

UK higher education institutions' leave offers for parents

Summary of data gathered by Clare Matysova

UK researcher Clare Matysova sent out Freedom of Information requests to 117 UK higher education institutions in 2023, asking them for details of their leave offers for parents¹. Below is a summary of their responses²:

Maternity leave

- Almost all the HEIs (98%) offered enhanced maternity leave
- 34% offered the equivalent of between 6 and 18 weeks' leave at full pay
- 46% offered between 18 and 26 weeks' leave at full pay
- 17% offered at least 26 weeks' leave at full pay, with one of these offering 52 weeks at full pay.
- The overall average number of weeks of maternity leave at full pay equivalent was 18.2 weeks.

Paternity leave

- The vast majority of HEIs (93%) offered enhanced paternity leave
- 68% offered two weeks' paternity leave at full pay
- 14% offered more than two weeks at full pay
- 3% offered 6 weeks or more fully paid paternity leave, with one of these offering 26 weeks at full pay.
- The overall average number of weeks of paternity leave at full pay equivalent was 2.3 weeks.

Shared parental leave

- 62% of the HEIs matched their maternity offer for fathers/co-parents taking shared parental leave

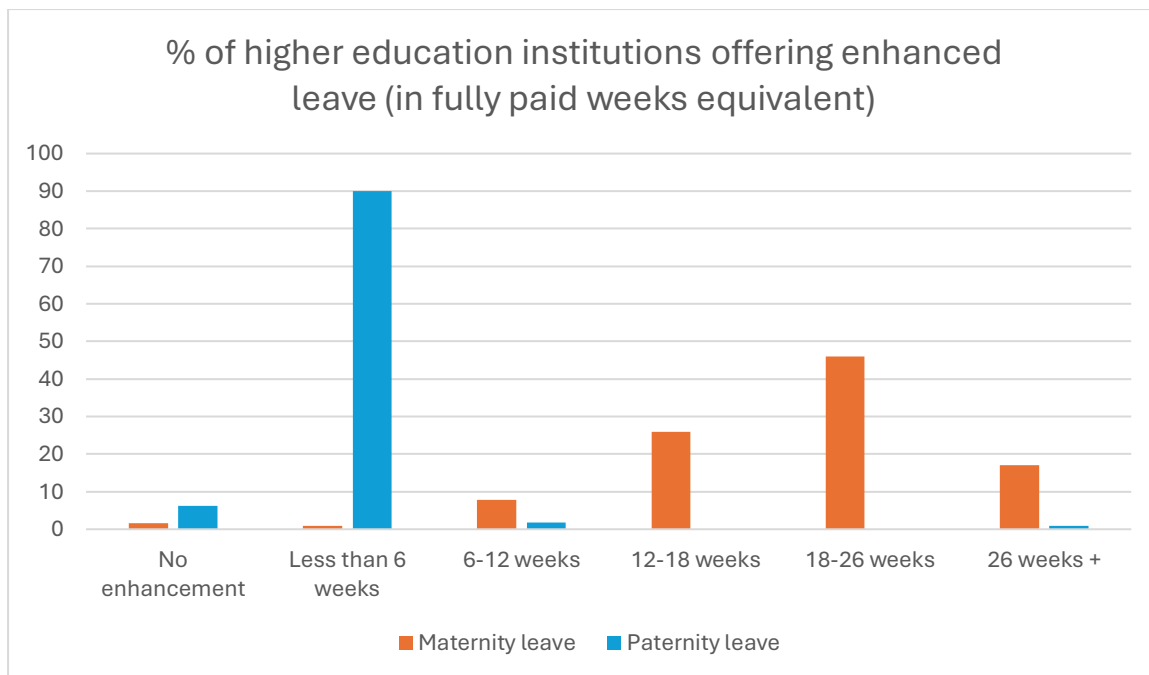
Transparency

- 50% of the HEIs publicised their parental leave policies on their website.

The chart below provides a summary of the data.

¹ You can watch a video interview with Clare, talking about this research, on the [Fatherhood Institute Youtube channel](#).

² 115 HEIs provided information about maternity leave, 112 about paternity leave and 113 about shared parental leave.



Observations from the Fatherhood Institute

- Most UK employers offer fathers only statutory paternity leave and pay. So relative to many other sectors, higher education is generous to dads. But the HEIs' enhanced paternity offers are very limited in scope – in most cases amounting to only 2 weeks' paternity leave, albeit paid at full salary, which should mean fathers can at least afford to take the time off.
- To put HEIs' 2.3-weeks-at-full-pay average in perspective, organisations in the 270-strong Inspiring Dads Parental Leave Database³ - offer dads an average of 4.9 weeks' fully paid leave.
- There is a very wide gap between HEIs' maternity and paternity offers, with the average number of weeks at full pay being just over 18 weeks for mothers and 2 weeks for fathers. A similar gap exists in the Inspiring Dads database - but it's worth noting that a substantial minority (45%) of organisations listed there offer their staff equal amounts of parental leave, regardless of gender⁴.
- This, added to the fact that two-fifths of the HEIs don't even enhance shared parental leave to the same level as their maternity offer, suggests HEIs are somewhat behind the times, equating 'a better deal for mothers' with 'longer and better paid maternity leave' rather than 'a reduced gap between mothers' and fathers' access to paid leave for parenting'.
- Only 50% of HEIs publish details of their leave offers: a disappointing lack of transparency that could lead to discrimination against parents who ask about this when applying for jobs.

³ Created by Ian Dinwiddy and available for free, this [searchable database](#) is the best available listing of 'top tier' employers for parental leave, in the UK.

⁴ Read more in this [news article](#) from Personnel Today, 30 September 2024.