

Benefits of Paid Leave on Child Well-Being

- Scholar Jody Heymann's **review of the literature** found paid leave may support improvements across a range of sustainable development goals relevant to maternal and child health. Outcomes relate to poverty, health, gender equality, decent work, and inequality.
- Four-fifths of respondents who took paid leaves reported they were **better able to care for a new baby**. New mothers who take paid leave are **more likely** to take the minimum doctor-recommended six to eight weeks to recover from birth. Newborns whose mothers take 12 weeks of leave are **more likely to be breastfed and receive regular check-ups**.
- Paid parental leave can reduce infant mortality by as much as 10%, **according to a 2011 study** of 141 countries with paid leave policies.
- Paid parental leave can **reduce the share of low birth weight births by over 10%** and decreases the likelihood of early term birth by nearly 7%, with a particularly large impact on children the well-being of children born to children of unmarried and black mothers.
- Paid parental leave can also increase the rate and duration of breast-feeding. **A 2011 study in California** found that women who had paid leave breast-fed twice as long as women who did not take leave. Babies who are breast-fed, **according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**, are less likely to get a variety of infections and are also at lower risk for asthma, obesity and sudden infant death syndrome.
- **One study** found that children were 25.3% and 22.2% more likely to get their measles and polio vaccines, respectively, when their mother had access to paid maternity leave. Without paid leave, there was no increase in immunizations.
- The early bonds parents develop with their babies are **foundational to future learning** and relationships. Responsive parents let infants and toddlers know they are loved, safe, and cared for, which **gives them the confidence** to explore their environments, acquire new skills and abilities, and develop independence. Paid leave helps parents have the time they need at home to become a responsive caregiver to a young child, establishing a pattern that will promote the child's long-term cognitive, social, and emotional development.
- When parents take time to care for their sick children, the kids have a speedier recovery, and the length of hospital stays is decreased by nearly a third.¹
- Access to paid family leave has also **shown a decrease in child abuse** related head traumas.

¹ Heymann, J. (2001, October 15). The Widening Gap: Why America's Working Families Are in Jeopardy—and What Can Be Done About It. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Paid leave helps children by helping their parents.

- Paid leave increases time for treatment for post-partum depression. One in seven (15%) of women experience **post-partum depression**. Most receive no treatment. **Women who took longer than 12 weeks maternity leave reported fewer depressive symptoms**, a reduction in severe depression and improvement in their overall mental health.
- Mothers who are able to breast-feed are less likely to get breast cancer, ovarian cancer, type 2 diabetes and heart disease, according to the CDC.
- Women who take paid leave after a child's birth are **more likely to be employed** the following year and report increased wages than women who do not take leave. First-time mothers who utilized paid leave were **26.3% less likely to quit their jobs and 18.2% more likely to work for the same employer** after the birth of their first child.
- Parents who took leave report **lower levels of public assistance** in the year following their child's birth, when compared to those without paid leave.
- In 2010, **a Swedish study found** a mother's future earnings increased 7% for every month of parental leave that her partner took.
- Studies show that **seven percent** of people who filed for bankruptcy cited the birth of a child as the cause. A **significant number** of bankruptcies also happen after a worker misses two or more weeks of work due to illness.
- **Forty-eight percent** of family caregivers who have to take time off to care for a family member lost income during that time.
- Those who received no pay during leave were more likely to be **female, poorer, less educated or younger** than those who got at least some pay.
- Family and medical leave insurance **increases men's role in caregiving by making it possible for them to be involved without the family taking a big financial hit**. In Rhode Island, during the first year of its program, nearly **one-third of all leave takers were men**.
- Fathers in the U.S. who take longer paternity leave are **more involved with their child's care** nine months later.
- In Iceland, where men and women each get 3 months paid leave and can share another 3 months, **90 percent of fathers of newborns take leave – and 3 years later, 70% of those couples share child care responsibilities**.