

Australian Fathers' Use of Leave for Parenting: Changing Patterns and Policy Implications

By

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Paid parental leave in Australia

- Prior to 1 January 2011...
- Employer paid schemes covered about 46% of working mothers and 35% of working fathers
 - Varied in length of time and remuneration by employer
 - Many parents took other forms of paid leave – most typically holiday leave (if eligible)
- 1 January 2011: Government funded Paid Parental Leave (PPL) scheme
 - Gender neutral language, but essentially set up as a maternity leave scheme
 - covered about 93% of working mothers
 - Work test @ 8 hours week/10 of 13 months prior to birth
 - 18 weeks minimum wage (payment only – no leave entitlement)
- PPL scheme operates alongside existing employer paid schemes (and alongside a statutory entitlement to 52 weeks' unpaid parental leave)
- Family payments and paid leave policies have continued to change since

Importance of Fathers' parenting leave

- Changing notions of good “fatherhood”
- Gender equity in the workplace and home

Influences on fathers' leave taking

- Policy design
- Workplace and employment characteristics
- Mothers' characteristics
- Family characteristics
- Individual characteristics

Research Question

- What (if any) changes occurred in fathers' access to and usage of leave for parenting in dual earner families in the context of major social and policy change in Australia?
 - Reinforce the status quo by subsidising mothers to stay out of workforce?
 - Raise awareness of importance of parental leave around birth?

What this study does

Using mothers' reports*:

1. Describes differences in fathers' access to leave before and after PPL
2. Describes differences in leave taking (type and time) before and after PPL

* In other qualitative research we have found that mothers reports of fathers leave are fairly accurate (particularly of leave taken)

The study and data

- Mothers were all working prior to birth – at least 1 day a week for 10/13 months prior to birth
- “Before” and “after” study design
- Baseline Mothers study (BaMS): Before PPL scheme
 - Babies born October/November 2009
 - 2,587 mothers surveyed October 2010 – February 2011
- Family and Work Cohort Study (FaWCS): After PPL scheme
 - Babies born October/November 2011
 - Longitudinal study:
 - Wave 1: 4,201 mothers surveyed May-July 2012 (@ 7 months)
 - Wave 2: 3,487 mothers surveyed Oct-Dec 2012 (@ 12 months)

Analytic Sample

- Mothers who were working before birth
- Had a partner who was working at the time of birth
 - dual earner families before birth of baby
- N = 5,426
 - 2,280 BaMS
 - 3,146 FaWCS
 - Numbers vary depending on outcome

Descriptive statistics of types of leave access, took and time (first 12 months after birth)

Type of leave	% Access		% Took (access)		Mean (weeks)	
	BaMS	FaWCS	BaMS	FaWCS	BaMS	FaWCS
Employer-Paid Paternity Leave	34	34	92	92	1.81	1.98
Paid Holiday Leave	67	61	80	78	2.37	3.65
Unpaid Parental Leave	31	28	45	50	2.09	2.32
Paid Sick Leave	43	35	15	31	1.04	1.20
Other Paid Leave	7	7	53	64	1.88	1.66
Paid Long Service Leave	18	12	11	19	5.24	5.98
Other Unpaid Leave	26	23	31	36	2.09	2.76
Total (all leave types)	86	83	84	87	3.31	3.69
N	2,280	3,146	1,963	2,620	1,669	2,279

Control Variables

Collected identically across all data collections:

- Fathers (pre-birth job/individual chars):
 - occupation
 - Income
 - Contract
 - Sector
 - Education
 - Australian born (or migrant)
- Mothers:
 - Returned to work (at interview)
- Family/household:
 - Marital status (cohab or married)
 - First birth or not
 - Housing tenure

Analytic approach

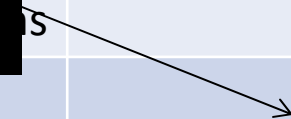
- Merged data files and include an indicator for FaWCS (BaMS reference)
- Regressions on took leave and time taken
 - We know overall decline in access reports
- BaMS – FaWCS comparison
 - Took leave – logit (only if had access to leave)
 - Months of leave - Regression analysis (only if took leave)
- Run unadjusted (no controls) and adjusted models

BaMS – FaWCS comparison

Took leave (if had access)

Type of leave	Unadjusted (FaWCS (ref BaMS))	Adjusted FaWCS (ref BaMS)
Employer Paid Paternity Leave	0.03 ns	-0.03 ns
Paid Holiday Leave	-0.12 ns	-0.08 ns
Unpaid Parental Leave	0.21*	0.28*
Paid Sick Leave	0.92***	0.96***
Other Paid Leave	0.44*	0.34 ns
Paid Long Service Leave	0.65*	1.13**
Other Unpaid Leave	0.05 ns	0.05 ns
Took any leave	0.22**	0.35**

48 % increase in the odds
of taking some leave



N = 4,583

*P<.05; **P<.01; ***P<.001

BaMS – FaWCS comparison

Time in paid leave (if took leave)

Time in leave (months)	Unadjusted FaWCS (ref BaMS)	Adjusted FaWCS (ref BaMS)
Employer Paid Paternity Leave	0.16 ns	0.14 ns
Paid Holiday Leave	1.30***	1.18***
Unpaid Parental Leave	0.23 ns	0.23 ns
Paid Sick Leave (n=34)	0.17 ns	-0.06 ns
Other Paid Leave	-0.22 ns	-0.12 ns
Paid Long Service Leave (n=75)	0.74 ns	-0.18 ns
Other Unpaid Leave	0.67*	0.76*
Total time in leave	0.38**	0.27*

About 1.35 working days

N = 3,948

*P<.05; **P<.01; ***P<.001

Summary

- Australian fathers take relatively short periods of leave for parenting in first year after birth (around 3.5 weeks)
- Some evidence of increased uptake and duration of leave overall, but picture not clear:
 - No increased uptake or time in **employer paid leave**
 - Some indication of increased uptake of **unpaid parenting leave**, but not time
 - Some indication of increased time in **paid holiday leave**, but not uptake
 - Changes not due to “parenting” leave per se
- Natural increase??
- Further analysis: include more mothers characteristics (whole of family approach)

Implications for policy

- Successful fathers leave policies have 3 main components:
 1. High replacement wage
 2. Use it or lose it component
 3. Flexibility in timing
- The Paid Parental Leave policy that was introduced at this time did not include any of these provisions
 - No substantial increase
- The new Dad and Partner Pay (DaPP) leave policy commenced 1 January 2013 (evaluation not publicly available) includes:
 - 2 weeks ✗ (use it or lose it) ✓
 - Can be taken any time within 52 weeks of birth ✓
 - Has to be taken all at once, paid in a one-off lump sum ✗
 - Minimum wage ✗