

The Swedish Parental Leave (SweParLe) Dataset

Version 1 – October 2026



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1. Introduction

The purpose of the **Swedish Parental Leave (SweParLe) dataset** is to provide an overview of the Swedish parental leave system by describing its main components and developments over time. This resource is primarily intended for researchers and policymakers who want to familiarize themselves with the complex system. The dataset will be updated regularly in order to capture the system's continuous evolution, as well as to incorporate additional legislation specific to sub-groups of parents (e.g., single parents, parents of multiples, migrants, and non-heterosexual couples). The current version of the dataset and its accompanying documentation include up-to-date information as of October 1st, 2026.

The present document is structured as follows: first, we offer a brief overview of the Swedish parental leave system, from its introduction to the present; second, we define various general concepts, the different components of the system, and their evolution; and finally, we introduce the data material, including a description of the variables, and provide some references for European comparisons.

This dataset has been created as a combined effort of two research projects: *Unintended Health Consequences of Swedish Parental Leave Policy* (PI: Sol P. Juárez, financed by the Swedish Research Council or *Vetenskapsrådet*) and *Parental Leave and Mental Health across the Life Course* (PI: Helena Honkaniemi, financed by *Riksbankens Jubileumsfond*). Both projects have been based at the Department of Public Health Sciences at Stockholm University and at the Centre for Health Equity Studies (CHESS), a joint center between Stockholm University and Karolinska Institutet. The dataset and its accompanying documentation can be found at the CHESS website: <https://chessresearch.se/>

2. The Swedish parental leave system – A brief overview

Sweden's gender-neutral parental leave system is widely regarded as one of the most generous and flexible in the world. The system was introduced in 1974 under the National Insurance Act Reform (SFS 1973:473), replacing an earlier maternity leave system (SFS 1962:381) that provided 180 days of paid leave exclusively to mothers. Since then, it has in part been regulated by the Parental Leave Act (SFS 1995:584) and most recently by the consolidated Social Insurance Code (SFS 2010:111).

In 1974, the introduction of a gender-neutral parental leave system provided parents with 180 days of leave immediately after birth, to be shared as they saw fit. Parental leave benefits were reimbursed at the sickness benefit level (*sjukpenningnivå*): in other words, parents who were employed for at least 270 days before the estimated due date and whose annual salary exceeded a set threshold (10,139 Swedish kronor [SEK], or approximately €6,824 today) were entitled to receive approximately 90% of their salary after taxes (for fathers, this was only true if the mother was also eligible). Parents who did not meet these requirements received a basic-level benefit of 25 SEK (approximately €17 today) per day of leave.

Since then, the system has undergone various changes in terms of the length, remuneration, and flexibility of leave, making it not only one of the most generous, but also one of the most complex systems in the world.

As of October 2026, all Swedish residents with custody of a child have the right to 1.5 years (equivalent to 547.5 days) of job-protected time off work following the child's birth, as well as 480 days of paid parental leave per child, to share as they see fit (except for 90 days reserved for each parent). Of the 480 days, 384 days must be used before the child's 4th birthday and 96 days before their 12th birthday. Parents are also entitled to use 60 days simultaneously. Remuneration for 390 days is based on specific work requirements. A parent with an annual salary above 117,590 SEK (€10,371) in 2026 that worked for 240 consecutive days before the estimated due date is entitled to 77.6% of their monthly salary (earnings-related or higher-level parental leave benefits) for the first 180 days of benefits claimed, whereas parents who do not meet these criteria are eligible for a basic-level benefit of 250 SEK (€22) per day. Either parent must claim 180 days of parental leave benefits reimbursed based on their income before childbirth (whether earnings-related or basic-level benefits) before they are eligible to claim minimum-level benefits set at 180 SEK (€16) per day (for up to 90 days).

3. General concepts, main components, and evolution

The complexity of the Swedish parental leave system requires clear, standardized definitions of relevant concepts and an overview of the system's main components and their evolution over time. This section is particularly relevant for international readers, as some terminology may be used differently in other national contexts.

We have divided the concepts into four components: timing, duration of paid leave, remuneration, and special provisions. These sections are by no means comprehensive but rather intend to cover the most general aspects of the Swedish parental leave system. **Figure 1** illustrates the current system in relation to its different components.

