

# Parental Leave in Azerbaijan: Policy Regulations, Implementation, and Discussion of Focus Group Data

written by Yuliya Aliyeva (Gureyeva) Yuliya Əliyeva (Qureyeva)  
**Introduction**

Parental<sup>[1]</sup> leave regulations constitute the core of national family policies and ideally should guarantee working parents with job-protected leave and replacement of some or all of their usual earnings during leave. However, the structures and provisions of leave are highly contextual and depend on the social and economic conditions of the nation, as well as historical and cultural practices which construct appropriate codes of behavior for mothers and fathers. Reform of parental leave policies in their turn can have an important impact on gender equality in the country in terms of promotion of equitable practices of childcare and better access to the labor market for women.

Recent scholarly debates have been intensively concerned with fathers, fatherhood and *the fathers' effect* in an attempt to grasp the important structural changes in families worldwide and assess if national social policies are promoting more inclusive parenthood. Scholarly works have three major foci: (1) the well-being of children, who, as suggested by scholarly reports, tremendously benefit from deep engagement with their fathers from early infancy; (2) interests of mothers who need to be supported during pregnancy and the early stages of motherhood and not lose their qualifications and positions in the labor market; (3) a few studies raised concerns about how

to theorize men and masculinities in a new way: as playing double roles of breadwinners and nurturing parents, and whether performance of these roles is both gratifying and satisfying for men or rather is a source of conflict. One of the serious limitations of these studies is that they are primarily based on empirical data from European countries and to a lesser extent on developing countries. This study aims to fill in this gap and provide some insights drawing on the case of Azerbaijan.

The current research focuses on two key aspects of parental leave policies in Azerbaijan: (1) legal regulations related to the provisions of parental leave and care and associated social security benefits and (2) social attitudes towards parenting practices and paternal and maternal involvement in childcare. The goal of this assessment is to evaluate to what degree existing leave policies promote an egalitarian approach and support both mothers and fathers in the fulfilment of their childcare responsibilities and to open a discussion about ways to improve parental leave policy provisions in the country.

The article begins with a review of methodology followed by a literature review and discussion of major trends in parental leave policies. The next sub-section is dedicated to analyses of the existent structure of maternal, parental and paternal leaves in Azerbaijan, their advantages and limitations. The results of the qualitative study based on focus group discussions are featured in the final section and provide insights into public perceptions of motherhood and fatherhood and parental leave policies. The final part of the report provides general recommendations on provisions of gender equitable parental leave in Azerbaijan.

## **Methodology**

Desk research and thematic analysis of qualitative data were used to address key objectives of this study. At the initial

stage, I conducted a review of national legislation and state policies addressing parental leave policies in Azerbaijan. I then supplemented this information with an overview of applicable international human rights standards and best practices on gender equitable parental policies, academic articles and reports by international organizations addressing the issue.

The findings from the focus group discussions provided qualitative data to gain an in-depth understanding on attitudes prevalent in Azerbaijan and reflections on changing social dynamics. In total, five focus group discussions were conducted in December 2020 to January 2021 in which members reflected on issues of gender equality, roles of mothers and fathers in the life of their children and general awareness about legislative and policy framework regulating the issues of parental leave and childcare in Azerbaijan. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic all focus group discussions were organized on-line with the help of the video conferencing platform Zoom. The duration of each conversation was around one hour. All meetings were recorded. Informants were provided with details about the project and the use of their data at the beginning of each discussion, they were also informed about issues of anonymity and opportunities for withdrawal. Discussions were conducted in gender-disaggregated groups. All interviews were performed in Azerbaijani.

Recruitment of participants was administered through various social media websites and targeted messaging through Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) networks located in the Azerbaijani regions of Azerbaijan. Interested individuals were invited to fill in a short online form, providing basic demographic data about themselves. They were divided into five groups based on their gender and geographical location.

The online mode of the FGDs (focus group discussions) displayed a few advantages. First, it created the possibility to involve geographically remote participants simultaneously.

