

# Paid Leave for Children's Health Needs



WORLD Policy Analysis Center

## KEY FINDINGS

**63%**

*of countries have no paid leave for parents to meet their children's everyday health needs.*

**58%**

*of countries have no paid leave that can be used to meet the ongoing everyday health needs of children with disabilities.*

**78%**

*of countries have less than 6 weeks of paid leave available to meet young children's serious health needs.*

## Balancing Children's Health and Work

- Parental presence is central to children's health and their recovery from illness and accidents.
- Yet in the absence of adequate paid leave policies, parents may have to choose between adequate care for their child and job/income security.
- A lack of paid leave or inadequate paid leave disproportionately harms women's economic opportunities because women are primarily responsible for children's health needs, and men frequently cite work as a barrier to being more engaged fathers.
- Nearly every country around the world recognizes the importance of allowing parents to care for their children while maintaining income and keeping their jobs by providing paid parental leave after the birth

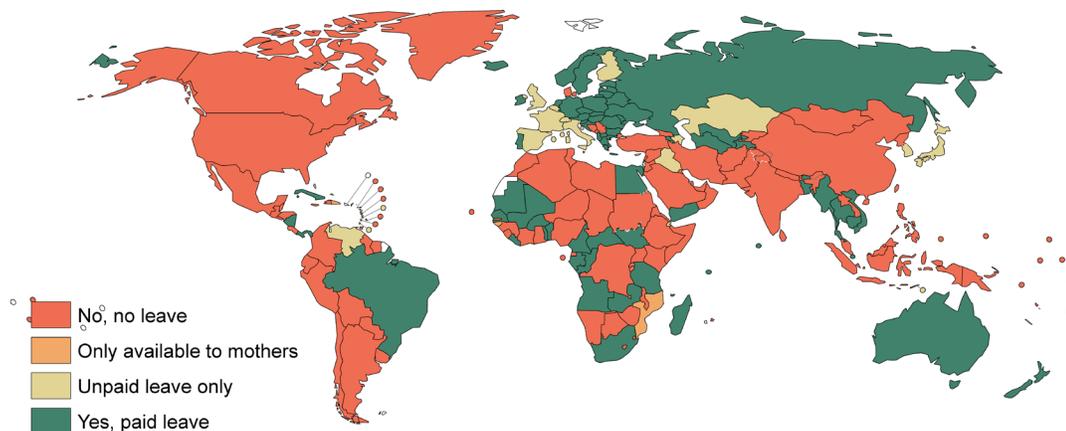
of a child.

- However, far too few countries adequately address health needs beyond infancy.

## Everyday Health Needs

- Infectious and gastrointestinal disease, as well as seasonal illnesses, are common for children, particularly as they first start childcare or school.
- By supporting parents' ability to keep their children home when they are sick, paid leave can also reduce the spread of infectious disease, benefiting communities and local economies.
- Paid leave also reduces unnecessary emergency room visits by enabling access to preventive care and allowing parents to seek care during standard clinic hours.
- Yet only 37% of countries guarantee parents any paid leave that can meet their children's

## Are working parents guaranteed any leave for children's everyday health needs?



## ABOUT THE DATA

This fact sheet presents findings from the following article, updated to 2022:

Amy Raub and Jody Heymann (2022). [Supporting children's health needs: An analysis of paid leave policies in 193 countries](#). *Global Public Health*. DOI: 10.1080/17441692.2022.2062028.

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

everyday health needs.

- Moreover, in 11 countries this leave is too short (less than a week) to adequately respond to multiple episodes of illness that young children frequently have.

available each month for disability-specific needs (Estonia) to allowing parents of children with severe disability to take full or part-time leave during early childhood (Croatia).

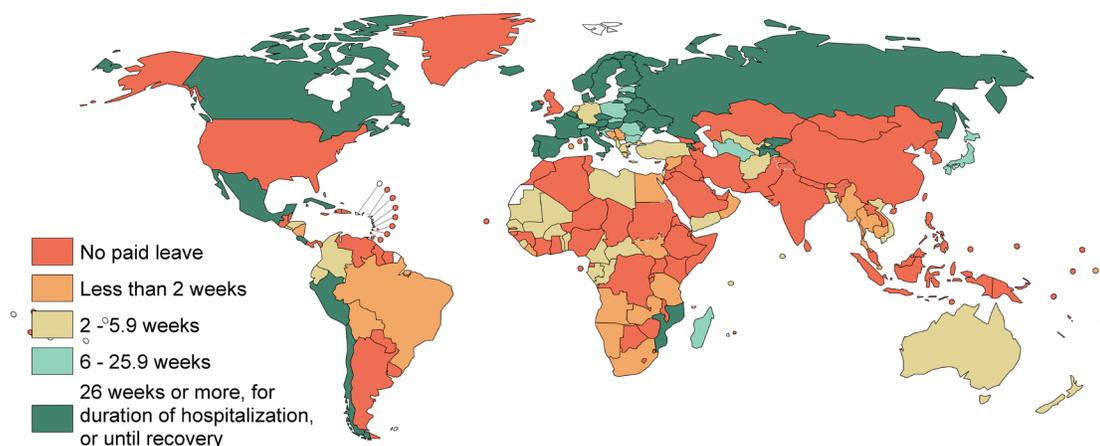
## Ongoing Everyday Health Needs of Children with Disabilities

- Children with disabilities face a wide range of ongoing health challenges that require parental support.
- In countries around the world, addressing these challenges often requires more frequent doctor's appointments and/or absences from school. For example, one U.S. study estimated that, on average, children with special health needs miss 4 weeks of school or childcare a year. Similarly, among HIV-infected children in Botswana, one study estimated that 60% missed at least one day of school in the previous month, typically for medical appointments.
- 17% of countries specifically recognize the special health needs of children with disabilities by establishing separate leave entitlements for these needs, and an additional 25% generally make health leave available for children's everyday health needs.
- Approaches to these leaves vary greatly from making an additional day of paid leave

## Serious Health Needs

- Many serious health needs require lengthy and ongoing periods of care to support children's health.
- For example, one study found that Swiss parents took nearly the full working year to care for their child after a cancer diagnosis.
- Meanwhile, other serious illnesses, such as malaria, meningitis, and asthma, may require shorter periods of care to respond to acute attacks.
- Paid leave can help mitigate the detrimental impacts on employment from these lengthy health needs while also supporting parental physical and mental health during a challenging time.
- More than half of countries (55%) guarantee at least some paid leave that can be used to meet children's health needs. Yet only 22% guarantee at least 6 weeks of paid leave to care for a young child, which would be necessary to support many serious health conditions.
- Moreover, in 10 countries, parents can only take paid leave to meet the serious health needs of young children.

## How much paid leave can working parents take for a five-year-old child's serious health needs?



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



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## 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](https://worldpolicycenter.org/topics/care/methods).

## 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.

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