

FATHER ON PARENTAL LEAVE

WHAT THE FIGURES SAY
ABOUT FATHERHOOD IN POLAND

APRIL 2024



FUNDACJA
SHARE THE CARE

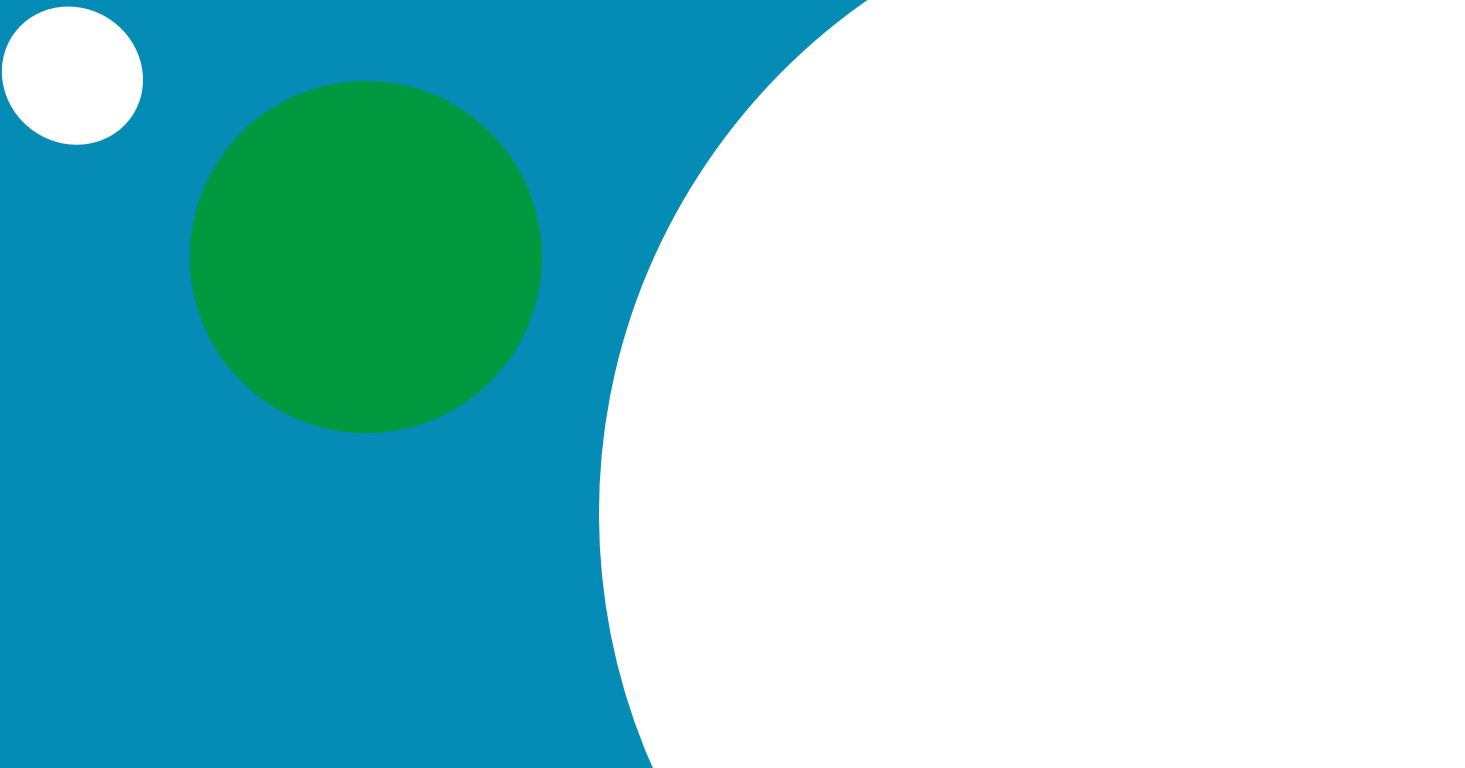


SOCIAL
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KEY FINDINGS

Following the entry into force of the Work-Life Balance Directive, the number of fathers taking parental leaves is growing.

In 2023, already 19 thousand fathers exercised their right to

the parental leave as compared to 3.7 thousand one year earlier. This is a positive trend, but it is still only 7% of eligible men.

Indicators of the involvement of working parents in childcare show that still mainly mothers take care of the children.

The financial implications of childcare accompany women throughout their lives.

The aim of the new regulations is to support women in the labour market by getting men more involved in childcare. Shared parental leaves are a tool to build a world of equal opportunities.

For this solution to have the desired effect, further education of parents, employers and childcare support organisations about the new law and its benefits for all is essential.

On the anniversary of the entry into force of the Work-Life Balance Directive in Poland, the Share the Care Foundation and ZUS are launching a campaign 'Equal at home - equal at work. It pays off for everyone.'



MOTHERS AND FATHERS IN FIGURES

MUM AND DAD AT WORK

Employment rate

without children

women  73% men  75%

with one child under 6 years of age

women  69% men  85%

with two children of which at least one is under 6 years of age

women  68% men  87%

with three children of which at least one is under 6 years of age

women  56% men  84%

Source: Employment rate of adults by sex, age groups, educational attainment level, number of children and age of youngest child (%) – 2022

FINANCES OF MUM AND DAD

Post-birth leave allowances

Average daily maternity allowance for mothers on maternity leave in 2023.

PLN 111.52

Average daily maternity allowance for mothers on parental leave in 2023.

PLN 107.10

Source: ZUS data

Wage gap in Poland

17.5% in 2020.

Source: According to calculations by the Institute for Structural Research based on data of the Wage Structure Survey conducted by ZUS, the adjusted gap (education, age, workplace characteristics)

Average daily maternity allowance for fathers on paternity leave in 2023



PLN 204.38

Average daily maternity allowance for fathers on parental leave in 2023.

PLN 152.72

Old-age pensions

Average pension in December 2023 in Poland

women  PLN 2920.98 men  PLN 4251.56

Źródło: Dane ZUS

Share of minimum pensions by sex

women  78.7% men  21.3%

Source: ZUS data



Financial support for mum and dad

In the period from January to December 2023, the following were paid out:

- Good Start benefit in the amount of PLN 101.5 million;
- child care benefit in the amount of PLN 41,647.0 million;
- with a day-care provider to the amount of PLN 2,195.4 million.
- • subsidies for fees for the stay of a child in a nursery, children's club or with a day-care provider to the amount of PLN 429.4 million.

MUM'S AND DAD'S CARING WORK

Percentage of fathers on parental leave

2022 – 1% (3.7 thousand fathers)

2023 – 7% (19.0 thousand fathers)

Number of days of sickness absenteeism due to caring for a sick child in 2023

mothers – 8,637 thousand days **(79%)**

fathers – 2,282 thousand days **(21%)**

Source: ZUS data

The share of the number of days of maternity leave taken in 2023 by men was 4%, while in the number of days of absenteeism due to caring for a sick child it amounted to 21%.

Source: ZUS data

Caring responsibilities

In as many as 68% of families with young children aged 1-9 in which both parents work, it is the mothers who most often fulfil caring responsibilities.

Source: Report 'Work versus home Challenges for parents and their consequences', Polish Economic Institute, December 2022

FOREWORD

New regulations help develop the equal role of mothers and fathers in children's lives

Mariusz Jedynak, ZUS

As the Social Insurance Institution, we are pleased to pay parents benefits resulting from the birth of a child. Labour Code amendments in recent years and the level of use of individual benefits, is a good barometer of the social change that we are witnessing.

Both successive regulatory changes and social research show that we are increasingly recognising the equal and important role of mothers and fathers in children's lives.

Paternity leave was established in **2011**. The name of the benefit was legible and clearly communicated to whom it was addressed. Within a very short time, the take-up rate by men increased to almost **60%**.

In **2013**, parental leave was introduced by the Labour Code. Till **2022**, it was taken in its entirety mostly by mothers, and only in 1% by fathers.

There are certainly several reasons for this situation. Firstly, dad's right to maternity allowance depended on mum's right. Formally it was mum who had to waive her share of parental leave in favour of dad. Secondly, easier formalities promoted a solution in which the mother used maternity and parental leave in full.

In **April 2023**, as a result of the implementation of the Work-Life Balance Directive in Poland, fathers gained an individual right to parental leave. This means that dad's right is now independent of mum's right, and that parents can in fact realistically share parental leave.



A **9-week** non-transferable parental leave for the other parent has also been introduced.

The introduction of a part of the parental leave dedicated to fathers has resulted in a dynamic increase in the take-up rate. In **2023, 19,000** fathers decided to take this leave. This means an increase to **7%** of those eligible.

These figures show that legal regulations have a major impact on our social reality.

Optimistic conclusions may be drawn, when looking at the use of the benefits and the rate of dissemination of solutions that were dedicated to fathers.

