



Further Progress to
Paternity Parity:

DADS & BONDING LEAVE IN STATE PAID LEAVE PROGRAMS

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The following provides new data and analysis, building on and updating our 2025 report “Progress to Paternity Parity: Dads & Bonding Leave in State Paid Leave Programs.”¹


AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL, THE UNITED STATES DOES NOT GUARANTEE NEW FATHERS THE RIGHT TO ANY PAID LEAVE FROM WORK TO BOND WITH A NEW CHILD, IN CONTRAST TO MOST OF ITS ECONOMIC PEERS.² NOR, FOR THAT MATTER, DOES THE UNITED STATES NATIONALLY GUARANTEE PAID LEAVE FOR ANY OTHER REASON.

To fill this gap, fourteen states and the District of Columbia have passed laws to create their own paid family and medical leave programs, all of which include leave to bond with a new child for parents of any gender.³ Thirteen of these programs are already providing benefits, while the remaining two will begin doing so in the coming years. This report examines recent and historical data across all thirteen operational programs regarding usage of bonding leave by gender. These data show that, while work remains, dads are coming close to—or matching—the rates of moms taking bonding leave in most state paid leave programs.

BACKGROUND

In the U.S., most workers do not have access to paid leave to welcome a new child: only 27% of private sector employees have access to paid family leave, with low-income workers especially likely to be left out. Access to paid paternity leave is uncommon in the United States, though data specifically on paternity leave access and use are very limited. A 2018 Department of Labor survey found that nearly three-quarters (73%) of employees worked at worksites that did not provide paid paternity leave to any employees. Only about 1 in 8 employees worked at worksites where all employees have access to paid paternity leave.⁶





**AS A RESULT,
TOO MANY
FATHERS
ARE NOT
ABLE TO
TAKE THE
LEAVE
THEY NEED WHEN
WELCOMING A
NEW CHILD.**

From 2014 to 2022, more than a third (35%) of first-time fathers in the United States took no leave at all.⁷ When American dads do take leave, their leaves are typically short. In a 2026 survey, among men who took leave from work when their youngest child was born, the median length of leave was just two weeks,⁸ with 52% of leave-taking fathers reporting they had less time than they wanted.⁹ Notably, research has found that fathers with access to state-provided paid leave take longer leaves than those without. In another study, dads who took at least two weeks of leave were more likely to have access to paid leave than those who took short leaves or no leave at all.¹¹

When fathers can take leave on the arrival of a new child, everyone benefits. Fathers who take longer leaves are more engaged in caring for their children¹² and report greater satisfaction in their interactions with their children.¹³ Improved paid parental leave policies also have positive impacts on dads' physical and mental health.¹⁴ When dads can take paid parental leave, mothers also see improved physical and mental health¹⁵ and even increased wages.¹⁶ In the intense transition to new parenthood, fathers taking leave corresponds to lesser increases in stress for both mothers and fathers.¹⁷ When fathers take leave, households see more equal division of house and care work¹⁸ and more egalitarian parenting roles.¹⁹ Paternity leave is also associated with greater relationship stability between parents;²⁰ international comparisons show providing paternity leave reduces divorce rates.²¹

More broadly, paid paternity leave is part of the picture of the profound benefits of paid leave for infant and child health. Research on gender-neutral paid family leave laws show that paid family leave reduces infant maltreatment,²² including abusive head trauma.²³ Similarly, state paid family leave policies reduce dangerous respiratory tract infections and respiratory syncytial virus in infants²⁴ and increase rates of timely vaccinations.²⁵ And most of all, paid paternity leave reduces infant and child mortality rates—saving lives.²⁶

Note on pregnancy and childbirth leave:

Following the birth of a child, workers might take two different types of leave: bonding leave and medical/disability leave to recover from childbirth. To facilitate comparisons among parents and among states, this report only considers claims designated as for bonding with a new child. Very commonly, workers who take medical leave for childbirth recovery subsequently take bonding leave; workers who do so are included here as bonding leave claimants. However, to the extent that some workers take medical leave for childbirth and do not take bonding leave,²⁷ they are not included, potentially underrepresenting the number of women relative to men who use state paid leave programs following the birth of a child.²⁸

**MEN ARE TAKING
OR SEEKING
BONDING LEAVE
AT RATES NEAR
OR EQUAL
TO THOSE
OF WOMEN
IN NEARLY ALL
STATE PROGRAMS,
WITH CONTINUED
POSITIVE TRENDS.**