Second, the nature of electronic communications allowed for a more balanced participation of all members as there was a notable absence of group leaders and reticent speakers.

At the same time administering FGDs in an online mode revealed some serious limitations. First, the participants represented mainly the capital and urban areas; it was not possible to recruit participants from rural areas since the majority of them had an insufficient level of internet connectivity, which made participation in video conferencing impossible or highly costly. Second, the mode of recruitment of respondents attests to self-selection bias: people who were interested in the issue, had some prior knowledge on the subject or wanted to share specific personal experiences were the most likely to volunteer and register. Third, administering the discussions in video conference mode was challenging due to the technical issues, as some of the registered participants were not able to join the session at all, while a few others experienced occasional disconnections. However, these technical challenges were not prevalent and did not compromise the quality of discussions.

Information about the demographic characteristics of participants and the individual codes (W or M, which refers to the gender of the participant, and then a reference number) assigned to them can be found in the Annex 1.

In addition, three key informant interviews have been conducted with representatives of CSOs to discuss their experiences with the legislative and policy framework regulating issues of parental leave and childcare and collect their suggestions and proposals on how to enhance legislative provisions.

## **Review of the Trends in Parental Leave Policies**

The quality of parent-child interaction during the early childhood years is one of the major predictors of the long-term developmental and emotional well-being of children. At

the same time infancy is a particularly vulnerable period for parents as provision of care requires allocation of substantial resources, including financial means, time, and enlargements of responsibilities.

In this respect the social welfare system should act as a cushion providing a variety of services believed to be essential for individual and familial social security.

However, the visions of what is an *ideal* welfare regime<sup>[2]</sup> and how to organize support of families with newly born children is highly contextual and depends on dominant patterns of gender norms as reflected in Azerbaijan's national legislation and policy provisions. Drawing on current debates and best practices in the field I aim to provide key insights into approaches to parental care regimes and the organization of inclusive parental care strategies.

Parental leave policies are informed by particular gender regimes<sup>[3]</sup> reflecting social expectations of men and women's roles in society. Currently policy analysts distinguish two major approaches to parental leave policies: (1) a *traditional approach* representing a combination of obligatory *maternity leave* with optional *parental leave*; (2) the more recent *egalitarian approach* of dropping *maternity leave* entirely or partially in favor of more generic *parental leave* with fixed periods designated for mothers and fathers (Blum et al. 2018). These approaches and their outcomes will be discussed briefly below.

Historically a traditional understanding of gender roles (male–breadwinner, female–homemaker) was at the core of the state policies regulating the provisions of childcare. Within this traditional model, still widespread in many countries, women are regarded as primary caregivers. Maternity leave is intended only for women and is treated as a biological requirement associated with maternal health during the pregnancy and post-partum period. Parental leave is available

equally to women and men. However, men are often reluctant to use their entitlement to parental leave, since usually it is not well-paid, may negatively affect their career prospects or is overall discouraged by social attitudes. The disengagement of men from domestic labor and care work is often regarded as a *natural* outcome of biological differences translated into social roles for men and women. The male role thus is reduced to the position of breadwinner, supplier of cash, leading to the pervasiveness of the so-called *paradox of patriarchy*: while a father may be the *head* of the family, he is constrained from playing an active role within it (Lewis and O'Brien 1987). The role of the state within this welfare policy structure is to provide support to mothers and encourage them to withdraw from the labor market for a short or prolonged time, whereas the involvement of fathers is either neglected or only nominally provided.

The turn towards egalitarian policies is often associated with the growth of dual-earning families and policy measures aimed at the stimulation of women's economic empowerment. However, equally important are social changes reflected in the idea of alternative modes of fatherhood and promotion of responsible and caring fathering. The notion of *good fatherhood* extends now beyond the financial provisions for the family and includes intimate emotional bonds with children as crucial components of fathers' personal fulfilment (Doherty et al. 1998; Musumeci and Santero 2018). But while increasingly the concept of *fatherhood* is being associated with greater family commitments, economic participation of men and the role of the provider for a family still remains in the range of principal responsibilities that present challenges for maintaining work and family balance. So, there is an increasing social demand to reshape welfare policy approaches to account for these deep societal changes and to contribute to the recognition of fathers' abilities not only to provide, but also to be active caregivers for their children.

