

Paid Leave for Adult Family Members' Health Needs



WORLD Policy Analysis Center

KEY FINDINGS

58% of countries fail to provide any paid leave to meet the health needs of adult family members, including seriously ill spouses, aging parents, and adult children.

78% of countries fail to provide at least 2 weeks of paid leave to support an aging parent's health needs.

While leave for adult health needs is more common in high-income countries (with 63% providing leave), 37% of low-income and 36% of middle-income countries have likewise shown it's feasible.

ABOUT THE DATA

This fact sheet presents findings from the following article:

Jody Heymann, Amy Raub, Willetta Waisath, Alison Earle, Pamela Stek, and Aleta Sprague (2022). [Paid leave to meet the health needs of aging family members in 193 countries](#). *Journal of Aging & Social Policy*. DOI: 10.1080/08959420.2022.2110804.

Balancing Adult Caregiving and Employment

- Research from wide-ranging countries has found that when supports and leave are inadequate, adult caregiving can have negative impacts on working caregivers' employment, work hours, income, and work trajectories.
- As working lives extend and the global population ages, adult caregiving responsibilities for working caregivers are likely to expand.
- Paid leave for adult caregiving can powerfully support workers' ability to meet the short-term and recurring health needs of ill, aging, and disabled family members—with particularly profound implications for the

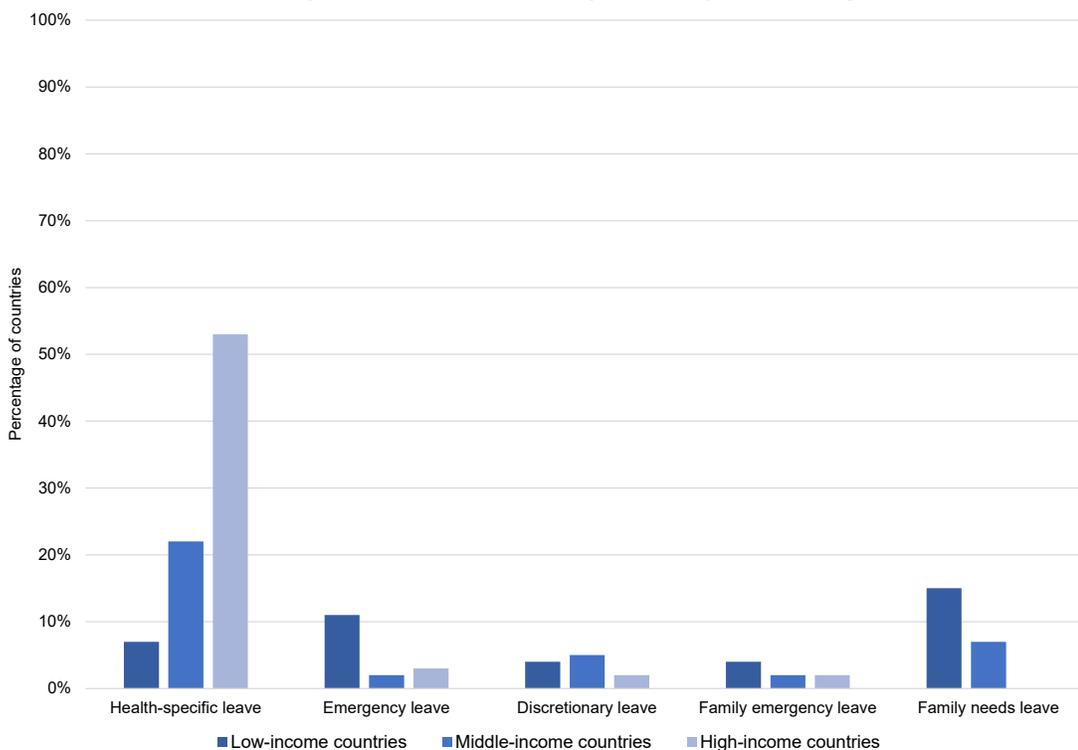
economic outcomes and wellbeing of women and older workers, who bear some of the greatest responsibility for adult care.

- However, as of 2022, the majority of countries fail to provide paid leave for adult health needs. Moreover, even where paid leave is available, significant limitations hamper workers' ability to take leave and provide care.

