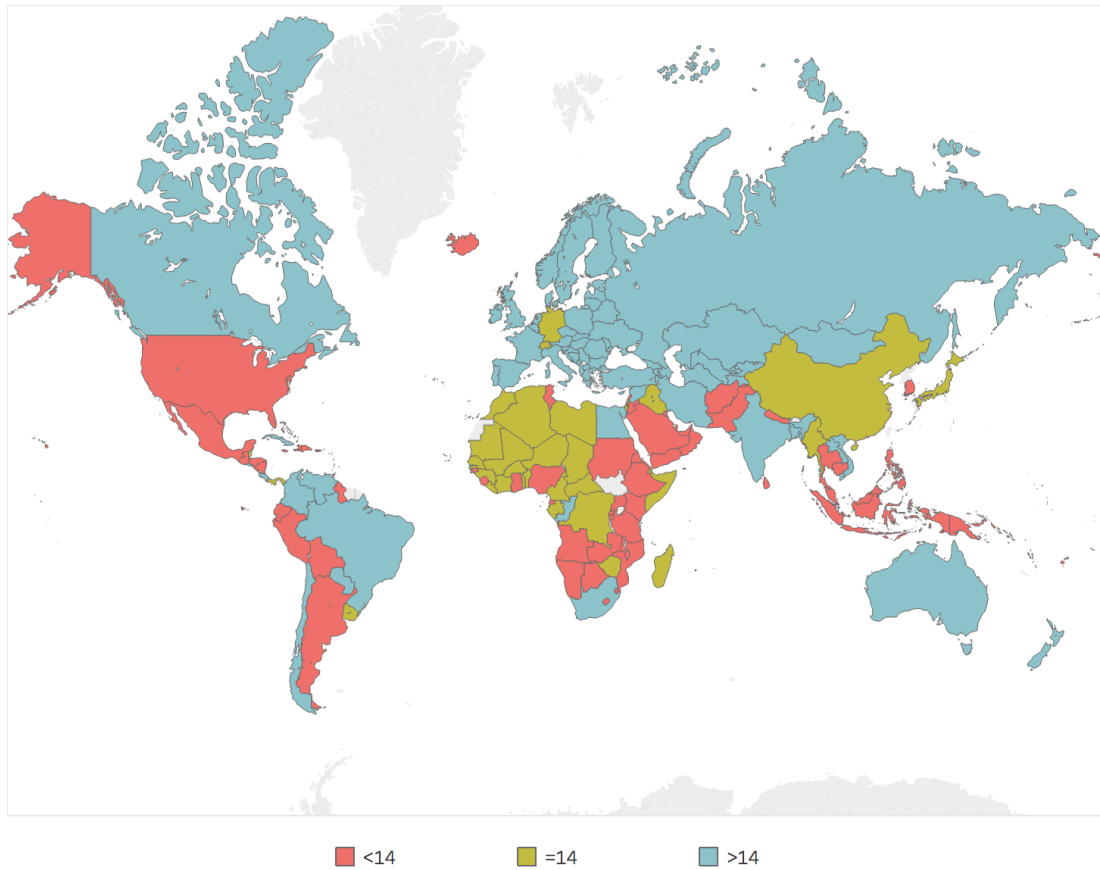


Figure 2.1: Duration of Paid Maternity Leave in National Legislation, 2015 or Latest Available Year (weeks). Source: International Labor Organization, 2018. World Social Protection Database.

## 2.5 Leave Policy and Gender Equality

### 2.5.1 Gender Equality, the Sexual Division of Labour and Gender Norms

Gender equality means equality between women and men. United Nations Women defines gender equality as *“the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women’s and men’s rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women’s issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women”* (UN Women, 2018).

In the context of this thesis, gender equality is analysed particularly from the perspective of responsibility in childcare. In this way, gender equality refers particularly to the situation where both mother and father take responsibility for childcare in an equal way.

Analysing gender equality in childcare implies also considering how the sexual division of labour and certain gender norms or stereotypes shape the way leave policies are implemented. The sexual division of labour *“refers to the way each society divides work between men and women, boys and girls, according to socially-established gender roles or what is considered suitable and valuable for each sex”* (UN Women, 2018).

As a result of this division of labour, mothers are usually considered as natural carers and therefore, they are required to spend more time with children than fathers. Females are usually thought to have a reproductive role in society, in charge of housework such as childbearing, rearing, and caring for family members, while men are expected to meet the economic needs of the family.

This is what is called gender norms, ideas about how men and women should be and

act; the standards and expectations to which gender identity should conform. These norms exalt gender stereotypes, which are simplifications about how women and men should be. Women are considered cooperative, nurturing, caring, connecting, while men competitive, acquisitive, autonomous, independent (UN Women, 2018).

These stereotypes are so ingrained in certain societies that they strongly shape how people think and behave around childcare and also how policies are designed. The fact that women are the main caregivers not only in countries with maternalist policies such as Argentina but also in countries with broad leave policies such as Finland, confirms that sometimes these gendered expectations are stronger than the policy design itself. However, it cannot be denied that certain policy designs contribute more than others to produce gender equality in childcare - they are an important step towards this aim.

## **2.5.2 The Gender Equality Dimension in Leave Policy**

Leave policy is a field within the family policy that has been researched from different perspectives. At the beginning, these studies were mainly focused on the leave's length and their impact on the female employment, analysing how it affects the return to work (Gornick et al., 1997; Ruhm, 1998; Hoffert and Curtin, 2006; Baker and Milligan, 2008; Spiess and Wrohlich, 2008; Pronzatto, 2009; Akgunduz and Plantenga, 2012, Genre et al., 2010). These studies show that a very short or a very long duration negatively affect women's working hours, while a moderate length leave would have a positive effect. Longer duration erodes women's human capital and makes them less attractive to employers when compared to the male workforce (Wall and Escobedo, 2013). There is also consensus that longer durations delay a mother's return to work, implying that mothers actually use the extended right to paid leave if it is offered to them (Dearing, 2016).

Defining what is a "moderate" length is an ambitious task because this depends on many factors related to the country-specific characteristics: labour market conditions, female workforce, work-family friendly policies, economic context, among

others. There is no consensus in this matter: some authors defined that the positive effect of the maternity leave on female labour participation is found from 6 to 8 months (Genre et al., 2010; Akgunduz and Plantenga, 2012) while other suggested 18 months (Misra et al., 2011) and 3 years (Pettit and Hook, 2005). Previous research also showed that too long leaves have negative consequences for mothers in terms of wages, occupational segregation and job-related training (Dearing, 2015).

More recently, literature also focused on the effects of parental leaves on the father's involvement in childcare (Duvander and Johansson, 2012; Ekberg et al., 2013). Specifically, the father's quota is one of the most analysed instruments. For instance, evidence of Sweden shows that the introduction of a month quota significantly increases the likelihood of fathers' take-up for more than 30 days, but not more than 5 weeks (Duvander and Johansson, 2012). It is demonstrated also that in countries where men are eligible for some leave they do more family work (Hook, 2006). Additionally, countries which reserve specific periods of leave for fathers on a "use it or lose it" base, plus well-paid leaves, positively affect father's take-up (Dearing, 2015).

In the context of their analysis of leave policies available for fathers in the Nordic countries, Haas and Rostgaard (2011) suggested six criteria which would facilitate a high level of take-up by fathers:

- (1) generous eligibility requirements;
- (2) a generous amount of non-transferable leave available to fathers on an individual basis;
- (3) a lengthy additional period of paid leave available to both partners;
- (4) a generous level of compensation;
- (5) flexibility in use;
- (6) other incentives to encourage fathers to take leave (Atkinson, 2017).

However, a study demonstrates that the introduction of this quota raises mother's use of the flat-rate paid parental leave in Norway and Sweden (Ekberg et al., 2013). As Dearing (2015) suggests, this interrogates about the unintended consequences

of this measures on women's employment. *“Does it mean that, although fathers' targeted instruments are successful in raising their take-up, they do not necessarily provoke that mothers hand over one of their leave months to their partner in order to return earlier to the labour market?”* (Dearing, 2015:11).

The literature shows that leave policies have a different impact on women and men regarding their income, education, social class and context in general. For instance, some authors find a negative effect of leave duration on wages, but only for skilled women (Akgunduz and Plantenga, 2012). Similarly, Ronsen and Sundström (2002) states that Finish part-time mothers are quite resistible to variations in leave policy, compared to full-time mothers. In the same way, while the introduction of gender equality bonus has no effect on father's take-up in Sweden, other studies show that in some regions of Spain they increase the take-up considerable (Dearing, 2015).

Scholars have also devoted their efforts to research the gender equality dimension in leave policies (Gornick and Meyers, 2003; Ellingsaeter and Leira, 2006, Ray et al., 2010; Leira, 2002; among others). These studies show how leave regulation is a way for government intervention in the organisation of the family, and how it can affect parents' behaviours, enabling them to transform the traditional gendered roles. Therefore, leave entitlements challenges these roles about “good” fatherhood and ideally, attracts non-carers into care (Ciccia and Verloo, 2012).

In addition, these articles demonstrate that when compared with childcare services (that only reduce indirectly women's care load) leave regulations generate immediate motivations to increase participation of fathers by establishing how parents will share childcare (Ciccia and Verloo, 2012).

Regarding household tasks, the reviewed literature confirms that the duration of the parental leave has an equalising effect on the division of housework between mothers and fathers. In this way, countries with more generous leaves have a more equal division of household work than countries with fewer leave entitlements (Fuwa and Cohen, 2007). These authors also find an important impact of full-time employment of women on an equal division of domestic work, although this is diminished by longer durations of parental leaves.



As previously cited, several researchers have been working in the creation of diverse “models” of leave policies, not only creating categories in which to group different countries, but also trying to find the “ideal” leave policy. Although there have been numerous research studies on this topic, this thesis is focused only on those authors that seek for the incorporation of the gender equality dimension in the creation of these models. In other words, authors that specifically have been interested in categorizing countries considering the development of leave policies in relation to their contribution to gender equality.

An example of this is the typology created by Wall and Escobedo (2013). These models go beyond leave generosity and pay attention to some fundamental dimensions of work-leave-gender policies, culture, and social practices. The authors use different indicators to explore the promotion of gender equality in these arrangements, such as the division of labour between parents and if the policy is complemented by care services. As a result, they obtain seven groups of countries that vary from systems that strongly encourage the equal division of childcare between women and men such as Sweden and Iceland, to arrangements that incentivize the traditional breadwinner model, like in Italy or Greece.

Moreover, Dearing (2016) explores the gender equality dimension by assessing countries with an ideal leave duration of 14 months, well paid, where 50% of the time is reserved for fathers. Additionally, Dearing (2016) creates the equal gender division of labour (EGDL) indicator, formed by three indexes: duration of total leave, duration of well-paid leave, duration of well-paid leave reserved for fathers (all of them in months). With these instruments, the author assesses how 27 European countries perform in terms of leave policy and gender equality. Gender equality in the division of labour is understood “*as a scenario, where, on average, men and women contribute equally to both the sphere of employment and family work*” (Dearing, 2016:236).

### 2.5.3 Why Study Leave Policy in relation to Gender Equality

Family policy is an extensive field of research with many dimensions. As part of this big spectrum, leave policies are an indispensable tool to balance work and family especially for women. Different leave designs lead to different implications, but when gender equality is at the core of these policies, leave entitlements might actually modify parents' behaviours towards the positive realization of an equal division of childcare. In this way, when implemented to achieve gender equality, leave policy could be considered a manifest, explicit, direct and intended policy. Also, it is a status policy in terms of Kaufmann (2002) since it is addressed to the legal status of parenthood by employers giving employees time off to take care of their children. These entitlements could be driven by many different factors, but following the women's issue motive and the children's welfare motive would lead these policies to the best results in terms of equal division of work between parents.

Most of the previous work about leaves has been focused on comparative studies about the generosity of them (length and payment). From this perspective, it is very difficult to include the gender equality dimension, because the best scenario would be individuals (mostly mothers) with long leaves to stay at home - and this outcome is far away from producing gender equality (Ciccia and Verloo, 2012). Generosity does not mean gender equality and what previous studies have done is to create a correlation between these two concepts without considering other aspects. As Brunning and Plantega (1999) states, leave generosity would not be a problem for gender equality if they were not taken mostly by women, strengthening traditional gender roles.

Throughout the research on family policy and leave policy more specifically, it is possible to note that the majority of the studies are mainly focused on European countries and other high-income countries. Therefore, there is an important research gap when it comes to comparing this region with other parts of the world where the conditions are not so optimal in terms of leaves. Furthermore, few empirical studies have systematically compared how national leave regulations promote a transformation of the traditional gender roles regarding childcare.

For all these reasons, the main objective of this study is to explore how leave policy contributes to an equal division of childcare between mothers and fathers, taking into account not only the main characteristics of the leave but also including the gender equality dimension. In contrast to most of the previous studies, this thesis analyses leave policy from both leave generosity and gender equality, not as correlated elements, but including other enriching aspects such as well-paid periods of leave, leave take-up and time spent in childcare between parents. The reason behind this is that it is difficult to isolate the policy effects on a single instrument.

Another important contribution of this thesis is the introduction of a Latin American country such as Argentina. Since there are not many studies addressing these comparisons, it will shed light on how leave policy works in the continent.

Additionally, this study focuses not only on normative frameworks but also on their actual impact on gender equality by analysing take-up rates and time use in childcare, demonstrating that there is a clear female dominance in these areas.



# 3

## Research Question and Methodology

This study focuses on leave policies for working parents of children from 0 to 3 years in the following countries: Argentina, the UK and Finland. Specifically, the thesis aims to understand: **How leave policy in these countries contribute to developing gender equality in the division of childcare between parents?** Therefore, this study seeks to explore how leave policy arrangements are designed in these countries and how this impacts on the equal division of care between mothers and fathers.

The main concept of this study is **Leave Policy**, understood as the main arrangements related to employment protection for parents who need to be absent from work in order to be in charge of a newborn. This public policy was chosen considering Kaufmann's (2002) modes of policy intervention previously mentioned. Leave policy is considered as a status policy since it addresses the legal status of parenthood by

employers.

