

Leave policy changes: April 2024

Table 6 gives a quick overview of **larger policy changes in the included countries**. For more information about those changes, we point to the individual country notes.

Table 6 gives an overview of policy changes according to the different types of leave distinguished in our report, i.e., Maternity leave, Paternity leave, Parental leave, as well as Statutory other leave measures. We do not summarise changes in other policies at this point (e.g., early childhood education and care). Also, for more details, readers should refer to the country notes. For the four “groups” of changes, **we distinguish where a policy has newly been introduced** (marked by symbol: ✓) **or where a policy has been abolished** (x). Regarding the reforms of existing policies, we distinguish three types of change: if a change can be quantified, such as an increase in the replacement rate of a leave benefit or a reduction of leave duration, we classify it as either **expansion** (↑) or **cutback** (↓). If a change cannot be easily quantified, such as a change in flexibility rules or a structure of leave rights, we classify it as **recalibration** (o).

Which **types of changes** have been reported in the 2024 Review of Leave Policies? Please note that these are only policy changes enacted in the year *up to April 2024* (whereas there are often significant policy changes that are expected to be enacted later in the year).¹¹ In this 2024 edition of the leave review, **51 countries** are included. Of those, **24 countries and Canada-Quebec report some policy change** (while the rest report continuity across the different types of leave), which seems to indicate similar activity on leave reform when compared to the previous year. Possibly, in the previous year, and then continuing into 2024, reforms gained on track after comparatively strong stability over the COVID-19 pandemic years when measures often concerned temporary adaptations and support,¹² but also because of the need to align with the EU Work-Life Balance Directive. Some of the enacted changes are small (e.g., adjustments in benefit levels), others target specific groups, and a few transform the main parameters of national leave systems.

For **Maternity leave**, ten countries and Canada-Quebec report changes; 11 and Canada-Quebec for Paternity leave; and 17 and Canada-Quebec for Parental leave. Changes in 8 countries and Canada-Quebec concern Statutory other leave measures. Compared to

¹¹ Later changes that are under way but not yet enacted will be included in forthcoming review(s). In many countries, there are also on-going discussions about policy reforms, which have not been decided upon yet; these discussions are portrayed in the policy changes sections of each country note

¹² For an overview see: Koslowski, A., Blum, S. and Dobrotić, I. (2022) 'Leave policy in the time of pandemic: new developments and lessons learned', in Dobrotić, I., Blum, S. and Koslowski, A. (eds.) *Research Handbook on Leave Policy: Parenting and Social Inequalities in a Global Perspective*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, pp.384-397.

previous years (when there was a comparatively strong focus on reforming Paternity leave measures), now also Maternity leave and Parental leave and to some extent other statutory measures are subject to reform.

When it comes to qualifying the changes, a few **measures were newly introduced**. This included the introduction of new leaves, such as five days of paid domestic violence leave in Ireland, 20-day paid leave for grieving parents in Greece, or carers' leave in several countries (e.g. Luxembourg, UK), as well as the extension of existing leaves (e.g., Maternity leave in Cyprus). There were also changes related to leave restructuring (e.g. increase in non-transferable leave months in Austria), benefit increase or allowing (easier) access to leaves to groups of parents that were often marginalised within the leave schemes (e.g., same-sex parents in Estonia and Greece, or non-standard workers in France and Serbia).

Regarding the reform of existing measures, we see – as in previous years – that expansions and recalibrations are most widespread. Outright **retrenchment** measures are very rare. However, this statement should keep in mind that also the absence of a policy reform can mean significant change, namely, if e.g. benefit levels or benefit ceiling levels are not adapted to the significant inflationary losses we currently see in many countries.

Table 6: Overview of leave policy changes in 2023/24

	Maternity leave	Paternity leave	Parental leave	Statutory other leave measures
Argentina				
Australia	o leave structure and related payment	o leave structure and related payment	o leave structure and related payment	
Austria		↑ higher benefit (flat-rate and ceilings adjustment)	o non-transferable quota; single parents entitled to the same leave length as couples	
Belgium				
Bosnia and Herzegovina				
Brazil				
Bulgaria	↑ benefit height (floor); can be transferred to grandparents			
Canada				
Canada: Quebec	↑ additional weeks for single parents – under both Basic and Special plans	↑ additional weeks for single parents – under both Basic and Special plans	o additional weeks for parents who share o additional weeks for multiple births	↑ enhancement of low-income supplement – eligibility threshold raised

	Maternity leave	Paternity leave	Parental leave	Statutory other leave measures
China				
Chile				✓ 40-hour week law ✓ Law on the Reconciliation of Personal, Family, and Work Life
Colombia				
Croatia				
Cyprus	↑ increased by 4 weeks			
Czech Republic			↑ benefit	
Denmark				
Estonia		o same-sex partners' access	o same-sex partners' access	
Finland				
France	↑ self-employed are entitled to leave benefits if they have been working over the past six months (instead of ten months, previously)	↑ self-employed are entitled to leave benefits if they have been working over the past six months (instead of ten months, previously)		
Germany				
Greece	↑ special maternity leave is extended to self-employed and farmers o: Same-sex couples eligible	o same-sex couples eligible	o same-sex couples eligible	✓ twenty-day paid leave for grieving parents
Hungary				
Iceland				
Ireland	↑ benefit payment (5%)	↑ benefit payment (5%)	↑ benefit payment (5%)	✓ 5 days unpaid carer's leave ✓ 5 days of paid domestic violence leave ↑ breastfeeding breaks for longer period
Israel				
Italy			↑ allowance (see Country Note for the limited increase)	✓ bonus for working mothers ↑ nursery school bonus ↑ fringe benefit threshold

	Maternity leave	Paternity leave	Parental leave	Statutory other leave measures
				x VAT cut on baby and feminine hygiene products is NOT confirmed
Japan				
Korea			↑ benefit height when both parents take leave	
Latvia				
Lithuania				
Luxembourg		↑ expansion of scope	↑ expansion of scope	✓ carer leave ✓ leave for reasons of force majeure
Malta			↑ the first 2 months are paid individual entitlement	
Mexico				
Netherlands				
New Zealand				
Norway				
Poland				
Portugal	↑ benefit payment if father takes 60 days o part-time option introduced ('Initial Parental leave')	o period of obligatory leave increased ('Fathers-only Parental Leave')	↑ benefit payment o part-time options introduced ('Additional Parental leave')	✓ leave if the child dies during pregnancy ('Gestational mourning leave')
Romania			↑ benefit payment for multiple births or further births while on leave	
Russian Federation			o benefit payment made to the leave-taker returning to full-time work until the child is 18 months	
Serbia	↑ eligibility for supplemental "childcare" leave extended to non-standard workers			
Slovakia	↑ benefit cap	↑ benefit cap	↑ benefit height	

	Maternity leave	Paternity leave	Parental leave	Statutory other leave measures
	↑ expansion of eligibility of student mothers			
Slovenia	↑ benefit floor	↑ benefit floor	↑ benefit height	
South Africa				
Spain			↑ longer unpaid leave & more flexible	↑ care leave
Sweden				
Switzerland				
Türkiye				
United Kingdom		o more flexibility on timing		✓ care leave ✓ neonatal care leave o flexible working: increasing eligibility; o redundancy protection: extension to 18 months post birth + pregnancy
United States			↑ Two more states enacted paid family and medical leave programs	
Uruguay	↑ benefit height for health reasons (private sector)	↑ extended to 30 days for health reasons (private sector)	✓ public sector up to 6 or 9 months	
Vietnam				

Key: ✓ introduction, x abolishment, ↑ expansion, – cutback, o recalibration