In the "Timing of leave" section, we refer to concepts related to the right to time off work, independent of remuneration, and concepts related to the timing of paid leave. This section differs from the following section in that it refers to fixed time periods.

In the "Duration of paid leave" section, we refer to concepts related to the quantity of paid leave days.

In the "Remuneration" section, we include concepts related to different levels of paid parental leave as well as the work-related requirements for eligibility to higher-paid benefits.

In the "Special provisions" section, we list several concepts related to additional rules, rights, and specific circumstances usually linked to specific policy reforms.

TIMING OF LEAVE		DURATION OF PAID LEAVE	REMUNERATION	SPECIAL PROVISIONS		
RIGHT TO LEAVE (from birth to 548 days later)						
EARNINGS-RELATED DAYS (from birth)	EARNINGS-RELATED OR MINIMUM-LEVEL DAYS Until child's 4th birthday (384 days) / Until child's 12th birthday (96 days)	EARNINGS-RELATED DAYS (390 days)	PERCENTAGE OF EARNINGS ABOVE BASIC-LEVEL BENEFITS	INCOME PROTECTION	PARENT-SPECIFIC QUOTAS	SIMULTANEOUS LEAVE
MINIMUM-LEVEL DAYS (after 180 days of earnings-related benefits)	Full, three-quarter, half, quarter or one-eighth days (all days)	MINIMUM-LEVEL DAYS (90 days)	BASIC-LEVEL BENEFITS (250 SEK)			
			MINIMUM-LEVEL BENEFITS (180 SEK)			

Figure 1. The main components of the current Swedish parental leave system

Table 1. Defining the main components of the Swedish parental leave system and their evolution

CONCEPT	DEFINITION	HISTORY
GENERAL CONCEPTS		
Maternity (birthing parent) leave	The birthing parent's job-protected right to leave directly before or directly after childbirth. <i>Not covered in the dataset</i>	From 1974 to 1995, birthing parents (mothers) were entitled to six weeks of voluntary maternity leave before birth and six weeks after birth. In 1995, the Parental Leave Act (SFS 1995:584) extended the voluntary maternity leave period to seven weeks before birth and seven weeks after birth, while introducing two weeks of mandatory maternity leave to be taken within the 14-week voluntary leave period, directly before or after birth. Birthing parents on leave for other reasons (sick leave or holidays) are exempt from this obligation. Maternity leave can be taken on an unpaid basis, in connection with parental leave benefits for either parent, or alongside paid paternity leave (see below).
Paid maternity (birthing parent) leave	The paid component of the former maternity leave system, not to be confused with the still existing right to leave for mothers and other birthing parents. <i>Not covered in the dataset</i>	Universal mandatory maternity leave was introduced in Sweden in 1955 (Maternity Assistance Act SFS 1954:266) for up to three months after birth, including a basic fixed fee and income top-up if the mother earned above a certain threshold. From 1963, maternity leave benefits were divided into fixed benefits and income-based benefits, to be paid up to 180 days after birth (National Insurance Act SFS 1962:381). This system was eventually replaced by parental leave benefits in 1974.

CONCEPT	DEFINITION	HISTORY
Paternity (co-parent) leave	The co-parent's temporary leave in connection with birth. Also referred to as paternity leave. <i>Not covered in the dataset</i>	Introduced in 1974 with the gender-neutral parental leave system to non-first-time fathers (National Insurance Act Reform SFS 1973:473) and extended to all fathers in 1980 (National Insurance Act Reform SFS 1979:644).
Parental leave	Paid or unpaid leave taken after childbirth by either parent.	This includes the right-to-leave (with job protections) and the paid parental leave component. Parental leave has been gender-neutral (i.e., available for both parents) since 1974 (National Insurance Act Reform SFS 1973:473).
Paid parental leave	The paid component of the Swedish parental leave system, not to be confused with the legally separate right-to-leave provision. More details under <i>Remuneration</i> .	In 1974, the introduction of the gender-neutral paid parental leave system (National Insurance Act Reform SFS 1973:473) replaced maternity leave benefits introduced in 1955. While the length of the right-to-leave provision has only changed once, paid leave has been gradually expanded in multiple stages. From 180 days in 1974, 210 days in 1975, and 270 days in 1978, it continued to grow until reaching the current 480 days in 2002. The period during which paid leave can be used (see <i>Timing</i>), as well as its remuneration levels (see <i>Remuneration</i>), have also varied over the years. For example, until 1977, all paid leave had to be used right after birth (with few exceptions). Between 1978 and 1985, 180 of the total days were required to be taken directly after birth, while other "special parental leave benefits" could be used until the child's 8 th birthday. Since 1986, specific rules have applied for the last permissible date by which all paid days can be used. Most recently, in 2014, parents became eligible to use 384 days before the child's 4 th birthday and the remaining 96 days before the child's 12 th birthday.