Leave policy is analysed taking into consideration two different variables: (1) **Leave System** and (2) **Gender Equality**. Leave System refers to the general characteristics of the leave itself, such as type (maternity, paternity, parental leave, etc), duration, eligibility, payment and funding. It is important to mention that only the statutory entitlements (national regulations) of access to leave are considered, omitting benefits arising from collective bargaining or benefit offered by individual employers.

The second variable is Gender Equality. To assess whether these policy designs contribute or not to the equal division of childcare between parents, a variable on gender equality is introduced to measure specifically how flexible these policies are in terms of use and alternation between parents, and how many mothers and fathers actually take that leaves, when data is available.

Additionally, considering Dearing (2016) and Wall and Escobedo (2013) policy models, this thesis explores whether leaves exclusively reserved for fathers are offered. Furthermore, it analyses the conjugal division of housework looking at how much time in childcare women and men spend separately.

This second variable is assessed also taking into consideration Dearing's (2016) definition of gender equality in the division of labour characterised by men and women contributing equally to both the sphere of employment and family work on average.

Table 1 shows how the main concept is operationalised.

Table 3.1: Concept, Variables, Dimensions and Indicators.

Concept	Variable	Dimension	Indicator	
Leave Policy	Leave System	Type	Maternity, paternity, parental, home care, adoption leave	
		Total Leave	Number of days	
		Well-paid Leave	Number of days	
		Eligibility	Who is entitled?	
		Payment	Government, Employer, mixed	
		Funding	Government, Employer, mixed	
		Variation in due to premature	Yes/No	
		Variation due to multiple births	Yes/No	
		Breastfeeding time	Yes/No How much?	
	Gender Equality	Flexibility in use		Possibility of choosing how is taken (yes/no)
				Degree of individualization (individual, non-transferable/family entitlement)
				Alternation between parents (yes/no)
		Leave take-up	% mothers and fathers served	
		Leave exclusively reserved for fathers	Yes/no	
		Conjugal division of work	Time spent in childcare by gender	

### 3.1 Case Selection: Argentina, Finland and the UK

The selection of the cases to be compared is justified by Kaufmann’s (2002) typology of families of family policy. In this way, the UK is considered as the most representative case of Common Law Countries, where there is a lack of explicit family policy and mostly means-tested benefits, following a selective principle. Finland is part of the Scandinavian cluster, which provides comfortable opportunities to combine family and work for both genders and universal childcare benefits, under the principle of universalism.

Although Latin American countries are not included in Kaufmann’s typology, Argentina will be considered because it is understood as one of the most generous welfare states within the Latin American region, characterized by stratified universalism (Figueira, 1998).

Family typologies and leave models are extremely Eurocentric, hence the contribution and the novelty of this study is to include a country from a different region

with both similar and contrasting characteristics when compared to certain European countries. In the European context, Argentina would not fit in any family nations, since it seems to be a hybrid that takes elements from different European family policy models.

## **3.2 Methodology**

A qualitative cross-country analysis is conducted, exploring how the different dimensions and indicators previously mentioned are developed in Argentina, Finland, and the UK.

The thesis is secondary source-based, including academic articles, books, government reports, policy documents and international legislation as well as national statistics. The methodology is case-study research, based on the qualitative analysis of the design of leave policy in the countries mentioned before.



# 4

## Different Logics in the Design of Leave Policies: The cases of Argentina, Finland and the UK

In the following chapters, the leave policy designs of Argentina, Finland and the UK are presented considering the indicators previously mentioned. The countries are ordered from the one which least contributes to gender equality in childcare to the one which does the most in this regard.

## 4.1 ARGENTINA

In this chapter, the leave policy design of Argentina is presented, taking into account maternity, paternity and parental leaves, together with the latest available data on these topics.

### 4.1.1 Balancing Work and Family in Latin America and Argentina

Fernando Filgueira was the first researcher that adapted Esping-Andersen's work to the Latin American context (Filgueira, 1998). The author classified the countries not only focusing on the amount they invest in people but also considering the criteria with which those investments are made. In this way, three different groups are identified: (1) **Stratified universalism**, with extended policies but segmented along occupations - Argentina, Costa Rica and Uruguay; (2) **Exclusive regimes**, exclusionary countries with residual states and almost non-existent public redistribution - El Salvador, Nicaragua; and (3) **Dual regimes**, which combines stratified universalism in the cities and exclusion in rural areas - Brazil and Mexico.

Particularly, Argentina has been identified in the academic literature as a “successful” welfare state (Huber and Stephens, 2005), a pioneer in Latin America, where apparently, the low poverty rates, the high social expenditure and the progressive benefits led to an important level of universality (Filgueira, 1998).

This view is simplistic and obsolete. This assumption was based on the features of the public education system, which is provided under the principle of universalism for free. However, leave policies and pensions schemes show more complex developments. Far from being universalist, they partly depend on the power of union trades and cover only formal workers (Faur, 2011). For these reasons, Argentinian welfare state is certainly not universal; it is more a fragmented set of social policies based on different benefits for different social groups. In fact, social policies are addressed according to beneficiaries' position on the labour market and their gender (Faur,

2011).

The demographic and economic changes mentioned before also took place in Latin America. Increasing participation of women in the labour market and considerable modifications in the household compositions led to the need of implementing leave policies not only for health reasons but also for generating gender equality in the division of work at home.

However, these changes were not followed by public policies to organise care properly in Latin America. Although female labour participation has doubled in the last decades, this has not been balanced with men's participation in caregiving. Therefore, care is largely sustained by unpaid home care, disproportionately performed by women (Rodriguez Enriquez, 2012), which is disadvantageous to their job and wage (CEPAL, 2011).

This situation might be explained by several factors:

- (a) A prevailing social understanding that home is the best care environment for children together with a strong belief that women are natural caregivers.
- (b) Government resistance to investing funds, weak public policies in terms of regulation and provision of public care services. Conservative, sexist and patriarchal political ideologies, reflected in labour policies and regulations.
- (c) Undervalued care work. This is a low paid job principally carried out by women in the informal economy.
- (d) Very expensive private care services, with a limited and stratified access (Rodriguez Enriquez, 2012).
- (e) Since women are under-represented in union trades, childcare usually does not appear in collective negotiation agreements.

The enormous informal economy plays an important role when implementing leave policies. Informality is a long-lasting and structural component in Latin America. For that reason, a public policy that seeks to organise care should take this into account to provide equal opportunities for all workers.

Labour policies and regulations fail in generating a balance between job and family duties, for both women and men. Leave policies to take care of the newborn are mainly addressed to women, paternity leaves are extremely short and in some countries even non-existent. Additionally, a lack of public care infrastructure and services is notable too (CEPAL, 2011).

Because of this way of targeting policies, leave regulation tends to be limited to the mothers during their pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum stages, without considering the child-rearing phase. Fathers are seen as secondary caregivers minimizing their responsibility, and workers in the informal sector are outsiders to these policies.

Although there has been some progress, when compared to European countries, Latin American countries leave entitlements fall short with regard to generating gender equality in childcare.

The average length of maternity leaves in the region is 3 months (89 days), from 56 days in Jamaica to 182 days in Venezuela. Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Panama and Venezuela meet the ILO requirements for maternity offering 14 weeks paid leave at 100% of a woman's salary (OECD, 2017). In case a working parent wants to extend the leave, only three countries allow this: Argentina and Brazil (only for mothers, up to 6 months) and also Cuba (available for both parents during the first year, paid at 60% of the maternity leave).

Paternity leave varies from 2 days to 14 days in most of the countries in the region, which is very short when compared to European countries. Cuba is the exception because the 6-month leave after the birth can be shared between parents. Concerning parental leaves, there is a lack of them in most of the countries and they tend to be the exception. Some countries have unpaid leaves to take after the maternity leave, such as Brazil and Argentina. Cuba stands out again since provides beneficiaries with a three-month parental leave which can be used by both parents. Regarding funding, in most countries, leaves are covered by social security or public funds (Aulicino et al., 2013).

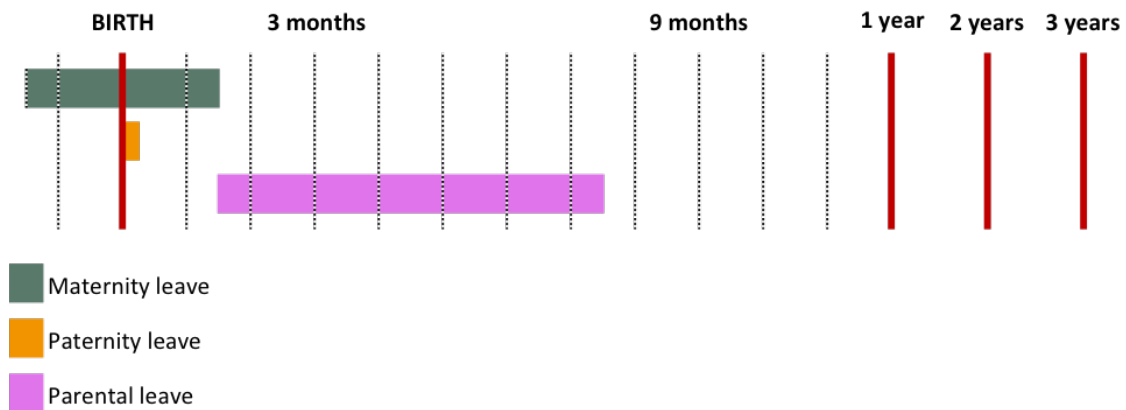
Many countries do not meet ILO standards and paternity and parental leaves are

extremely short or non-existent. Argentina is not the exception in the region. It lacks a unified care policy and consequently, the organization of the political and social care is both complex and multifaceted (Faur, 2011).

The employment-related leaves for childcare in Argentina posit women as the main person responsible for familial care. In this way, policies are targeted with this stereotypical view of women as innate caregivers, not incorporating a true gender equality perspective. At the same time, it diminishes the father’s role in the child-bearing, providing extremely short leaves for them.

### 4.1.2 Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leaves in Argentina

Before explaining the main features of the employment-based childcare leaves in Argentina, it is important to mention that this policy is characterized by an extreme heterogeneity, not only across the different regions of the country but also within the labour market among the different occupations. For that reason, in the following section, leave policies are addressed separately for the private sector and the public administration respectively, considering the differences within each sector.



Source: Ley de Contrato de Trabajo, 2018.

Figure 4.1: Overview of Available Leave Entitlements. Argentina, 2018.

Figure 4.1 shows an overview of the existing leaves in Argentina for private sector employees: a three-month maternity leave, a two-day paternity leave and an optional parental leave of 3 or 6 months.

**PRIVATE SECTOR** The main legal instrument that regulates the leaves for the private sector is the Employment Law Contract (Ley de Contrato de Trabajo - LCT). This instrument addresses only employees in the formal sector, thus informal workers are excluded from these benefits.

This law enables women to have 90 days of paid maternity leave (not meeting ILO standards) in which they receive a monthly stipend equal to the 100% of the salary, funded by the social security (ANSES). The days are assigned to be 45 before the birth and 45 days after it, however, women have the possibility to modify this periods and work until 30 days before the delivery. Regarding the breaks for breastfeeding, female workers have the right to take two paid breaks of 30 minutes each day, for one year after the birth. It is important to mention that this payment is not considered when calculating pension schemes and seniority (CIPPEC, 2013).

In case of a child with Down Syndrome, the leave is extended by 6 additional unpaid months. This law does not consider any type of adoption leave neither the case of multiple births. Rural workers and domestic workers have these same rights even if they are not covered by this law.

Regarding the paternity leave, the law provides men with only 2 paid days, to be taken immediately after the childbirth. With respect to the parental leaves, the law enables only women to extend the leave from 3 to 6 months, but this is an unpaid benefit. Additionally, the law requires that the companies with more than 50 female employees provide childcare services at work. However, this is only on paper, it has not been accomplished by the companies yet, nor checked by the government.

All the rights mentioned before may be expanded by the collective bargaining agreements of each specific sector. Evidence shows that some companies exceed the benefits given by this law, seeking to be more attractive to the younger generation of workers who evaluate this before accepting a job. In this way, flexitime, home-office and soft-maternity landing policies are implemented in order to provide employees with more opportunities to conciliate work and family obligations. Although parental leaves are not offered formally, in some cases employees may negotiate the terms with their supervisor (Marzonetto and Martelotte, 2013).

**PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION** The Argentinian public administration is more generous than the private companies but not by far. Heterogeneity is the keyword when explaining employment-related leaves in this country. In this section, the national and the provincial public administration are considered separately in order to analyse this discrepancy.

**Employees at the National Public Administration** The National Public Administration is regulated by the Collective Bargaining Agreement (Convenio Colectivo de Trabajo - CCT) which establishes a maternity leave of 100 days, 30 days before and 70 after the birth. This law enables women with multiple births with 10 additional days.

Moreover, from the third child, women receive 10 more days per pregnancy. With respect to the breastfeeding break, the national government provide their employees with two daily breaks of one hour until one year after the birth, having the opportunity to reduce the working time 2 hours per day.

Public administration workers are also provided with an adoption leave of 100 days for mothers and 30 days for fathers. Additionally, fathers have the right to take 5 days of paternity leave after the childbirth.

Regarding the parental leaves, the national public administration offers the same benefits as in the private sector: unpaid leave from 3 to 6 months only for the mother as Table 4.1 shows.

Table 4.1: Leave Policy Entitlements in Private and Public Sector. Argentina, 2018. Source: LCT. CCT.

<b>Benefit</b>	<b>Private Sector</b>	<b>Public Sector</b>
Maternity leave	90 days	100 days
Breastfeeding break	2 daily breaks of 30 min for 1 year	2 daily breaks of 1 hour for 1 year
Multiple births	No	110 days
Paternity leave	2 days	5 days
Parental leave	3 to 6 months for mothers	3 to 6 months for mothers
Adoption leave	No	100 days for mothers, 30 for fathers
Special cases	Child with Down Syndrome: 6 months	From the 3rd child, 110 days

**Employees at the Provincial Public Administration** Employees of the provincial public administration have different rights when compared to the previous employee categories. In the case of the maternity leave, the average in the 23 provinces of Argentina is 132.5 days, ranging from 30 days (Tierra del Fuego) to 210 (La Rioja). Four provinces do not meet the ILO standards (Buenos Aires, Entre Ríos, Jujuy y Tierra del Fuego), while the rest exceed this minimum.