Fathers want to be involved in their children's lives, but legal solutions need to be legible and communicate clearly for whom they were designed.

Education and building legal awareness among parents are crucial if the implemented regulations are to fulfil their role.

It is worth adding that in this case they also meet the needs of parents. According to the results of a cyclical survey by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) (last measurement: December 2020) on the preferred family models of Poles, already **58% of people** indicate a partnership family model - husband (partner) and wife (partner) spend more or less the same amount of time at professional work and both equally take care of the home and children. This survey at the same time indicates that more and more families (**37%**) are following this model in practice.

At the same time, the models that burden mainly women as the best for the family have been chosen more rarely.

We believe that this publication and our joint campaign with the Share the Care Foundation 'Equal at home - equal at work. It pays off for all' will contribute to disseminating the new law and building a world of equal opportunities for all.

Parental leave for fathers as a tool to build gender equality in the labour market and in family life

**Karolina Andrian,
Share the Care Foundation**

Parental equality is a prerequisite for equality in the labour market. Why? Because parental care is one of the main factors of inequality between women and men.

We were reminded of this fact by the American economist Claudia Goldin, who last year won the Nobel Prize in Economics for her research on the situation of women in the labour market. She showed that most of the income gap exists between men and women performing the same occupation, and that it largely arises with the birth of the first child.

Researchers from all over the world repeatedly note the phenomenon of the so-called motherhood penalty

– mothers are paid less than fathers in the labour market. The different treatment of employees on grounds of sex can also be seen in differences in the level of old-age pensions, in different rights to social insurance and opportunities to participate in professional and public life, as well as in unequal opportunities for personal development.

To respond to this problem a large-scale state policy has been launched, which includes, inter alia, regulation of paid parental leaves for fathers.

On **26 April 2023**, the EU Work-Life Balance Directive was implemented in Poland. It granted to fathers an individual right to parental leave and **9 weeks** of non-transferable parental leave.



The experience of other countries, e.g. Scandinavian countries, shows that non-transferable leave, or in other words the part of leave reserved only for the father (the so-called father's quota) is the golden standard of leave policy for fathers.

This mechanism, in addition to the high payment for leave, effectively encourages fathers to take advantage of parental leaves.

Dad on parental leave means a smooth return of mum to professional activity. Mum is sure that the child is well looked after. There is no stress that a while after returning to work she will have to take sick leave in the event of the baby's illness. Such a positive experience of returning to work after a long absence affects a woman's perception of combining work with motherhood. This may determine her further labour market participation and career development.

It may also affect the decision to have another child.

Thanks to the new regulations, fathers are beginning to be perceived as equal parents and mothers are no longer treated as inferior employees. This corresponds to the needs of women and men, especially in the younger generation. Both employers and society as a whole also benefit from this change. Because equality benefits everyone.

The Work-Life Balance Directive has provided us with a tool to build equality between women and men and to build a world of equal opportunities. It is a relatively small change in the legislation that can have far-reaching positive consequences for society as a whole and the labour market.

Now all of us - mothers, fathers, employers, social policy-making institutions - need to learn how to use this tool effectively and what we can achieve as a result. I very much hope that this study will help us.

LEAVES FOR A FATHER AFTER THE CHILDBIRTH UNDER THE LABOUR CODE

When a child is born, fathers are also entitled to leave. And it is by no means only the paternity leave!

BENEFIT	RATE	REMUNERATION / TAKE-UP CONDITIONS
Maternity leave	6 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child's mum may hand over 6 weeks of her leave to the child's dad. The maternity allowance for the period of this leave is 100% of the allowance assessment basis.
Paternity leave	2 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be used in the first year of a child's life. The maternity allowance for the period of this leave is 100% of the allowance assessment basis.
Parental leave	9 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part non-transferable to the other parent - if dad/mum doesn't take it, is lost. To be taken until the end of the calendar year in which the child turns 6. The maternity allowance for the period of this leave is 70% of the allowance assessment basis.
Parental leave	23 weeks/ 25 weeks (in the case of a single/multiple pregnancy) In the case where the child has a 'pro-life certificate' the leave is extended . In the case of a single pregnancy, the total duration of leave, including non-transferable parts, is 65 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leave to be freely shared by mum and dad. The maternity allowance for the period of this leave is 70% or 81.5% of the allowance assessment basis - depending on the choice of allowance settlement made by the mother. To be taken until the end of the calendar year in which the child turns 6.
Child-care leave	36 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leave to be shared by mum and dad, with a maximum of 35 months to be used by one parent. Unpaid. To be taken until the end of the calendar year in which the child turns 6.

The Labour Code is written in language that most people do not understand. Many of its provisions also raise doubts among employers. For this reason, employees do not understand what their rights are, they make numerous mistakes when claiming the benefits, and there are many false myths and beliefs circulating in the public space about parents' rights, in particular fathers' rights.

Here are some of them.

Dad is entitled only to 9 weeks of parental leave for himself and nothing more.

Wrong!

Dad and mum have 41 weeks of parental leave to share in the case of a single pregnancy and 43 weeks in the case of a multiple pregnancy.

This includes 9 weeks of non-transferable leave for each parent, which may not be transferred to the other parent. This means that within 41/43 weeks, mum is entitled to 9 weeks of her leave and dad to 9 weeks.

The remainder, i.e. 23/25 weeks, may be used and freely shared by mum and dad.

A request to average the allowance at 81.5% is equivalent to applying for full parental leave immediately after maternity leave..

Wrong!

The request to average the allowance is ONLY a request concerning the amount of the allowance.

Failure to file this request results in splitting the allowance into 100% for maternity leave and 70% for parental leave.

This request is not a request for leave! We apply for leave on another form – a form of request for parental leave.

Dads are only entitled to a leave for fathers called in Polish '*urlop tacierzyński*'. **Wrong!**

There is no such thing as '*urlop tacierzyński*' in the Labour Code. This word does not even exist in the Polish language dictionary.

The word '*tacierzyński*' is used incorrectly in this context and in relation to various benefits, e.g. as a substitute for paternity leave ('*urlop ojcowski*'), the non-transferable 9-week part of the parental leave for the dad or the part of the maternity leave that the mum can transfer to the child's dad.

In Poland we have 4 types of leave for the care of the child: maternity, paternity, parental and childcare leave.

There is no such term as '*urlop tacierzyński*'.

Dads are only entitled to paternity leave (in Polish '*ojcowski*').

Wrong!

Paternity leave is one of father's entitlements. The dad is also entitled to parental leave on an equal basis with the mum and maternity leave if the mum would like to give it up after 14 weeks from the birth of the child.

Dad carrying out business activity has no rights.

Wrong!

The dad-entrepreneur is not entitled to leaves, but is entitled to allowances for the period of individual leaves. He will also have his ZUS contribution assessment basis reduced for this period.

The allowance for a dad on parental leave is always 70% of the allowance assessment basis.

A dad taking leave after the birth of his child receives maternity allowance.

In Poland, maternity leave lasts one year.

Wrong!

A dad taking more than 9 weeks of leave may also receive maternity allowance of 81.5% of the allowance assessment basis for weeks falling after the first 9 weeks of leave.

It means that if dad decides to take 16 weeks of parental leave, he will receive maternity allowance of 70% of the allowance assessment basis for the first 9 weeks and 81.5% of the allowance assessment basis for the remaining 7 weeks (if mum has previously requested to average the allowance).

Truth

According to the Polish Labour Code, a dad who takes paternity or parental leave, formally receives maternity allowance.

