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MOTHERS AND FATHERS AT HOME AND AT WORK

PARENTAL EQUALITY IN POLAND IN A BROADER SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

May 2025 / The report is part of the campaign “Equal at home – equal at work. It benefits everyone”

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PURPOSE OF THE REPORT AND ITS RECIPIENTS

This report presents data and summarises the effects of actions taken so far to create a modern and balanced ecosystem that supports parenthood and allows mothers and fathers to maintain work-life balance.

This publication is addressed to a wide range of decision-makers – politicians, local government officials, public institutions, employers, and social organisations – who together have a real impact on shaping the living conditions of families in Poland.

Our goal is to build a common understanding of the need to support parents – both mothers and fathers – in their daily care and professional challenges.

Two years after the implementation of the work-life balance directive, we can see the first changes, but we also know that this is just the beginning of the journey. In the face of demographic crisis, staff shortages and the growing burden on the social system, supporting parents is no longer a matter of choice, but becomes a necessity. It is an investment in Poland's future, in economic development, public health and social cohesion.



KEY FINDINGS

1. Parental equality translates into equality of professional opportunities

The increase in the number of fathers taking parental leave in relation to the number of births from 1% in 2022 to 17% in 2024 (Social Insurance Institution data) is evidence of men's growing awareness and activity in childcare. It is also the first step towards relieving women and enabling them to return to the labour market more quickly. Equal distribution of parental responsibilities directly translates into equality in professional development.

2. The difference in the amount of allowances for mothers and fathers is higher than the pay gap

In 2024, the average daily allowance for a father taking parental leave was

PLN 167, and for a mother – PLN 124 (Social Insurance Institution data). This difference results from the level of remuneration, not the amount of benefits, and is over 30%. This is much more than the pay gap in Poland.

3. The use of parental leave is increasing, but not always in accordance with its purpose

The analysis of the use of parental leave by fathers, especially seasonality (with a peak in summer), indicates that some men may treat parental leave more as “free time” than as a real period of building bonds with the child. Further social education is needed on the role of the father in the family and the function of these leaves in the context of parental equality.

4. Women still do most of the unpaid care work

79% of the number of days of absence due to caring for a sick child still concerns women (Social Insurance Institution data). Legal change is just the beginning. We have social change ahead of us.

5. Employers are a key link in the system supporting parenthood

Without the conscious involvement of companies, and thus without updating procedures, educating the management staff, open communication with employees and promoting equal use of leave, the regulations will remain dead. Not only employees lose out from the lack of support for parents, but also the organisations themselves and the economy. Forecasts of the Institute for Structural Research (IBS) indicate that by 2030, more than a million people will disappear from the labour market, and by 2050 – more than 4 million. In the face of these challenges, investing in parental equality and equality in the labour market, which guarantee the use of competences and talents of a wide range of employees, is a condition for business survival and development.

6. Cross-sectoral cooperation is the key to lasting change

Building a modern and balanced system supporting parenthood requires coherent action by the government, public institutions, employers, and non-governmental organisations. Each of these groups brings a unique perspective, but they can achieve a lasting effect only if they cooperate and communicate in a common language.



POLAND IN NUMBERS

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Population: **37.64 million**
Women: **51.6% of population**
Urban population: **59% of population**

Population structure by economic age groups (2023):

- Pre-working age (0–17 years): 18.2%
- Working age women 18–59 years, men 18–64 years: 58.4%
- Post-working age women 60+, men 65+: 23.3%
- Median age: women – **44 years**, men – **41 years**

Natural increase: **–3.6%**

Fertility rate: **1.158**

Average age of women at the birth of their first child: **29 years**

Retirement age:
• women: **60 years**,
• men: **65 years**

LABOUR MARKET AND PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY

Economic activity rate in working age women 18–59 years, men 18–64 years **81%**

Unemployment rate (LFS): **2.8%**

Employment of women aged 20–64 (Eurostat, 2024): **72.5%**

Employment of men in the same group: **84.1%**

Minimum gross wage from 1 January 2025 **PLN 4,666**

Average gross wage in the national economy in 2024:
• Men: **PLN 8,660.04**
• Women: **PLN 7,028.98**

Median gross wages in the national economy:
• Men: **PLN 7,028.98**
• Women: **PLN 6,700.34**

Source: "Poland in 2024", Statistics Poland

Companies without women, with one woman and with at least two women in management (companies that report at least 3 persons in management):

- 0 women – 43% of companies
- 1 woman – 36% of companies
- 2 and more women – 21% of companies

Source: Report "Equality and professional aspirations of women and men", 2024, UN Global Compact Network Poland and GRAPE Institute

PAY GAP IN POLAND

17.5% in 2020

Source: According to calculations by the Institute for Structural Research based on Social Insurance Institution's Structure of Earnings Survey data, adjusted gap (education, age, workplace characteristics)

18% – the highest adjusted pay gap indicator – occurs in the 35-44 age range

Source: Magda I., Rozszczypała A., "Luka płacowa – o ile więcej mężczyźni zarabiają od kobiet?" (Pay gap – how much more do men earn than women?), Institute for Structural Research, 2025

PENSIONS

Average pension in December 2024 in Poland:

- women: **PLN 3,341** – increase compared to 2023 by PLN 420 (14%)
- men: **PLN 4,847** – increase compared to 2023 by PLN 595 (14%)

Source: Social Insurance Institution data

Share in pensions paid at a level lower than the minimum pension by gender:

- women: 77.4%
- men: 22.6%

Source: Social Insurance Institution data

HEALTH AND LIFE EXPECTANCY

Average life expectancy:

- women: 82 years
- men: 74.7 years

Time devoted (share in a day) to: household and care duties:

- women: 18.2%
- men: 11.2%

professional activity:

- women: 10.2%,
- men: 16.4%

rest:

- women: 16.1%,
- men: 19.4%

Average time devoted to performing household and care duties:

- women: 4 hours 19 minutes – compared to 2013, a decrease of 1 minute
- men: 2 hours 41 minutes – compared to 2013, an increase of 20 minutes

Source: Daily time budget of the population in 2013 and 2023. Statistics Poland (survey conducted every 10 years)

MOTHERS AND FATHERS IN POLAND

BENEFITS FOR PARENTS IN POLAND

Childcare and leave system

Leave after childbirth (per child):

- maternity leave: 20 weeks (14 weeks compulsory, paid 100% or 81.5%)¹
- supplementary maternity leave for parents of premature babies or babies born on time who require hospitalisation up to 8 weeks or up to 15 weeks – depending on the period of hospitalisation and the week of pregnancy in which the child is born, or the birth weight (paid 100%)²
- paternity leave: 2 weeks (paid 100%)

- parental leave: 41 weeks, including 9 non-transferable weeks (paid 70% or 81.5%)
- childcare leave: 36 months (unpaid; 1 month non-transferable)

Pre-school education rate (children aged 3–6): 97.3% (EU – Barcelona target: 96%)

Childcare rate for children under 3 (nurseries, clubs, day carers): 40.84% (EU – Barcelona target: 45%)

Number of municipalities without a nursery (2024): 924 (for comparison in 2023: 1105)

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Family 800 plus Programme

Within the programme, families with dependent children are entitled to a child-raising benefit of PLN 800 per child until the child reaches 18 years of age, regardless of the family’s income.

¹ If the application for maternity allowance for the period corresponding to the period of maternity leave and parental leave in full is submitted no later than 21 days after childbirth (Article 31(3) of the Act of 25 June 1999 on cash benefits from social insurance in case of sickness and maternity (Journal of Laws of 2025, item 501), referred to as the “Benefit Act”).

² The right to supplementary maternity leave has been in force since 19 March 2025.



Active Parent Programme

- **active parents at work** – a benefit of PLN 1,500 per month for professionally active parents, and in the case of children with disabilities – PLN 1,900;
- **active in nursery** – co-financing of up to PLN 1,500 per month (or PLN 1,900 for children with disabilities) to cover fees for nursery, children’s club, or day carer;
- **active at home** – PLN 500 per month for parents who independently care for a child and do not use other forms of support.



Mother and father in the labour market

Economic activity rate:



without children :

- women 86% 
- men 88% 



with one child under 6:

- women 77% 
- men 96% 

with two children, including at least one under 6:

- women 73% 
- men 96% 

with three or more children including at least one under 6:

- women 60% 
- men 93% 

Source: Employment rate of adults by sex, age groups, educational attainment level, number of children and age of youngest child (%), Eurostat 2024

Finances of mother and father

Allowances for leave after childbirth

Average daily amount of maternity allowance for mothers on maternity leave in 2024 (adjusted to 100%)	Average daily amount of maternity allowance for fathers on paternity leave in 2024
PLN 160	PLN 228
Average daily amount of maternity allowance for mothers on parental leave in 2024	Average daily amount of maternity allowance for fathers on parental leave in 2024
PLN 124	PLN 167

Source: Social Insurance Institution data

Financial support for mother and father

From January to December 2024, the following were paid:

- good start benefits – amounting to PLN 1.4 billion;
- child-raising benefits (so-called 800+) – amounting to PLN 66.1 billion;
- family care capitals – amounting to PLN 1.8 billion;
- co-financing for nursery attendance – amounting to PLN 0.4 billion;
- benefits from the Active Parent Programme – amounting to PLN 0.7 billion (from November to December 2024).