The average paternity leave is 8.8 days. However, the discrepancies between provinces are notable: while some regions do not offer any paternity leave (Formosa and Santiago del Estero), the majority provides fathers with 15 days. La Rioja, for instance, grants fathers with 30 days. In Figure 4.2, it is possible to observe the different leaves that each province provides. In all of them, maternity leaves are significantly longer than paternity leaves.

The LGTB+ community has not been recognised in the legislation on employee-related leaves. Faur (2018) mentions that some changes with gender perspective are being developed in the judiciary system, giving both male parents the possibility to access to the adoption leave. Also, some modifications in the way authorities refer to these leaves have been made, using, for instance, the phrases “leave for gestating individuals” and “for non-gestating parents”, instead of maternity and paternity leaves, which clearly has a heterosexual connotation.



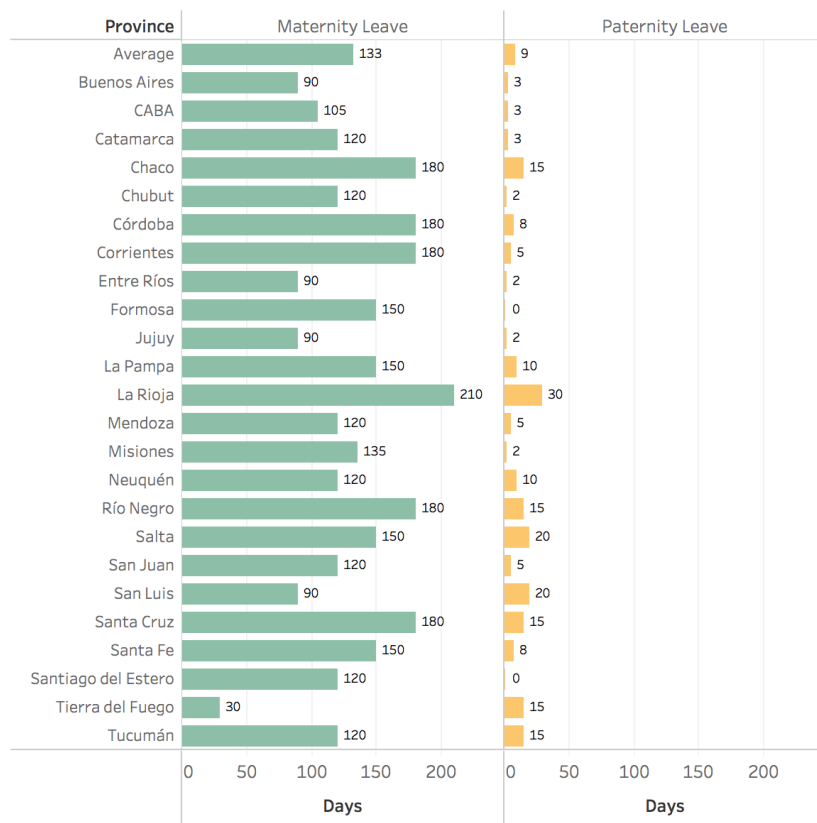


Figure 4.2: Length of Maternity and Paternity Leave by Province. Argentina, 2018. Source: CIPPEC.

However, LGTB+ parents are mostly not covered by these benefits and their right to childcare is neither recognized in the labour regulation. This confirms Faur’s claims about the impossibility of think about Argentina’s care policy as something unified and consolidated (Faur, 2011).

### 4.1.3 Data on Leave Policy and Time Use in Childcare

There is no official data on leave take-up for Argentina. However, the National Statistics Institute (INDEC) carries out regular surveys on unpaid work and time use (Encuesta Sobre Trabajo No Remunerado y Uso del Tiempo).

Figure 4.3 shows the average time in hours devoted to unpaid domestic work for people aged 18+ considering the presence of children in the household.

Unpaid domestic work is defined as all unpaid activities performed to provide ser-

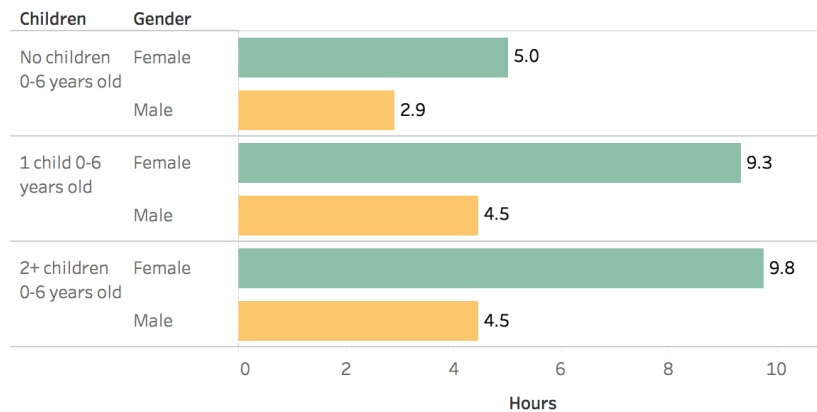


Figure 4.3: Average Time in Hours Devoted to Unpaid Domestic Work for People Aged 18+ by Presence of Children in Household, Argentina. 2013. Source: INDEC Encuesta sobre Trabajo No Remunerado y Uso del Tiempo.

vices for the own home. In this survey, domestic work includes not only household chores (house cleaning and clothes washing, cooking and preparing food, shopping for the home, repair and maintenance of household goods) but also care of children, sick or elderly members of the household. It also includes activities dedicated to school support (INDEC, 2013).

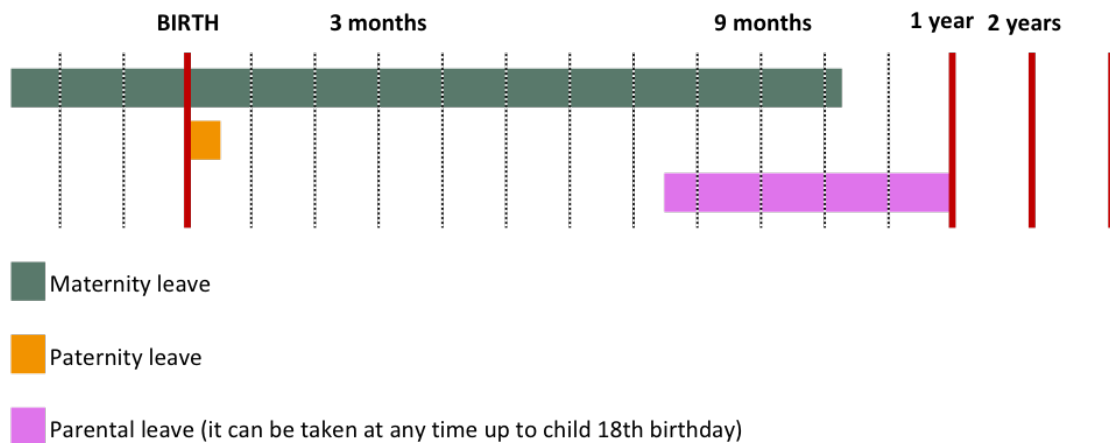
Figure 4.3 shows that women do much more unpaid domestic work than men in households with and without children. However, the difference between how much time men and women spend in domestic work is bigger with the presence of children. The average time devoted by women to this work almost doubled from 5 to 9.3 and 9.8 hours when there are children.

It is appalling that, on average, men spend less than half of the time women spend in domestic work when there are children between 0 to 6 years old in the household. Moreover, the time devoted to household work by men increases only by 1.6 hours on average in the presence of children.

## 4.2 THE UNITED KINGDOM

In this chapter, the leave policy design of the UK is presented, taking into account maternity, paternity and parental leaves, together with the latest available data on these topics. Figure 4.4 shows an overview of the existent leaves in the UK.

The UK has been characterised by different authors as a thought-provoking case of study because of its combination of policy entitlements. In other words, “*a particularly interesting case as a liberal welfare state that has come consistently late to the introduction of leave policies, after sustained political resistance, and that has ended up with a distinctly unusual leave profile, including the longest maternity leave in the developed world and the most limited parental leave*” (Moss and Kamerman, 2009:11).



Source: Gov.UK, 2018.

Figure 4.4: Overview of Available Leave Entitlements. UK, 2018.

### 4.2.1 Maternity Leave

The maternity leave in the UK is the longest in Europe, consisting of 52 weeks. The first 26 weeks are known as Ordinary Maternity Leave while the last 26 weeks as Additional Maternity Leave.

All employed women are eligible for this leave. However, the payment is different

according to their current employment situation. There are mainly two benefits: (1) the **Statutory Maternity Pay** (SMP) and (2) the **Maternity Allowance** (MA).

In order to qualify for the SMP women should satisfy two rules: the continuous employment rule and the earning rule. The first one means that the woman should be employed and earn on average at least GBP 113 a week. The earning rule implies that she must have worked for the employer continuously for at least 26 weeks. In addition, they should give the correct notice to the employer and a proof of pregnancy (Gov.UK, 2018).

Women can take the leave at any point from 11 weeks before the beginning of the week in which the child is due until the baby is born. However, it is mandatory (whether they take the SMP or not) to take the leave during the 2 weeks after the birth, with exception of factory workers who have to return 4 weeks after the childbirth. Additionally, up to 10 “Keep in touch” days are allowed during the leave, without affecting the leave itself or the pay. If the employee is off work for a pregnancy-related illness in the 4 weeks before the baby is due, the leave will start automatically (Gov.UK, 2018).

The payment for this leave is 90% of the woman’s average earnings with no ceiling during the first 6 weeks. The next 33 weeks, women can receive a flat-rate payment of either GBP 140 or 90% average gross weekly earnings (whichever is lower), while the remaining 13 weeks are unpaid.

The maternity leave is administered by employers. Medium and large employers can claim back 92% from the national treasury while small employers can claim back 103% (O’Brien and Koslowski, 2017).

In case the baby is premature, the period in which the leave can be taken is extended until 8 weeks after the child was due. However, a variation in the leave due to multiple births is non-existent as it is the specific provision for breastfeeding. Still, workplace regulations require employers to provide suitable facilities where pregnant and breastfeeding mothers can rest. Furthermore, employers must give pregnant employees time off for antenatal care and pay their normal rate for this time off

(Gov.UK, 2018).

There are some reasons for not being benefited by the SMP, such as being exclusively self-employed or not satisfying the continuous employment rule. For this kind of situations, women have access to the Maternity Allowance.

To receive this allowance for 39 weeks, mothers must have worked (employed or self-employed) for 26 weeks out of the 66 preceding the expected week of the childbirth and have earned at least GBP 30 per week on 13 of these weeks. For those women who do not qualify for the SMP or this allowance, there is a lower allowance for 14 weeks. This benefit is not administered by employers but from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Jobcentre Plus (Gov.UK, 2018).

#### **4.2.2 Paternity Leave**

The UK is characterised by a short and minimalist paternity leave with low or no income replacement (O'Brien, 2009). The Paternity Leave (Statutory Paternity Leave/Pay), is relatively short when compared with the maternity leave: 1 or 2 weeks. The eligibility criteria to access to this benefit follows the same rules as for mothers: being an employee and having worked for the employer continuously for at least 26 weeks. In addition, the beneficiary should be the biological father of the child, the child's adopter, the mother's husband, partner or civil partner, and he is expected to have responsibility for the child.

The payment for this statutory leave is a flat rate of GBP 140.98 a week or 90% of the average weekly earnings, whichever is lower. In the same way as maternity leaves, it is administered by the employers. Furthermore, there is no flexibility in use: it must be taken in one go, and cannot start until the baby is born. It must finish within 56 days of the baby's birth or within 8 weeks of the due date if it is premature. Fathers have the right to go to two antenatal appointments but this time off is unpaid.

The reasons for ineligibility are the same as for the maternity leave. However, a Paternity Allowance does not exist, thus self-employed fathers or those who earn

less than GBP 113 per week do not have supplementary benefit if they cannot access paternity leave.

Some employers go beyond the statutory minimum and offer additional provisions regarding both maternity and paternity leaves.

### **4.2.3 Shared Parental Leave. A Policy Intended to Generate an Equal Division of Childcare**

In 2015, the UK incorporated a “new” type of leave called Shared Parental Leave (SPL) in which mothers can transfer all maternity leave to the fathers except for the 2 weeks after the childbirth (50 weeks in total). This leave can be taken in separate blocks of a week at least, instead of taking it all in one go like maternity leave. Each parent qualifies separately for the SPL; hence, parents can take alternating weeks and there is provision also for parents to take the leave together (O’Brien and Koslowski, 2017). Employers are only legally obliged to agree to continuous block arrangements.

In order to qualify for SPL, parents should share responsibility for the child with their husband, wife, civil partner or joint adopter, the child’s other parent or a partner. Also, the continuous employment rule applies here: parents should be employees for at least 26 weeks by the end of the 15th week before the due date and be eligible for the other leave entitlements.

SPL is paid at the rate of GBP 140.98 a week or 90% of the average weekly earnings, whichever is lower, during the first 37 weeks. The remaining 13 weeks are unpaid. This is the same as the maternity leave except that during the first 6 weeks maternity leave is paid at 90% of whatever mothers earn (with no maximum) (Gov.UK, 2018).

### **4.2.4 Parental Leave**

After the maternity, paternity or shared leave, British parents could opt also for parental leave. This is an unpaid leave which length is 18 weeks per parent per

child. Again, the rule of continuous employment applies here, but stricter since they should be employees (not self-employed) for more than a year. They also are expected to have the parental responsibility (not a foster parent unless they've secured parental responsibility through the courts) and the child must be under 18 (Gov.UK, 2018).

Regarding flexibility in use, employees can take only 4 weeks in one calendar year and in periods of the whole week (not separate days), unless the employer agrees otherwise. Employers have the right to postpone granting leave for up to 6 months in cases where taking the could cause disruption in business (Gov.UK, 2018).

#### **4.2.5 Adoption Leave**

Finally, the UK also offers employment-related leaves for adoptive parents, called Statutory Adoption Pay. In this case, only one person in a couple can take the paid adoption leave, while the other partner could get paternity leave instead. Additionally, parents can also get paid time off work to attend five adoption appointments after they have been matched with a child.