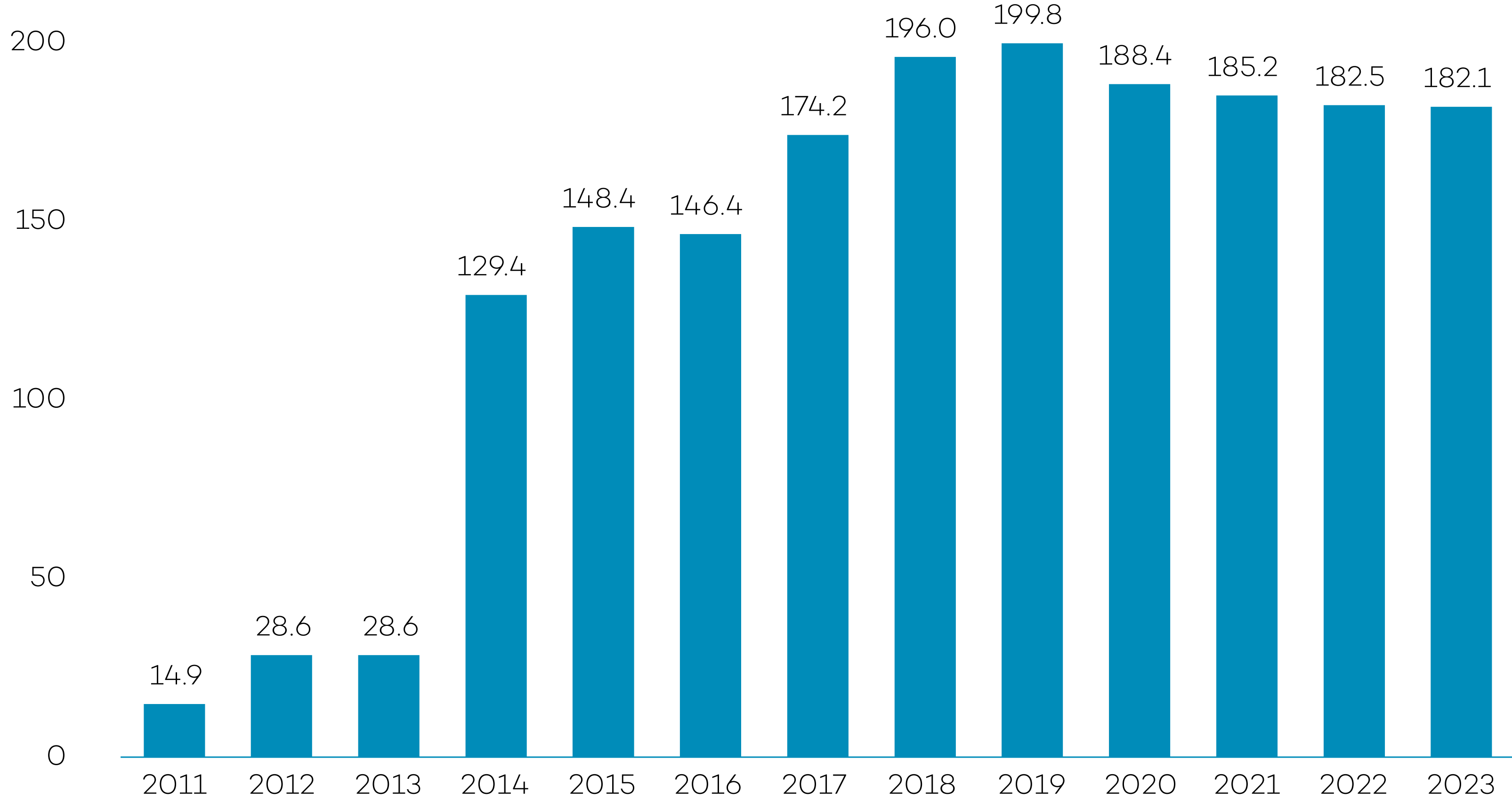
Wrong!

Maternity leave is 20 weeks (in the case of a single pregnancy) and that is all. This is followed by a parental leave, which lasts 41 weeks and is intended for mum and dad.

It is common practice in Poland for women to take the entire maternity and parental leave, which adds up to 52 weeks, or one year. But this is not a one-year maternity leave.

TAKE-UP OF LEAVES BY FATHERS AFTER THE CHILDBIRTH FOLLOWING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE DIRECTIVE

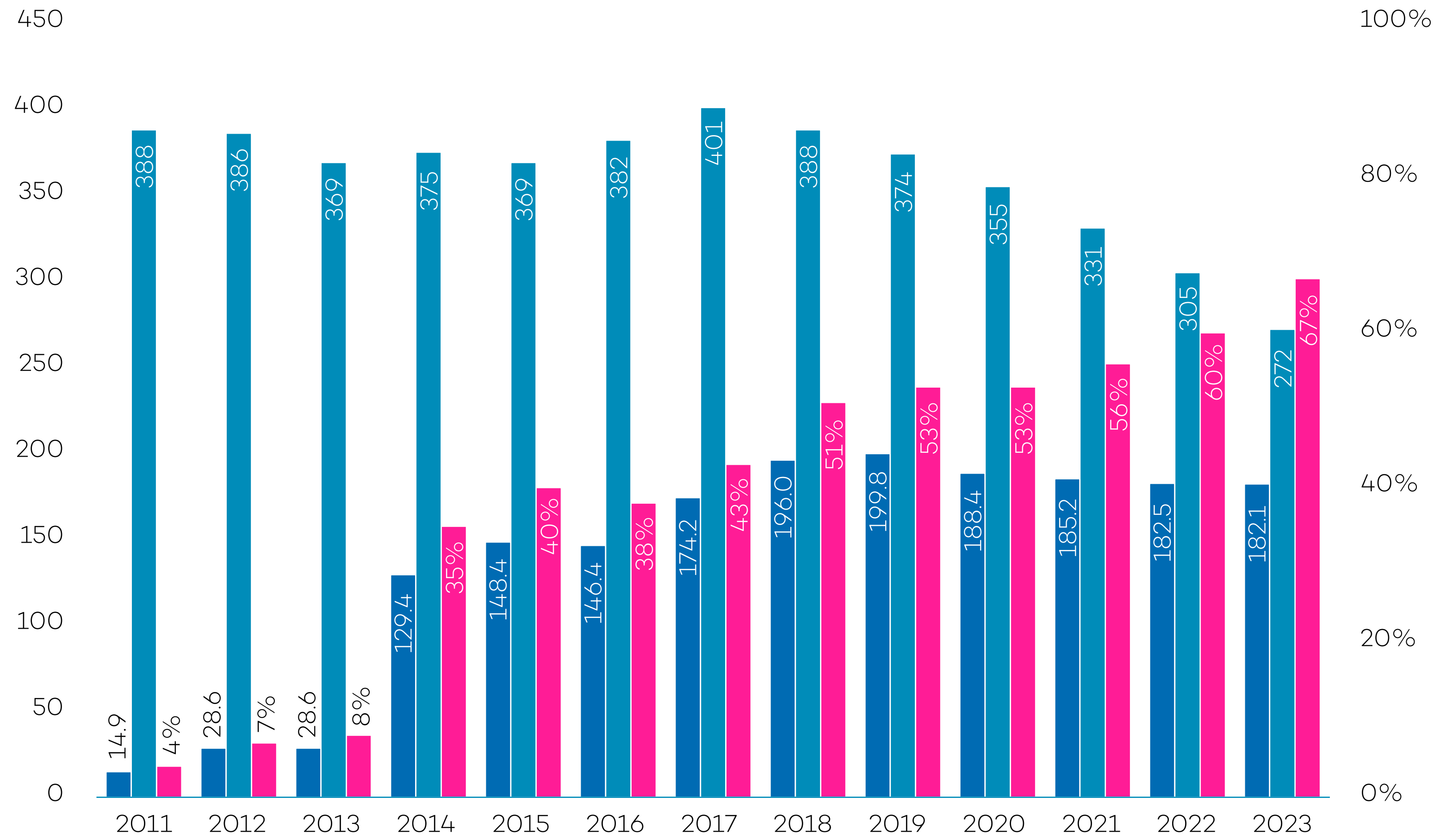
The most popular leave taken by fathers is paternity leave. Since its introduction in 2011, its take-up has grown very quickly.



Men receiving maternity allowances for paternity leave between 2011 and 2023 (number of men in thousands)

Last year, when - due to the implementation of the Work-Life Balance Directive - much has been said in the public space about fathers' rights, the take-up of paternity leave increased to 67%.

It is a pity that still more than 30% of fathers do not take up this entitlement, thus wasting valuable time they could spend with their newborn child.