In nearly all state paid leave programs, bonding leave claims from men are coming close to, matching, or even exceeding those from women.²⁹ Among the ten programs with at least a full year of available data, claims from men make up at least 40% of bonding leave claims in eight programs in the most recent year reported.³⁰ In the most recent year of available data, the number of bonding leave claims from dads matched or exceeded those from moms in California,³¹ Colorado,³² and Washington.³³

Moreover, across all states with at least two years of available data,³⁴ the proportion of bonding claims from men grew or held steady as compared to the prior year. All but one state had a higher percentage of bonding claims from men in the most recent year than in the immediately prior year. The exception was Connecticut, where the proportion of bonding leave claims from men stayed steady at 44% from fiscal year 2024 to fiscal year 2025, reflecting continued strong program use by fathers.³⁵ Notably, no state saw the fraction of bonding claims from men decrease compared to the prior year.

**PERCENTAGE
OF BONDING
LEAVE CLAIMS
FROM MEN
VERSUS
WOMEN**

In alphabetical order, based on the most recent two full years of available data

STATE	MOST RECENT YEAR		PREVIOUS YEAR	
	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN
CALIFORNIA	50%	50%	44%	55%
COLORADO	57%	42%	50%	50%
CONNECTICUT	44%	55%	44%	56%
DC	36%	64%	35%	65%
MASSACHUSETTS	42%	55%	41%	57%
NEW JERSEY	33%	67%	30%	70%
NEW YORK	41%	58%	40%	59%
OREGON	44%	45%	43%	53%
RHODE ISLAND	46%	54%	45%	55%
WASHINGTON	56%	44%	55%	45%

Depending on the state, "most recent year" data generally cover calendar or fiscal year 2024 or 2025 and "previous year" data cover calendar or fiscal year 2023 or 2024. For sources and additional context on most recent year data, please see Appendix A. For sources and additional context on previous year data, please see Appendix B. Percentages rounded to nearest whole percent. Due to limitations in available data, Oregon "previous year" data cover a period from August 13, 2023, to January 31, 2025, and "most recent year" data cover calendar year 2025; New York data cover calendar years 2022 and 2023.


THE NATION'S OLDEST PAID FAMILY LEAVE PROGRAM REACHES PARITY, WHILE PROGRESS CONTINUES IN OTHER ESTABLISHED PROGRAMS.

One of the most notable changes over time among state paid leave programs has been the strong growth in bonding leave claims from dads among older programs, even those where initial claims from men lagged.³⁶ The newest data show continued progress in this area. Most notably, for the first time in its more than 20-year history, California had roughly equal numbers of bonding leave claims submitted from men and women in fiscal year 2024-2025.³⁷

California was the first state in the country to provide paid leave to bond with a new child, beginning in July 2004. In the first full calendar year (2005), just 18% of applications for bonding leave came from men.³⁸ In contrast, in the most recent fiscal year, men filed about 200 more bonding leave claims than women in California,³⁹ with men making up 49.92% of filed claims versus 49.85% from women.⁴⁰ Despite steady progress, California had never before reached gender equality in bonding claims, with submitted claims from men hovering around 44% of total submitted claims for the last few years.⁴¹

Moreover, this change represents tremendous growth in the total number of bonding claims from men. Comparing calendar year 2005 to fiscal year 2024-2025, California claims from men have grown 470%, compared to a much more modest 26% growth in claims from women.⁴² Early data suggest that this trend is continuing and expanding into the current fiscal year, with men filing 51.22% of bonding leave claims submitted from July 2025 to February 2026 in California.⁴³

Other older programs have also seen important progress. In New Jersey, the second oldest state paid family leave program, just 11% of eligible claimants for bonding leave were men in the program's first full calendar year (2010).⁴⁴ From 2010 to 2024, eligible claims from men increased 559%, compared to a 76% increase in eligible claims from women.⁴⁵ In Rhode Island, where paid family leave benefits began in 2014, approved bonding claims from men have quadrupled since launch, while those from women have merely doubled.⁴⁶



In California,
bonding claims for paid
leave from men have grown

470%

since the program's launch—
with claims from dads matching
those from moms for
the first time.

EARLY DATA

FROM THE NEWEST PAID LEAVE PROGRAMS

SHOW PROMISING RESULTS.