The adoption leaves consist of 52 weeks: 26 weeks of Ordinary Adoption Leave and 26 weeks of Additional Adoption Leave. Similarly to the maternity leave, it is administered by employers and paid for up to 39 weeks, while the 13 remaining weeks are unpaid. The payment is 90% of the average weekly earnings for the first 6 weeks, GBP 140.98 or 90% of the average weekly earnings (whichever is lower) for the next 33 weeks.

Following the earnings and working rules previously mentioned, the adoptive parent should have worked for the employer continuously for at least 26 weeks by the week they were matched with a child, earning on average at least GBP 113 a week. He/she should also give the correct notice and proof of the adoption or surrogacy to the employer. It is important to mention that parents who arrange a private adoption, become special guardians or adopt a stepchild or a family member do not qualify for this leave.

Although the maternity leave is restricted to the birth mother, LGBT+ parents have the same rights as heterosexual parents regarding time off and pay and paternity leave is available to women as well as men.

#### **4.2.6 Available Data on Leave Policy and Time Use in Child-care**

Available data on take-up of leaves is outdated since the UK government does not collect data regularly on these topics. However, the last source is the Maternity and Paternity Rights and Women Returners Survey 2009/10 published in 2011. The main results of this survey are presented in this section in order to provide an insight of the situation in the UK.

Regarding the maternity leave, the results show that the average number of weeks taken by mothers was 39 weeks. The remaining unpaid leave (weeks 40 to 52) was not attractive to all the mothers: only 45% of them took it.

Mothers who were entitled to the maternity leave were more likely to take time off beyond the statutory paid period (45%), while only 28% of the mothers not entitled to this benefit (but receiving the Maternity Allowance) chose this option. Additionally, many mothers who were entitled to longer leaves take shorter periods, and this was even shorter for mother with low income.

The majority reported no difficulties with their employers regarding the maternity leave decision (81%); the most common obstacle with employers was their lack of knowledge about maternity leave entitlements and benefits (13%). Taking longer maternity leave varied significantly by employer sector and size, trade union presence, family-friendly arrangements and gender composition.

Mothers working for small private sector employers took shorter maternity leave compared to mothers who worked for large private sector employers. Longer leaves were also more likely in workplaces with the presence of trade unions and in workplaces with a higher number of family arrangements. Professional mothers took longer leaves compared to mothers in skilled and elementary occupations. Taking



longer leaves was more common for mothers with high paid, mothers working part-time, mothers who have been in their jobs for 10 years or more, and mothers who are employed (compared to self-employed).

In addition, the family characteristics also played an important role, since mothers with partners were more likely to take longer leaves compared to single mothers. When the income of their partner was higher, they also took longer leaves. Regarding the return to work, 77% of the mothers returned to work between 12 and 18 months later, and the decision was mainly based on financial considerations. Regarding the mothers who did not return to work, 31% of them mentioned wanting to look after their children as the most important factor for their decision.

Concerning the paternity leave, a clear majority of fathers (91%) took time off around the time of the childbirth, most of them taking 2 weeks or more. Regarding the employer size and sector, fathers were most likely to take time off if they were employed, with medium earnings, working in the public sector or large private companies. In cases where there were no family-friendly arrangements available, the take-up was lower: only 88% of fathers took time off compared with 93% taking time off in situations where there were between one or two family-friendly arrangements available.

Fathers who took no time were most likely self-employed, fathers with low income, fathers working in small private organisations or working where they were no family-friendly policies. Additionally, also those in the top end of the occupational scale were less likely to take the leave. Being unable to afford the period was the most cited reason among those fathers who did not take the leave.

Similarly to women, employment status also has an important impact: 93% of the employed fathers compared to only 74% of the self-employed fathers took some time off following the birth of their baby. In this way, fathers who are professional are more likely to take the leave when compared to fathers who were managers or senior officials.

In sum, the study shows that both maternity and paternity leave decisions were

strongly influenced by financial considerations and the work-family arrangements offered by the employers.

Regarding the time use in childcare among parents, the UK Office for National Statistics released a report on changes in the value and division of unpaid care work from 2000 to 2015.

Figure 6 shows the average daily hours of childcare provided by parents, regarding their income, whose youngest child living in the same household is of pre-school age.

In this survey, childcare refers to two different dimensions: primary childcare and developmental childcare. Primary childcare refers to activities such as feeding, walking, supervising at the playground; looking after a sick child and other unspecified childcare, while developmental care refers to activities such as: reading or playing with children and helping children with homework.

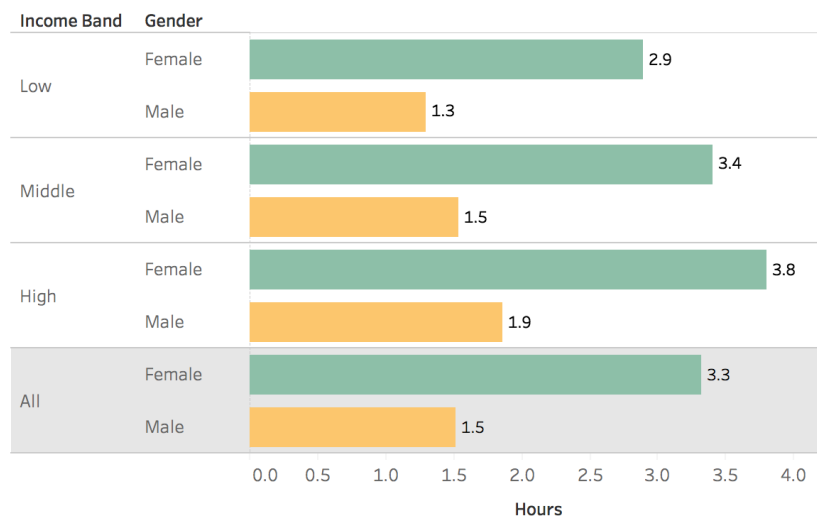


Figure 4.5: Average Daily Hours of Childcare Provided by Gender of Parent, where Youngest Child Living in Same Household is of Pre-school Age, UK, 2015. Source: UK Harmonised European Time Use Survey, 2015.

Figure 4.5 shows that mothers are the primary caregivers of pre-school children in all income groups, devoting double time to care when compared to fathers. Moreover, parents with high-income levels spend more time with their children compared to parents with lower income.

This report also states that mothers continue to provide higher levels of childcare when compared to fathers in all the age categories considered in the survey (pre-school, primary and secondary school), providing 74% of total childcare time in 2015. The estimated value of unpaid childcare in 2015 was GBP 132.4 billion, with 69% of that value accounted for by women.

The total amount of time that fathers devoted to childcare was almost the same from 2000 to 2015. However, statistics show that fathers of pre-school children increased their care time by 4%. Fathers whose youngest child was at pre-school age provided an average childcare proportionate to 45.5% of that provided by mothers.

## 4.3 FINLAND

Finland supports parents in a wider way than the UK and Argentina. When compared with the other two cases, it can be said that Finnish leave policy is more generous regarding both dimensions of this thesis.

In terms of entitlements to job-protected leaves, Finland appears to be a comprehensive welfare state that seeks to ensure the well-being of children by providing parents with an extensive variety of policies to reconcile work and family. With the objective to create a safe environment for children to grow up, this country offers services, cash benefits and specific leaves for having and raising children (Forseen, 2008).

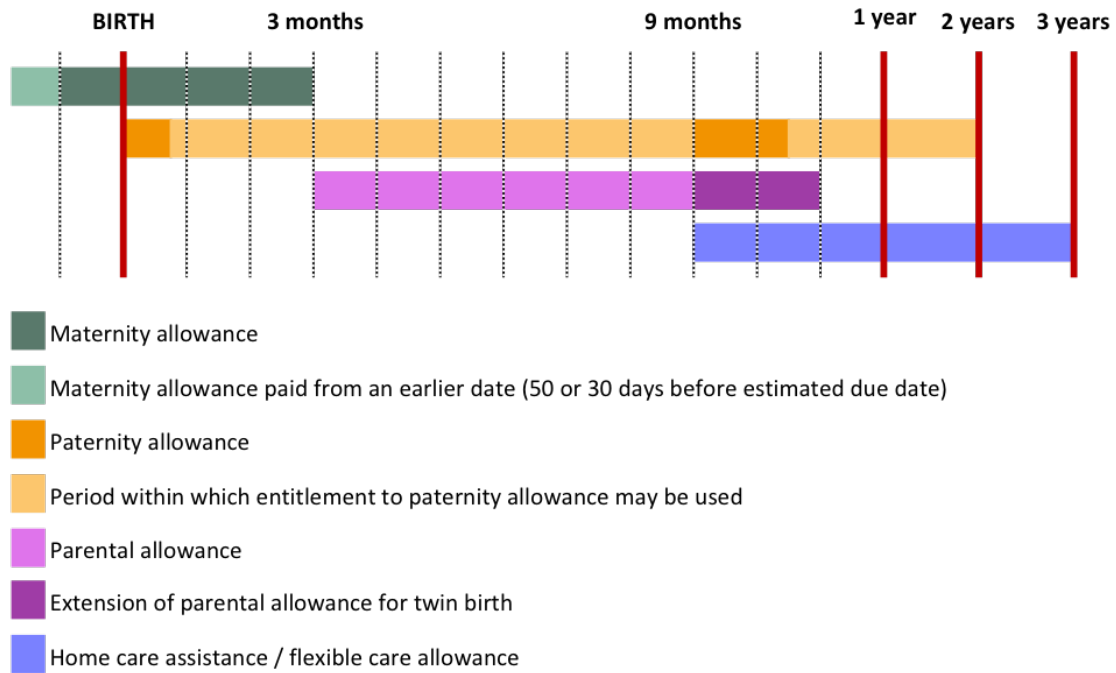
The focus is not only on children but also on gender equality since it encourages strongly women participation in the labour market and more involvement of men in childcare. In this way, the leaves are not only conceived in public health grounds, but also in the pursuit of gender equality and the well-being of the child in the long term. As Figure 4.6 shows, the extensive leave system in Finland includes maternity, paternity, parental and home care leaves. All of them are paid and ensure that jobs remain secure.

### 4.3.1 Maternity Leave

Mothers have 105 working days (17,5 weeks) of maternity leave<sup>1</sup> and this is an earnings-related benefit. During the first 54 days of leave, the payment is equal to 90% of annual earnings between EUR 1426 and EUR 57.101. Above this level, the payment is equal to 32%. Unemployed mothers and those who earn less than EUR 1426, receive a minimum flat-rate of EUR 24.64 per working day, EUR 593 per month. After this initial period, leave is paid at 70% of annual earnings between EUR 1426 and EUR 37.113; while those who earn more get a lower percentage (40% or 25%). Mothers who annual earnings are less than EUR 1426 before the birth also get the minimum flat-rate allowance (Salmi et al., 2017).

---

<sup>1</sup>Working days are Monday to Saturday, with the exception of official holidays.



Source: Kela, 2018.

Figure 4.6: Overview of Available Leave Entitlements. Finland, 2018.

A woman becomes entitled to the maternity allowance once she is 154 days into her pregnancy (Kela, 2018). This benefit is based on residence; it is paid to all women who have lived in Finland or have been insured in another EU or EEA Member State, Switzerland or Israel, for at least 180 days (30 weeks) before the date on which the baby is due. This allowance is paid only to the child’s biological mother.

If the child is premature, the mother has access to the maternity allowance from the first working day following childbirth. Additionally, if the pregnancy is terminated, there is no entitlement to the maternity leave even if the pregnancy had lasted for 154 days (Kela, 2018).

This benefit is financed by contributions from employers (approximately 68%) and employees (approximately 27%), while the remaining 5% is funded by the state (Salmi et al., 2017).

Regarding flexibility in use, between 30 and 50 days must be taken before the birth and it is mandatory to take 2 weeks before and 2 weeks after birth. The leave can be delegated to the father or to another person if the mother, due to illness, is unable to care for the child or if the mother dies and the father does not care for the child

(Salmi et al., 2017).

In case of multiple births, the mother usually goes on maternity leave earlier than mothers expecting only one baby, even if the pregnancy has been problem-free. However, maternity allowance and paternity allowance are not increased if more than one child is born at the same time (Kela, 2018).

Contrary to the case of Argentina, breastfeeding leave is not considered necessary in Finland for obvious reasons: maternity leave and parental leave last until the child is 9 to 10 months old.

Mothers are allowed to work during the leave, however, they receive only the minimum flat-rate allowance for the days they work. In the case of mothers who are students, the maternity allowance is paid at the normal rate if they do not count on other social benefits (Kela, 2018).

Unlike Argentina, maternity leave in Finland contributes to the pension scheme. *“Maternity leave accumulates the beneficiary’s pension based on 117% of the yearly earnings from which the leave benefit is calculated. These earnings accumulate the pension with 1,5% a year”* (Salmi et al., 2017). For those who are unemployed or full-time students, the pension is accumulated as if they would earn EUR 718.92 per month.

In addition to the traditional maternity allowance, Finland provides certain women with Special Maternity Allowance. This is specifically for those mothers who should stay off work because they are exposed to chemical substances, radiation or infectious diseases and the possibility of exposure cannot be prevented. Also, it applies to the cases when the employer is not able to reassign the woman for the duration of the pregnancy. This special benefit does not reduce the regular maternity allowance, and it is paid at the same rate until the maternity allowance period begins (Kela, 2018).

After the maternity leave, mothers can take a parental leave and get the parental allowance. Alternatively, the father can take the parental leave, or they can divide it between themselves. After the parental leave mothers can take home care leave

and get the child home care allowance. Furthermore, they can also return to work on a part-time basis and get flexible care allowance (Kela, 2018).

### 4.3.2 Paternity Leave

The paternity leave provided by Finland is again much longer than in Argentina and the UK: 54 working days (9 weeks). This is an individual entitlement and it cannot be transferred to the mother.

The benefit is paid at 70% of annual earnings between EUR 1416 and EUR 37.113, with a lower percentage for earnings above this amount (40% and 25%). Those fathers who earn less than EUR 1416 before the birth get the minimum flat-rate allowance likewise mothers.

Regarding flexibility in use, fathers can choose to stay at home for one to 18 days at the same time as the mother, while she is paid maternity or parental allowance. These days can be taken in up to four blocks of time. The rest of the leave (36 days) can be taken after the maternity leave and the parental allowance have ended (Kela, 2018). However, fathers should take this leave before the child reaches 2 years old (or up to 2 years after the adoption).

