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Let the Men Go Home

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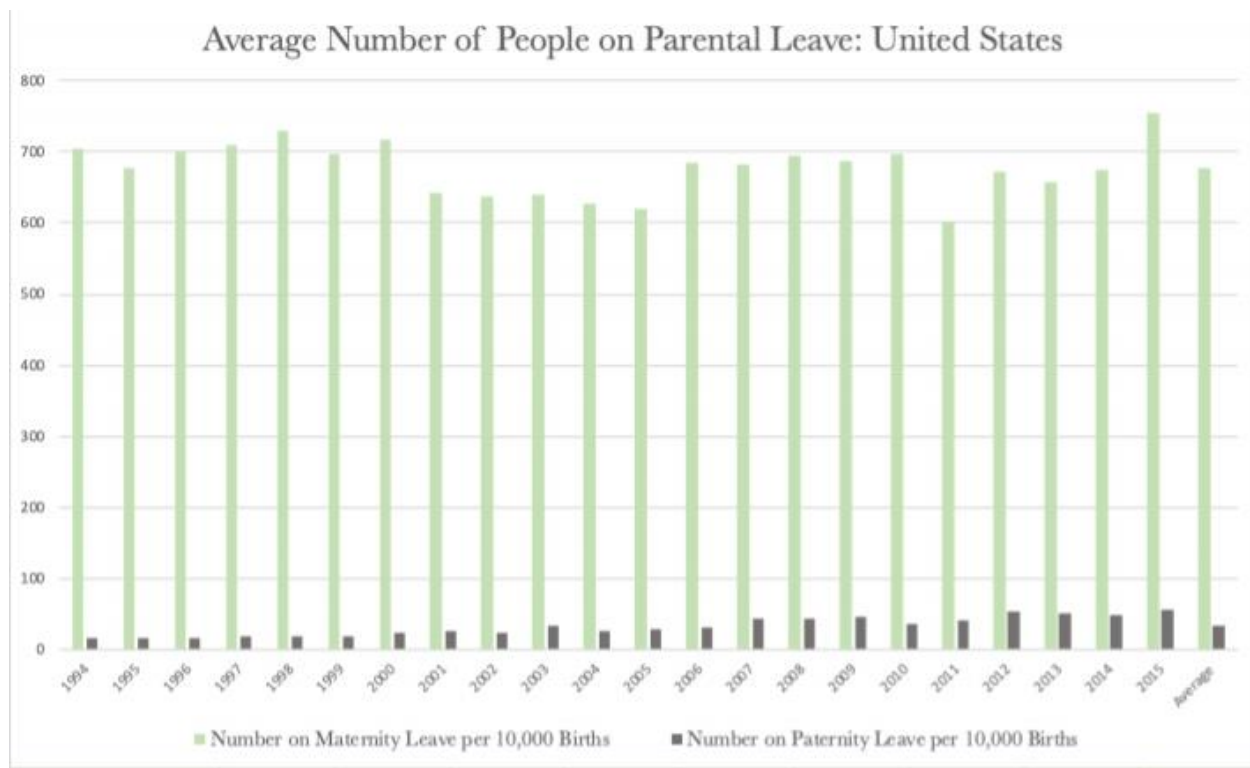
Cover Page Footnote