CONCEPT	DEFINITION	HISTORY
Parental leave system	All components of parental leave, including the right to leave, paid parental leave and special provisions. The parental leave system is defined as a gender-neutral system in which leave entitlements are granted for all parents of children residing in Sweden.	Over the years, the Swedish parental leave system has evolved in a complex manner, and it now includes several fixed components combined with a high degree of flexibility (see <i>Special provisions</i>).
CONCEPTS RELATED TO TIMING		
Right to leave	Job-protected time off work taken after the birth of a child, which today can be unpaid and/or coincide with paid leave. Note: The length of the right to leave is independent of the duration of paid leave.	From 1937 until the establishment of the gender-neutral parental leave system in 1974, the right to leave was only applicable to mothers. In 1974, with the introduction of the gender-neutral parental leave system (National Insurance Act Reform SFS 1973:473), the right to leave was automatically extended to fathers in connection with parental leave benefit receipt. Note that the right to leave immediately before and after birth as a mother (from before 1974) remained in force (see <i>Maternity (birthing parent) leave</i>). In 1979, under the Act on the Right to Leave for the Care of Children (SFS 1978:410), the right to leave was extended to 1.5 years (approximately 547.5 days) after birth for both parents and was made independent of benefit receipt. Since 1995, the right to leave has been covered by the Parental Leave Act (SFS 1995:584).
Timing of paid leave	Regulations concerning the timing of parental leave uptake, namely when parents are entitled to use specific paid	When the Swedish paid parental leave system was established, parents could use up to 180 days right after the child's birth. Only under special circumstances could parents postpone using these

CONCEPT	DEFINITION	HISTORY
	leave days. This feature makes the Swedish parental leave system particularly challenging to compare with those of other national contexts, especially in analyses of <i>paid</i> parental leave patterns. Note: Although parents are entitled to use up to 60 days of paid parental leave before the expected due date (for example, to attend antenatal classes), this dataset focuses exclusively on leave after birth.	days up to 240 days after birth. Over time, however, the system has become increasingly flexible. For example, from 1978 to 1985, parents could use 180 days directly after birth, and 90 to 180 “special parental leave” days until the child’s 8th birthday (National Insurance Act Reforms SFS 1977:630 and SFS 1979:644). When the “special parental leave” days were combined with the general parental leave scheme in 1986, parents became eligible to use all days freely up to their child’s 4th birthday (National Insurance Act Reform SFS 1985:83), and later in 1989, up to their 8th birthday (National Insurance Act Reform SFS 1989:100). From 2014, parents have been able to use 384 paid days until the child’s 4th birthday and another 96 days until their 12th birthday (Social Insurance Code Reform SFS 2013:999).
Special rules regarding timing of paid leave	Specific rules regarding when parental leave benefit days can be claimed.	Since 1974, parents have been eligible to claim their parental leave benefits as full or half days (i.e., one day off with benefits can be split in half between two days). With the introduction of “special parental leave days” in 1978, these benefits could also be claimed as quarter days. Since then, parents have become eligible to claim three-quarter and one-eighth days. Since 1987, parents have had to claim 180 days of earnings-related benefits before becoming eligible to claim minimum-level benefits (National Insurance Act Reform SFS 1987:223).
CONCEPTS RELATED TO DURATION OF PAID LEAVE		
Duration of paid leave	Number of paid parental leave days per child that parents can use after birth.	This component has changed considerably since the parental leave system’s introduction. In 1974, parents were eligible for 180 days of paid leave, compensated at the earnings-related benefit