Who is entitled to this benefit? Resident fathers (biological and adoptive) who are married to or living together with the child's mother and take part in the childcare responsibilities. Also, if the father is responsible for childcare, he is entitled to the leave even if the parents do not live together (Kela, 2018).

Fathers are not permitted to work or studying full-time during the leave. Moreover, this leave is child-specific, that means that the birth of the next child before the leave period has elapsed for the previous child does not cancel the father's unused leave entitlement (Kela, 2018)

In addition to the paternity leave, fathers can have the following family leaves after the birth of their child: parental leave after the mother has been on maternity leave, childcare leave following the parental leave and partial childcare leave if he returns to work on a part-time basis.

Figure 4.7 shows the maternity and paternity leave take-up in Finland from 2006 to 2017 together with the number of live births. While maternity leave take-up is decreasing, paternity leave take-up does not show a clear trend. However, it can be said that after 2013 there is an increasing pattern. This might be explained by some modifications applied from 2013 by the Finnish government to encourage fathers to take more family leaves.

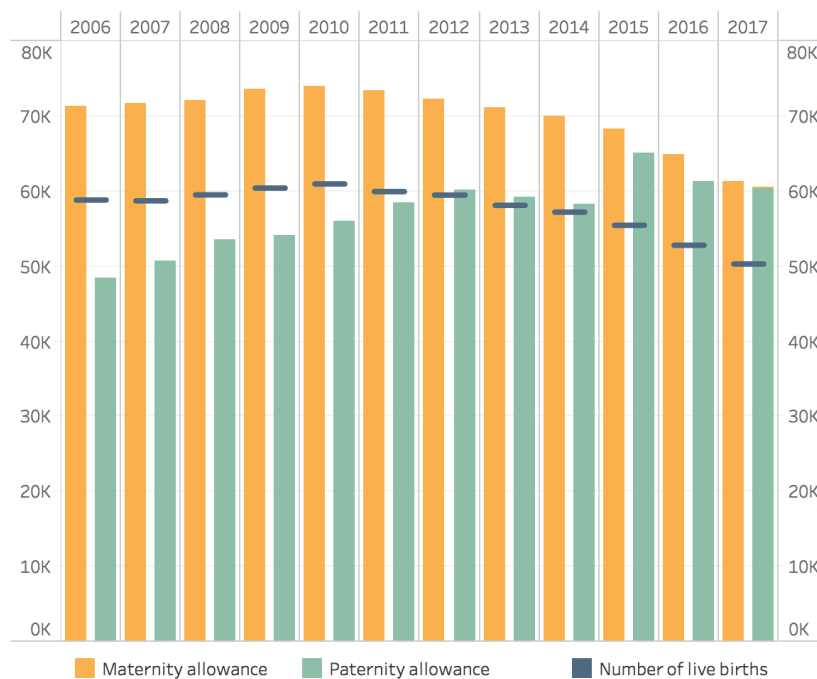


Figure 4.7: Recipients of Maternity and Paternity Leave and Number of Live Births per Year. Finland, 2006-2017. Source: KELA Statistics.

The changes consisted of making the paternity leave longer and more flexible. Until 2013, fathers had to take a paternity leave of one to 18 working days before the end of the parental allowance period and now, the entire paternity leave can be taken after the parental allowance period. Additionally, the leave entitlement is per child, so fathers have the possibility to spend more time with each child. All these changes were motivated by the low take-up of the father’s quota, less than 3% in 2012 (Kela, 2018).



### 4.3.3 Parental Leave

Parental leave in Finland is a family entitlement. The length of the leave is 150 working days (26,3 weeks) and should be taken after the end of the maternity leave. Parents can decide how to split the leave (e.g. only one parent can go on parental leave or both) but they cannot be on leave at the same time (Salmi et al., 2017)

Unlike the UK and Argentina, where the parental leave is not paid, in Finland this is an earnings-related benefit. It is paid at 70% of annual earnings between EUR 1416 and EUR 37.113, with a lower percentage for earnings above this amount. Those who earn less than EUR 1416 before the birth get the minimum flat-rate allowance as in maternity and paternity leaves (Salmi et al., 2017). Both parents are allowed to work, however, as for the maternity leave, the allowance is paid at a minimum rate in these cases.

The eligibility requirements are the same as for maternity and paternity leaves. However, fathers are entitled to this leave even if the mother does not fulfil the residence criteria. In this case, the leave starts 75 days after the childbirth. Additionally, another condition to receive this benefit is that the mother has had a check-up by a doctor employed in the public healthcare within 5 to 12 weeks after the birth.

If the father is responsible for childcare, he is entitled to parental benefit even if he no longer lives with the mother. If the mother dies and the father does not care for the child, another person can receive the benefit (Salmi et al., 2017). In the case of multiple births, there is an extension of 60 days for each additional child. Both parents can use these days, partly or wholly, during the maternity or the parental leave period.

Figure 4.8 shows parental allowance by gender together with the number of live births. The grey line represents the number of live births per year which, should be referenced with the secondary axis on the right. The strong decrease on fathers take-up of the parental leave might be explained by the discontinuation of the father's month from 2013 and the extension of the paternity leave entitlements mentioned before.

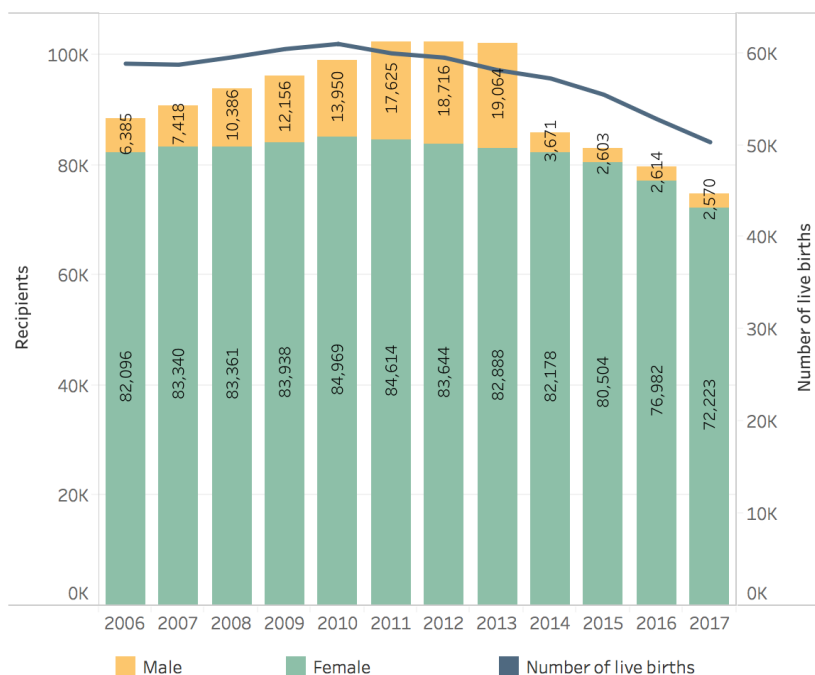


Figure 4.8: Recipients of Parental Allowance by Gender and Number of Live Births per Year. Finland, 2006-2017. Source: KELA Statistics.

#### 4.3.4 Partial Parental Allowance

The parental leave can be taken part-time. Both parents can take partial parental leave at the same time, if they met certain conditions: (1) both work on a part-time basis, (2) both parents have contracts lasting at least 2 consecutive months during the period of parental allowance and (3) they reduce their working time to 40-60% of normal full-time hours and pay.

Self-employed persons can take a partial parental leave as well by reducing their working time and pay correspondingly (Kela, 2018). Adoptive parents and those living in a registered partnership are eligible for a partial parental allowance. However, single parents and students are not.

This partial parental leave is available for a maximum of 158 working day and the payment is half the amount of the parental allowance (it is calculated for each parent separately).

### 4.3.5 Home Care Leave

When the parental leave ends, the child is approximately 9 months. The Finnish government provides working parents with different ways of arranging daycare after this period.

Until the child is 3 years old, Finnish parents can:

- (1) Look after their child at home and get the **Child Home Care Allowance**;
- (2) Arrange private daycare and get the **Child Home Care Allowance** or the **Private Day Care Allowance**;
- (3) Work for up to 30 hours per week and get the **Flexible Care Allowance**;
- (4) Place the child in **Municipal Daycare Centre**.

If parents decide that the children will be taken care of at home, they can access the **(1) Child Home Care Allowance**. In this case, the caregiver can be the father, the mother or guardians, married or cohabiting spouse of the parent or guardian, a hired caregiver or another person who looks after the child. Childcare leave is granted by the employer, for that reason, parents must agree with the employer before taking the leave, and notify them at least two months before. The period of leave should be at least one month. This right is established on the Finnish Employment Contracts Act (Kela, 2018).

This allowance includes a care allowance, a care supplement and a possible municipal supplement, depending on the home municipality.

The care allowance is not affected by the family's income and it is paid for each child separately (EUR 338.34 per month for one child, EUR 101.29 per month for each additional child, EUR 65.09 per month for each child over 3 years of age but under school age). The care supplement is affected by the family's total income and it is paid for one child only (the maximum is EUR 181.07). The benefit ends when the family's youngest child reaches the age of 3 years (Kela, 2018).

Figure 4.9 shows the recipients of home care leave by gender. Mothers are clearly who use mostly this type of leave, although this measure is intended to encourage

fathers to be more involved in childcare.

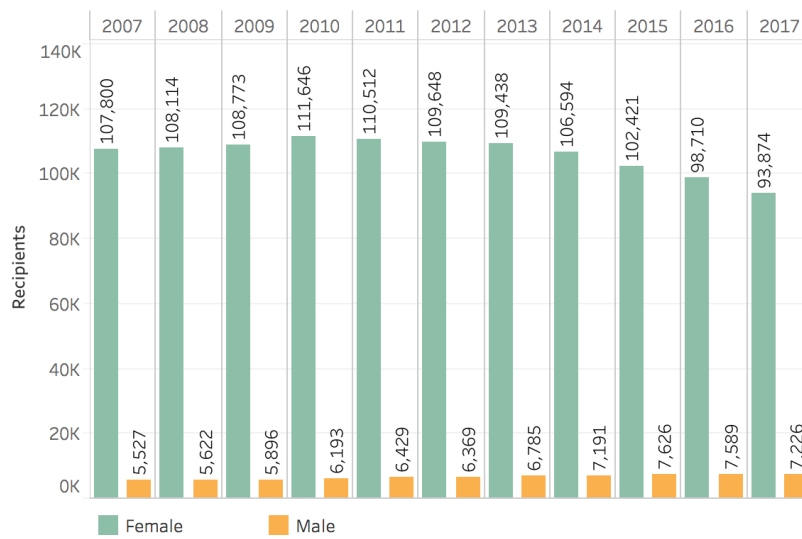


Figure 4.9: Recipients of Home Care Leave by Gender per Year. Finland, 2007-2017. Source: KELA Statistics.

In case parents decide that the children will attend a private daycare centre or will be looked after by a hired carer, they can opt for the **(2) Private Day Care Allowance**.

This benefit is granted to one parent or guardian if the child is looked after by a caregiver paid by the family or a private daycare provider and he/she is under school age. The daycare provider is *“a person with whom the family has made a contract of employment and whom the municipality has approved as a daycare provider or a private day care centre or family day care provider who has filed a notification with the municipality according to the Act on Child Day Care”* (Kela, 2018). A relative can also be a daycare provider but he/she should not live in the same household. Furthermore, the allowance is always paid directly to the private caregiver or daycare provider.

This allowance includes a care allowance, a care supplement and a possible municipal supplement, depending on the home municipality. This is affected by the child’s right to early childhood education and the family’s income. For children who have a right

to more than 20 hours of early childhood education per week <sup>2</sup>, the care allowance is EUR 172.25 per month per child plus up to EUR 144.85 per month and per child as care supplement. For those children who have the right to 20 hours, the care allowance is EUR 63.38 per month per child and the care supplement is paid at half rate.

For parents working up to 30 hours per week with children under 3 years old, there is another option: **(3) The Flexible Care Allowance**. The advantage of this benefit is that parents could take it at the same time if they make work arrangements that allow them to look after the child at different times during the day (e.g. the mother during the morning, the father in the afternoon). This benefit is also available for a parent who does not live in the same household as the child.

As Figure 4.10 shows, women again are the main beneficiaries of this allowance. This means that they are who work less in order to take care of the child, while most fathers continue working full-time.

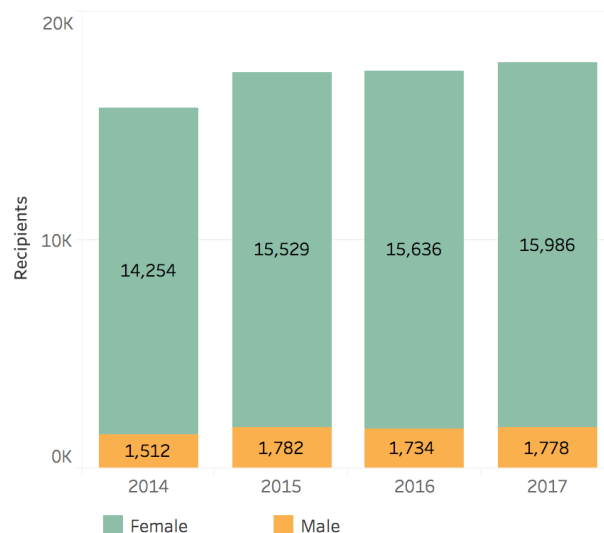


Figure 4.10: Recipients of Flexible Care by Gender per Year. Finland, 2014-2017. Source: KELA Statistics.

<sup>2</sup>The right to early childhood education is affected by the employment and educational situation of the parent or other guardian living with the child. Every child has the right to 20 hours of early childhood education per week. An extended right to early childhood education applies if the child's parent or other guardian works full-time, is a full-time student, operates a business, is self-employed, works on a part-time basis, participates in an employment promoting service, rehabilitation or comparable activity. Also, if the child has a special need of full-time early childhood education, for instance, particular developmental needs or need of assistance (Kela, 2018).