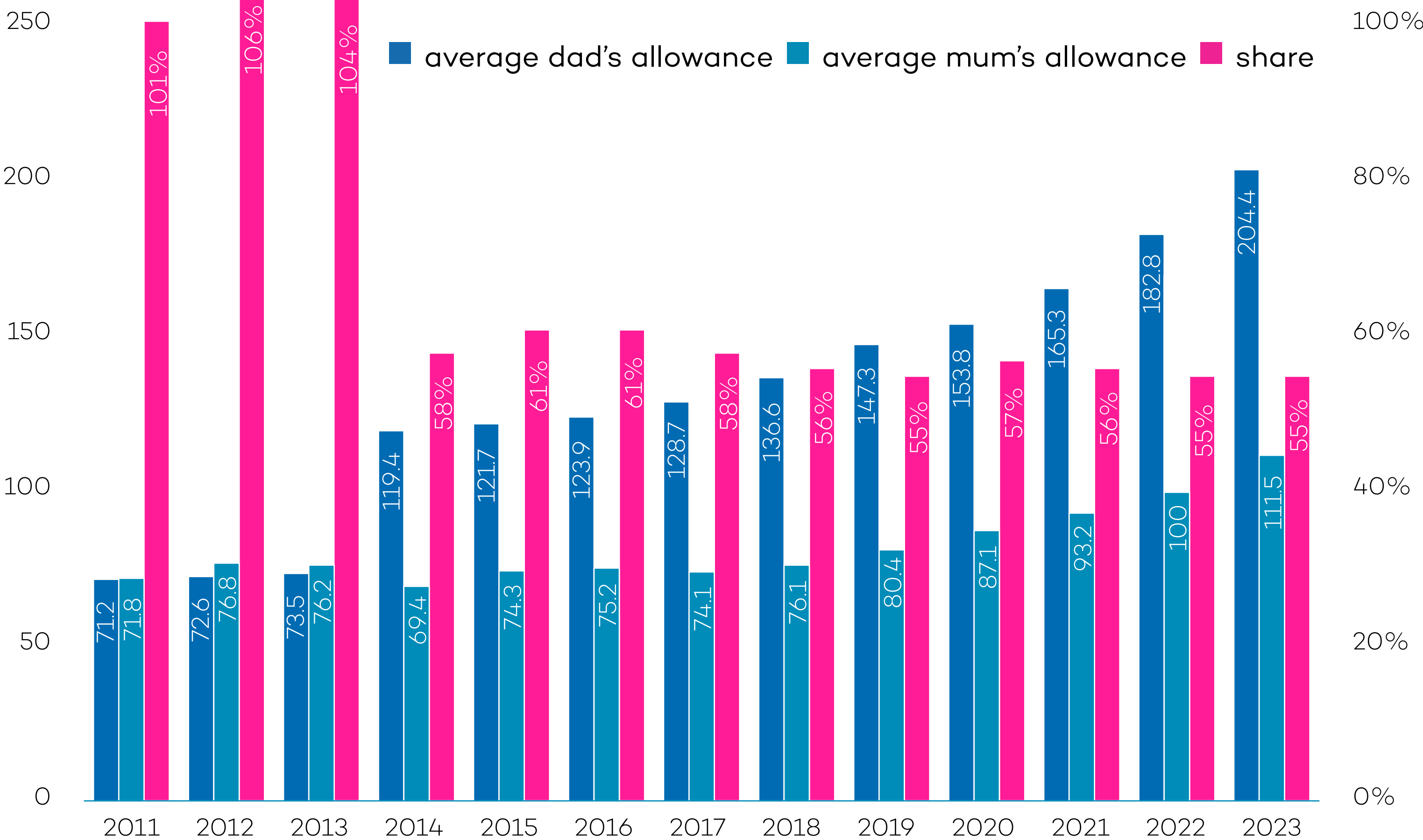


Paternity leave take-up rate between 2011 and 2023

■ number of men (in thousands) ■ number of births (in thousands) ■ rate

Let's see what was the average maternity allowance for paternity leave compared to the maternity allowance received by women on maternity leave.

Since 2014, when fathers started to take leave in large numbers, the gap between the average allowance of mums and dads has widened significantly. At present, mum's average allowance is 55% of dad's average allowance.

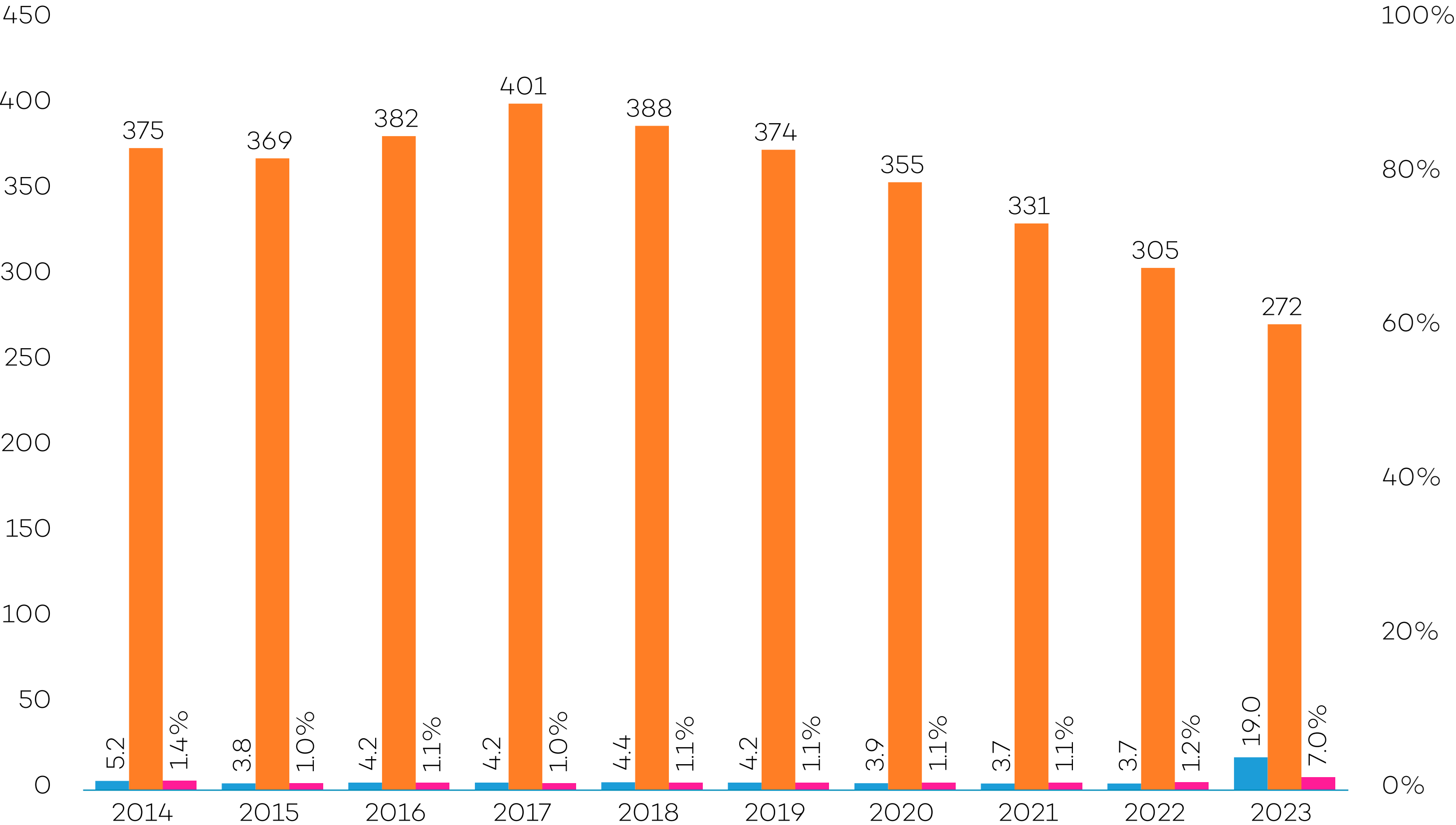


Share of the average daily allowance of mums (for maternity leave) in the average daily allowance of dads (for paternity leave) from 2011 to 2023

Since the end of 2013, fathers may take parental leave.

Unfortunately, prior to entry into force of the Work-Life Balance Directive, only a few were doing this – only 1% of fathers exercised their right to this benefit.

Not until 2023 do we observe increase in this area.