The total benefits supporting parents paid by the Social Insurance Institution amounted to PLN 70.4 billion.

Care work of mother and father

Percentage of fathers on parental leave:

- 2024 r. – 17%
(41,900 fathers / 252,000 births)
- 2023 r. – 7%
(19,000 fathers / 273,000 births)
- 2022 r. – 1%
(3,700 fathers / 305,000 births)

Number of days of absence due to care for a sick child in 2024:

- mothers: 8.7 million days (79%)
- fathers: 2.3 million days (21%)

Number of days of fathers' absence due to care for a sick child in 2024:

- 2024 r. – 21,3%
- 2023 r. – 20,9%

Source: Social Insurance Institution data

The share of the number of days of maternity leave used in 2024 by men was 5.4%, and for parental leave – 4.1% (in 2023 – 1.9%).

Source: Social Insurance Institution data

Care responsibilities

In as many as 68% of families with children aged 1-9, where both parents work, it is mothers who bear the greatest care responsibilities.

Source: Report “Work and Home. Challenges for parents and their consequences”, Polish Economic Institute, December 2022

INSTEAD OF AN INTRODUCTION



**Aleksandra Gajewska,
Secretary of State in the Ministry
of Family, Labour, and Social Policy**

Parental equality and equality in the labour market are two sides of the same coin. In Poland, more and more couples consider the partnership model of family as optimal – one in which both parents work professionally and share household duties and childcare together.

More and more women want to develop professionally and want to believe that work is not incompatible with motherhood. At the same time, more and more men are consciously engaging in their children's lives from the very first days, because they want to have a real impact on their upbringing and way of perceiving the world.

Children and the quality of life of the whole family benefit from the involvement of both parents. Society and the economy also benefit from this.

Gender equality is not only a fair distribution of responsibilities in the family and at work – it is also a key to sustainable development and a response to the demographic challenges that Poland is facing.

Modern society expects solutions that allow parents to combine professional and family life, giving them a real choice, while supporting them in making decisions about expanding their family.

One of our key actions for gender equality and family support is the “Active Parent” programme, which we introduced in 2024. Thanks to this programme, parents gain a real choice of how they want to organise childcare, without the pressure to give up professional activity. Since its implementation, as many as 91% of children aged 12-35 months have been covered by support under “Active Parent”, which shows how much such solutions were needed.

But gender equality is not just about the possibility of reconciling family and professional roles – it is also a response to the problem of declining fertility. Poles often indicate that the lack of available, high-quality childcare and difficulties in returning to work after parental leave are key barriers to making decisions about expanding their family.

That is why we are investing in the development of institutional care for the youngest children. Under the “Active Toddler” programme for 2022-2029, we support the construction of new nurseries, children’s clubs, and day care institutions, providing parents with access to quality care for their children.

This is one of the largest such programmes in Europe, which aims not only to increase the number of places in nurseries, but also to improve care standards.

The Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy has given honorary patronage to the Share the Care Foundation’s

campaign “Equal at home, equal at work”, because supporting both mothers and fathers in reconciling work and family life is an important element of modern social policy. This is not just about the values we believe in, but also about the real needs of Polish women and men who want to have the possibility to reconcile work with family life without having to choose between one and the other.

We all face similar challenges, which is why it is worth looking together for good solutions that will benefit families and society throughout Europe.

We are pleased that this year’s campaign has an international character and is part of activities within the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union. This is an opportunity for us to share best practices with representatives of other EU countries.





**Mariusz Jedynak,
Member of the Management Board
at the Social Insurance Institution**

In recent years in Poland – as in many European Union countries – we have observed deepening demographic challenges that affect not only the social structure, but also the stability of the labour market and social security systems.

The declining number of births, an ageing society and growing care needs mean that caring for the family and reconciling professional roles with household duties are becoming strategic issues.

The Social Insurance Institution is an institution responsible for implementing key tasks of the social security system. That is why we actively participate in building solutions supporting parents – we grant benefits and conduct information, analytical and educational activities.

We act in accordance with the National Development Concept 2050, which places a clear emphasis on long-term planning, integration of labour market,

health, education and migration policies, as well as building systems that promote professional activity and social security for all residents – regardless of the stage of life they are at. One of the most important elements of this puzzle – from both a demographic and economic perspective – is supporting parents and enabling them to fully participate in the labour market.

It has been two years since the implementation of the EU work-life balance directive in Poland, which aims to facilitate the reconciliation of professional and family life and strengthen equal opportunities for women and men in the labour market. .

We are pleased to observe the first positive effects of these changes – the growing interest in parental leave from fathers, the increasing awareness of employers and the growth of social understanding of the importance of the partnership model of family.

We are aware that this is just the beginning of the journey. The data we collect and analyse show that despite progressive legislative and cultural changes, many parents who want to combine work and family life still encounter barriers. The scale of challenges requires the continuation of systemic actions, education and further strengthening of the role of public institutions and employers in supporting families.

Labour market institutions, social security systems and social services must function in a complementary way – to enable entry, return and remaining in the labour market in an increasingly complex, automated, and digital environment. At the centre of these activities should be the family as the basic social unit, whose stability and well-being have a direct impact on the development of the entire country.

The report we are placing in your hands is an attempt to gather the most important data, observations, and

recommendations. We believe that it will be not only a source of knowledge, but also an impulse for further cooperation between public institutions, social organisations, local governments, and employers. Only by working together can we build a modern and balanced support system for families. One that responds to the needs of modern society and the changing labour market.

Supporting parents is not a cost – it is an investment in the development, security, and quality of life of both current and future generations.





**Karolina Andrian,
Member of the Management Board
at the Share the Care Foundation**

Two years ago, the EU work-life balance directive was implemented in Poland. Thanks to it, many changes for the better have occurred – more and more fathers are taking parental leave, and awareness among employers and working parents about parental equality and its impact on equal professional opportunities is gradually growing.

We can be satisfied with the progress, especially since there are EU countries that have still not introduced this directive.

Its implementation was an important step towards equalising opportunities for women and men in the labour market, as it helps counteract the unequal distribution of care responsibilities. Along with subsequent EU directives – concerning quotas in the highest company bodies and pay transparency – we have a chance to permanently strengthen gender equality in Europe.

However, without real parental equality, these changes may not bring

the expected results. A woman who combines professional work with full-time care has limited opportunities for development and promotion – even with formal guarantees of equal treatment. Fair distribution of responsibilities and fathers' involvement is the foundation of equal access for mothers to the labour market, economic independence, and reconciliation of roles.

If we want more children to be born in Poland, we must create conditions in which parenthood does not exclude professional activity..

This is not a choice – it is a necessity from the perspective of the demographic and economic future of the country.

The past two years have allowed us to better examine the barriers that still hinder building equality at home and at work, and to plan further actions. The rights of working parents are still poorly understood. The complexity of regulations and non-intuitive terminology present

difficulties even for employers who have legal support. Employees who do not have such support are in an even more difficult situation. Strong stereotypes of gender roles in the family are also brakes on change.

Meanwhile, gender equality and fair distribution of care responsibilities are not just social issues. These are also key factors that strengthen innovation, socio-economic security, and the competitiveness of the country. Equal opportunities in access to work promote greater professional activity, the use of human potential and productivity growth. Research shows that more egalitarian societies are more resilient to crises and better adapt to technological and demographic changes.

In the context of Poland’s Presidency of the EU Council, whose pillars are security, development and the future of Europe, parental equality is an essential element of sustainable gender equality. Especially today – in the face of geopolitical uncertainty, mental health crisis, staff

shortages and declining employee engagement – we need strong, systemic actions for equality in all areas of life.

This is an investment in human capital that brings long-term benefits to the whole society.

This year’s campaign and conference “Equal at home – equal at work” have a cross-sectoral and international dimension. We believe that it is precisely at the interface of different worlds and experiences that cooperation is born, which will lead to real, bold changes. This report is an attempt to gather the most important data and ask questions for which we need to jointly seek answers.





**Marcin Stanecki,
Chief Labour Inspector,
National Labour Inspectorate**

The amendment to the Labour Code of 2023, by virtue of which the work-life balance directive was implemented in Poland, brought significant changes regarding, among others, the use of parental leave. Thanks to it, parents of children up to 8 years of age can also request flexible work arrangements, including remote work.

We see that despite the passage of time, many people are still looking for information on this topic.

In 2024, the labour inspectorate provided over 21,000 pieces of advice on rights related to parenthood.