The 2025 edition of this report highlighted an encouraging emerging national trend around gender balance in bonding claims.⁴⁷ Among the earliest paid leave programs to launch, parental leave claims initially skewed heavily towards women and grew towards parity over time.⁴⁸ In contrast, in many newer programs, men have claimed bonding leave at rates much more similar to those of women from the very beginning.⁴⁹

Early indications suggest the newest state paid leave programs may be continuing this trend. In 2026, three state paid leave programs began providing benefits for the first time: Delaware and Minnesota on January 1 and Maine on May 1. While any detailed evaluation of these programs would be premature, initial data suggest all three states are starting with much stronger proportions of bonding leave claims from men than those seen initially in early-adopter programs.

Based on preliminary data, two of the three 2026 launches are already near gender parity in bonding leave claims. In Delaware, claims from men made up 46% of approved parental leave claims in the first 5.5 months of the program, compared to 54% from women.⁵⁰ Similarly, in Maine, dads filed 44% of parental leave claims submitted in the program's first two months of accepting applications, compared to 56% from women.⁵¹

While early numbers suggest room for improvement compared to peer states, the third new program is also off to a relatively strong start. In Minnesota, in the first approximately seven months of applications, 36% of approved bonding claims were from men, compared to 64% from women.⁵² For comparison, in California, which began providing paid family leave benefits in 2004, just 15% of submitted bonding leave claims were from men in the first six months of the program;⁵³ in New Jersey, where benefits began in 2009, only 12% of eligible bonding leave claims were from men in the first six months of the program.⁵⁴





CONCLUSION

The data presented in this report underscore how much progress has been made in men's access to and use of leave following the arrival of a new child in the United States in the last two decades. The number of states with paid leave programs is growing and within those states many more dads are taking leave. These represent powerful steps towards the future that dads, moms, and kids deserve.

However, there is still more to do. Most states with paid leave programs still have gender gaps in leave taking for bonding, some more pronounced than others, suggesting that further work is needed to promote paternity leave taking. It is also not enough for dads to catch up to moms: in all states with paid leave programs, many parents of all genders do not take paid leave when they welcome a new child, whether because they are simply not aware the program exists or because it does not meet their needs. Therefore, further investment in outreach and education, as well as continued attention to policy and implementation barriers to use, is needed in all state paid leave programs to ensure that all working parents can meaningfully access the leave they need.

More broadly, two thirds of Americans live in states that do not have a paid family and medical leave program. Nationally, nearly three quarters of private sector employees do not have designated paid family leave through their employers. As a result, each year, too many parents are forced back to work by economic necessity too soon after welcoming a new child. For dads, lack of paid leave means missing out on those precious early moments they won't get back while losing crucial opportunities to bond and build a lifelong relationship with their children. Federal inaction on paid leave comes with costs that dads—and all of us—have been bearing for far too long.

**DADS DESERVE BETTER.
SO DO MOMS, KIDS, AND THE
AMERICAN PEOPLE.**

All working people deserve the time they need to heal, to care, and to bond, without losing their paycheck or their job. Until we guarantee universal, comprehensive paid leave at the federal level, too many families will be forced to make impossible choices. It is long past time for paid leave for all.

APPENDIX A: Most Recent Year Data

California: Bonding leave claims filed in state fiscal year 2024-2025 (7/1/24 to 6/30/25), from Employment Development Department, State of California, "Paid Family Leave (PFL) Program Statistics," pg. 1, https://edd.ca.gov/siteassets/files/about_edd/quick-stats/qspfl_pfl_program_statistics.pdf

Colorado: Bonding leave claims submitted in calendar year 2025 currently categorized as approved, completed, or pending/processing, data provided by e-mail to author by Michael Borts, Data Analyst III, Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program, Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, April 7, 2026

Connecticut: Bonding leave claims approved for calendar year 2025, data provided by e-mail to author by John Simonetti, Benefits Manager, Connecticut Paid Leave Authority, April 1, 2026

District of Columbia: Bonding leave claims approved for fiscal year 2025 (10/1/24 to 9/30/25), data provided by e-mail to author by Michael Henderson, Program Analyst, Office of Paid Family Leave, Bureau of Economic Stability and Benefits, D.C. Department of Employment Services, April 2, 2026

Massachusetts: Bonding leave claims approved for fiscal year 2025 (7/1/24 to 6/30/25), data provided by e-mail to author by Caitlin Bearce, Assistant General Counsel, Massachusetts Department of Family and Medical Leave, April 9, 2026