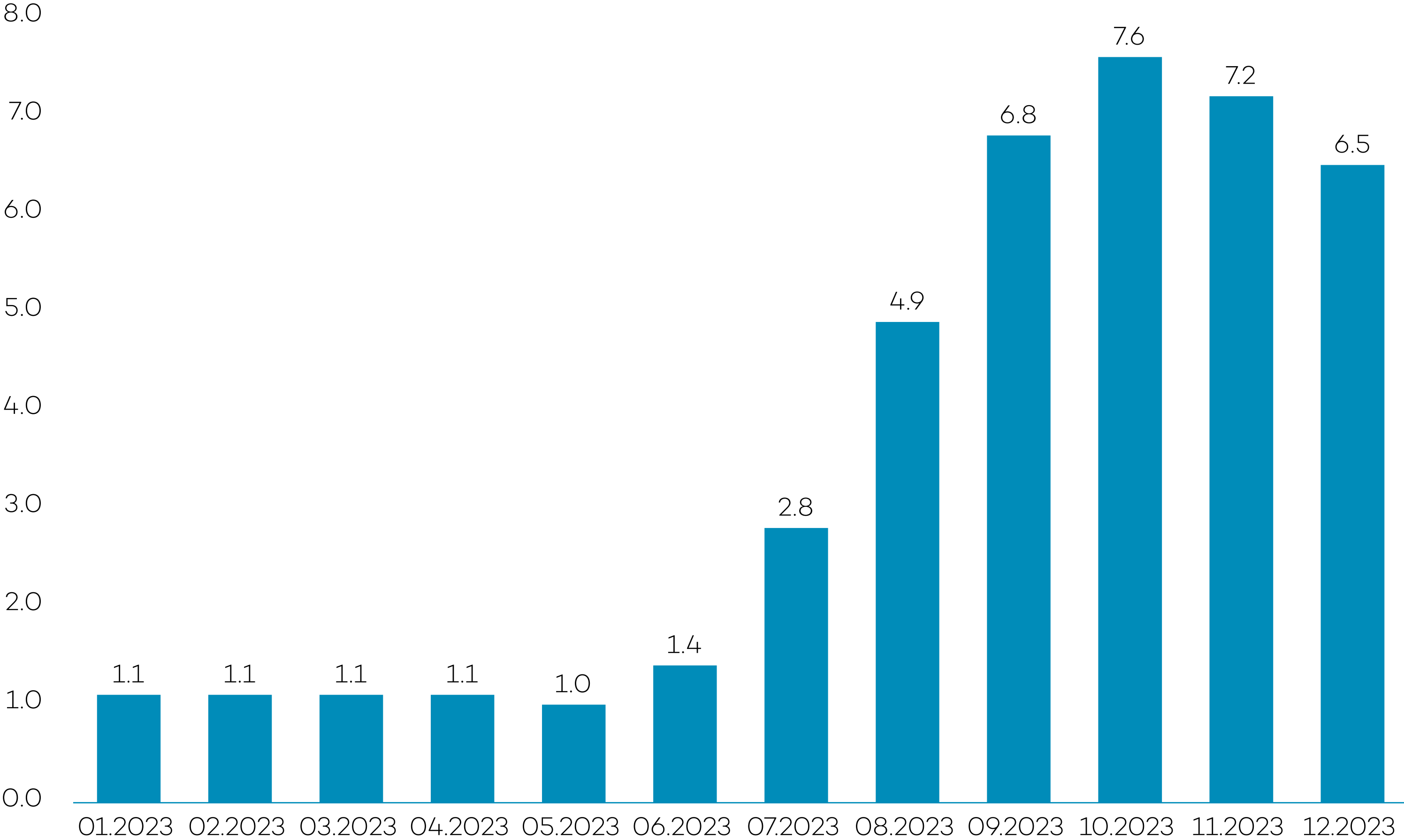
Parental leave take-up rate between 2014 and 2023

■ number of men (in thousands) ■ number of births (in thousands) ■ rate

It is worth noting that fathers started to take more frequently their parental leave as early as January 2023 , i.e. several months before the amendment of the Labour Code.

This may be due to the fact that the Directive was to be implemented in Poland in August 2022.

This is also certainly due to enhanced communication about the rights and role of fathers in child-care.



Number of fathers taking parental leave in 2023 by month (in thousands)

In 2023 , 19 thousand fathers took parental leave versus 3,7 thousand in 2022.

The increasing number of fathers taking parental leave is a positive trend.

What may be disappointing is the observed decrease in the duration of parental leaves taken by men in 2023.

By comparison, in 2022, dad was on parental leave for an average of 98 days, and in 2023 only 49 days. It means a decrease by **50%**. The median number of allowance days also fell significantly from **84** in 2022 to **43** in 2023.

This means that the number of fathers taking parental leave increased in 2023, but most of them opted for shorter leave than in earlier years. On average in 2023, a dad was on parental leave for **1.5 months**.

Data from January and February 2024 show a continuation of the upward trend in the use of parental leave by fathers. In the first two months of this year, **9 thousand fathers** have already taken parental leave. In the corresponding period in 2023 there were only **1.4 thousand**.

We hope that with the spread of knowledge about the new rights of fathers and the increasing visibility of men on parental leave, this positive change will intensify.



TAKE-UP OF OTHER CARE BENEFITS BY FATHERS

It is a well-known fact that childcare does not end with the end of parental leave. In fact, it is only then that parents have an opportunity to experience a whole range of unexpected events, such as the child's illness after a few days at kindergarten or nursery, and to exercise a higher level of 'logistics' related to taking care of the child (dropping off and picking up, a colleague's birthday party, preparing an outfit for a play, etc.). Can mums count on a partnership in this area? Looking at figures we see a huge area for improvement.

The share of men's absence days due to caring for a sick child was **21%**.

Sick leave to care for a sick child is taken by **4 times more women than men**.

We expect that with greater use of parental leave by men, their involvement in caring for children in other circumstances, such as when a child is ill, will also increase.

Other countries' experiences point to this pattern.

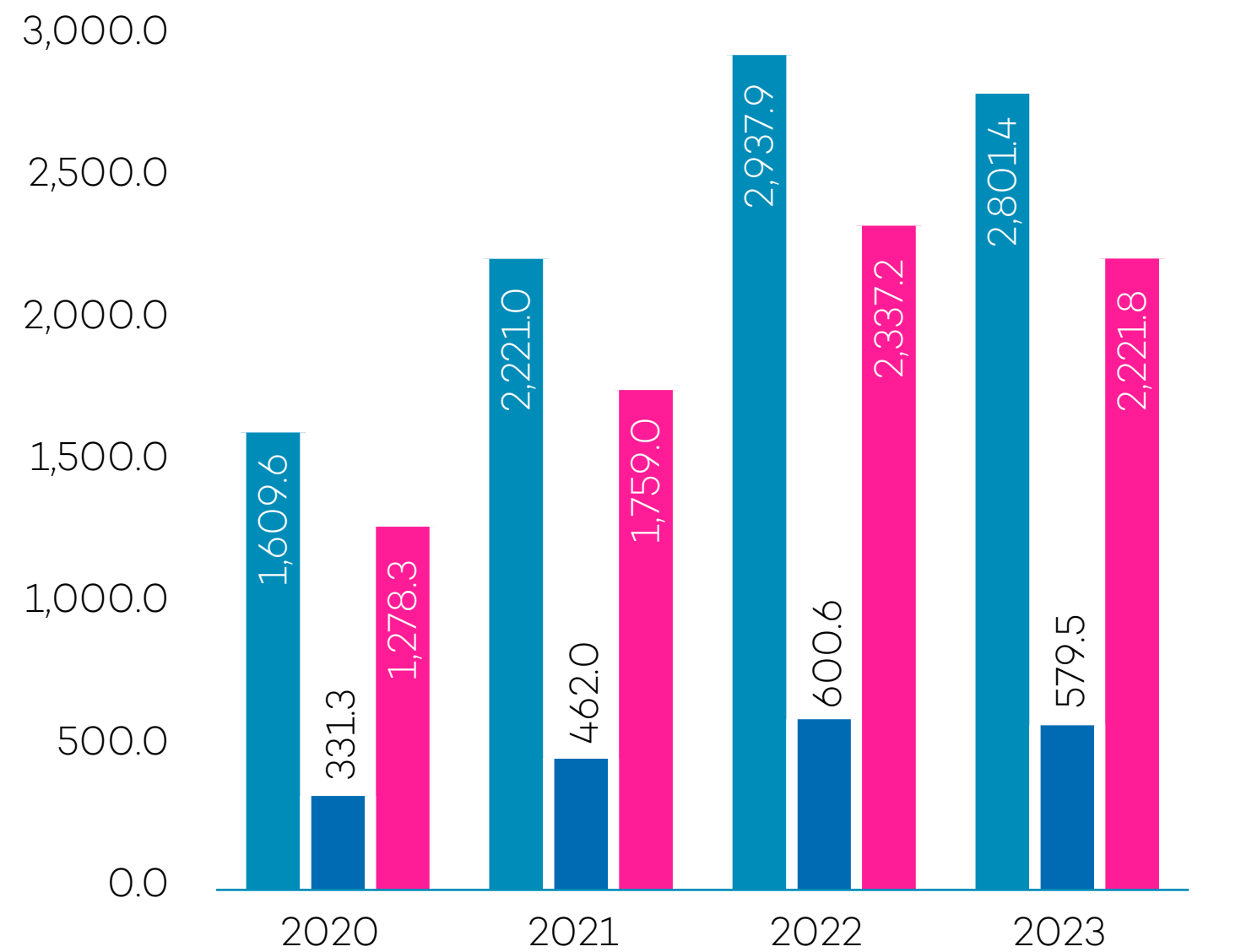
German research has shown that men who have been on parental leave are more involved in childcare and household duties when they return to work.