CONCEPT	DEFINITION	HISTORY
		level (i.e., either a basic benefit or a percentage of earnings above the basic level, depending on work eligibility requirements, see below). The total number of paid leave days was extended to 210 days in 1975 and to 270 days in 1978. In 1978, 30 days of an additional benefit level – the minimum level – were introduced within the “special parental leave” days (SFS 1977:630; see more under <i>Timing of paid leave</i>). Subsequently, in 1980, earnings-related level benefits were increased to 270 days and minimum-level benefits to 90 days (National Insurance Act Reform SFS 1979:644). Later extensions of paid parental leave affected only the number of earnings-related benefit days, from 270 to 360 days in 1989 and 390 days in 2002 (National Insurance Act Reforms SFS 1989:100 and SFS 2001:141).
CONCEPTS RELATED TO REMUNERATION		
Earnings-related parental leave benefits	Parental leave benefits compensated based on the parent’s income levels prior to childbirth (see below). This category can, in turn, be divided into basic-level or “sickness-benefit level” benefits (<i>sjukpenningnivå</i>, i.e., as a percentage of earnings above the basic level), depending on whether parents meet the work requirements for more generous paid parental leave benefits (see below).	Over the years, the different components of earnings-related parental leave benefits (the basic level and the percentage of earnings above the basic level) have changed independently of one another. Since 1974, eligible parents have received a decreasing percentage of their pre-childbirth salary: from 90% in 1974, fluctuating between 75-90% between 1995 and 2005, and remaining at 77.6% since. By contrast, the basic-level benefits have consistently increased, with the largest rise in 2001, from 60 SEK to 120 SEK per day. However, since 2016, they have remained at 250 SEK per day.

CONCEPT	DEFINITION	HISTORY
Income threshold	A threshold corresponding to the sickness-benefit qualifying income (<i>sjukpenninggrundande inkomst</i> or SGI), with incomes below this level being reimbursed at a basic flat rate, and those above this level being reimbursed as a percentage of earnings.	The income threshold for earnings-related benefits above the basic level has generally increased with time as a function of the government-set Price Base Amount (<i>prisbasbeloppet</i>).
Earnings-related, Basic level (<i>grundnivå</i>)	A level of parental leave remuneration that is compensated at the lowest sickness benefit level for parents who do not meet the work-related requirements (see <i>Work-related requirements</i>).	The basic level has increased over time and, since 2014, provides a higher level of pay than the minimum-level option.
Earnings-related, Above basic level (<i>sjukpenningnivå</i>)	A level of parental leave remuneration for parents who meet the work-related requirements, compensated as a percentage of their monthly salary up to a ceiling. This level can include a 10% increase based on collective agreements. Also referred to as “higher remuneration levels”, “generous levels”, or “earnings-related parental leave benefits”.	The percentage of earnings has become less generous over time, with the highest rate of 90% of the salary maintained until 1994. Since 2006, parents have been compensated at 77.6% of their earnings.
Work-related requirements	Specific conditions required for parents to be eligible to higher parental leave remuneration levels (or earnings-related for above-basic levels).	From 1974 to 1977, parents were eligible to receive earnings-related parental leave benefits if they had worked for 270 consecutive days before the estimated due date of the child and earned above a specified income (see <i>Income threshold</i>). Furthermore, fathers were only eligible for these benefits if both