1 ANON, 2019. "ACCESS TO PAID AND UNPAID FAMILY LEAVE IN 2018." U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS. AVAILABLE AT: [HTTPS://WWW.BLS.GOV/OPUB/TED/2019/ACCESS-TO-PAID-AND-UNPAID-FAMILY-LEAVE-IN-2018.HTM](https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2019/access-to-paid-and-unpaid-family-leave-in-2018.htm) [ACCESSED MAY 25, 2019]. 2 GAULT, B., PH.D., HARTMANN, H., PH.D., HEGEWISCH A. MILLI, J., PH.D., REICHLIN, L., 2014. "PAID PARENTAL LEAVE IN THE UNITED STATES". AVAILABLE AT: [HTTPS://WWW.DOL.GOV/WB/RESOURCES/PAID_PARENTAL_LEAVE_IN_THE_UNITED_STATES.PDF](https://www.dol.gov/wb/resources/paid-parental-leave-in-the-united-states.pdf) [ACCESSED MAY 25, 2019]. 3 ZAGORSKY, J.L., PH.D., 2017. "DIVERGENT TRENDS IN US MATERNITY AND PATERNITY LEAVE," 1994-2015. AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH, 107(3), PP. 460-465. 4 GARTZIA, L., SANCHEZ-VIDAL, M.E. AND CEGARRA-LEIVA, D., 2018. "MALE LEADERS WITH PATERNITY LEAVES: EFFECTS OF WORK NORMS ON EFFECTIVENESS EVALUATIONS." EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF WORK AND ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY, 27(6), P. 793. 5 REHEL, E., 2014. "WHEN DAD STAYS HOME TOO: PATERNITY LEAVE, GENDER, AND PARENTING." GENDER AND SOCIETY, 28(1), P. 120. 6 GARTZIA. "MALE LEADERS," P. 442. 8 REHEL. "WHEN DAD STAYS HOME," P. 114. 9 MCLANAHAN, S., TACH, L. AND SCHNEIDER, D., 2013. "THE CAUSAL EFFECTS OF FATHER ABSENCE. ANNUAL REVIEW OF SOCIOLOGY," 39, P. 399. 10 REHEL. "WHEN DAD STAYS HOME," P. 110. 11 REHEL. "WHEN DAD STAYS HOME," P. 111. 12 PETTS, R.J. AND KNOESTER, C., 2019. "PATERNITY LEAVE AND PARENTAL RELATIONSHIPS: VARIATIONS BY GENDER AND MOTHERS' WORK STATUSES." JOURNAL OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY, 81(2), P. 468. 13 DOUGLAS, D., 2016. "HOW TO GET DADS TO TAKE PARENTAL LEAVE? SEEING OTHER DADS DO IT." NPR. AVAILABLE AT: [HTTPS://WWW.NPR.ORG/2016/02/08/465726445/HOW-TO-GET-DADS-TO-TAKE-PARENTAL-LEAVE-SEEING-OTHER-DADS-DO-IT](https://www.npr.org/2016/02/08/465726445/how-to-get-dads-to-take-parental-leave-seeing-other-dads-do-it) [ACCESSED MAY 25, 2019]. 14 LEVS, J. ET AL., 2019. "TO MAKE THE CASE FOR PATERNITY LEAVE, DADS WILL HAVE TO WORK TOGETHER." HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW. AVAILABLE AT: [HTTPS://HBR.ORG/2019/03/TO-MAKE-THE-CASE-FOR-PATERNITY-LEAVE-DADS-WILL-HAVE-TO-WORK-TOGETHER](https://hbr.org/2019/03/to-make-the-case-for-paternity-leave-dads-will-have-to-work-together) [ACCESSED MAY 25, 2019].

Let the Men Go Home

By Gwyn Yukon

The U.S. Department of Labor reported that a majority of workers had access to paid or unpaid family leave in 2018. Women utilize this leave at much higher rates than men.ⁱ When men do take advantage of paternity leave, only 30% take off more than 10 days.ⁱⁱ The rates of men taking leave after the birth of a child are increasing, but at a noticeably slower pace. Figure 1 displays the trends of parental leave between the years of 1994 and 2015.



This graph shows the average number of individuals on leave per 10,000 births in the United States each month. While the number of men taking leave is increasing, it is still significantly below that of mothers.ⁱⁱⁱ This article seeks to address the following issues regarding paternity leave: (1) the barriers that men face, (2) the benefits of doing so, and (3) the measures men can take to stand against the current stigma.

Barriers

When trying to take paternity leave, men face many barriers. New fathers are often expected to maintain focus on work regardless of the demands placed on them at home. Due in part to these negative pressures, fathers have a hard time breaking from the standard of prioritizing work over family. Men who take an extended leave receive visibly negative evaluation from their coworkers in comparison to those who take shorter leaves.^{iv} A journal article published in *Gender & Society* found that male employees did not take extended time off because they feared how they would be viewed by employers and coworkers.^v Additionally, extended time off has been linked to fewer promotions as well as salary penalties.^{vi}

Benefits

Men are reasonably hesitant about taking an extended leave, given that they face many difficulties in getting time off from work; however, the benefits of utilizing leave far outweigh the struggle.