Number of medical certificates and absence days and average duration of medical certificate for caring for a sick child in 2020-2023 by sex

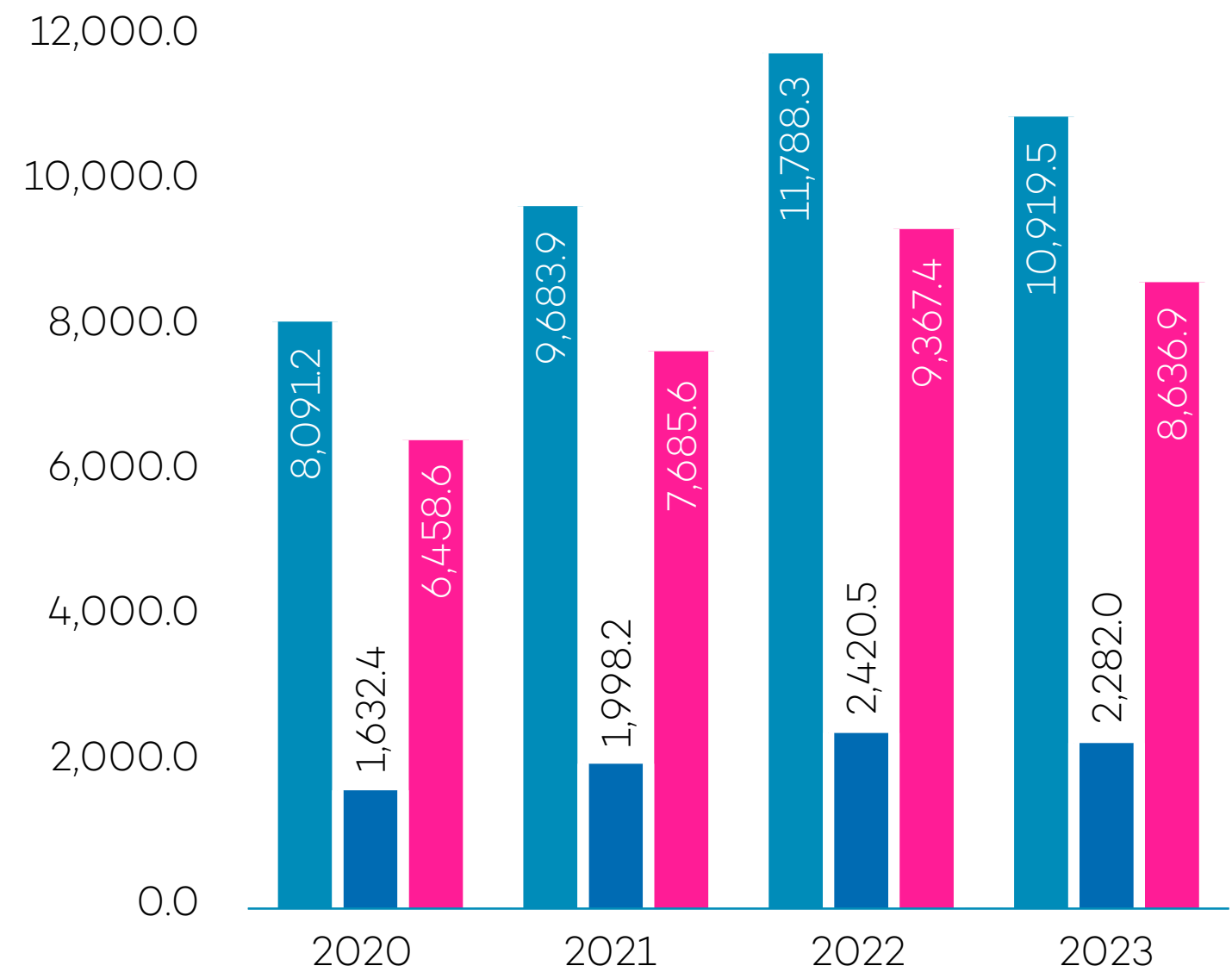
■ total ■ men ■ women

Due to rounding of data, component totals may in some cases differ slightly from the 'total' figures.



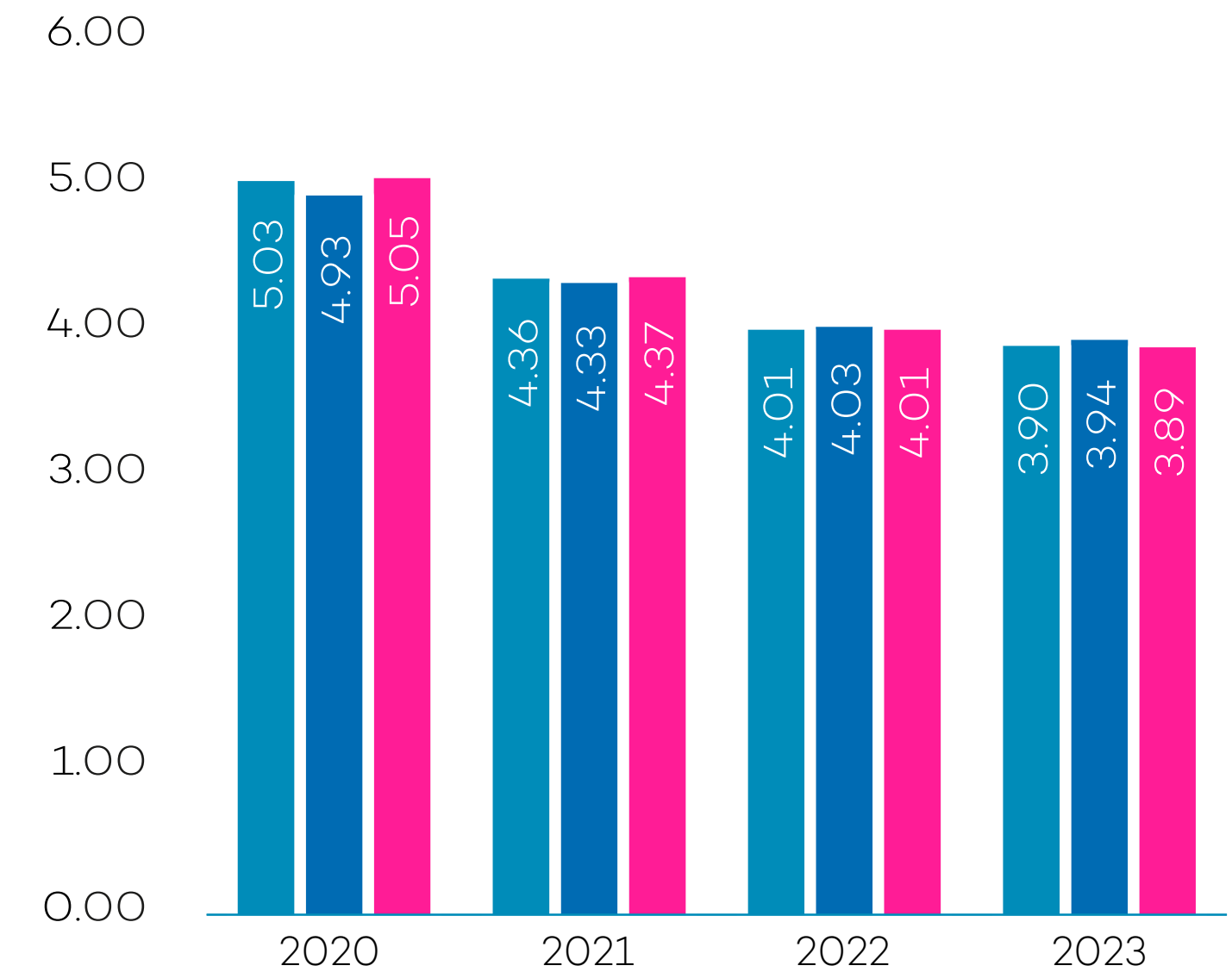
Number of medical certificates in thousand

Based on medical certificates of temporary incapacity registered in the Register of Medical Certificates.



Number of sickness absence days in thousand

Refers to the care of a sick child up to the age of 14 and a sick disabled child up to the age of 18.



Average duration of medical certificate in days

The only area where fathers' activity can be seen is in applying for child-care benefit (i.e. the so-called 500/800+) . In 2023, **24%** claims were filed by fathers. However, filing claims is not a child care but an administrative act.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE FAMILY

The Social Insurance Institution is involved in the payment of public funds for the maintenance and upbringing of children.

It plays only the role of a payer here, which means that it does not interfere in the way these funds are spent. It is the parents' task to bring up their children, provide them with appropriate care or develop/support their passions, with budgetary resources being of great help here. Only some budgetary resources have a purpose defined in their name, others do not have such restrictions.

ZUS pays four types of benefits, only one of which is paid once a year. It is called 'Good start' (or colloquially **300+**) and is intended for expenses associated with the start of the school year.

The other three benefits are periodic, paid out on a monthly basis, after several conditions have been met, including the most important one - claiming the benefit within a statutorily defined period of time. The most significant quantitative impact is exerted by the child-care benefit, the so-called **800+**, which is payable until the child reaches the age of 18. In January 2024, its amount was increased **from PLN 500 to PLN 800** per child. The two other benefits payable for raising minor children are the family care capital and subsidies for fees for the stay of a child in a nursery, children's club or with a day-care provider.

In total, by mid-April 2024, ZUS has paid out almost **PLN 100 billion**.