A greater number of European countries recognize the

importance of adoption of policies aimed at the promotion of an egalitarian relationship within the household and reconciliation of work and family life for both partners. In this case states often provide universally accessible and affordable nonparental care services. These models also support provision of care by both parents through the structure of parental leave. For instance, in 2009 in Portugal, legislative provisions for maternity leave were replaced by a parental leave of 150 calendar days in length which can be shared by both parents as they wish but only six weeks after birth; the first six weeks of leave are obligatory for mothers. A *shared bonus* of extra 30 days is available if both parents take the leave (Wall and Leitão 2018).

The example of the Nordic countries<sup>[4]</sup> is widely used to illustrate the promotion of *dual earner – dual career* families through closely linked and interdependent gender equality and family support policies. The Nordic approach provides a continuum of support to families with children. Parents have access to generous paid leave when children are small. Fathers and mothers are encouraged to share responsibilities through *use it or lose it* paid leave entitlements. The state guarantees the provision of universally accessible, affordable, non-parental care services from early age to pre-school level and out-of-school hours (OECD 2018). As a result, the Nordic countries have the highest women's labor-force participation rate in the EU, which co-exists with their moderate fertility rates (Kinoshita and Guo 2015; OECD 2018), which exceed the European average<sup>[5]</sup>.

There is growing evidence that parental leave schemes in all their variability help not only to address the essential and immediate needs of families with small children, but also contribute to positive developments in future. Besides widely noted numerous health benefits for children (UNICEF 2019), the current literature supports that more generous parental leave policies contribute to a higher level of life satisfaction and

happiness among parents (Aassve et al. 2012) and may indirectly lead to better educational attainment among children (Cools et al. 2015). Numerous studies also demonstrate the positive impact of fathers' greater emotional involvement on their children's development and well-being (see e.g. Coltrane 1996; Marsiglio et al. 2000).

Studies also have found that the introduction of such schemes on gender equality in household chores and the recognition of men as equal caregivers have a positive influence (Brandth and Kvande 2018). A study of families in Iceland showed that the introduction of a *father's quota*, that is, non-transferable paternal leave, had a direct effect on the divorce rate, which was reduced by 8,3% five years after policy implementation and by 3,4% after 15 years (Duffy et al. 2019). A study from Quebec, Canada also confirmed a 6% decrease in union dissolution among couples who shared parental leave (Margolis et al. 2020).

Limited data is available on non-European countries. One of the studies using firm-level data for 53 developing countries, corroborated a strong positive relationship between the provision of paternity leave and women's employment status. (Amin et al. 2016).

Evidence from across the world shows that countries have lately enlarged parental leave schemes and that they now have a greater preference for more egalitarian models. Data from the *World Policy Analysis Center* shows clear progress on the provision of paid parental leave worldwide, and a significant rise in the number of countries providing paid leave for fathers. For instance, while the share of countries guaranteeing paid maternal leave rose from 89% to 96 % from 1995 to 2015, the provisions of paternal leave expanded from 21% to 52% during that same time period. (UNICEF 2019).

### **Family Welfare Policies in Azerbaijan**

The Azerbaijani national welfare system was entirely

reorganized in the 1990s. Reorganization included the revision of the Soviet universalist principle of providing protection and services to all citizens regardless of their occupation or income levels. State-funded welfare benefits were largely replaced with new means – social assistance packages targeting the neediest groups. Significant drawbacks in family welfare provisions in the post-Soviet state have resulted in increased unemployment, enlargement of the informal labor market, a shrinking of free medical support to families and budget cuts for childcare institutions.