Active Fathering

Extended paternity leave promotes active fathering. A recent study conducted by researchers from Rutgers University and Columbia University found that fathers who take more than two weeks of leave are more involved in child care activities nine months later, such as feeding, bathing, dressing, and diapering.^{vii} If a man takes time off of work at the beginning of his child's life, then the father learns how to become an active caregiver.

Erin Rehel, a researcher on fatherhood, found that as men build greater confidence in their parenting skills, they are more involved caregivers.^{viii} Children need their fathers. Paternal involvement can prevent a slew of negative outcomes. Researchers from Princeton, Cornell, and University of California, Berkeley, found that paternal absence is negatively associated with high school graduation, social-emotional adjustment, and adult mental health.^{ix} If men are engaged in fathering from the start, they can prevent an array of negative experiences from occurring later in their children's lives.

Egalitarian Partnership

Another benefit to paternity leave is its effective promotion of gender equality while simultaneously improving relationships. As fathers take more time off, they develop a sense of responsibility and actively co-parent, rather than simply "helping" their partners.^x Fathers who take extended time off tend to parent like a mother.^{xi} Paternity leave enables greater gender role flexibility, allowing men and women to parent as equal partners. Paternity leave is also connected to reports of higher relationship satisfaction. An article in the *Journal of Marriage and Family* found that when fathers take a longer leave, mothers are more satisfied with the relationship. Additionally, working mothers reported less relational conflict when their partners

utilized extended leave.^{xii} The birth of a child can be a tumultuous time for a relationship; however, extended paternity leave can help to alleviate potential conflict and promote higher relationship satisfaction.

Resolve

Resolve to take a stand. Despite the benefits of paternity leave, many men struggle to fight against established social mores. Gordon Dahl, an economist at University of California, San Diego, found that the key to increasing paternity leave rates is to have men see a coworker return from paternity leave without experiencing negative consequences.^{xiii} Former CNN journalist and author of *All In*, Josh Levs is a strong advocate for paternity leave. Levs said, “It isn’t easy to stand up to the pressures against taking paternity leave. But men in this situation need to know they’re not alone.”^{xiv} As men take extended leave, they stand as examples for their coworkers and can help their coworkers feel supported.

Conclusion

Although the negative consequences of taking extended paternity leave are real, the benefits are invaluable. Fathers are more involved in their children’s lives from the beginning, leading to long-term positive relationships. Mothers report higher relationship satisfaction and lower levels of conflict. Ultimately, everyone benefits. And everyone can do their part to expel the unnecessary repercussions experienced by fathers who opt to take extended paternal leave. Working men and women must take a stand. If you were not planning to take any leave at the birth of your child, then decide today to change. If you already were planning to take time off, then extend the length of that leave. Encourage others to do the same. Simple changes will prove transformative for your family.

ⁱ U.S. Bureau of Labor (2019). *Access to paid and unpaid family leave in 2018*. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2019/access-to-paid-and-unpaid-family-leave-in-2018.htm>

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^v Rehel, E. (2014). When dad stays home too: Paternity leave, gender, and parenting. *Gender and Society*, 28(1), 120.

^{vi} Gartzia, pp. 442.

^{vii} Rehel, pp. 114.

^{viii} Ibid.

^{ix} McLanahan, S., Tach, L., & Schneider, D. (2013). The causal effects of father absence. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 39(1), 399.

^x Rehel, pp. 110.

^{xi} Ibid, pp. 111.

^{xii} Petts, R. J., & Knoester, C. (2019). Paternity leave and paternal relationships: Variations by gender and mothers’ work statuses. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 81(2), 468.

^{xiii} Douglas, D. (2016). *How to get dads to take parental leave? Seeing other dads do it.* NPR.

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^{xiv} Levs, J. (2019). To make the case for paternity leave, dads will have to work together. *Harvard Business Review*.