The number of questions about the possibilities for fathers to take parental leave is growing.

Doubts arise primarily about the rules for dividing leave between parents, its extent, and the conditions that the child's father must meet in order to benefit from this type of leave. Some men also ask about the possibility of combining

parental leave with work – both with the current and another employer. They are particularly interested in whether they can take up employment on the basis of another contract while on leave and what consequences this may have for their right to maternity allowance.

The number of questions regarding flexible working arrangements is also growing, which indicates the increasing interest of employees in the possibility of easier reconciliation of work and family duties. Many people inquire about the rules for applying for remote work, individual work schedules and the possibilities of using the shortened work week system or part-time work. Flexible working arrangements also raise questions about the consequences of its introduction for employee rights, including the amount of remuneration and the right to leave.

Similar issues are of interest to employers. They also ask about the possibility of negative consideration of the application in case of organisational difficulties in the company, as well as ways to control remote work and assess the effectiveness of an employee who has flexible working arrangements.

It is clearly visible that both employees and employers need greater clarity regarding the practical application of regulations.

For years, we have been receiving questions about the protection of the employment relationship of pregnant women and people taking leave related to parenthood. We also clarify doubts regarding the right to breaks for breastfeeding and the possibility of not granting leave from work to care for a child on the date indicated by the employee (in accordance with Article 188 of the Labour Code).

Most often, employees who are parents turn to us for advice, but about 30 percent of questions come from employers.

Among the employees who call us, women predominate, but – importantly – we are increasingly hearing men interested in parental rights on the phone.

I am pleased that the number of people who use the advice, materials and training of the National Labour Inspectorate and participate in our preventive programmes is growing. Although the labour inspectorate is primarily associated with inspections, preventive activities are equally important to us. We help employers and employees better understand regulations and adapt to changes that affect work organisation.

In 2025, we launched the National Labour Inspectorate’s “Parents at work” campaign, partnered by the Share the Care Foundation. We also support the “Equal at home – equal at work” campaign. Thanks to joint activities, knowledge about parental rights resulting from labour law is becoming widespread. The better the knowledge of these regulations, the easier it is for parents to reconcile professional and family life, and for employers – to build a friendly work environment that promotes efficiency.

USE OF LEAVE BY FATHERS AFTER THE BIRTH OF A CHILD TWO YEARS AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE DIRECTIVE

Paternity leave – the most commonly used leave

Of the various forms of support after the birth of a child, fathers most often choose paternity leave. In 2024, 64% of men who had a child used it.

Although this is still the highest rate among all available leaves for fathers, for the first time since the introduction of this benefit in 2011, a slight decrease was recorded (in 2023 it was 67%).

This may be due to the fact that the time to use paternity leave has been shortened to the child’s 1st birthday (previously it was the 2nd year of life), fathers have been given the opportunity to use parental leave simultaneously with the mother on maternity leave.

However, giving up paternity leave is a worrying phenomenon because it serves a different function than parental leave. Paternity leave is for the father to take care of the newborn and the mother during the postpartum period.

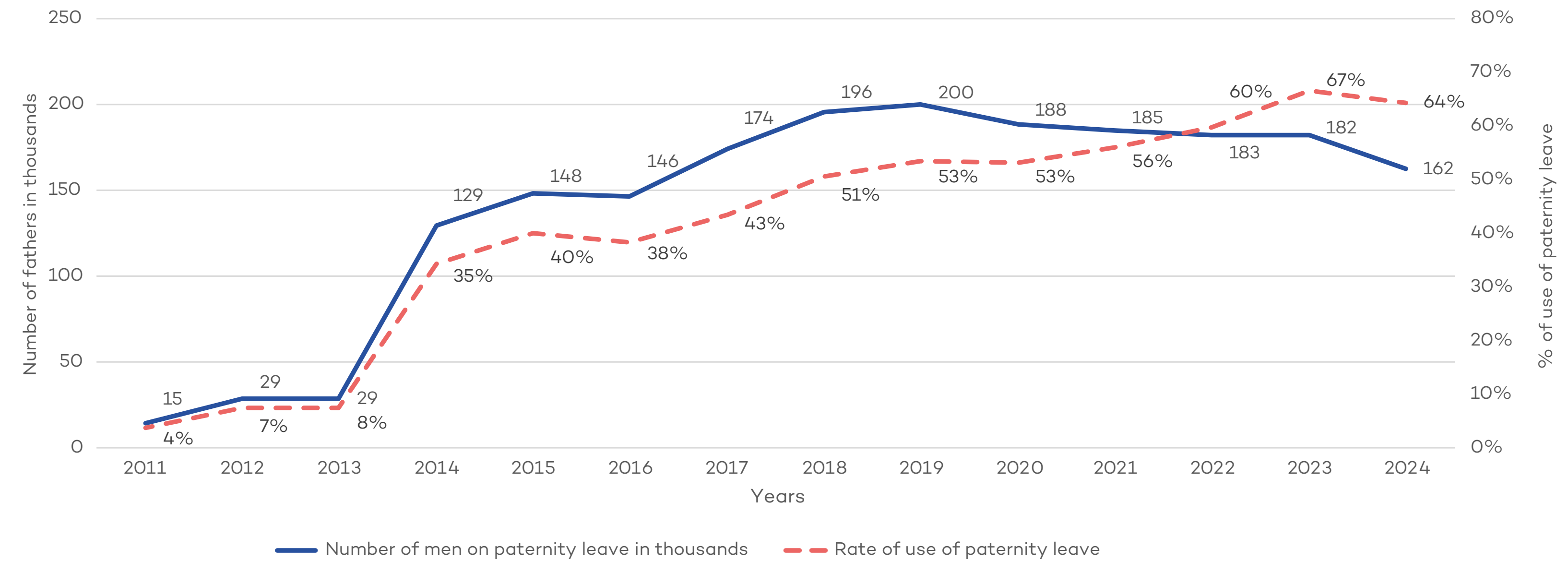


Chart 1.
Men receiving paternity allowances for paternity leave in 2011-2024 and the rate of its use.

Still, a large group of fathers do not use this entitlement, and their absence in the initial period of the child’s life is a missed opportunity to build parental identity. Research clearly indicates that fathers who decide to take paternity leave are more involved in care also in later years of the child’s life.

In addition, the long-term tendency for fathers to use leave mainly in the summer months suggests that it is often not treated as a time of real care, but as additional annual leave. This emphasises the need for comprehensive education on the importance of leave after the birth of a child, its functions and the benefits that flow from it.