The welfare regime in Azerbaijan can be described as *hybrid* in nature, as certain provisions were carried over to national legislation from Soviet legislation and co-exist with new post-Soviet regulations, which are informed by a promotion of gender equality. Thus, according to the Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, pregnant women are entitled to a total of 126 days of paid maternity leave, including 70 days prior and 56 days following the birth. In some special circumstances (a difficult delivery or the birth of two or more children at once) women receive additional two weeks of leave, increasing the total duration of leave to 140 days (Labor Code, Article 125). After the completion of maternity leave, the primary caretaker can be granted a partially paid social leave for up to 3 years for childcare upon request (Labor Code, Article 127). These provisions mirror the regulations introduced in the Soviet Union in support of mothers and families with children (Soviet Law 1990).

The adoption of the Law on Guarantees for Gender (Men and Women) Equality in 2006 and subsequent amendments to the legislative framework improved legal language towards greater gender-neutrality and inclusivity. For instance, certain social benefits have been extended to fathers raising children alone (Law on Gender Equality 2006; Additions and Amendments to Legislative Acts 2007).

However, many gaps remain to be addressed. For instance, the

Labor Code of Azerbaijan introduces deliberate restrictions on women's engagement in labor intensive jobs, hazardous workplaces including underground works (Labor Code, Article 241), women with children under three years old are prohibited from working night shifts, overtime and participation in job related travel (Labor Code, Article 241). In addition, Resolution 170 approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan prohibits women's engagement in more than 674 occupations which might supposedly harm their reproductive function. While these provisions are regarded by some local policy experts and practitioners as example of *positive discrimination*, they introduce bias against women by not allowing them to make informed decisions for themselves.

Thus, the structure of childcare benefits and parental leave policies in Azerbaijan represents the neofamilialist model,<sup>[6]</sup> which draws on a traditional understanding of gender roles. Post-Soviet reality has significantly advanced the role of males as breadwinners, while women's role as caregivers has increased to substitute for a lack of state-provided welfare services. The scarcity of flexible or part-time employment options for women combined with the expanding informal sector of the economy has significantly strained employment opportunities for women while also limiting their entitlement to maternity leave. Only women in formal employment and with at least 6 months history of payment of social security fees can qualify for maternity leave benefits. As a result, the share of mothers of newborn children covered by maternity leave benefits was only 14% in 2015 (ILO 2017) and approximately 13% in 2019 (estimates by the author).<sup>[7]</sup>

Fathers are entitled to 14 days of unpaid leave following the birth of a child, or they can apply for 7 days unpaid leave to settle family, domestic and other social issues (Labor Code, Articles 128 and 130). The leave can be granted under the following conditions: 1. Formal request of the worker; 2. Employer's consent; 3. Medical document confirming the birth

of a child (or woman's pregnancy). An employee can take only one unpaid leave per year (Labor Code, Articles 129 and 130). As such, existing legal regulations do not qualify as a *paternity leave* scheme but fall under the category of *unpaid leave*.<sup>[8]</sup> Alternatively, employees whose wife is on maternity leave can request to take an annual leave, regardless of the duration of their employment contract (Labor Code, Article 133.4).

Although there is a legal provision in the Family Code for equal responsibility of parents in the rearing of children (Family Code, Article 56, 1999), in practice it is very rare that fathers take paternity or parental leave to look after their child. In 2015-2020 there were no cases when fathers took official paternity leave to take care of their children.<sup>[9]</sup> According to the *IMAGES Survey*, only 6,1 percent of men in the study reported being able to take leave or time off at the birth of their latest child. This number is even lower according to women's reports: only 2,9 percent of women reported that their husband or partner took leave or time off the last time they had a child. An average duration of such leave was only 4,9 days (UNFPA/SCFWCA 2018).

The reluctance to take leave following the birth of a child can be conditioned by the economic necessity. Paternity leave is unpaid, and fathers are not interested in requesting it and losing their wages for two weeks. The reluctance to take parental leave by fathers can be attributed to the non-adequate compensation and the difference in male and female salary levels.<sup>[10]</sup> The financial assistance offered during leave is rather low and does not compensate for earnings forgone when either parent decides to stay at home until a child reaches age three.<sup>[11]</sup> But given that male salaries as a rule are higher than females' the loss of the mother's salary has less of an impact on an overall family budget.

