

Why aren't more fathers taking parental leave?

In 2017, Canadians reported:

- 90% of mothers took maternity leave
- 12% of fathers took or intended to take paternity leave

Source: Statistics Canada (2018). *Employment Insurance Coverage Survey, 2017*



What is parental leave?

Parental leave is time given to an employee to take care of their children away from work. It includes "maternity," "paternal," and "adoption" leave.



What are the **barriers to fathers** taking parental leave?



Psychological barriers

Some men may feel inadequate as fathers, particularly if they're not providing financially for their family, and thus won't take any parental leave. This is partly a result of the perpetuation of traditional notions of masculinity and what it means to be a father (e.g., the "breadwinner").

To remove these barriers we can increase fatherhood self-efficacy by providing targeted resources to fathers (e.g., parenting books), as well as expanding our definition of masculinity to include traits such as "nurturing."



What are the **benefits of fathers taking leave?**

- Fathers play an important role in child development
- Men who had involved fathers, are more likely to be involved fathers themselves
- It may reduce the motherhood penalty, which contributes to the wage gap and career limitations



Societal barriers

Not all fathers who want to take a leave have the privilege to do so. Yet the current system assumes they do because it's designed for the "ideal family" stereotype, which typically implies a straight, white, middle or upper-class family. This masks the privilege of access to leaves.

To remove these barriers we should be more inclusive in our definition of what constitutes a "family." By doing this, we can design more advantageous leave policies, particularly for low-income families.



Policy barriers

The design of leave policies often don't take into account the additional support needed for parents during and after taking leave; including re-integration programs and childcare. Many policies also reinforce the privilege of parental leave by offering low income-replacement rates.

To remove these barriers companies can offer a fixed rather than a relative income-replacement rate, provide support to returning parents, and ensure that workplace culture encourages fathers to take leave.