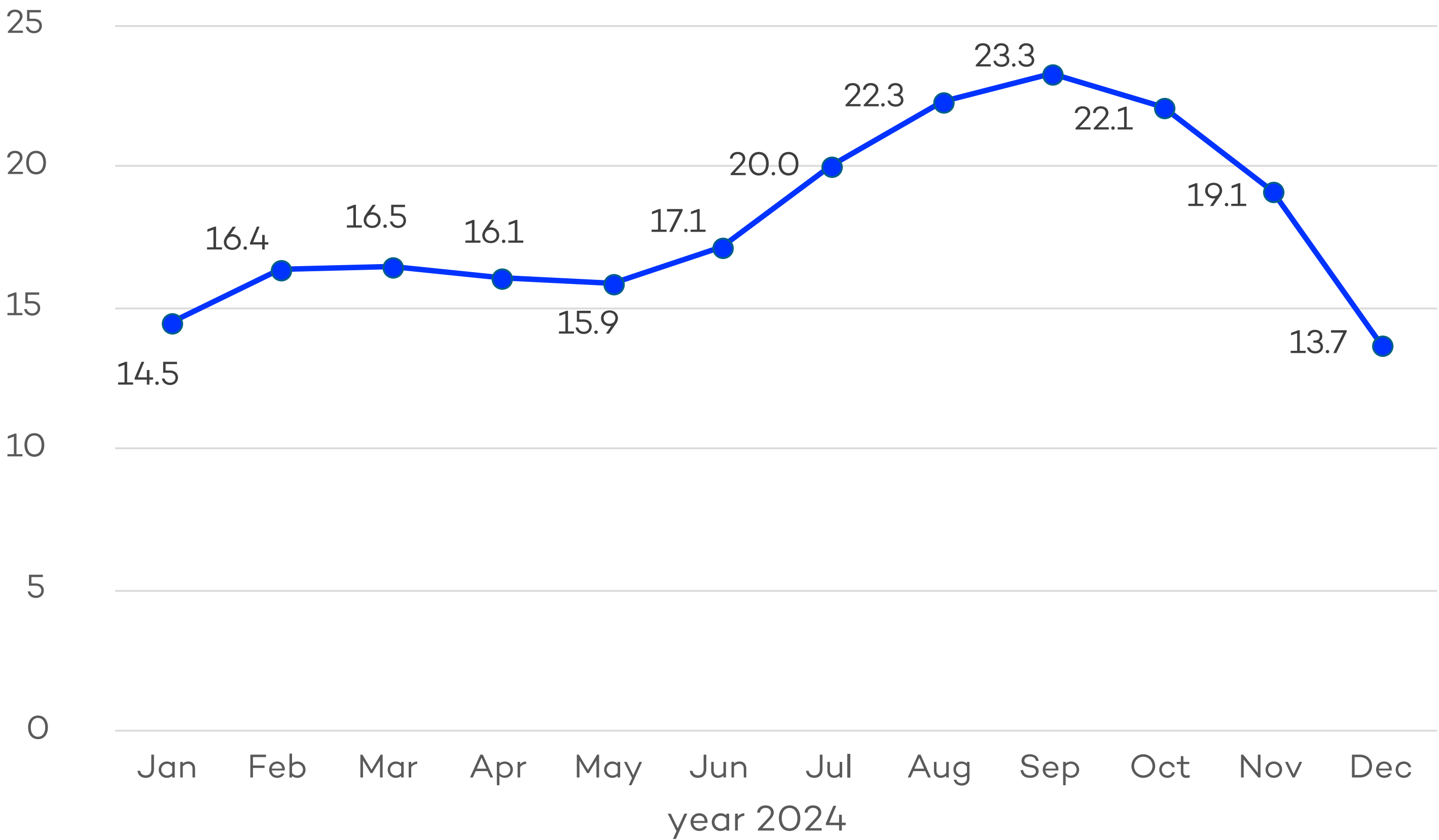


Chart 2.
Men receiving paternity allowances for paternity leave in 2024 (in thousands).

It is also worth looking at how the average amount of maternity allowance for paternity leave compared to the maternity allowance received by women for maternity leave.

Paternity leave and maternity leave are paid at 100%. The allowance paid to men for paternity leave is on average 30% higher than that paid to women (mothers' allowance adjusted to 100%). This is definitely more than the pay gap. Given that the period of payment of maternity allowance falls in the initial professional phase of working parents, these data show how large the disparity is between the earnings of mothers and fathers.

While for the pay gap or pension amounts we include all women and all men in the calculations, the comparison of allowances gives us a picture of wage differences between working mothers and working fathers.

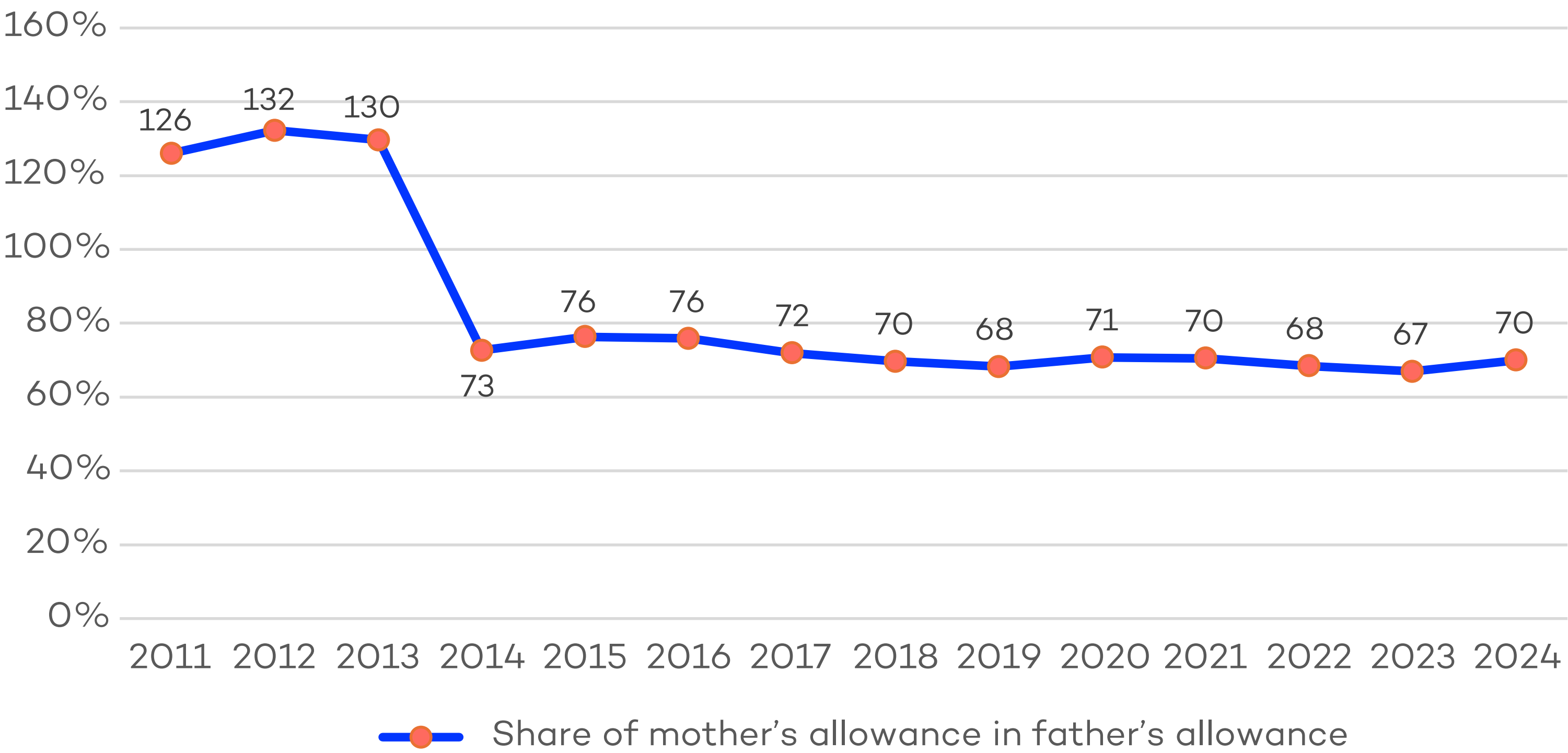


Chart 3.
Share of the average daily allowance of a mother (for maternity leave, adjusted to 100%) in the average daily allowance of a father (for paternity leave) in 2011-2024.

Parental leave – on the rise

Fathers have been able to use parental leave in Poland since 2013. Due to the lack of a non-transferability mechanism, this benefit was neither very recognisable nor popular for years. In practice, it functioned as an extension of maternity leave.

The division of parental leave between parents formally meant that the mother had to give up some part of her parental leave in favour of the child’s father. The result was a very low participation of men – just 1%.

Only the implementation of the EU work-life balance directive in 2023, and with it the introduction of an individual right to leave and a 9-week non-transferable part, led to a significant increase in its use – to 7% in 2023 and 17% in 2024.