New Jersey: Bonding leave claims classified as "eligible" for calendar year 2024, data from New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, "Family Leave Insurance and Temporary Disability Insurance Combined Annual Activity Report" (December 2025), pg. 17, <https://www.nj.gov/labor/myleavebenefits/assets/pdfs/Annual%20FLI%20TDI%20Report%20for%202024.pdf>

New York: Bonding leave claims including "Newborn Bonding," "Adoption Bonding," and "Foster Child Bonding," for calendar year 2023, data from New York State Department of Financial Services, "New York State Paid Family Leave Report," https://www.dfs.ny.gov/reports_and_publications/pfl
Note: More recent New York data were not available at the time of publication.

Oregon: Bonding leave applications approved in calendar year 2025 by gender, data provided to author by e-mail by James P. Francis, Information Management Analyst, Oregon Employment Department, June 15, 2026.

Rhode Island: Bonding leave claims approved for calendar year 2025, data from Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, "Temporary Disability Insurance Program: January 2025- December 2025," <https://dlt.ri.gov/media/24736/download?language=en>

Washington: Bonding leave claims approved for calendar year 2025, data provided by e-mail to author by Matt Hasso, Economic Analyst III, Leave and Care, Washington Employment Security Department, April 20, 2026

APPENDIX B: Prior Year Data

California: Bonding leave claims filed in state fiscal year 2023-2024 (7/1/23 to 6/30/24), from Employment Development Department, State of California, "Paid Family Leave (PFL) Program Statistics," pg. 1, https://edd.ca.gov/siteassets/files/about_edd/quick-stats/qspfl_pfl_program_statistics.pdf

Colorado: Bonding leave claims submitted in calendar year 2024 currently categorized as approved, completed, or pending/processing, data provided by e-mail to author by Michael Borts, Data Analyst III, Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program, Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, April 30, 2025

Connecticut: Bonding leave claims approved for fiscal year 2024 (7/1/23 to 6/30/24), data provided by e-mail to author by John Simonetti, Benefits Manager, Connecticut Paid Leave Authority, April 22, 2025

District of Columbia: Bonding leave claims approved for fiscal year 2024 (10/1/23 to 9/30/24), data provided by e-mail to author by Michael Henderson, Program Analyst, Office of Paid Family Leave, Bureau of Economic Stability and Benefits, D.C. Department of Employment Services, March 18, 2025.

Massachusetts: Bonding leave claims approved for fiscal year 2024 (7/1/23 to 6/30/24), data provided by e-mail to author by Caitlin Bearce, Assistant General Counsel, Massachusetts Department of Family and Medical Leave, March 28, 2025

New Jersey: Bonding leave claims classified as "eligible" for calendar year 2023, data from New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, "Family Leave Insurance and Temporary Disability Insurance Combined Annual Activity Report" (December 2024), pg. 18, <https://www.nj.gov/labor/myleavebenefits/assets/pdfs/Annual%20FLI%20TDI%20Report%20for%202023.pdf>

New York: Bonding leave claims including "Newborn Bonding," "Adoption Bonding," and "Foster Child Bonding," for calendar year 2022, data from New York State Department of Financial Services, "New York State Paid Family Leave Report," https://www.dfs.ny.gov/reports_and_publications/pfl

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approximately 18 months, including the one-month period when claims could be submitted before the start of the program.