CONCEPT	DEFINITION	HISTORY
		they and their partners (the mother) qualified. In 1978, this rule only became applicable to the first 180 days of benefits claimed – all ensuing earnings-related benefits were calculated based on the parents' current income, regardless of how long they had been employed. In 1986, the work requirement was decreased to 240 consecutive days' employment prior to the due date, and the rule for fathers' earnings-related benefits depending on mothers' eligibility was abolished.
Minimum level (<i>lägstnivå</i>)	A category of compensation for parental leave benefits that is paid at a fixed rate to all parents, regardless of whether they meet the work-related requirements. Also referred to as the "guarantee level" or "minimum flat-rate level".	Parental leave days reimbursed at the minimum level were introduced in 1978, the value of which has increased in parallel with basic level benefits until 2014.
CONCEPTS RELATED TO SPECIAL PROVISIONS		
Quotas	Paid parental leave days reserved for one parent on a use-it-or-lose-it basis.	In 1995, 30-day quotas for each parent were introduced, reserving these days exclusively for fathers (i.e., the <i>father's quota</i> or <i>pappamånad</i>) or mothers, to be forfeited if left unused by the specified parent (National Insurance Act Reform SFS 1994:1568). In 2002, the quotas for each parent were extended to 60 days (National Insurance Act Reform SFS 2001:141), and in 2016, to 90 days (Social Insurance Code Reform SFS 2015:674).
Simultaneous days (<i>dubbeldagar</i>)	Paid parental leave days that can be used by parents simultaneously (jointly) to take care of the child.	Since 2012, parents have been entitled to take 30 days of leave simultaneously (Social Insurance Code Reform SFS 2011:1082), and since July 2024, they may take up to 60 days simultaneously (Social Insurance Code Reform SFS 2023:905). These days do not include leave reserved exclusively for each parent (i.e., quota

CONCEPT	DEFINITION	HISTORY
		days). Simultaneous leave counts for double the parental leave, i.e., one day during which both parents are on leave simultaneously counts as two parental leave days.
Income protection	Parents with children born in quick succession are entitled to receive earnings-related benefits based on the income earned prior to the first child's birth. This is to ensure that parents are not penalized for being unable to fully return to work and recuperate their earnings between births.	In 1980, income protection rules were introduced for births spaced 24 months apart (National Insurance Act Reform SFS 1979:644). This was extended to births spaced 36 months apart in 1986 (National Insurance Act Reform SFS 1985:83).
Gender equality bonus	Economic incentive oriented to compensate for an approximately equal use of parental leave between genders.	This bonus was introduced in 2007 by the Act on gender equality bonus (SFS 2008:313) but was abolished in 2017 (SFS 2016:1295), as it was not widely used by couples.

4. Description of data material and variable list

The SweParLe data material is presented in an Excel file that can be accessed directly on Zenodo or via the Centre for Health Equity Studies (CHESS) website.

The Excel file includes four sheets. The first sheet, "Introduction", contains information about the dataset version, authors and contact details, as well as the relevant citation. The second sheet, "Variable List", contains a list of variables organized by parental leave component (see also **Table 2**). The third sheet, "Descriptives", provides a description of the parental leave system since 1974, along with additional information about specific acts, reforms, and links to relevant legislation, all organized by year. This descriptive data allows for easier navigation of the parental leave system. The fourth sheet, "Dataset", includes quantitative information drawn from the descriptive sheet that can be used directly for statistical analyses or that can be easily transferred to statistical software.

Table 2. Variable list by component

Component	Descriptive label	Description	Variable name	Data type	Units (continuous) or value label (binary)
General information	Year	Calendar year during which legal provisions applicable ¹	year	Continuous	Calendar years
	Specific act	Legal provision relevant to parental leave and SFS Code	-	-	-
	Reform type	Description of parental leave legislation	-	-	-
	General leave applicable to parent	Whether leave is for mothers only or for both parents	-	-	-
	Complementary types of leave	Description of other forms of leave available in addition to parental leave, i.e., maternity and paternity (co-parent) leave	-	-	-
Timing of leave	Right to leave (if independent of benefit receipt)	Guaranteed period during which parents can take time off work, if separate from benefit use	timing_timeoff	Continuous	Days
	Period to use parental leave benefits (after birth)	Period within which parental leave needs to be used (days after birth), first leave period	timing_1	Continuous	Days
		Duration of first leave period	timing_1_duration	Continuous	Days
		Period within which parental leave needs to be used (days after birth), second leave period	timing_2	Continuous	Days
		Duration of second leave period	timing_2_duration	Continuous	Days