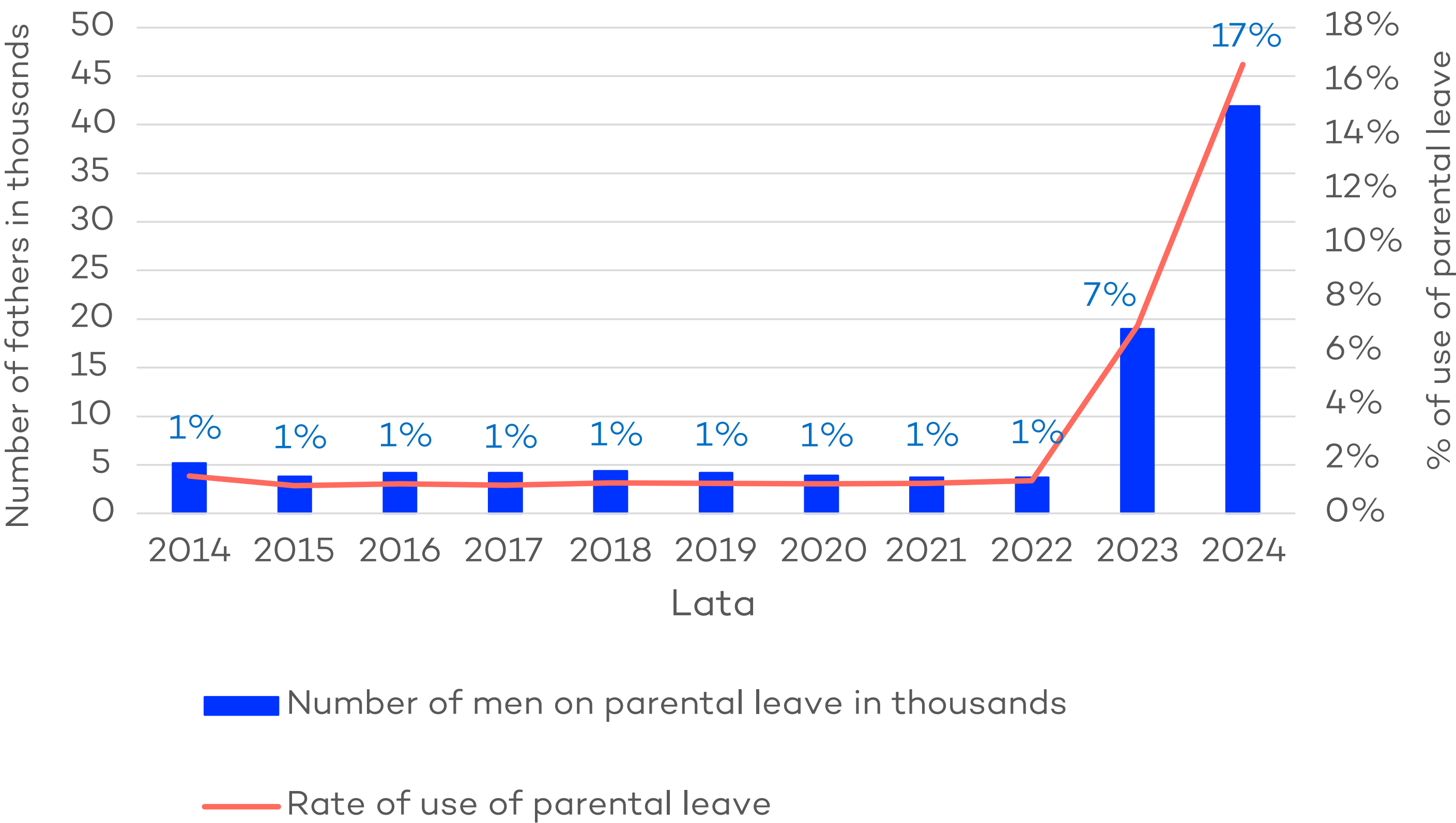


Chart 4.
Parental leave take-up rate in 2014–2024.

The introduction of the work-life balance directive was accompanied by numerous campaigns initiated by the Share the Care Foundation or with its participation:

- “Man at 100 Pro, or how to enjoy fatherhood and 9 weeks of leave only for fathers” (2023),
- Onet’s campaign “Dad at home” and
- OLX campaign “Work with benefit for all”, which was guided by the slogan: “Let’s share childcare to develop at work” (2024).

Thanks to these actions, parental leave is increasingly perceived as a common right of both parents, not just the mother. Engaged fatherhood is beginning to be visible – also in the media – which helps break stereotypes.

What is still concerning?

Data show a clear seasonality in the use of parental leave by men. As with paternity leave, summer months predominate. This may indicate treating leave as time for renovation, going abroad to work or holidays, and not for real involvement in childcare.

Also concerning is the result of the increase in leave use in some voivodeships, which is higher than the national average. For Poland, the increase in the use of parental leave by fathers in 2024 compared to 2023 was 120%). Meanwhile, in the Opolskie Voivodeship it was 142%, in Lubuskie – 139%, and in Małopolskie and Lubelskie – 129%. None of these voivodeships – except Małopolskie – has a city with over 500,000 inhabitants. A possible explanation for this phenomenon is not so much the greater involvement of fathers in childcare, but the use of parental leave for paid work, including seasonal work or work abroad. Further analyses and education in this area are necessary.

Too short and unequal – the length of fathers’ and mothers’ leave

Although the share of fathers in parental leave is systematically growing, its duration remains short. In 2022, fathers used leave for an average of 98 days, in 2023 – only 49 days, and in 2024 – just 47 days, or about 7 weeks. This means that many fathers do not even use all of their non-transferable part, which is 9 weeks.

Meanwhile, longer leaves are still the domain of mothers. The average length of their parental leave increased from 141 days in 2023 to 153 days in 2024.

The need for a nationwide narrative about fatherhood and legal education

Although we observe a positive trend of increasing fathers’ participation in parental leave, systemic actions promoting the partnership model of family and equal division of childcare are still necessary. Nationwide information campaigns, carried out by public institutions and supported by the media, which would show in an understandable and attractive way the role of fathers as full-fledged carers – those who do not “help”, but really share with mothers the responsibility for raising a child, would be effective. Only in such a model can a woman fully combine motherhood with professional development and return to work on equal terms. The whole family benefits from the involvement of both parents – as well as the labour market and society.

Challenges and directions for action

- We need a greater balancing of the division of parental leave between women and men. Equal opportunities in the labour market require an equal division of care responsibilities.
- Decisions about who takes leave often result from differences in remuneration. Therefore, of key importance are: elimination of the pay gap, economic education of women and creation of jobs conducive to reconciling family and professional life – for both women and men. In addition, increasing the allowance for the non-transferable part of parental leave from 70% to 100% would increase the use of leave by fathers.
- We need more ambassadors of the action, i.e. fathers who will publicly share with others their decision to take leave and care for children. This can be a strong incentive for other men. Such patterns break stereotypes, normalise fathers’ involvement and inspire a partnership approach in families.

- It is necessary to continue educational activities that explain in an accessible way the purpose of individual leaves, the differences between them and their social function. We also need legal education for employers and employees, which will help avoid misinterpretations of regulations and will promote patterns conducive to real equality. The Foundation’s postulate – supported by non-governmental organisations, employers, and parents – is to create a government portal that would contain reliable information about the leave rights of parents.
- It is worth considering simplifying and clarifying the provisions of the Labour Code regarding family entitlements (including leave). The current regulations are complex, which discourages their use and perpetuates inequalities.

USE OF OTHER CARE BENEFITS BY FATHERS

Care for a child does not end with the end of maternity or parental leave. This is just the beginning of a long and demanding stage of daily organisation of family life.

A child's illness after a few days in nursery, the need to provide an outfit for a performance, a friend's birthday or organising transport to and from the facility – all this constitutes the so-called invisible logistics of parenthood. What do the numbers say about fathers' involvement? Well, they indicate enormous disparities between working mothers and fathers in this area. The impact of these inequalities on women's professional activity is obvious.

Sick leave for a child

In 2024, the share of the number of days of absence due to care for a sick child used by men was only 21%, which means only a slight increase (by 0.42 percentage points) compared to the previous year. In practice, almost 80% of care days still fall on women.

This indicator is particularly important for us because – in addition to data on parental and maternity leave – it shows the actual division of daily care responsibilities in the family.

Its slow change may indicate a still low level of social acceptance for engaged fatherhood both on the part of fathers themselves and on the part of their professional environment.

Years	Number of days of sick absence in thousands				Average length of medical certificate in days		
	total	men	women	percentage of fathers' days of absence	total	men	women
2020	8,091.2	1,632.4	6,458.6	20.18%	5.03	4.93	5.05
2021	9,683.9	1,998.2	7,685.6	20.63%	4.36	4.33	4.37
2022	11,788.3	2,420.5	9,367.4	20.53%	4.01	4.03	4.01
2023	10,919.5	2,282.0	8,636.9	20.90%	3.90	3.94	3.89
2024	10,902.7	2,324.3	8,577.9	21.32%	3.80	3.86	3.78

Table 1. Number of days and average length of medical certificate for care of a sick child in 2020–2024 by gender.

It is also worth looking at how this division looks depending on the child’s age. The greatest involvement of fathers occurs in the first two years of a child’s life – 25% of care days, but in subsequent years this indicator decreases and reaches 17% for children aged nine years and older.

This can be explained by various factors – from the breakdown of relationships, through difficulty in flexibly combining professional duties with childcare or a feeling that during this period the involvement of the father is not needed. This is another issue that requires in-depth analysis.

In the long term, it is precisely these everyday decisions – who takes a day off, who organises care, who gives up work – that form the basis for real partnership and equality in the family and equal participation of women and men in professional life.

Age of child in years	Number of days of sick absence in thousands			
	Total	Men	Women	Percentage of fathers’ days of absence
TOTAL , including:	10,902.7	2,324.3	8,577.9	21%
1 year	1,124.0	284.2	839.8	25%
2 years	908.5	229.7	678.8	25%
3–4 years	2,600.4	609.0	1,991.3	23%
5–6 yers	2,322.6	489.9	1,832.6	21%
7–8 years	1,595.1	309.0	1,286.0	19%
9 years and more	2,351.3	402.2	1,948.9	17%

Table 2. Sick absence due to childcare in 2024 – division by age of child.

OTHER FORMS OF THE SUPPORT FOR PARENTS

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE FAMILY

The Social Insurance Institution is responsible for the payment of public funds intended for the maintenance and upbringing of children. It plays the role of a payer, but does not interfere with how the transferred funds are spent.

It is parents who are responsible for raising children, providing them with care, and developing their passions – and the state budget supports them in the implementation of these tasks. Only some benefits have a defined purpose in their name. Most are not subject to any restrictions on how they are spent.

Currently, the Social Insurance Institution pays four types of benefits, only one of which is one-off – this is the good start benefit (so-called 300+), intended for expenses related to the start of the school year.

