



# WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW

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## **FAQ – WBL 2025**

## **Methodology Workshops**

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# PARENTHOOD

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## 1. Do you consider parental leave policies or only maternity and paternity leave?

*Women, Business and the Law* has historically collected and reported data on three distinct types of leave policies: maternity leave, paternity leave, and parental leave, the latter defined as paid leave that can either be shared between mother and father or as an individual entitlement that each can take regardless of the other. To streamline the Parenthood indicator and to reflect more closely the existence and design of paid leave policies for working parents, *Women, Business and the Law 2.0* (published in 2024) incorporated data related to parental leave and their respective duration into the two existing questions on the availability of paid leave for mothers and fathers, respectively.

## 2. Is the question of length of maternity leave concerned with the percentage of salary paid during maternity leave? For example, if maternity leave lasts 98 days but only 10% of the salary is paid, does that mean the economy will receive full score of 1? Same question about paternity leave.

*Women, Business and the Law* collects detailed information on wage replacement rates for maternity, paternity, and parental leave, drawing on international standards such as the ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), which recommends that women receive at least two-thirds of their previous earnings during maternity leave. However, this information is not used in the scoring of the relevant indicators. Instead, the scoring focuses on the combined duration of paid maternity and parental leave, without factoring in the level of wage replacement. This approach avoids penalizing countries that offer longer periods of leave with lower wage replacement rates—a common structure in many national policies. The same principle applies to paternity leave, where benefits are recorded for reference but not used in the scoring methodology.

## 3. Why is it a good practice for governments to fully pay maternity, paternity, and parental leave benefits?

The full financing of maternity, paternity, and parental leave benefits by the government is regarded as an international good practice, as it alleviates the financial burden on employers and helps mitigate potential disincentives to hiring or retaining women, particularly those of childbearing age. When employers are required to bear the cost—either wholly or partially—it may unintentionally contribute to labor market discrimination.

Government-financed leave schemes are also consistent with international labor standards, such as the ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183). Historically, *Women, Business and the Law* applied a binary scoring system, assigning a full score of 1 only when leave benefits were entirely paid or administered by the government. When benefits were solely or partially paid by the employer, it received a score of 0. The current methodology introduces more detailed data collection on the source of leave benefits, enabling a more nuanced analysis and supporting efforts to encourage comprehensive policy reform.

**4. My question is about incentives for fathers to take paternity leave. Isn't paid leave incentive enough to encourage them to take it? Do we really need more incentives? I believe wages are 100% paid even during those days without being deducted.**

While paid paternity leave is an important step, evidence suggests that it is not always sufficient to ensure uptake by fathers. In most countries, paternity leave remains limited in duration and is often treated more as a short-term justified absence than as a substantial caregiving entitlement. As a result, it is typically fully remunerated usually by the employer. However, the mere availability of legally mandated paid leave does not automatically translate into widespread use. Cultural expectations, workplace norms, and concerns about stigma or career penalties often discourage fathers from taking time off. Therefore, additional incentives—such as non-transferable leave quotas, wage replacement guarantees, job protections, or awareness campaigns—can play a critical role in shifting social norms and encouraging more equitable sharing of caregiving responsibilities.

*Women, Business and the Law* began collecting and publishing data on these incentive measures for the first time in its 2024 report, with the objective of better understanding how policy design can increase the uptake of paternity leave and support broader gender equality in caregiving and labor force participation.

**5. Due to the pandemic, women have taken on more care work responsibilities. How did the report capture this impact on women?**

While *Women, Business and the Law* does not include a dedicated indicator specifically designed to capture the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on unpaid care responsibilities, related topics—such as childcare—enable a broader examination of policies that support caregiving. Through its analysis of legal frameworks and supportive policies related to the provision of childcare services, the childcare topic provides insights into how governments structure care support systems, which are critical in addressing the disproportionate care burden placed on women, especially during times of crisis. These provisions are examined to help promote a more holistic understanding of the enabling environment for women's economic participation.

**6. Do you publish data on the amount of maternity leave benefits?**

*Women, Business and the Law* collects data on the amount of maternity leave benefits but does not publish it. Nonetheless, it serves as a valuable reference for assessing alignment with international standards, such as the ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), which recommends that maternity benefits amount to at least two-thirds of a woman's previous earnings.