Types of Leave Available

- Countries guarantee workers different types of leave, sometimes in combination, that could be used to meet adult family members' health needs:
 - Leave specific to meeting health needs
 - Leave specific to meeting the needs of

Different types of paid leave by country income group





ABOUT THE METHODOLOGY

This analysis relies on a systematic review of original legislation and statutory guarantees extended to the private sector as of January 2022 for all 193 United Nations member states. Further details on full methodology can be found at: worldpolicycenter.org/topics/care/methods.

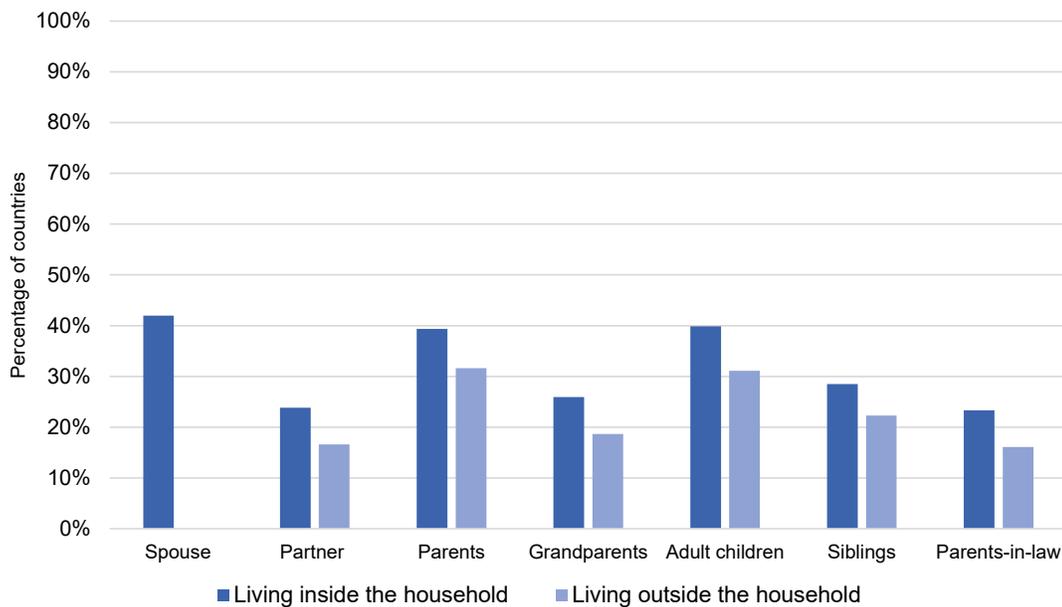
- family members, but not limited to health
- Leave reserved for emergencies
- Leave available only for family emergencies
- Broader discretionary leave
- Countries most commonly provide health-specific leave and leave to meet the needs of family members more broadly.
- High-income countries are more likely to

provide paid health-specific leave than low-income countries (53% compared to 7%).

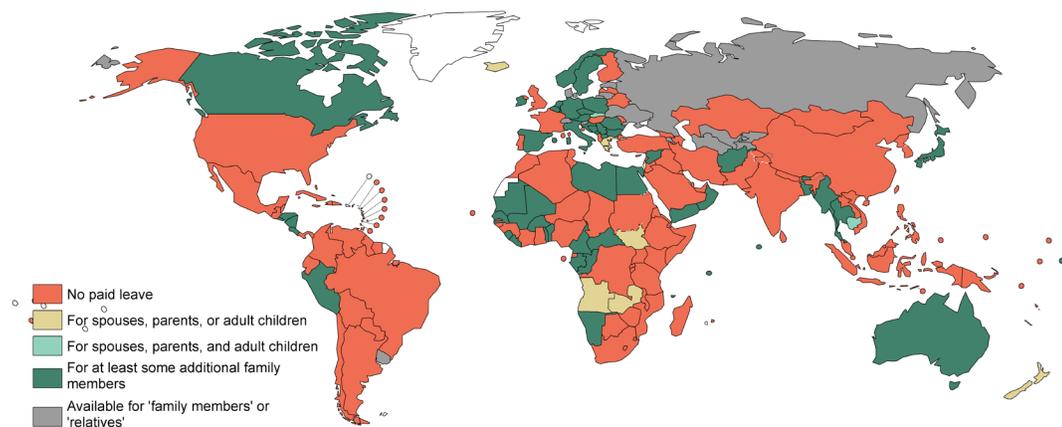
- Low-income countries are more likely to provide paid family needs leave than high-income countries (15% compared to 0%).