The other three are cyclical in nature and are paid monthly, after meeting certain conditions – including submitting an application within the statutory deadline.

The child-raising benefit, the so-called 800+, which is due until the child reaches 18 years of age, has the greatest financial significance. From January 2024, its amount increased from PLN 500 to PLN 800 per month.

Other benefits include the Family Care Capital and new forms of support introduced in October 2024: active parents at work, active in nursery and active at home.

Since the start of family support programmes until the end of April 2025, the Social Insurance Institution has paid benefits from these programmes totalling PLN 172 billion.



SYSTEMIC SUPPORT FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN UNDER THREE

In the face of demographic, social and economic changes that Poland is facing, one of the key issues is comprehensive support for families in their daily challenges.

A particularly important issue was the introduction of solutions encouraging parents of children aged from 12 to 35 months (i.e. at an age which, as a rule, follows the end of maternity and parental leave for a child by a parent, and before the child reaches the age entitling them to use pre-school care) to be professionally active, so that they can return to or enter the labour market after a break related to caring for a small child.

The introduced solutions were designed to help parents effectively reconcile family and professional roles, but at the same time leave them the possibility to choose the form of care provided for the child.

Active Parent

The Active Parent programme introduced in 2024 constitutes a comprehensive approach to supporting parents of nursery-age children. It provides them with various benefits depending on their needs and life situation.

The aim of the programme is to enable parents to return to the labour market and support them in choosing the most beneficial form of childcare for them.

The programme offers three benefits:

- active parents at work – PLN 1,500 per month for professionally active parents (or PLN 1,900 in the case of children with disabilities) paid for 24 months;
- active in nursery – up to PLN 1,500 per month (PLN 1,900 for a child with a disability) transferred directly to the care institution to reduce the cost of the child’s attendance;

- active at home – PLN 500 per month for parents who are not professionally active or who care for the child independently, without using care institutions.

According to the Social Insurance Institution data, from 1 October 2024 to 30 April 2025, a total of 608,500 applications for 613,400 children were submitted under the Active Parent programme, including

- active at home (AwD) – 181,600 applications for 181,700 children;
- active parents at work (AwP) – 181,100 applications for 182,200 children;
- active in nursery (AwZ) – 245,800 applications for 249,500 children.

Under the Active Parent programme:

- from November to December 2024, the Social Insurance Institution paid 0.6 million benefits amounting to PLN 0.7 billion;
- from January to April 2025, the Social Insurance Institution paid 1.6 million benefits amounting to PLN 2.0 billion.

Note: The total number of benefits means the sum of the number of benefits paid in a given period.

Analysis of applications in the Active Parent programme submitted to the Social Insurance Institution shows that they concerned 91% of children aged 15-36 months.

For the remaining children, their parents still use previously functioning solutions, in particular the Family Care Capital, which they receive on the basis of acquired rights.

Returning to work after the birth of a child is a considerable organisational challenge for parents. Among the barriers indicated by mothers and fathers are, among others, the lack of care institutions for small children, which would be accessible not only

territorially but also financially, and the lack of trust in the quality of care provided for children in nurseries and other institutions caring for the youngest.

For this reason, the priority of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy was to introduce solutions that serve to increase the availability of places and improve the quality of services provided in care institutions for children up to 3 years of age.

Thanks to the implementation of the Active Toddler programme 2022-2029, co-financed from the National Recovery Plan (KPO), European Funds for Social Development (FERS) and the state budget, care infrastructure is being developed. As of 30 April 2025, there were 252,277 childcare places available for children up to three years old in 8664 facilities.

The number of so-called white spots, i.e. municipalities without any care institution, decreased to 895 (from 1,105 at the end of 2023).

The nursery coverage indicator increased from 36% to 41.50% – which constitutes significant progress in just 16 months.

The programme provides for the creation of 102,500 new care places by the end of 2026 and their maintenance until 2029, with a total budget of PLN 6.5 billion. As of 30 April 2025, contracts had been signed for the creation of 67,400 care places, and 16,812 places are already functioning.

The programme not only supports the creation of new institutions but also co-finances their maintenance – regardless of the type of entity. The amount of co-financing ranges from PLN 12,410 to PLN 57,528 for the creation of one place, as well as PLN 836 per month for each place for three years in order to reduce costs for parents.

These activities are complemented by the Active day carer in the municipality programme (2025), addressed to municipalities that still do not offer any nursery care. It provides for support of up to PLN 300,000 for the establishment of one or two day carer institutions and co-financing of current functioning in the amount of PLN 8,000 per month.

THE ROLE OF EMPLOYERS IN SUPPORTING PARENTAL EQUALITY

Supporting parents in reconciling family and professional life requires a strategic approach from employers. It can be captured in three complementary levels of engagement – from basic procedural actions, through building organisational culture, to financial strengthening of the support system. Responsible companies implement these activities in stages and treat them as an investment that will allow them to ensure team stability and employee satisfaction. Below we present the best practices used by employers in companies in Poland. They translate into greater employee engagement and better business results.

LEVEL 1: Fundamentals – processes, procedures, reliable information

- Revision and updating of internal procedures regarding parental and paternity leave in light of new regulations, including the work-life balance directive.
- Development of clear, accessible instructions for mothers and for fathers – separately – with specification of possible leave division scenarios.
- Active informing of employees – both men and women – about their rights and possibilities in the field of childcare.
- Reliable and systematic education of HR and personnel departments – updating legal knowledge and raising awareness of the most common mistakes.
- Training managers in the field of law and scenarios for conversations with working parents.

- Establishing processes and procedures in companies – managers do not need to know all the legal intricacies, but should know how to guide a female or male employee going on parental leave and how they can organise substitution during their absence.

As many as 68% of maternity benefits (including paternity and parental) are paid by employers, who then settle the payments made with the Social Insurance Institution. This shows how important the role of this institution is in the efficient and understandable implementation of the law.



LEVEL 2: Organisational culture and supportive leadership

- Company strategy that links parental equality and the policy of managing parental leave for mothers and fathers, as an important element of building gender equality in the company.
- Training and workshops for management staff that would show how parental equality affects equality in the labour market, employee engagement and well-being.
- Onboarding programmes for returning parents – including mentoring by a so-called buddy, i.e. a guardian who supports the returning parent and helps them find their way in the company again.
- Creating support groups and parental networks and maintaining contact with people on leave (e.g. newsletters, invitations to events).

- Promoting positive role models and encouraging engaged fathers and working mothers to become ambassadors of parental equality.
- Webinars, internal campaigns, and educational materials that debunk stereotypes and show competences acquired by parents as a professional asset (e.g. empathy, multitasking, efficiency, responsibility).

Research shows that many mothers do not see the potential of skills brought from motherhood to professional work until they are explicitly asked about them. Meanwhile, these competences – from empathy to organisational efficiency – are an important capital for the company.

LEVEL 3: Financial support and equalising opportunities

- Supplements financed by employers to 100% of the allowance when the father uses the non-transferable part of parental leave (9 weeks).
- 100% of remuneration for part-time work for a parent in the first month after a longer absence resulting from the birth of a child.
- Internal pay audits and equalising inequalities – identification and elimination of the pay gap between women and men.
- Equal opportunities for promotion and access to training regardless of breaks related to childcare.

Recommendations for companies:

Strategic approach is the key to success

Include the topic of parental leave for fathers in the company policy and ensure that departments responsible for communication, processes and procedures feel the support of the board in this regard.

Involve communication, HR, personnel, and legal departments in jointly developing solutions for fathers who want to take parental leave.

Include line managers in the process of developing changes. The success of this project depends on their attitude towards fathers on parental leave, because they have direct contact with employees. Managers must feel the support of the board because they are responsible for maintaining the company’s business processes.

Talking about parental leave for fathers also opens up a discourse about women who return to work after giving birth. They

often feel underappreciated and guilty that as mothers they are unable to meet the company’s requirements. Showing that motherhood is not in conflict with a career, but can enrich it, is crucial for building a diverse organisation whose employees are satisfied.

Recommendations for HR and internal communication

Research and analyse employees’ approach to parental equality, division of leave and the needs of mothers and fathers. The collected data will help in planning activities that will eliminate real concerns and barriers.

Communicate separately with mothers and separately with fathers. Practice shows that general communication mainly reaches women.

Create a team responsible for the consistency of communication with procedures and processes in the company. Inconsistency between communication and the actual

experience of employees may bring the opposite effects.

Recruit ambassadors and promote role models – mothers who reconcile motherhood with career, and fathers who take parental leave.

Support building men’s parenting skills through workshops, webinars, and employee groups.

Affirm women in the belief that professional development is not in conflict with motherhood. Build a positive image of working mothers.

Help debunk gender stereotypes that a man is the sole breadwinner and a woman only takes care of the home.

Involve managers in the process of building a culture conducive to parental equality. Organise workshops where they learn about the benefits of such actions and express their concerns.