The payment is determined based on the number of working hours: EUR 241.19 per month if the parent works up to 22.5 hours per week or no more than 60% of normal full-time hours; EUR 160.80 per month if the recipient works more than 22.5 hours per week but no more than 30 hours, or more than 60% but less than 80% of normal full-time hours (Kela, 2018). This allowance is income taxable and it is paid for one child at a time. The family's income does not affect the amount of this allowance.

Finally, if both parents decide to continue working, at the end of the parental leave the child can be placed in a **(4) Municipal Daycare Centre**. In these centres, daycare implies early education carefully planned with precise goals for each specific age group.

#### **4.3.6 Adoptive Parents and LGBT+ Families**

Family benefits for adoptive parents are largely the same as for biological parents. However, they are not entitled to maternity allowance (only available for biological mothers), but they have the possibility to an extended period of parental allowance (200 to 234 working days). To access to these benefits, parents should be covered by the Finnish social security system.

If the child is adopted from another country, parents could claim an adoption grant to afford the cost. However, the adoption must be carried out by an international adoption agency authorised by the Finnish government.

Since March 2017, the leave entitlements for same-sex couples improved notably, being a mother's female spouse able to access to paternity and parental benefit in the same way as a male spouse (Salmi et al., 2017).

#### **4.3.7 Time Use in Childcare**

To measure the time spent in childcare, the Finnish government released the Time Use Survey, which is an interview survey in which the respondents keep an accurate diary of their time use over a two-day period. The survey explores different aspects

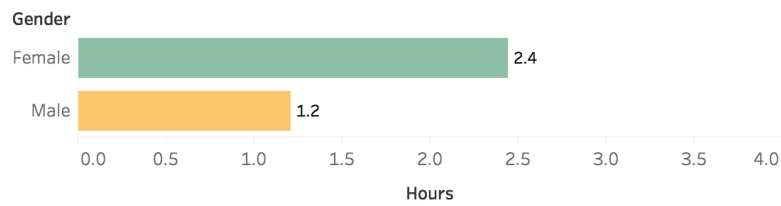


Figure 4.11: Hours Spent in Childcare by Married or Cohabiting Couples with Youngest Child aged 0-6, Finland, 2009-2010. Source: Official Statistics of Finland.

of working time, the time used in domestic work and within this category, the time used in childcare activities.

Time spent in childcare is a relevant indicator to show if there is an equal division of childcare between parents. Figure 4.11 shows the hours spent in childcare by married or cohabiting couples with youngest child aged 0-6 in 2009-2010.

This figure shows the same trend as in Argentina and the UK: women spend much more time in childcare than men. This might respond to the fact that women are mostly who take the parental leave and the home care leave during the early years of the child, usually working part-time or staying at home. However, this survey also demonstrates an increase in the time that fathers spend with children across the years. While in 1987 fathers spent 0.45 hours in childcare, this escalated to 1 hour in 2000 and 1.21 hours in 2010.





# 5

## Analysing Leave Policies

### **5.1 Argentina: Strong Maternalist Approach where Female Dominance in Childcare is the Rule**

Argentina performs very poorly in both dimensions of this thesis. Regarding the leave system, leaves are too short to allow parents to take care of the children properly and parental leaves are unpaid, which discourages women to take it. In terms of gender equality, this policy design does not contribute in any way to redress the unequal division of care between parents. Fathers are considered complementary carers and parental leaves are only offered to mothers, who spent much more time looking after their children when compared to fathers.

Childcare in Argentina is a dimension where gender and class inequalities are repro-

duced: *“Argentina social policy themselves may reproduce class inequalities among women (by assigning different responsibilities and benefits to mothers from different socio-economic groups) as well as children (by making different kinds and qualities of care services, instead of promoting equal opportunities)”* (Faur, 2011:969).

The Argentinian care system is characterized by a gender-differentiated logic and an extremely heterogeneity. The leave parents can receive depends on: (a) the type of work (in public administration or in a private company), (b) the province she/he lives, and (c) whether a person is part of the formal or informal economy (Marzonetto and Martelotte, 2013). This infringes the child’s right to care since this is conditioned by their parents’ occupation (CIPPEC, 2013). Those children whose parents are part of the informal economy do not receive the same opportunities, which increases social inequality.

Thus, there is a deep stratification amongst formal employees and a pervasive fragmentation that leaves informal workers unprotected (Faur, 2011). The possibility of family-work reconciliation is not equal for all. Faur (2011) also claims that the gap is wider between women in low-income sectors and those in middle and high classes. With better education and a smaller family, women of middle and high classes have the possibility to de-familiarizing care through access to private care services or hired domestic helpers. On the contrary, women from low-income sectors have fewer alternatives and, usually, they need to rely on family members.

There is stratification also among occupations. Public administration employees can reconcile work and family better than private sector employees because they have access to longer paternity and maternity leaves, adoption and sick leaves. The possibility for female workers to reduce the working time during the first year due to breastfeeding is also remarkable. Public administration entitlements also contribute better to generate gender equality in childcare because they provide fathers with a longer childcare leave. However, duration varies considerably across the country: while La Rioja offers a 30-day paternity leave, Santiago del Estero does not provide any.

Therefore, maternity, paternity and parental leave regulations stimulate not only

the idea of the female stereotypes of motherhood but also the male stereotypes, since they ignore men as potential caregivers (Faur, 2011). A clear example of this is the legislation that obliges companies to provide day childcare centres when they have more than 50 females employees, while this right is not guaranteed for male employees.

The Argentinian care system is characterized by a strong maternalist approach. It does not promote in any way the father's involvement in the child rearing; men are still considered as complimentary carers. Childcare and housework continue to be carried out mostly by women. This double burden for women not only poses barriers to have a full-time job but also obligates them to have long career breaks for child-rearing (Blofield and Franzoni, 2015).

This maternalism is explicit not only regarding the leaves length but also with respect to parental leaves. These entitlements are only offered to mothers (with the exception of one province, Tierra del Fuego), discouraging actively the co-responsibility between parents. This type of policy reinforces the idea that care is a woman's sole responsibility and generates an extremely unequal distribution of family responsibilities.

The non-recognition of LGBT+ parents in the leaves scheme is also an evident characteristic that feeds this maternalist approach. This traditional view of childcare roles contradicts Argentinian progressive laws on sexual diversity - it was the first country in Latin America in legalising the egalitarian marriage, giving couples the possibility to form a family having both parents the same responsibility for the children. Therefore, although marriage is egalitarian, the responsibilities for care are not (Faur, 2018).

By implementing this policy design, the government is clearly stating that females are the ones in charge of the childcare and that this is their "natural" duty as mothers. Available data on time use on unpaid domestic work supports this claim: mothers spend much more time than fathers in domestic work. This is an extremely retrograde public policy that does not recognize women's autonomy and freedom, encouraging patriarchal ideologies.

In sum, Argentina's leave policy does not perform satisfactorily regarding both dimensions of this thesis. This leave policy lacks totally measures that aim to create an equal division of work between fathers and mothers. Leaves do not meet in any case the international standards: they are too short, especially for men. Although both paternity and maternity leave are well paid (equal to 100% of the salary), this does not counteract the fact that this is not enough time for taking care of a newborn.

## 5.2 The UK: Mother-Centred Leaves and Short Well-paid Periods

The UK policy design neither contributes to an equal division of care between parents. Regarding the leave system, maternity is too long and could impact negatively on the return to work; on the other hand, paternity is not entirely well-paid, which could dissuade fathers to take it. Gender equality dimension also performs poorly since women spend much more time than men taking care of the children. In addition, the existent alternation provided by the shared parental leave is not successful because it does not supply fathers with their own entitlement to care.

To a lower degree than Argentina, the UK leave policy is also characterised by a maternalist approach. This is clear if the lengths of the maternity and paternity leaves are considered. While mothers have 52 weeks, fathers have only 1 or 2 weeks. Additionally, the highest paid is provided only to the mother during maternity leave and only for a period of 6 weeks. Although the maximum period of paid leave is 20 months in total, most of this is low paid or unpaid as O'Brien and Koslowski (2017) note.

The UK is not the exception: none of the Anglophone countries provides replacement wages for mothers for their full period of leave. Moreover, the low level of public policy interest in paternity leave is also characteristic of these countries, since none of them has a long leave or a high wage replacement for fathers (Baird and O'Brien, 2015).

The maternalism is also evident when the maternity allowance is analysed. Since the maternity leave is contributory, the payment depends entirely on the mother being an employee. For women who do not fulfil the employment rule, there is an allowance for 14 or 39 weeks. In contrast, there is no such allowance for fathers who do not qualify for the paid paternity leave. Fathers who recently started a new job or are self-employed, do not have these benefits. Certainly, these measures encourage the traditional role of women as the principal caregiver and pose the father as the primary breadwinner.

The fact that the parental leave is unpaid and not culturally promoted also contributes to this maternalist perspective because the economic factor is important when considering how the leaves would be taken. The fact that the parental leave remains unpaid severely limits the number of fathers who take it. Previous studies suggest that rather than a genuine commitment to gender equality, parental leave may have been included to fulfil the UK's obligations under the European Commission Directive on Parental Leave (Finch, 2008). On the contrary, other authors (Baird and O'Brien, 2015) affirm that the UK has shifted from an individual approach traditionally found in the liberal welfare states to a state that intervenes to a greater degree than what would be expected, and the framework provided by the European Union worked as an external pressure to achieve this.

Even though the shared parental leave is a notable step towards equal childcare between parents, the UK policy continues to be firmly maternalist and reassuring gendered roles. This newly shared leave is more flexible since the mother can transfer to the father the leave from the second week after the birth, and consequently, more time could be used by fathers.

However, since fathers do not have a period exclusively reserved for them, this leave is still "property" of the mother, putting her again in the place of primary carer, responsible to share her leave with the father. As Finch (2008) remarks this does not give fathers an individual right to extend their own paid leave since it is subsumed in the mother's leave. *"The right to care is still recognised as largely a women's prerogative and one that is vital for women in order to realise their right to paid work"* (Finch, 2008:148).

Additionally, the fact that the shared parental leave is paid less during the first 6 weeks (compared to maternity leave) do not encourage father's take-up (Atkinson, 2017). Therefore, mothers would continue to take the maternity leave for financial reasons, which makes more difficult to challenge this gendered division of work. *"The weaknesses in SPL as a policy reflect the reluctance of the government to challenge the expectation that it is mothers who will take time away from work to be the primary carer"* (Atkinson, 2017:20). A father's quota combined with a generous income

replacement could increase fathers taking up parental leaves in the UK. *“It is doubtful that UK fathers will take leave merely because it is non-transferable: it must be adequately compensated as well”* (Atkinson, 2017:11). Extending the shared leave to more than one year and including the possibility to parents of working part-time during the leave could also increase fathers take-up considerably, combining work and childcare at the same time (Atkinson, 2014).

## **Paternity Leave and Gendered Expectations**

Kilkey (2006) marks 3 different stages in father involvement policies in the UK.

1) **Ambivalence towards fathers (1998-1999)**, in which fathers did not figure in policymakers’ ideas. Policies to balance work and family were gender-neutral and fathers and mothers had the same individual rights to parental leave (with the exception of maternity leave).

2) **The naming of fathers (2000-2002)**. In this stage, fathers emerged as an explicit category and their reconciliation patterns were separated from the mothers. For the first time, fathers are the focus of policy proposals. Care is something that fathers can opt into.

3) **New opportunities for fathers? (2003-present)**. Fathers are, for the first time, mentioned in relation to care and their role towards this. The transferable and paid parental leave appeared as an attempt to give financial support to incentivize fathers to take care of their children. However, policies have not kept up with the pace of social change, and continue to be gendered; pressures on men as the main economic providers also increase.

Atkinson (2017) affirms that there is a disparity between the ideal of the caring father and the policies that have been presented to these fathers in the UK. As already mentioned, individual entitlements to fathers are minimal in duration and not generous when compared to other European countries. This length of the paternity leave *“does little to challenge the assumption of employers (and society in general), that mothers are the primary carers beyond the initial two-week period post-birth”*

(Atkinson, 2017:6).

Studying the motivations of fathers in taking leave, O'Brien and Twamley (2017) show that in the UK there are highly gendered models of appropriate care, despite the shared parental rhetoric. This research focused on the Additional Paternity Leave (APL) which was replaced by the current Shared Parental Leave. These authors shed light into the important role that gender expectations play.

In this study, fathers described taking the leave as something “fair” and “equal” with respect to mothers. The researchers demonstrate that the men’s uptake of the leave is constructed in the narrative as their individual choice, rather than a negotiated couple decision. In the same way, women use statements such as “I left it up to him”, perhaps to preserve notions of masculinity. The leave is considered a property of the mother, and this generates women expressing “gratitude” and “pride” in their partners (O'Brien and Twamley, 2017).

According to the authors, this gratitude shows a clear inequality in public perception about leave-taking by mothers and fathers. While it is rare for men taking the leave alone, this is expected of women. O'Brien and Twamley (2017) affirms that couples in this study understand the leave as a gift exchange: the woman gives her husband the opportunity to take the leave, and he gifts her his involvement taking it. This reinforces that the natural role of the women as the main caregiver mentioned before.

Another study exploring why British fathers do not take parental leave (Kaufman, 2018), reveals four main reasons: financial concerns, gender dynamics, workplace concerns and policy limitations. *“It seems that whilst many fathers feel that it is now acceptable to take a short period of leave following birth or adoption, the clear majority remain reluctant to take a longer period of leave and become the primary carer”* (Atkinson, 2017:21). Money appears as the most mentioned factor for fathers when taking leave decisions. However, even when male earn less money than women, they take less time off. This leads to the following factor, which has a stronger influence on decisions: gendered ideology and expectations.

Most interviewed parents believe that it would be better if the mothers take a



long leave while fathers a short one. According to the author, parents' emphasis on breastfeeding bolsters the idea that maternity leave is more important than paternity leave. Fathers think they are less prepared to bond with the child than mothers, and the fact of returning to work earlier and giving her a longer leave is seen as being supportive parents. Mothers also show some resistance in expanding the paternity leave if that would result in reducing their own leave. The idea of women as natural experts in childcare and fathers as helpers appeared again in this study, reinforcing gender ideologies and consequently leave-taking decisions (Kaufman, 2018).