PROPOSALS OF THE SHARE THE CARE FOUNDATION

Area for improvement - what else can we do to fully use the power of new solutions for the development of parental equality in Poland

It is one year since the implementation of the EU Work-Life Balance Directive in Poland, being a breakthrough for parental equality in Poland. The legislative changes have opened the door to wider social change, which corresponds to the aspirations of the majority of Polish women and men.

58% of Poles declare a partnership family model as preferred (CBOS, 2020). Partnership, i.e. where both parents work professionally and share childcare and household responsibilities. The greater involvement of fathers in the childcare makes it possible to realise this declaration and put it into practice.

To ensure that the declarations of Polish women and men become a reality, the involvement and cooperation of many sectors - employers, legislator, researchers and NGOs - is needed. This will enable us to truly and sustainably remove barriers, create incentives and facilities that will be of benefit to us all.

We regard the implementation of the Work-Life Balance Directive as the beginning of legislative changes aimed at promoting gender equality.

The history of other countries that have made good use of the parental leave sharing tool for building gender equality shows that this change is a process. The introduction of new solutions should be accompanied with social research and a reflection on the possibility of further changes or modifications.

We share our reflections on and suggestions for actions that can bring us closer to achieving parental equality.



We address our proposals to:

- the legislator, because we see further potential for legislative work to achieve the equality goal more quickly and effectively
- employers, as their commitment and support are crucial for fathers to take advantage of the new benefits
- organisations and institutions that support parents in caring for their children, because their stereotypical approach focused on communication to the mother as the child's primary caregiver is a barrier to building parental equality
- media, which, while disseminating new solutions, still often make substantive mistakes regarding the new regulations.

WHY HAVE YOU DECIDED TO TAKE PARENTAL LEAVE?

I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE AN IMPORTANT LIFE EXPERIENCE. AND INDEED IT WAS.

*DAD AFTER PARENTAL LEAVE,
SCHOOL EDUCATIONALIST*

Increase in allowance to 100% for its non-transferable part (i.e. 9 weeks of parental leave for mum and dad)

Financial issues are one of the main reasons why fathers do not take parental leave.

The gender gap in earnings and the belief that a man's main role is to provide for his family are still widespread.

An argument about the loss of some part of the salary is raised by fathers, but also by mums - their partners. They also think that this would be detrimental to the family budget.

Thus, the proposal to increase the allowance to 100% of the salary for the non-transferable part is a response to the need of the family, not the man himself.

It is worth adding that the issue of payment for parental leave has been raised by the European Commission, which clearly indicated that “When setting the level of the payment or allowance provided for the minimum non-transferable period of parental leave, Member States should take into account that the take-up of parental leave often results in a loss of income for the family and that first earners in a family are able to make use of their right to parental leave only if it is sufficiently well remunerated, with a view to allowing for a decent living standard”.

In the opinion of the Share the Care Foundation, an allowance of 70% does not meet this condition.

We propose to increase the allowance for 9 weeks of non-transferable parental leave, which would allow more fathers to take the leave, not just those whose financial situation is good enough for the household budget to withstand the loss of 30% of income.



Introducing financial incentives for couples sharing leave 50/50

9 weeks is not the only part of the leave that the child's father may take.

The experience of other countries tells us that the more equal the distribution of leave between parents, the greater the benefits for mum, dad and child.

A parent survey in Ireland showed that the longer the period of time a dad spends with his child, the quicker the return of mums to the labour market and the smaller the drop in their remuneration. This reduces the wage gap.

We call for the introduction of a financial incentive for parents who share parental leave 50/50, which will motivate parents to consider this scenario and encourage fathers to take longer parental leave and not just the non-transferable part.

DO YOU FEEL THAT BEING ON LEAVE HAS CHANGED YOU AS A FATHER?

IT HAS DEFINITELY CHANGED ME. THE BASIC CHANGE WAS TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CARE OF THE CHILD AND TO FEEL THAT I WAS AS IMPORTANT A PARENT AS THE MOTHER.

*DAD AFTER PARENTAL LEAVE,
ART DIRECTOR*

Education on the model use of parental leave

The parental leave may be taken in 5 parts and simultaneously by mum and dad.

This is true, but in the opinion of the Share the Care Foundation, in order for the new law to promote equality, it is advisable for dad to take parental leave on his own after mum and use it in one part.

Flexibility in the way parental leave is taken, is crucial if parents are to be encouraged to do so. However, it is important not to forget about the purpose of the new law.

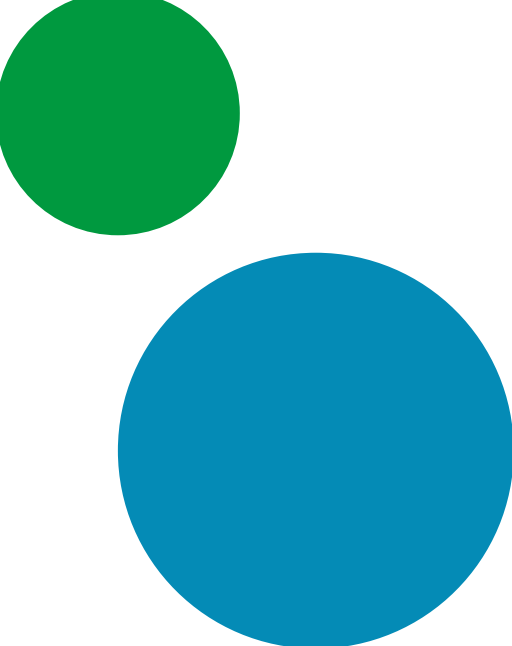
The parental leave serves the purpose of caring for the child, building a bond with the child, facilitating mothers' return to work, strengthening a man's confidence in his role as a dad and building a dad's parenting skills.

This leave of is not intended for family holidays, additional gainful employment or home renovations.

For the leave to have its effect, the father needs to be alone with the child - without the presence of the mother. Only then will he build his position as an independent carer, develop his care strategies and a sense of confidence and proficiency

We want these relationships to be clearly communicated. Flexibility is needed because life writes different scenarios. It is important, however, to educate and create awareness on how to use parental leave in a way which will realistically benefit all parties.

DAD AFTER PARENTAL LEAVE, DOCTOR



HOW DID YOUR COLLEAGUES AT WORK AND SUPERIORS REACT TO YOUR DECISION TO TAKE PARENTAL LEAVE?

DISBELIEF, THE BOSS ASKED SEVERAL TIMES IF I HAD OVERTHOUGHT MY DECISION. COLLEAGUES WERE SHAKING THEIR HEADS IN SHOCK, NOT SEEING ME IN THE ROLE OF 'NANNY AND HOUSEKEEPER'. HOWEVER, MY FEMALE COLLEAGUES LOOKED WITH ADMIRATION



Official government portal for parents about their rights, written in plain language

Education is crucial for parents to wisely exercise their right to post-birth leave. Unfortunately, legal awareness is still at a low level, in particular as regards the rights of fathers.

This is in part due to the fact that communication to parents of young children is often based on the assumption that the mother is the child's primary, most important caregiver. A lot of guidebooks, social campaigns, but also content popularised by employers, is (unconsciously) aimed at mums, is written in language for mums and from their perspective.

This communication does not reach fathers, which results in their low awareness of their rights.

A survey by the Share the Care Foundation in 2020 showed that 1/5 of fathers did not take paternity leave (!) because they did not know they were entitled to it.

Moreover, we find a lot of legal errors in the public space (particularly on the internet), and in the case of a different interpretation of legal regulations between the employee and the employer, the case is most often resolved according to the employer's decision. And employers refer to the provisions of the Labour Code, but often make mistakes.

We call for the creation of a portal on parental rights in the domain of a government institution, where parents could find valid information on their rights after the birth of their child written in an equal, practical and clear-to-understand manner. This website will be the basis for parents and employers to process benefits related to childbirth leave.



Full involvement of fathers in perinatal education

Childbirth preparation classes are designed to prepare parents for childbirth and childcare. However, the provisions of the so-called Perinatal Standard are unclear

On the one hand, (Part I paragraph 4(13)) it is suggested that antenatal education also applies to a 'close relative' - i.e. potentially the pregnant woman's partner. On the other hand, only the woman is mentioned as an addressee of antenatal education.

According to a survey conducted in 2023 by Dr. Kamil Janowicz from the Warsaw School of Social Sciences and Humanities (SWPS), in 25% of the institutions fathers were not allowed to participate in any activities and in 5% only in some. This shows that the goals set out in the Standard for the preparation of a close relative are still not being met in many institutions.

Meanwhile, the full involvement of fathers in perinatal education helps prepare them for their caring and parenting roles. It is also an important support for the woman and can have a positive impact on her well-being during pregnancy and after childbirth.



We call for the full inclusion of fathers in perinatal care and for the extension of education in childbirth preparation classes aimed to incorporate topics on legal issues, including fathers' rights after birth, partnership in parenting and the benefits brought about by fathers' active involvement in care from the very beginning (including taking parental leave on their own).