Recommendations for personnel services

Update knowledge regarding the possibilities of using parental and paternity leave by employees. Mistakes are often made in this area.

The implementation of the work-life balance directive changed the rights of fathers after the birth of a child. Analyse procedures and applications regarding the division of parental leave.

Describe procedures and processes in a way that is understandable for parents – preferably in separate instructions for mothers and separate for fathers.

Present various possibilities of using leave. Do not assume that a woman will use the full 32 weeks of parental leave and a father – only 9 non-transferable weeks. The division can be more equal.

Encourage fathers to independently use 9 weeks of parental leave. This builds their position as carers and allows women to return to work with peace of mind.

Inform fathers about all the possibilities of spending time with a newborn child that result from the Labour Code. Many men do not use available facilities because they lack knowledge about them.

Important

Building a culture that supports parenthood benefits everyone:

- companies – because they retain valuable employees,
- employees – because they feel treated with respect and understanding and
- the whole society – because equality in the family means equality in the labour market and a greater chance that parents will decide to have another child.



THE MOST IMPORTANT BENEFITS SUPPORTING WORKING PARENTS IN POLAND

Leave after childbirth (per child)::

- Maternity leave: 20 weeks (14 weeks compulsory, paid 100% or 81.5%)³
- supplementary maternity leave for parents of premature babies or babies born on time who require hospitalisation up to 8 weeks or up to 15 weeks – depending on the period of hospitalisation and the week of pregnancy in which the child is born, or the birth weight (paid 100%)⁴
- paternity leave: 2 weeks (paid 100%)
- parental leave: 41 weeks, including 9 non-transferable weeks (paid 70% or 81.5%)
- childcare leave: 36 months (unpaid; 1 month non-transferable)

³ If the application for maternity allowance for the period corresponding to the period of maternity leave and parental leave in full is submitted no later than 21 days after childbirth (Article 31(3) of the Benefit Act).

⁴ The right to supplementary maternity leave has been in force since 19 March 2025.

Flexible working arrangements for parents

Parents of children up to 4 years of age have the right to remote work, and the employer must accept this, unless there are justified reasons that make remote work impossible.

Parents of children up to 8 years of age may request flexible working arrangements, within which remote work may be one of the forms.

Other forms include:

- interrupted working time system,
- shortened working week system,
- extension of daily working time,
- different working hours,
- flexible starting time system,
- individual working time schedule,
- reduction of working time.

If a parent wants to use this entitlement, they must submit an application for the application of a chosen form of flexible working arrangements to them. The document in paper or electronic version should be submitted to the employer no less than 21 days before the planned start of using it. The employer may refuse the employee’s request due to work organisation.

Remote work for mothers and fathers of small children is not only a possibility, but also a right, which is to facilitate the reconciliation of professional duties with childcare. Regulations on remote work for parents are becoming more and more beneficial for them.

MYTHS, FACTS AND THE MOST COMMON MISTAKES OF EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYERS IN USING BENEFITS FOR PARENTAL LEAVE

Myths and facts from the experience of the National Labour Inspectorate

MYTH: The child’s father can only use 9 weeks of parental leave.

FACT: If one child is born, both parents are jointly entitled to 41 weeks of parental leave, which they can divide between themselves as they wish – with the exception of 9 weeks, which constitute an individual, non-transferable right of each of them. This means that, for example, the mother can use 20 weeks and the father – 21.

MYTH: The employer may terminate the employee’s employment contract until the end of the third month of pregnancy.

FACT: A pregnant woman is protected from termination from the first day of pregnancy.

MYTH: The child’s father can take parental leave when the mother finishes her leave.

FACT: Parents can be on parental leave at the same time. There are also no obstacles to the father taking parental leave while the mother is on maternity leave. However, both must fit within the leave period provided for in the Labour Code.

MYTH: If the child’s father runs his own business and does not use parental leave, the mother can use the full 41 weeks.

FACT: One of the parents can use a maximum of 32 weeks of parental leave. 9 weeks is the exclusive right of the other parent and the father cannot transfer this right to the mother in any case.

MYTH: Only one of the parents can use flexible working arrangements.

FACT: While some of the entitlements related to parenthood can indeed only be used by one of the parents (e.g. leave for childcare under Article 188 of the Labour Code), there are no such restrictions in the case of flexible working arrangements. Therefore, both parents can use them.

Myths and facts in ways of calculating allowances – from the experience of the Social Insurance Institution

MYTH: Maternity allowance for the period of maternity leave and parental leave is 100% of the basis of its calculation.

FACT: The amount of maternity allowance depends on:

- the period of granted maternity and parental leave,
- the content of the application for its payment,
- the date of its submission.

If the mother submits an application for payment of maternity allowance simultaneously for the period of granted maternity and parental leave within 21 days from childbirth, the amount of maternity allowance is 81.5% of the basis of calculation. If, on the other hand, the mother applies for maternity allowance for the period of maternity leave, and then after using it – for maternity allowance for the period of parental leave – the amount of the allowance is, respectively:

- for the period of maternity leave – 100% of the basis of its calculation,
- for the period of parental leave – 70% of the basis of its calculation.



Erroneous practices that result from misunderstanding of new regulations and hinder building parental equality in Poland – from the experience of the Share the Care Foundation

Error: Using the old “upfront” application

Both among parents and employers, there is still a common belief that leave after the birth of a child – maternity and parental – is intended exclusively for women. Some people still mistakenly believe that Poland has a one-year maternity leave, which perpetuates the misconception about the mother’s automatic use of the entire period. As a result, it is often assumed in advance that it is the mother who will use the full leave entitlement, although according to the law she can share this right with the child’s father.

In practice, a simplified scheme is still used: the mother’s application for averaging maternity allowance to 81.5% is considered equivalent to her declaration that she wants to use the entire maternity and parental leave. This is a mistake – such an application concerns only the method of payment of the allowance, not the structure of leave use. This type of practice not only reinforces the stereotype that women are responsible for childcare, but also effectively limits the possibility of actual division of parental leave between both parents. Meanwhile, parents can share leave related to parenthood.

Solution:

Employers should verify the procedures and applications used by parents. Using the old type of application for so-called upfront leave is a mistake.

Error: The belief of employers who employ mostly men that the topic of combining parenthood with work does not apply to them

In the discussion on supporting parents in reconciling professional work with care responsibilities, there is still a lack of involvement from employers who mainly employ men. This approach perpetuates the stereotype that childcare is exclusively a woman's duty, and that the topic of parental equality concerns only companies where there is a predominance of female employees.

Meanwhile, men working in these companies are partners of women who raise the same children and often work in other organisations. Their involvement in childcare is crucial for equality in the family and women's professional activity. Lack of adequate support from the employer makes it difficult for fathers to take on real care responsibilities, and as a result deepens inequalities in the labour market.

There is also a growing number of men who no longer want to serve as the sole breadwinners of the family. Younger generations of fathers expect greater work-life balance and want to actively participate in raising children from the first months of their lives. For many of them, work-life balance is not a privilege, but a condition for mental health, life satisfaction and building a real relationship with their family. At the same time, data show an increasing level of burnout among men – especially in professions with high levels of stress, responsibility, and pressure for uninterrupted availability. Lack of space for private and family life not only reduces their well-being, but also negatively affects their efficiency at work.

Solution:

Companies that employ mainly men should be active participants in the change. Supporting fathers in taking parental leave, implementing flexible working arrangements, educating managers, and building a culture of respect for family roles is today not only an expression of social responsibility, but also a strategic business decision.

For many young men, whether a company supports work-life balance will soon be one of the most important criteria for choosing an employer. If we want to talk about real gender equality and effective pro-family policy, we cannot forget about fathers. And we cannot forget about their employers.

Error: Use of leave contrary to the legislator's intention

Although the number of men who take parental leave is systematically growing, the question is increasingly being raised not only about how long this leave lasts, but also about how this time is used. Parental leave is not a time for additional earnings, apartment renovation or holidays – it is a period intended for real, daily involvement of the father in childcare.

According to the legislator's intention, this leave is to serve building bonds, supporting the child's development, and relieving the mother, who during this time can return to work. Only such – conscious, independent, and active – use of parental leave brings benefits to everyone: the family, employers and the economy.

It is also worth for the father to spend this time with the child independently, without the presence of the mother. Only then does he have a chance not only to build his own, independent relationship with the child, but also to increase his parenting competences, self-confidence and agency as a carer. Such a model of fatherhood – present, independent and competent – is the key to a partnership family and greater professional activity of women.

Solution:

We need extensive educational activities – both at the systemic and local level – that will make people aware of what parental leave really is and how it should be used. Campaigns, guides and media messages should promote a model of a father who actively cares for the child, i.e. not only supports the mother, but fully takes on the role of a carer.

It is also important to show men the benefits of their involvement – not only emotional, but also health-related, relational and social. Education should also be directed to employers and the social environment to debunk stereotypes and create an atmosphere of acceptance for new roles of fathers. Only then will parental leave become a real tool for building equality – and not just a not fully used opportunity.