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- ²⁷ Workers may also need leave to medically recover from childbirth in circumstances in which they do not need time to bond with a child, including stillbirths, surrogacy, and those whose children are adopted.
- ²⁸ While most people who give birth are women, trans men and nonbinary people who give birth also need and deserve leave to recover from childbirth as well as to bond.
- ²⁹ States vary substantially in the extent to which they identify or track bonding leave claims from nonbinary claimants. To facilitate comparisons among states, this analysis only separately analyzes claims labeled as from male or female claimants as percentage of total bonding claims.
- ³⁰ For information on early results from state paid leave programs that have been operational for less than a year, see "Early data from the newest paid leave programs show promising results" below.
- ³¹ Bonding leave claims filed in state fiscal year 2024-2025 (7/1/24 to 6/30/25), from Employment Development Department, State of California, "Paid Family Leave (PFL) Program Statistics," pg. 1, https://edd.ca.gov/siteassets/files/about_edd/quick-stats/qspl_pfl_program_statistics.pdf.
- ³² Bonding leave claims submitted in calendar year 2025 currently categorized as approved, completed, or pending/processing, data provided by e-mail to author by Michael Borts, Data Analyst III, Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program, Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, April 7, 2026.
- ³³ Bonding leave claims approved for calendar year 2025, data provided by e-mail to author by Matt Hasso, Economic Analyst III, Leave and Care, Washington Employment Security Department, April 20, 2026.
- ³⁴ In Oregon, due to limitations in available data, the comparison is between data from calendar year 2025 and from a prior, slightly overlapping period from August 13, 2023, to January 31, 2025. See Appendices A and B for full source information.
- ³⁵ Author comparison of data provided by e-mail to author by John Simonetti, Benefits Manager, Connecticut Paid Leave Authority, April 1, 2026, and April 22, 2025.
- ³⁶ For more on changes over time among state paid leave programs, see Williamson, supra note 1, pg. 7.
- ³⁷ Bonding leave claims filed in state fiscal year 2024-2025 (7/1/24 to 6/30/25), from Employment Development Department, State of California, "Paid Family Leave (PFL) Program Statistics," pg. 1, https://edd.ca.gov/siteassets/files/about_edd/quick-stats/qspl_pfl_program_statistics.pdf.
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- ³⁹ Author's calculations based on data from, from Employment Development Department, State of California, "Paid Family Leave (PFL) Program Statistics," pg. 1, https://edd.ca.gov/siteassets/files/about_edd/quick-stats/qspl_pfl_program_statistics.pdf.
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- ⁴⁴ Bonding leave claims classified as "eligible" for calendar year 2010, among those for whom gender information was available, data from New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Annual Report 2010: Family Leave Insurance and Temporary Disability Insurance Programs (December 2011), pg. 10, https://www.nj.gov/labor/forms_pdfs/tid/ANNUAL_FLI-TDI_REPORT_FOR_2010.pdf. New Jersey's program began providing paid family leave benefits in July 2009 but provides data on a calendar year basis, making calendar year 2010 the first full year for which data are available. In calendar year 2009, when paid family leave benefits were only available for six months, 12% of eligible bonding leave claims were from men. Data from New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Annual Report 2009: Family Leave Insurance and Temporary Disability Insurance Programs Combined Annual Activity Report (December 2011), pg. 10, <https://dspace.njstatelib.org/bitstreams/ceac7b77-df60-447f-8393-9c239d40869d/download>.
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- ⁴⁸ Id.
- ⁴⁹ Id.
- ⁵⁰ Parental leave claims paid from January 1, 2026, to May 19, 2026, data provided by e-mail to author by Christopher Counihan, Director, Division of Paid Leave, Delaware Department of Labor, May 19, 2026.
- ⁵¹ Bonding leave claims submitted from March 30, 2026, to current, data provided by e-mail to author by Reginald Parson, Deputy Director, Maine Paid Family and Medical Leave Program, June 5, 2026. Eligible Maine workers were able to begin taking leave on May 1, 2026. Maine allowed workers to submit applications beginning on March 30, 2026, in anticipation of the May 1 launch.
- ⁵² Bonding leave claims approved from November 2, 2025, to May 28, 2026, data provided by e-mail to author by Ellen Squires, Evaluation Coordinator, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, May 29, 2026. Eligible Minnesota workers were able to begin taking covered paid leaves on January 1, 2026. Minnesota soft launched applications on November 3, 2025, in anticipation of the January 1 launch. Note that Minnesota's program allows workers to take paid leave within the 12-month period following a child's birth or placement for adoption or foster care, meaning that many claimants may be taking leave for a child who joined their family in 2025.
- ⁵³ Author's calculation from bonding leave first claims filed in calendar year 2004, from Employment Development Department, State of California, "Overview of California's Paid Family Leave Program: 2025," pg. 15, https://edd.ca.gov/siteassets/files/pdf_pub_ctr/de2530.pdf.
- ⁵⁴ Among claimants for whom gender information was available. New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, "Annual Report 2009: Family Leave Insurance and Temporary Disability Insurance Programs Combined Annual Activity Report" (December 2011), pg. 10, <https://dspace.njstatelib.org/bitstreams/ceac7b77-df60-447f-8393-9c239d40869d/download/>.

A teal-tinted photograph of a person's arm in a white sweater, holding a small object. The background is a blurred landscape. The text 'PAID LEAVE for ALL' is overlaid in the bottom left.

**PAID
LEAVE
for ALL**