No more employer decisions on leave distribution

Many employers, despite the Labour Code amendments, have not updated their HR processes and procedures. This approach is a barrier to equal treatment of employees.

We mean here, first and foremost, the so-called 'long request' (also known as 'request in advance'), which was abolished with the implementation of the Work-Life Balance Directive. Unfortunately, it is still used by both employers and parents.

Why is this wrong?

The long request means that, in principle, it is the mother who takes maternity leave (20 weeks) and all the parental leave available to one parent (32 weeks). When a mother gets a form of such a 'request in advance' for the entire leave and signs it, she does not think about the fact that the leave may be shared differently.

An employer who uses such a request form also makes the decision for the father of the child, potentially depriving him of part of his parental leave.

A consequence of the so called 'long request' before the amendment of the Labour Code was the widespread belief that we have a one-year maternity leave in Poland.

Let us remember that this is not true.

Let's make full use of the new regulations to legitimately give parents the choice and freedom to take parental leave. It is no longer obvious that the mother has to take 32 weeks of parental leave.

We call for the creation of concrete and clear guidelines concerning the requests to be filed and for the dissemination of correct forms of requests for parental leave. This will ensure that parents, not employers, decide how to share parental leave.



Building a gender-equal organisational culture among employers

The favourable attitude of employers to fathers taking parental leave is very important.

It is not enough just to know one's right, one must also feel comfortable to exercise it.

Meanwhile, the majority of fathers expect a hostile reaction from their employer if they wish to take parental leave, because there is no workplace culture conducive to such decisions. This is indicated, *inter alia*, by the results of a survey conducted by the Polish Economic Institute. As many as 60% of fathers believe that their employers would look unfavourably at their decision to take parental leave.

We perceive a great need to clearly and intensively educate employers about building an organisational culture conducive to parental equality and its benefits. Employers must also comply with leave request procedures according to the new interpretation of the Labour Code.



DAD AFTER PARENTAL LEAVE,
LECTURER

DO YOU FEEL THAT BEING ON LEAVE HAS CHANGED YOU AS A FATHER?

YES. A LITTLE. I WAS A RATHER SILENT TYPE OF PERSON. BUT WITH THE BABY I OVERCAME ALL BARRIERS. FOR EXAMPLE: I WAS TALKING TO THE CHILD NON-STOP, ETC. IT HELPED ME TO OPEN UP. AND, OF COURSE, IT WAS EASIER FOR ME TO DO THE HOUSEWORK AND TAKE CARE OF THE CHILD, BECAUSE I WAS USED TO IT.

Change of name of maternity allowance to parental allowance

Irrespective of whether you are a mum or dad on parental, paternity or maternity leave, you will always be paid maternity allowance

The name of this allowance is inadequate to reality. It is time to change this. It is worth considering a statement by the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein: “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world”.

The name of the allowance should reflect the assumption that parents are equal carers and leaves are both for both mum and dad. Such an allowance could be called a parental allowance to correspond with its purpose.

DO YOU THINK THAT THE STEREOTYPES ASSOCIATED WITH GENDER ARE REFLECTED IN MEN'S DECISION TO TAKE PARENTAL LEAVE? WHICH?

WHAT BOTHERS ME IS THE STEREOTYPE THAT THE FIRST YEAR IS BEST WITH THE MUM, BECAUSE SHE BREASTFEEDS AND TAKES BETTER CARE OF THE BABY, BECAUSE SHE HAS MORE MATERNAL INSTINCT.

DAD AFTER PARENTAL LEAVE,
BUS DRIVER

Education of communities supporting parents in caring for their child

Those who work and support parents in caring for their child have an impact on the perception of the father’s position and role.

From gynaecologists and obstetricians, midwives, nurses and paediatricians, through education and care staff to judges – we see how common is an opinion that the father is a second carer, a helper to the mother. Fathers are important, as important as mothers are. Both have their individual and independent role to play in a child’s life.

Educating parent supporters is crucial to overcome the misconception and stereotype operating in many heads that fathers are second-class caregivers, replacing mothers when they, for some reason, cannot care for the children. Enhanced education will support fathers and contribute to their greater involvement in care.



LIST THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT REASONS WHY YOU HAVE DECIDED TO TAKE PARENTAL LEAVE?

LOVE - DESIRE TO CARE FOR THE CHILD AND TAKE ON MORE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE UPBRINGING OF MY SON; TO ENABLE MY SPOUSE TO FURTHER DEVELOP HER CAREER. A DESIRE TO SLOW DOWN, ANSWERING THE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS OF LIFE.

DAD AFTER PARENTAL LEAVE,
PRODUCTION PROCESS COORDINATOR



Education of the media dealing with the labour market and gender equality

The Labour Code is written in language that most people do not understand. Even more so, the media or experts who raise the topics of labour law and gender equality, must communicate the new regulations and their purpose as well as advantages related to them very precisely and responsibly.

This requires a great deal of sensitivity and responsibility for words, because mental abbreviations, understatements or phrases intended as synonyms are often misleading.

Although the Polish term related to a leave for fathers – *‘urlop tacierzyński’* – sounds very good, but there is no such benefit in the Labour Code.

Paternity leave and parental leave for dads are not the same. They are two different benefits.

The fact that the Labour Code provides currently for 9 non-transferable weeks of parental leave for dad does not mean that the dad is only entitled to 9 weeks of parental leave. He may take even 32 weeks if he wishes.

We still find erroneous statements in various publications, so we encourage everyone to contact us to verify the statements used.

We write about the most common mistakes at the beginning of this publication. Let this be a guideline for those who want to promote this knowledge in the field of parental equality.

The Labour Code contains legal regulations but does not explain what they are intended for. When writing about solutions that build parental equality, it is always worth starting from their purpose and writing about the benefits they bring to all parties.

The sentence about the 9 non-transferable weeks of leave for the father, does not say anything about the fact that the additional benefit is aimed to help the mother to return to work comfortably and provide the father with the space to build a secure relationship with his child.



ABOUT AUTHORS OF THE REPORT

About the Social Insurance Institution

The Social Insurance Institution is a state organisational unit with a legal personality, involved in collection of social insurance and health insurance contributions of citizens and in distribution of benefits (e.g. pensions, 800+, sickness and maternity allowances) in amounts and under the rules laid down in generally applicable regulations.

Presently about 24 million clients take advantage of ZUS services.

ZUS manages the resources of the Demographic Reserve Fund, which - thanks to correct forecasts of its managers - achieves results comparable to the leading commercial investment funds in Poland.

Website: www.zus.pl



About Share the Care Foundation

The Foundation has been operating since the end of 2020. It focuses on three pillars of action: supporting employers in building an organisational culture that fosters gender and parental equality; conducting social campaigns to raise awareness and showcase the benefits of partnership; and engaging in advocacy efforts involving the government, local authorities, and non-governmental institutions.

The Foundation actively campaigned for the implementation of the EU Work-Life Balance Directive in Poland, which came into force in April 2023, providing parents with the right to individual parental leave and to 9 weeks of non-transferable leave for each of them. Since the directive's implementation, the number of fathers taking parental leave has increased seven times.

Partnership benefits the whole family, so through our initiatives we want to encourage parents, employers and the government to incorporate this new social paradigm into their actions.

We promote a partnership model of the family that allows parents to fulfil themselves in all spheres of life, giving children the chance to build close ties with both parents. We emphasise the need to build relationships not only between parents and children, but also between parents themselves.

Website: www.sharethecare.pl

A portal on partnership in parenting operated by the foundation: www.teamrodzina.pl





President Ignacy Mościcki

The Social Insurance Institution is celebrating its 90th anniversary this year - it was established by a decree of the President of the Republic of Poland, Ignacy Mościcki, on 24 October 1934.

The founders of the independent Polish state recognised social insurance as an important element in building our statehood. Therefore, the first work on the development of insurance legislation began even before gaining independence, in 1917.

This was not an easy task, since the regulations in force in the Polish lands that were under three different partitions had to be unified. The consolidation of laws inherited after the partitioners and the creation of its own social insurance system was part of an ambitious project to build a modern, reborn Polish state. This has been successfully achieved, and the Polish insurance legislation of the inter-war period was recognised as one of the most modern in Europe. Throughout its existence, ZUS has been and continues to be a modern institution that guarantees timely payment of benefits. It defends the rights and privileges of the persons insured and is actively involved in social policy-making. Nowadays, ZUS is also one of the most modern state institutions, one of the largest e-offices and a leader in e-government in Poland.



EQUAL AT HOME

– EQUAL AT WORK

IT PAYS OFF FOR EVERYONE!

Go to www.TeamRodzina.pl and see what benefits are brought by parental equality to employers, parents and society.



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