INSTEAD OF A SUMMARY

The data and observations collected in the report clearly show that a key element of further development of a balanced system supporting parenthood should be systematic social education – both on the rights of mothers and fathers, and on the real benefits of equal sharing of childcare.

This applies to all actors in this process::

- state institutions that shape social policies and legal frameworks,
- local governments that implement local solutions and build infrastructure supporting families,
- public institutions that can be an example for other employers and environments,
- social organisations that have great power to reach parents and public opinion,
- employers, on whom depend the practical implementation of equality principles and the creation of a culture based on trust, flexibility and partnership.

Each of these groups has a different role, but one common goal: to create a system in which parenthood does not exclude professional activity, and equality becomes the foundation of social development.

It's not about privileges. It's about investing in Poland's future and its competitiveness in the international arena. It's about economic growth that goes hand in hand with improving the quality of life.

Below we present a table that shows how systemic solutions, employer actions and initiatives of local governments and public institutions can complement each other to realistically support working parents. Thanks to such multidimensional cooperation and understanding of the role of each of the entities involved, we can build a world of equal opportunities much faster.

This gives hope that achieving gender equality does not have to be a distant perspective – contrary to forecasts of organisations such as the United Nations

(UN) or the World Economic Forum (WEF), according to which it may take about a hundred years.

This thesis is also confirmed by the authors of the book *Equality within Our Lifetimes: How Laws and Policies Can Close – or Widen – Gender Gaps in Economies Worldwide*. Jody Heymann, Aleta Sprague and Amy Raub from the WORLD Policy Analysis Center indicate that since it was laws and policies that contributed to the creation of inequalities, it is precisely through their change that we can reduce them. The condition is the involvement of all parties.

The table is open-ended. We invite you to supplement it with ideas and programmes that are implemented by employers, local governments, and institutions.

Period of life	Systemic support	Employer support	Local government support
Pregnancy period	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sickness allowance at 100% level.• Perinatal care that takes into account the mother and father (we need changes that will take into account the perspective of fathers to a greater extent and thus support the formation of parental identity and involvement in childcare).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flexible working arrangements and solutions enabling women to maintain professional activity during pregnancy.• Support for the process of leaving professional activity and returning to it.• Support for the future mother, which aims to create a sense of usefulness and importance for the employer – information about the rights of the employee, a conversation about what her parental leave will look like, a conversation with a superior about the fact that her return to work after parental leave is welcome and expected. <p>Examples of good practices: work in the third trimester of pregnancy on a part-time basis while maintaining 100% of remuneration, a well-thought-out and organised process of planning departure from work and return to it after parental leave, conversation scenarios for managers, e-books for mothers and fathers on how to apply for individual leaves and how to use them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Education of parents about the leave rights and partnership in parenthood. <p>Particularly important is education in childbirth schools, medical facilities, hospitals, and other public spaces (cultural centres, libraries, educational and care facilities, public transport).</p> <p>We recommend expanding the programme of classes in childbirth schools with a panel on parents’ rights, partnership in parenthood and psychological education for mothers and fathers (regarding the emotional level of life in an expanded family).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social education on changing social norms and active involvement of both parents in the child’s life.

Period of life	Systemic support	Employer support	Local government support
After the birth of a child	Formalities related to the birth of a child		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Informational and educational materials in city offices and medical facilities.
	Maternity leave (20 weeks, paid 100%) Supplementary maternity leave for premature babies and hospitalised children (8-15 weeks, paid 100%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enabling mothers to contact other employees and use employer benefits during the maternity period, e.g. webinars, integration meetings, work tools. <p>Companies recognise the need to maintain this contact so that a woman on maternity leave has a sense that the company is waiting for her, and they implement programmes that facilitate this.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Package of educational materials for community midwives and lactation midwives regarding partnership in parenthood, with particular emphasis on stimulating fathers to become more involved in care.
	Paternity leave (2 weeks, paid 100%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Informing fathers about the right to paternity leave and the rules for its use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Education of fathers on the function of paternity leave – i.e. taking care of the mother in the postpartum period and the infant.

Period of life	Systemic support	Employer support	Local government support
After the birth of a child	Parental leave for mother and father (41 weeks, paid 70%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Informing parents, in particular fathers, about the right to parental leave and the rules for its use.• Support from the manager and HR department in the process of applying for parental leave and joint planning of managing the absence of the employee.• Enabling fathers and mothers to contact other employees and use employer benefits during parental leave, e.g. webinars, integration meetings, work tools.• Supplementing the father's maternity allowance for the non-transferable part to 100%.• Education on the wise use of leave – division between parents, use by the father without the presence of the mother. Showing the resulting benefits – for the child, mother, and father.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local support groups for parents – separately for mothers and separately for fathers, who experience the time of the child's birth differently and face different emotions.• Co-financing of the father's maternity allowance to 100% when meeting the conditions regarding the division of parental leave.• Showing role models, supplementing the available information about support for parents by the municipality with topics of parental equality and benefits resulting from fathers' involvement in care.

Period of life	Systemic support	Employer support	Local government support
Return to work	Flexible working arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Informing about employees’ rights, respecting employees’ rights (also in production, trade and those that employ mainly men).• Training managers and supporting them in managing a dispersed team and meeting the needs of working parents.• Acceptance of absence of both mother and father due to child’s illness, understanding and trust. Normalisation of the needs of working parents.• Building an organisational culture based on tolerance and respect for the needs and challenges of colleagues at different stages of life.• Building intergenerational solidarity, in order to support solutions directed at specific groups of employees (e.g. carers).• Moving away from measuring work by time “from-to”, focusing on effectiveness and competences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Campaigns directed at employers and employees regarding respecting the rights of working parents and the benefits resulting from them for everyone.• Promoting good employer practices, e.g. through competitions or distinctions.

Period of life	Systemic support	Employer support	Local government support
Return to work	<p>Support for childcare for children under three</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • active parents at work – PLN 1,500/ month, PLN 1,900 for child disability • active in nursery – co-financing of fees up to PLN 1,500 or PLN 1,900 • access to nurseries – Toddler+ programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-financing of tuition fees in nursery, kindergarten. • Creating workplace childcare facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating care facilities and alternative forms of care with attention to the quality of education for the youngest. • Promoting the benefits of early education for children under 3 years of age. • Building support groups and communities of parents who can support each other.
Family budget	<p>Financial support for the family:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 800+ for each child up to 18 years of age 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the EU directive eliminating the pay gap – intensification of work, implementation of solutions going beyond the directive and accelerating the process of eliminating the gap. • Building understanding among employers about the benefits of equal pay for women and men for the same work. • Education of employers on the pay gap. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliable verification of the existing gender gap in the organisation along with the implementation of corrective actions. • Education of employees on the pay gap and building support for actions eliminating the pay gap, in order to prevent polarisation and resistance to the implementation of actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliable verification of the existing gender gap and implementation of corrective actions in local governments and in companies subject to local governments. • Promoting actions to reduce the pay gap and rewarding best practices.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS OF THE REPORT

About the Social Insurance Institution

The Social Insurance Institution is a state organisational unit that deals with, among others, collecting social insurance contributions, paying benefits (e.g. pensions, disability pensions, sickness, or maternity/paternity allowances), maintaining individual accounts of the insured or referring for medical rehabilitation.

The Social Insurance Institution cooperates with approximately 28 million clients and several hundred institutions in the country and abroad. In terms of the scope of activity and the social significance of the tasks carried out, it is one of the most important public institutions in Poland. The Social Insurance Institution, as one of the few organisations, combines two functions essential for the country:

- a social security institution, which carries out tasks related to universal social insurance,
- a financial institution, which manages the Social Insurance Fund, the Demographic Reserve Fund, and the Bridging Pensions Fund.

Website: www.zus.pl



About the Share the Care Foundation

The Foundation has existed since the end of 2020. In its activities, it focuses on 3 pillars, which are:

- supporting employers in building an organisational culture that promotes gender equality and parental equality,
- social campaigns building legal awareness and presenting the benefits of partnership,
- advocacy activities involving the government, local governments, and non-governmental institutions.

The Foundation advocated for the implementation in Poland of the EU work-life balance directive, which came into force in April 2023 and gave parents an individual right to parental leave and 9 non-transferable weeks of leave for each of them.

Partnership brings benefits to the whole family, which is why through its initiatives the foundation wants to encourage parents, employers, and the government to include this new social paradigm in their actions.

The Share the Care Foundation promotes the partnership model of family, which allows parents to fulfil themselves in all spheres of life and gives children a chance to build close bonds with both parents. It emphasises the need to build relationships not only between parents and children, but also between the parents themselves.

Website: www.sharethecare.pl

Portal about partnership in parenthood run by the foundation: www.teamrodzina.pl