Component	Descriptive label	Description	Variable name	Data type	Units (continuous) or value label (binary)
	Special rules regarding timing	Number of days that can be claimed as full or partial days; Number of days of earnings-related benefits that need to be claimed prior to qualifying for minimum-level benefits	-	-	-
Duration of paid leave	All benefit types	Total number of paid parental leave days (per child)	duration_all	Continuous	Days
	Earnings-related benefits	Number of paid parental leave days (per child), reimbursed based on earnings	duration_earnings	Continuous	Days
	Minimum-level benefits	Number of paid parental leave days (per child), reimbursed based on minimum-level benefit	duration_minimum	Continuous	Days
Remuneration	Earnings-related benefits, Basic level (SEK)	Guaranteed level for parents who do not qualify for earnings-related benefits, paid at the sickness benefit rate	remun_basic	Continuous	SEK
	Earnings-related benefits, Annual income threshold for above basic level (SEK)	Annual income threshold for eligibility to earnings-related benefits above the basic level	remun_threshold	Continuous	SEK

Component	Descriptive label	Description	Variable name	Data type	Units (continuous) or value label (binary)
	Earnings-related benefits, Percentage of earnings for above basic level	Percentage of earnings reimbursed for earnings-related benefits above the basic level	remun_above	Continuous	%
	Earnings-related benefits, Price base amount (SEK) ²	Standardized metric set annually by the government for tax calculations	remun_pricebase	Continuous	SEK
	Earnings-related benefits, Compensation units (N) ²	Fractions or multiples of the price base amount	remun_compunits	Continuous	Units
	Earnings-related benefits, Annual income ceiling for earnings-related benefits (SEK)	Maximum annual income based on which earnings-related benefits calculated: Price base amount*N*(% of earnings)	remun_ceiling	Continuous	SEK
	Earnings-related benefits, Daily cap (SEK)	Maximum earnings-related remuneration per day: (Price base amount*N*(% of earnings))/365 days	remun_daily	Continuous	SEK
	Earnings-related benefits, Work-related requirements	Days before estimated due date parent needs to have worked to qualify for earnings-related benefits	remun_work	Continuous	Days

Component	Descriptive label	Description	Variable name	Data type	Units (continuous) or value label (binary)
		Whether father's (co-parent's) eligibility for earnings-related benefits is dependent on mother's eligibility	remun_work_m	Binary	0 = Independent eligibility criteria; 1 = Dependent on mother's eligibility
	Minimum-level benefits (SEK)	Basic remuneration level, independent of actual income (flat rate)	remun_minimum	Continuous	SEK
Reforms	Income protection	Eligibility criteria for income-protected parental leave benefits, by birth spacing	special_income	Continuous	Days
	Quota for mothers	Number of (earnings-related) paid parental leave days reserved for mothers	special_quota_m	Continuous	Days
	Quota for fathers	Number of (earnings-related) paid parental leave days reserved for fathers	special_quota_f	Continuous	Days
	Gender equality bonus	Whether bonus paid out to parents who share parental leave more equally	special_bonus	Binary	. = No bonus; 0 = No bonus (repealed); 1 = Bonus
	Simultaneous leave	Number of (total) paid parental leave days eligible to be used simultaneously	special_simultaneous	Continuous	Days

Footnotes: ¹ If more than one value (e.g., duration, remuneration) applicable within a year, maximum value selected; ² Used for calculation of annual income threshold of above basic-level benefits.

Abbreviations: SEK: Swedish kronor; SFS: Swedish Code of Statutes

5. Opportunities for European comparisons

To complement the described dataset, other relevant resources for international comparisons are available.¹⁻⁷ Please note, however, that datasets may differ in their descriptions of the various components of parental leave systems due to different focuses. For example, the European Parenting Leave Policies (EPLP) dataset focuses on the duration of parental leave,^{1,2} while the Parental Leave Benefits (PLB) data module of the Social Policy Indicators (SPIN) database focuses on both duration and remuneration levels.^{3,4} In addition, cross-country harmonization efforts may result in the datasets being less informative for each specific country. The SweParLe dataset comprises information on timing, duration, and remuneration of parental leave, alongside specific provisions. Therefore, we recommend scholars and policymakers to consider the SweParLe dataset if they are specifically interested in the Swedish context or if they wish to complement international efforts with more nuanced information.

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