Workplace resistance is another cause for fathers not taking the extended leave. They usually do not want to be conceived as uncommitted workers and are afraid of losing responsibilities and rights, which is not exclusive to men. In the UK usually, fathers are not replaced while on leave, so this could result in a burden for co-workers or more work in the return for the man. This could strengthen the idea of not taking extra leave, taking into consideration the return conditions (Kaufman, 2018) *"In practice employers often see women as mothers (or potential mothers) while they tend to ignore men's paternity status"* (Kaufman, 2018:11).

In sum, the difference between the maternity and paternity leave results in a gap between mothers and fathers, reassuring a gendered division of roles that highlight gender stereotypes: the "naturalness" of care for women and the mandatory economic support of fathers; *"Although a norm of caring fatherhood is endorsed in British culture, so too is an expectation of work commitment, reinforced by rather weak institutional support when men become parents and comparatively high levels of paternal working hours"* (O'Brien and Twamley, 2017:179).

According to Baird and O'Brien (2015), this mother-centred approach has been shaped by historical pathways to protect working mothers' health and the need to increase female employment and fertility. In the UK, as well as in the rest of the Anglophone countries, the focus on men's role as the carer has been less, and consequently, less attention to design policies targeted specifically at fathers.

## 5.3 Finland: Gender Equality in Childcare is still a Prospect

Finnish leave entitlements are generous in many aspects. Not only maternity and paternity leave have appropriate length, but they also are very well-paid. Parental leave is available to both parents equally and after this period parents have different options to balance work and family according to their own preferences. Although these measures' primary objective is to increase male participation in childcare, they are not being successful in achieving this.

Women are still the ones who principally take care of the children in a country with a wide variety of public policies to accomplish an equal division of care between parents. Finnish family policy shows a controversial mixture of women-friendly policies, de-familiarisation measures and home care allowances that encourage traditional gender roles.

Home care leaves are a very popular benefit among Finnish parents since the majority of the 0 to 3 years old children are looked after at home by their mothers. As previously cited, this allowance is both universal (available for all parents, the only condition is to not use the public care services) and means-tested (considering the size of the family and its income - less affluent families receive more). Although being constantly used by parents, this benefit has been both celebrated and strongly criticized.

On the one hand, it implies not only a real choice for women between going to work or staying at home, but also more flexibility for both parents, enlarging and strengthen their rights to care, giving varied options to balance work and family. On the other hand, this policy is very questionable in terms of gender equality because it emphasises the traditional gender roles and encourages low-income women to stay at home, creating a new class of full-time mothers outside the labour market (Forseen, 2008). Additionally, it implies more children outside the early childhood education system and more children under the risk of poverty especially in the case of single mothers (Repo, 2010).

The fact that part of this benefit is universal and part is means-tested generates that low-income families rely more on the allowance as an alternative to daycare centres, and middle and upper-class families use more the municipal daycare (Repo, 2010). Furthermore, statistics show that the longest periods at home with this benefit are taken up by mothers, which does not contribute to an equal redistribution of childcare tasks between parents.

As in many other countries, increasing men involvement in childcare has been one of the goals of gender equality in Finland. However, when compared to the other Nordic countries, individual fathers' right to leave have been developed slower in Finland. Although the number of fathers taking leaves when the mother returns to work has increased slowly, mothers still go on longer leaves than fathers (Lammi-Taskula, 2017).

At the workplace, paternity leave has become something normal, automatic and desirable in order to support the mother after delivery and take care of the child (Lammi-Taskula, 2017). Some authors claim that the low take-up rate is related to education level: highly educated fathers want to spend time with the baby, while less educated fathers feel they should help their spouse (Lammi-Taskula, 2017).

It has been strongly debated in Finland how to reduce or balance the costs of parental leaves since they are unevenly distributed between female- and male-dominated industries. Additionally, another concern is the low take-up rate of these specific leaves among fathers. Women are the ones who mainly use this benefit, which generates consequently a weaker position in the labour market for them (Forseen, 2008).

At the workplace parental leave is not automatic for fathers as it is the paternity leave. It is often seen as exceptional and a private matter. Men are not necessarily encouraged to take it but if they require it, they are usually supported. Fathers reports that it is easier to access to these leaves in the public sector than in the private one (Lammi-Taskula, 2017).

Regarding the experience of being at home on parental leave, Finnish fathers describe it as something different which involves autonomy, full responsibility and freedom

(Lammi-Taskula, 2017).

Usually, the low take-up of fathers is related to socio-economic issues. Fathers who have a high education level and whose spouse is also educated are more likely to take the leave. In addition, young fathers take more leave with their first child; and older fathers take more time than fathers in their twenties (Lammi-Taskula, 2017).

A study carried out by Lammi-Taskula (2017) reflects on negotiations and lived experiences among parents in relation to how to share the parental leave or the home care leave. A common motivation noted among the interviewed parents is the shared interest to provide home care for the children. Since parental leaves end when the child is 10 months old, most parents feel that the child is too young to attend a daycare centre. Material preconditions, emotional and ideological aspects are also important when the division of labour is organised. The mother work situation also plays an important role when the couples decide that the father will be the one staying at home.

Beyond Finland historic tradition of dual-earners family, this study shows that mothers are still culturally considered as the main caregiver of their young children and those who spent more time on these tasks. Unfortunately, those who decide to return to work earlier deal usually with predominant ideas about good motherhood.

In Haataja (2005) words, Finland's family policy could be described somewhat paradoxical: while it has developed the largest and most generous rights for public child-care, in practice small children are mostly cared on a full-time basis by their mothers at home.

# 6

## Comparing Different Leave Policy Designs

This section compares the different policy designs previously presented to detect differences and parallels between the countries, considering the dimensions of this study: gender equality and leave system.

Argentina performs very poorly in both dimensions of this study; the leaves are too short and parental leaves are unpaid. This policy design does not contribute in any way to generate gender equality in the division of care between parents because fathers are still considered complementary carers and mothers spend much more time looking after their children. Additionally, social and gendered expectations shape strongly this idea of the mother as the natural caregivers.

The UK policy design does not contribute to an equal division of care between parents neither. Maternity leave is too long and paternity is not entirely well-paid. Women spend much more time than men taking care of the children like in Ar-

gentina. Furthermore, the difference between poor and rich parents is notorious regarding their possibilities to access the market in order to solve the need of child-care.

Leave entitlements in Finland are more generous than in Argentina and in the UK in many aspects. Maternity and paternity leaves have what could be called the “appropriate” length and are well-paid. Parents have many options to balance work and family according to their own preferences. However, these women-friendly policies are opposing the fact that women are still who mostly take care of the children as in Argentina and the UK.

## **6.1 Leave System Dimension: Different Degrees of Maternalism**

This dimension of the study includes eligibility, funding, payment, total and well-paid leave length. Argentina, Finland and the UK follow different logics regarding how to address leave policies. Finland is characterized by universalism and, at the same time, an earning-related principle, where all Finnish residents receive equal access to leaves depending on their salary - although there are some purely universal benefits and means-tested benefits, such as the home care leave.

Argentina and the UK appear to follow a selective approach when they address their policies since they are specifically for employed parents. This does not allow unemployed or informal employees to access to the same benefits, creating a substantial inequality, especially in Argentina.

Maternalist ways of addressing policies are clear in the case of Argentina and the UK. Argentina strongly encourages the development of the breadwinner model by giving mothers remarkably longer leaves when compared to fathers, and posing the father as the main financial provider. How could a father be involved in the child rearing with only 2 days off from work?

Although the UK has a longer paternity leave than Argentina, it also encourages

mothers to be the main caregivers offering them the longest maternity leave in Europe: 52 weeks. Evidence shows that a moderate duration of leave has a positive effect on the employment participation of mothers, while very short and very long durations only have slightly positive effects. Additionally, longer duration of paid maternity leave delays the mother's return to work (Dearing, 2016). Although this leave can be shared with the father (Shared Parental Leave), parents perceive it not as a father's own entitlement, but rather as a gift from mothers to fathers.

In terms of duration, Finnish leaves seem to be more appropriate for both fathers and mothers. Although paternity leave is long enough (9 weeks), much more time is given to mothers (17,5). This still marks an unequal distribution of work between parents.

The way the welfare state is defining certain gender roles is extremely relevant because this not only shapes policies, but also influences how people understand the sexual division of labour.

In this way, it is important to remark the need of implementing a father's quota in Argentina and the UK, a well-paid leave entitled only to the father (that if it is not used, it is lost). Evidence shows that this is the only way to incentivize fathers to take the leave. *“Father's usage of paternity and parental leaves is highest under extended leaves with high-income replacement, lower under short leaves with low or no income replacement and intermediate under a short leave with high income. When the high replacement is combined with leaves exclusive to the fathers the usage is even higher. Discretionary or optional leaves are less attractive for fathers. Gender-neutral parental leaves that implicit, rather than explicitly, include fathers do not appear to promote greater father involvement”* (O'Brien, 2009).

Certainly, job protection is a key element of parental leave policies, providing parents with legal protection and security when leaving and returning to work. Payment level is also important since this would affect how the leave is taken. Figure 6.1 shows the available leave entitlements in Argentina, Finland and the UK, where “paid” refers to a flat rate and/or earnings-related benefit, and “well-paid” means earnings-related payment at 66% of earnings or above. A month consists of 4.3

weeks, while 4 weeks consist of 0.9 months.

Previous studies suggest that to achieve gender equality, full wages replacement is necessary (Baird and O'Brien, 2015). Argentina and Finland present well-paid maternity and paternity leaves, while the UK displays a well-paid maternity leave period of only 6 weeks and a flat-rate during paternity leave. Regarding the parental leaves, Finland is the only case that provides well-paid leave for a long period, while the UK and Argentina this is an unpaid benefit.



Figure 6.1: Leave Entitlements by Country in Months. Argentina, Finland, UK, 2018. Source: CIPPEC, KELA, Gov.UK

The fact that maternity and paternity benefits are not offered to unemployed parents (or mothers in the informal sector) is also a shared characteristic between the UK and Argentina. The latter provides leaves only for formal workers - having a huge informal sector in the economy, this means that a lot of people do not have access to these policies. The UK offers maternity allowances in some cases, but not paternity allowances, so unemployed fathers do not receive any benefit. Additionally, these benefits are very low when compared to Finland, where policies are targeted universally, for all parents who reside there. The benefit is also extended



to students, something that is not present neither in Argentina nor in the UK.

## **6.2 Gender Equality: Shared Maternalism and Strong Gendered Expectations**

This is the second dimension of this thesis, which involves the number of mothers and fathers that take leaves, whether there is a leave that is exclusively reserved to fathers, flexibility in use, plus how much time parents spend in childcare.

Finnish policy contributes better to an equal division of work between parents. In principle, this is supported by the fact that it gives mothers the actual option to return to the labour market almost immediately, providing good quality public childcare. In addition, the maternity leave is not too long and it could be combined with the parental and the flexible home leave that allows mothers to keep on working. The paternity leave also contributes to generating a high level of gender equality because it is the longest and the best well-paid of the three cases. The UK offers a flat-rate leave for fathers, and Argentina does not provide parents with a father's quota.

Regarding parental leaves, Argentina is the only case where this benefit is only offered to the mother. This is an unpaid benefit for up to 6 months. Parental leave is also unpaid in the UK where both parents have 18 weeks per child. Finland, one more time, shows the most generous leave entitlements not only in terms of duration (23,6 weeks) but also regarding payment, although this is an earnings-related benefit. Both parents cannot be on leave at the same time, they should alternate it. However, they also have the option to take a partial parental leave and work part-time. From the end of the parental leave, Finnish parents have different options until a child is 3 years old: stay at home, hire a caregiver, return to work, or use public day centres.

This is an excellent opportunity for mothers to choose between staying at home or returning to work, and also for fathers to engage in the same way as mothers in

the childcare. However, it also implies controversial drawbacks such as the female returning to work later, the reinforcement of gendered roles, more women outside the labour markets, more low-income families relying on these benefits and fewer children in the early education system.

Evidence in this thesis shows that even though father's take-up of paternity leave is relatively high, women are the ones who principally take both parental and home care leaves in Finland. Therefore, leave generosity does not mean gender equality. As already mentioned, the only way to change this is by providing well-paid father's quotas. Haas and Rostgaard (2011) identify the father's quota as the most important factor in improving the take-up in the Nordic countries: Sweden, Norway and Iceland all introduced quotas and have seen a clear majority of fathers taking the available periods of leave (Atkinson, 2017).

Changing these traditional gender roles requires that fathers spend more time with children under an individual, non-transferable and well-paid leave. Beyond paternity leave, a mandatory period within the parental and home care leave specifically for men could be an option to increase the father's involvement in the child rearing. This means a period during the parental leave that cannot be transferred to the partner, on the basis of "use it or lose it". Therefore, parents would split parental leave to split the care too.

Contrary to generate equal division of work, the three cases show the same trends: women are mostly who take care of the children, they usually spend more than double of the time than men. Although the father's involvement has been increased in the last years, women are still the main responsible for childcare in the household.

### **6.3 Familiarisation vs. De-familiarisation**

As indicated in the literature review, a crucial term in the family policy field is the level of de-familiarization (the degree to which households' welfare and caring responsibilities are relaxed, either via welfare state or market). The three cases show important differences in relation to this concept.

Finland appears to have a high level of de-familiarization mainly because it provides opportunities for parents to choose between different options. They can return to work immediately if they wish, relying on public care; they can stay at home and take longer leaves or parents can hire a private carer, receiving an allowance to pay for this service.

In the UK and Argentina, the levels of de-familiarization are lower; the market and family are the providers of care after the mother returns to work; childcare services are very expensive and scarce.

Therefore, Finland could be more related to the Social Investment approach (Knijn and Smit, 2009) regarding work-family balance, because it provides good quality public care and generous leaves, two tools that help women to carry with the double burden of work. The UK is in a totally opposed position, being characterised by the Individual Life Course approach (Knijn and Smit, 2009) in which family and its arrangements are a private matter; a very contradictory model because at the same time it has the longest maternity leave in Europe.

Argentina does not fit into any of these paths because it does neither invest nor facilitate the conciliation of work and family. It might show some elements of the Individual Life Course approach, since leaves are focused mainly on mothers, and they are the ones in charge of defining who will take care of the child (family or market). Therefore, while the Finnish leave policies encourage co-responsibility, the British and Argentinian leave policies can be characterised as entirely maternalist.