Leave Availability for Different Family Members

Availability of paid leave for family members living inside and outside the household



Availability of paid leave for family members living within a worker's household



Available for 'family members' or 'relatives' means that legislation broadly guarantees leave for family health needs, but does not specify the type of relationship. New Zealand is the only country to guarantee leave for partners without explicitly addressing parents and adult children. New Zealand guarantees paid leave for spouses, partners, and dependents.

Source: WORLD Policy Analysis Center, Adult Labor Database, 2022

- To enable more family members to share caregiving responsibilities and facilitate care across different family structures and relationships, it is important to ensure that leave can be taken for a wide range of family members.
- However, while paid leave that can be used to meet the health needs of an aging parent, spouse, or adult child is most common, fewer countries provide paid leave to care for a sibling, grandparent, parent-in-law, or partner.
- Across all family member relationship types, fewer countries also guarantee paid leave to care for family members living outside the worker's household, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. For example, whereas 45% of high-income countries guarantee paid leave to care for parents living outside the household, only 28% of middle-income and 19% of low-income countries do so.

Duration of Leave Available

- The most likely leaves to be available for lengthy periods of time are the health-specific leaves. Meanwhile, emergency, family emergency, discretionary, and family needs leaves are typically 2 weeks or less.
- In cases of life-threatening and terminal illnesses, multiple chronic conditions, hospitalization and recovery, or care dependency among older adults, shorter periods of leave may be insufficient for providing adequate support, particularly if care responsibilities cannot be shared among

multiple caregivers.

- In the case of health-specific leave, 12 countries guarantee at least 6 weeks of leave to care for the health needs of a parent or adult child, and 13 do so for spouses. No country provides at least 6 weeks of emergency, family emergency, discretionary, or family needs leave.
- Due in part to differences in the types of leave provided across country income level, differences in the duration of paid leave are marked. For example, 1 in 5 high-income countries guarantee at least 6 weeks of paid leave that can be used to care for an ill spouse, compared to just 1 middle-income country and no low-income countries.

Wage Replacement during Leave

- The adequacy of wage replacement rates during leave can markedly shape both the ability of caregivers to take leave and whether leave is shared equitably across gender, with broader consequences for women's economic outcomes.
- Most countries offer a wage replacement rate of at least 80% for leave that can be used for adult health needs—but in some countries, the maximum wage replacement is far lower.
- While health-specific leaves tend to be longer in duration, they are somewhat less likely to provide full wages. The shorter emergency, discretionary, and family needs leaves are at full wages.



WORLD Policy Analysis Center

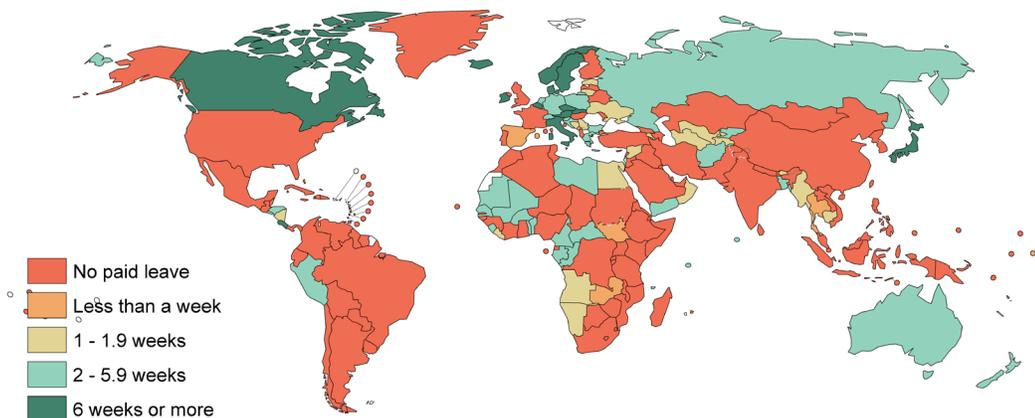
ABOUT WORLD

The **WORLD Policy Analysis Center (WORLD)** aims to improve the quantity and quality of globally comparative data on policies affecting health, development, well-being, and equity. With these data, WORLD informs policy debates; facilitates comparative studies of policy progress, feasibility, and effectiveness; and advances efforts to hold decision-makers accountable.

Website:
worldpolicycenter.org

Email:
world@ph.ucla.edu

How much paid leave is available to workers to meet a spouse's serious health needs?



Source: WORLD Policy Analysis Center, Adult Labor Database, 2022