

What do we spend on fathers?

Key facts about UK paternity and parental leave pay

Eligible UK fathers can take one- or two-weeks' paternity leave, paid at the statutory rate of £184.03 per week. This is less than half the National Living Wage, which is £11.44 per hour, and works out at £400.40 for a 35-hour working week¹.

HMRC data² shows that in 2021/22, 204,200 UK fathers received statutory paternity pay. That's around a third (32%) of fathers, assuming one father for every mother who received maternity pay that year. These fathers received a total of £59.3 million, representing just 1.9% of the total parenting leave bill in the UK³. They received an average of £290 each. By comparison, the average amount of statutory maternity pay received by mothers was £4,762⁴.

Around a fifth of fathers are not eligible to paternity leave; many others will take annual leave instead of paternity leave, because it's paid at 100% salary. Around a quarter of fathers receive enhanced paternity leave/pay from their employers.

If an average-earning, full-time working man takes two weeks' statutory paternity pay at the current rate, he is £1,023.04 worse off, compared to what he would earn if he carried on working⁵.

A father earning the average male full-time weekly wage of £695.60, would bring home £36,171.20 per year, and pay income tax and National

¹ The average working week for men was 35.3 hours in 2022, according to [ONS data](#)

² Some employers may not claim statutory paternity pay back from the Government, so the number of fathers actually taking paternity leave may be higher than this

³ 636,000 mothers received £3.03 billion in statutory maternity pay (96.7% of the total spent on parenting leave pay); 13,000 parents received £23.2 million in shared parental leave pay (0.7%); and 4,600 'main adopter' parents received £21.8 million in adoption pay (0.7%)

⁴ £3,028,700,000 total statutory maternity payout divided by 636,000 recipients = £4,762 per mother

⁵ Qualifying employee fathers in the UK are eligible to two weeks' paternity leave. The statutory rate for paternity pay is £184.03 per week (from April 2024). Two weeks' statutory paternity pay is £368.06 (2 x £184.03). Two weeks' pay at the UK average for a full-time working man (£695.60 per week: Office for National Statistics, April 2023: median weekly full-time pay for full-time men) is £1,391.20 (2 x £695.60). The difference is £1,023.04

Insurance of £4,720.24⁶ per year. Assuming he stayed on this average rate of pay for a working life of 40 years, he would have paid £188,809.60 in tax and NI by the time he retired.

- The £290 average statutory paternity payout represents just 0.15% of such a father's whole-working-life tax contribution; and 6.14% of his tax bill for one year
- The £386.60 such a father might receive in statutory paternity pay⁷, if eligible and taking the full two weeks of statutory paternity leave, represents 0.2% of his total whole-working-life tax contribution; and 8.19% of his tax bill for one year

To pay an average-earning full-time working father six weeks' paternity/parental leave at 90% of his usual wage, would cost £3,753⁸. This would represent 1.98% of his total working-life tax contribution; and 79.5% of his tax bill for one year.

There were 605,479 live births in 2022⁹. Assuming this level of births, one father per live birth, each father working full-time on average earnings, and 100% take-up of the full entitlement, our calculations suggest that six weeks' statutory leave paid at 90% of average earnings would cost the UK up to £2,272,362,687 (i.e. £2.27 billion) per year. To set this in context, this would represent 2.6% of the UK's welfare spend (excluding universal credit and state pensions)¹⁰.

⁶ The first £12,570 is not taxed, and he pays 20% tax and NI paid on the remaining £23,601.20 = £4,720.24

⁷ Two weeks at £184.03 per week

⁸ £695.60 per week x 6 = £4,170 x 90% = £3,753

⁹ Source: [ONS](#)

¹⁰ Based on Office for Budget Responsibility prediction of 2024/25 spending of £87.9 billion on 'other welfare' (see [A brief guide to the UK public finances](#), p3)