In terms of Kaufmann (2002) policy motives, Finland implements its leave policy considering concerns about women's participation in the labour market and the social and economic disadvantages resulting from being a mother (socio-political motive/women's issue motive). However, it is also driven by the children well-being motive, providing different and generous options for childcare. On the contrary, Argentina and the UK do not explicitly recognize gender equality in leave policies. Particularly, Argentina could be thought of applying the familial and institutional motive to the design of leave policy, since it is actively encouraging the breadwinner model. The UK also encourages this traditional and sexual division of work giving

only mothers such a long leave.

Furthermore, Argentina and the UK leave policies are justified mainly in health grounds, considering the mother and the child well-being during the pregnancy, but the father is completely left apart. On the contrary, Finnish leave policy seems to be understood as a social care policy, a tool to generate gender equality, female labour participation and hence facilitate the balance between work and family duties between parents.

Argentina is the only case where LGBT+ right to leave is not recognised. As already mentioned, although the family law is very progressive, leave policy is characterised by strong gender biases that do not acknowledge family diversity. On the contrary, the UK and Finland apply equal rights to biological and adoptive parents, except for maternity leave which is only available for biological mothers. However, other benefits to replace that leave are offered.

# 7

## Final Remarks

Throughout this thesis, three different designs of leave policies have been identified: one universalist and two selective. Despite the different way in which each country provides their leaves, they all share a common characteristic: there is a marked female dominance in the take-up of childcare responsibilities.

The level of maternalism is such in all three cases that in a country like Finland where the opportunities for childcare are so varied and broad, women are still the main children caregiver in the household.

Undoubtedly, it is challenging to generate gender equality institutionally from the public policies. However, it is clear that certain designs of leave policies do make a difference towards gender equality in childcare, they are crucial steps towards this aim.

A policy design that allows mothers and fathers to take care of their children in an equal way could have a positive impact not only in female participation in the labour market, which might increase, but also on the household economy since sharing care responsibilities means more economic resources. It would also help to create a view of the fathers as legitimate carers, in the same conditions as the mothers, without stigma or misconceptions, de-constructing traditional gender stereotypes.

Furthermore, if parents rely on a good quality public care system plus generous allowances and flexible work schedules, it could create more incentives to have children. It would also imply helping women to reach more leadership positions, as a result of not too long career breaks.

In this way, in order to positively impact on gender equality, a leave policy design needs to involve both mothers and fathers in an equal way, providing them with universal well-paid periods of leave with enough length. Furthermore, exclusive and generous entitlements for fathers after the maternity and paternity leave would encourage fathers to take them up. Only in this way, governments could redress the gendered roles around childcare and start contributing towards a society where “natural” is that both parents look after the child equally.

# Bibliography

Addati, L., Cassirer, N., and Gilchrist, K. (2014). *Maternity and paternity at work: Law and practice across the world*. International Labour Office.

Akgunduz, Y. E. and Plantenga, J. (2012). Labour market effects of parental leave in Europe. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 37(4):845–862.

Anttonen, A. and Sipilä, J. (2014). Varieties of universalism. In *Draft paper prepared for the UNRISD Conference, New Directions in Social Policy: Alternatives from and for the Global South, Geneva*, pages 7–8.

Atkinson, J. (2017). Shared Parental Leave in the UK: can it advance gender equality by changing fathers into co-parents? *International Journal of Law in Context*, 13(3):356–368.

Aulicino, C., Cano, E., Díaz Langou, G., and Tedeschi, V. (2013). Licencias: protección social y mercado laboral. Equidad en el cuidado. *Documento de Trabajo N*, 106:0–107.

Baird, M. and O’Brien, M. (2015). Dynamics of parental leave in Anglophone countries: the paradox of state expansion in liberal welfare regimes. *Community, Work & Family*, 18(2):198–217.

Baker, M. and Milligan, K. (2008). How does job-protected maternity leave affect mothers’ employment? *Journal of Labor Economics*, 26(4):655–691.

Blofield, M. and Martínez Franzoni, J. (2014). Maternalism, co-responsibility, and social equity: a typology of work–family policies. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 22(1):38–59.

Brandth, B. and Kvande, E. (2002). Reflexive fathers: Negotiating parental leave and working life. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 9(2):186–203.

Bruning, G. and Plantenga, J. (1999). Parental leave and equal opportunities: experiences in eight European countries. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 9(3):195–209.

Carey, G., Crammond, B., and De Leeuw, E. (2015). Towards health equity: a framework for the application of proportionate universalism. *International journal for equity in health*, 14(1):81.

- Ceglowski, D. and Bacigalupa, C. (2002). Four perspectives on Child Care Quality. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 30(2):87–92.
- CEPAL, N., UNICEF, et al. (2011). Cuidado infantil y licencias parentales.
- Ciccia, R. and Verloo, M. (2012). Parental leave regulations and the persistence of the male breadwinner model: Using fuzzy-set ideal type analysis to assess gender equality in an enlarged Europe. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 22(5):507–528.
- Daly, M. (2010). Families versus state and market. In *The Oxford handbook of the welfare state*.
- Davis, M. F. (2005). Child Care as a Human Right: A New Perspective on an Old Debate. *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, 27(1-2):173–179.
- Dearing, H. (2015). Does parental leave influence the gender division of labour? Recent empirical findings from Europe.
- Dearing, H. (2016). Gender equality in the division of work: How to assess European leave policies regarding their compliance with an ideal leave model. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 26(3):234–247.
- Duvander, A.-Z. and Johansson, M. (2012). What are the effects of reforms promoting fathers’ parental leave use? *Journal of European Social Policy*, 22(3):319–330.
- Ekberg, J., Eriksson, R., and Friebel, G. (2013). Parental leave. A policy evaluation of the Swedish “Daddy-Month” reform. *Journal of Public Economics*, 97:131–143.
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1999). *Social foundations of postindustrial economies*. OUP Oxford.
- Faur, E. (2011). A widening gap? The political and social organization of childcare in Argentina. *Development and Change*, 42(4):967–994.
- Faur, E. (2018). Contrasting trends in gender and childcare in Argentina: Family policies between LGBT rights and maternalism. *Current Sociology*, 66(4):617–628.
- Filgueira, F. (1998). El nuevo modelo de prestaciones sociales en América Latina: eficiencia, residualismo y ciudadanía estratificada. *Centroamérica en reestructuración. Ciudadanía y política social*, pages 71–116.
- Filgueira, F. (2005). Welfare and Democracy in Latin America: The Development, Crises and Aftermath of Universal, Dual and Exclusionary Social States.
- Fuwa, M. and Cohen, P. N. (2007). Housework and social policy. *Social Science Research*, 36(2):512–530.
- Genre, V., Salvador, R. G., and Lamo, A. (2010). European women: why don’t they work? *Applied Economics*, 42(12):1499–1514.
- Gornick, J. C. and Meyers, M. K. (2003). *Families that work: Policies for reconciling parenthood and employment*. Russell Sage Foundation.



Gornick, J. C., Meyers, M. K., and Ross, K. E. (1997). Supporting the employment of mothers: Policy variation across fourteen Welfare States. *Journal of European social policy*, 7(1):45–70.

Government UK (2018). Childcare and parenting. <https://www.gov.uk/browse/childcare-parenting>. Accessed: 03-2018.

Haataja, A. (2005). Lasten hoitomuodon valintaoikeudet–mahdollisuuksia ja riskejä. *Teoksessa Pentti Takala (toim.) Onko meillä malttia sijoittaa lapsiin. Helsinki: Kelan tutkimusosasto*, pages 80–109.

Hofferth, S. L. and Curtin, S. C. (2006). Parental leave statutes and maternal return to work after childbirth in the United States. *Work and occupations*, 33(1):73–105.

Hook, J. L. (2006). Care in context: Men’s unpaid work in 20 countries, 1965–2003. *American sociological review*, 71(4):639–660.

ILO (2017). World social protection report 2017–19: Universal social protection to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

INDEC (2013). Encuesta sobre Trabajo No Remunerado y Uso del Tiempo. [https://www.indec.gov.ar/uploads/informesdeprensa/tnr\\_07\\_14.pdf](https://www.indec.gov.ar/uploads/informesdeprensa/tnr_07_14.pdf). Accessed: 04-2018.

International Network on Leave Policies and Research (2017). Country reports. <https://www.leavenetwork.org/>. Accessed: 03-2018.

Kamerman, S. and Moss, P. (2009). *The politics of parental leave policies: Children, parenting, gender and the labour market*. Policy Press.

Kaufman, G. (2018). Barriers to equality: why British fathers do not use parental leave. *Community, Work & Family*, 21(3):310–325.

Kaufmann, F.-X. (2002). Politics and Policies towards the Family in Europe: A Framework and an Inquiry into their Differences and Convergences.

Kaufmann, F.-X., Kuijsten, A., and Schulze, H.-J. (1997). *Family life and family policies in Europe: Problems and issues in comparative perspective*, volume 2. Oxford University Press on Demand.

KELA (2018). Quick guide for families with children. <https://www.kela.fi/web/en/families>. Accessed: 03-2018.

Kilkey, M. (2006). New Labour and reconciling work and family life: Making it fathers’ business? *Social policy and society*, 5(2):167–175.

Knijn, T. and Smit, A. (2009). Investing, facilitating, or individualizing the reconciliation of work and family life: Three paradigms and ambivalent policies. *Social Politics*, 16(4):484–518.

- Lammi-Taskula, J. (2006). Nordic men on parental leave: can the welfare state change gender relations. *Politicising parenthood in Scandinavia: Gender relations in welfare states*, pages 79–99.
- Lammi-Taskula, J. (2017). Fathers on leave alone in Finland: Negotiations and lived experiences. In *Comparative Perspectives on Work-Life Balance and Gender Equality*, pages 89–106. Springer.
- Leira, A. (2002). *Working parents and the welfare state: Family change and policy reform in Scandinavia*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lewis, S. (1997). Family friendly employment policies: A route to changing organizational culture or playing about at the margins? *Gender, Work & Organization*, 4(1):13–23.
- Mahon, R. (2002). Child care: Toward what kind of “social Europe”? *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 9(3):343–379.
- Manzonetto, G. and Martelotte, L. (2013). Cómo se organiza el cuidado en Argentina? Algunas respuestas a partir del análisis de cinco centros urbanos. *Revista Cuestión de Derechos*, 5:29–50.
- Misra, J., Budig, M., and Boeckmann, I. (2011). Work-family policies and the effects of children on women’s employment hours and wages. *Community, Work & Family*, 14(2):139–157.
- O’Brien, M. (2009). Fathers, parental leave policies, and infant quality of life: International perspectives and policy impact. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 624(1):190–213.
- OECD (2011). Doing Better for Families. <http://www.oecd.org/els/soc/doingbetterforfamilies.htm>. Accessed: 04-2018.
- OECD (2017). Latin America and the Caribbean. SIGI Regional Report. [https://www.oecd.org/dev/development-gender/Brochure\\_SIGI\\_LAC\\_web.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/dev/development-gender/Brochure_SIGI_LAC_web.pdf). Accessed: 03-2018.
- Official Statistics of Finland (2018). Time use. e-publication. [http://www.stat.fi/til/akay/kas\\_en.html](http://www.stat.fi/til/akay/kas_en.html). Accessed: 05-2018.
- Ostner, I. and Schmitt, C. (2008). Family Policies in the context of Family Change. *The Nordic Countries in Comparative Perspective*. Wiesbaden: VS.
- O’Brien, M., Moss, P., Koslowski, A., and Daly, M. (2014). United Kingdom country note. *International review of leave policies and research*. Available at: [http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp\\_and\\_r\\_reports](http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports).
- O’Brien, M. and Twamley, K. (2017). Fathers Taking Leave Alone in the UK—A Gift Exchange Between Mother and Father? In *Comparative Perspectives on Work-Life Balance and Gender Equality*, pages 163–181. Springer.

- Pettit, B. and Hook, J. (2005). The structure of women's employment in comparative perspective. *Social Forces*, 84(2):779–801.
- Pronzato, C. D. (2009). Return to work after childbirth: does parental leave matter in Europe? *Review of Economics of the Household*, 7(4):341–360.
- Prpic, M. (2017). Maternity, paternity and parental leave in the EU. *Retrieved on*, 31:2018.
- Ray, R., Gornick, J. C., and Schmitt, J. (2010). Who cares? Assessing generosity and gender equality in parental leave policy designs in 21 countries. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 20(3):196–216.
- Repo, K. (2010). Finnish child home care allowance. Users' perspectives and perceptions. *Cash-for-children. The consequences for caring mothers*, pages 46–64.
- Rønsen, M. and Sundström, M. (2002). Family policy and after-birth employment among new mothers—A comparison of Finland, Norway and Sweden. *European Journal of Population/Revue europeenne de demographie*, 18(2):121–152.
- Ruhm, C. J. (1998). The economic consequences of parental leave mandates: Lessons from Europe. *The quarterly journal of economics*, 113(1):285–317.
- Salmi, M., Närvi, J., and Lammi-Taskula, J. (2017). Finland Country Note. In: Blum S., Koslowski A., and Moss P. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research*.
- Saraceno, C. (2011). Family policies. Concepts, goals and instruments. *Carlo Alberto Notebooks*, 230:20.
- Spiess, C. K. and Wrohlich, K. (2008). The parental leave benefit reform in Germany: costs and labour market outcomes of moving towards the Nordic model. *Population Research and Policy Review*, 27(5):575.
- UK Office for National Statistics (2016). Changes in the value and division of unpaid care work in the UK: 2000 to 2015. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts/satelliteaccounts/articles/changesinthevalueanddivisionofunpaidcareworkintheuk/2000to2015>. Accessed: 06-2018.
- Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW) (2017). Rights for LGBT Parents. <http://www.usdaw.org.uk/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=962a1ed4-4bbd-4bf6-976f-53d3f67ecb6b>. Accessed: 04-2018.
- United Nations Women (2018). Gender Equality Glossary. <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=letter&hook=g&sortkey=&sortorder=asc&fullsearch=0&page=0>. Accessed: 07-2018.

Wall, K. and Escobedo, A. (2013). Parental leave policies, gender equity and family well-being in Europe: A comparative perspective. In *Family Well-Being*, pages 103–129. Springer.

Zimmerman, S. L. (1995). *Understanding family policy: Theories and applications*. Sage.