This *male-breadwinner* norm has been further reinforced by the

limited supply of reliable and affordable care services, particularly important for the mothers of children between 0 and 4 years old (Azimli 2018). The coverage of children in kindergartens is very low in comparison with the neighboring countries, although it has been on a steady increase in recent years (from 15,6% in 2015 to 31.3% in 2020) (Azerbaijan State Statistical Committee 2020a). The age of admission to daycares was lowered to one-year old children (previously enrollment was possible starting only from the age of two) (Law on Preschool Education 2017). There are no public arrangements or institutions sponsored from the state budget that provide assistance to families with infants (0-1 years).

Furthermore, family support policy has mainly focused on support for mothers and children, but not on fathers. For instance, in accordance with the Labor Code, fathers may benefit from the labor-related benefits only if they raise children as single parents for a particular reason (if the children's mother has died, or has been deprived of her rights to motherhood, or has to be away for therapy in a medical institution, or has to spend time in jail), (Labor Code, Article 246). Similar provisions are reflected in the Law on Labor Pensions, as only single fathers are entitled to 5 years reduction in pension age, if they are raising five or more children younger than 8 years old (Law on Labor Pensions, Article 8.3). Moreover, the same law envisions pension age benefits only for mothers of children with disabilities, implicitly charging only women with care work and not regulating the involvement of fathers (Law on Labor Pensions, Article 8.2).

Thus, the limited participation of men in childcare is preconditioned by the institutional setup and traditional views on masculinity. Men are seen as responsible when they are providers, but not required to show emotional attachment or administer routine care. Men who are willing to play the role of involved fathers often face the need to cope with negative societal perception informed by traditional gender roles.

## **“What does ‘fathering’ mean in Azerbaijan?”: Findings of the Focus Group Discussions**

A series of focus group discussions (FGDs) with people representing different age groups and regions of Azerbaijan was held online in December 2020 – January 2021. The primary goal of the FGDs was to gain an in-depth understanding of social issues surrounding maternity and paternity leaves and strategic decisions taken by the families to ensure the best possible reconciliation of family and career lives following the birth of a child/children. All FGDs were gender-disaggregated, so the groups consisted entirely of individuals who identify themselves either as males or females. Information about the demographic characteristics of participants and the individual codes assigned to them can be found in Appendix 1.

Each focus group was video recorded and then transcribed. Based on a qualitative analysis of the transcribed data, six primary themes emerged between the four focus group discussions. These themes are listed and described below with verbatim samples.

### **1. Awareness**

The participants of the FGDs were well aware of the provisions of maternity leave. The majority rightfully considered that it consists of two stages: *mandatory, fully paid* prior and immediately after the birth of a child and *optional, partially paid* until a child is 3 years old. Not all participants, especially men were able to specify the exact duration of mandatory maternity leave, and their estimates varied from 7 to 20 weeks. Parental leave was regarded as *optional maternity leave* and the majority of participants did not know that by law other family members, including husbands, can also benefit from it. Another misconception was that this optional maternity leave counts towards employee tenure (*əmək stajı*).<sup>[12]</sup> When it comes to paternity leave, only a few

participants were aware of it; some said they heard of some discussion of this topic but were not sure if it was ever legally formalized.

## **2. Taking Maternity Leave**

The personal experiences with leave taking were quite diverse and can be divided into three types: (1) employees of *budgetary organizations*, whose salaries are paid from the state budget and who have formal legal contracts; (2) those who work in the private sphere and have formal labor contracts with their employers; (3) employees on temporal or seasonal contracts or engaged in the informal sector without any formal contractual relationships.

FGD participants working in the public sector (teachers and medical personnel) confirmed that they have not had any problems with taking maternity leave for the 18 weeks envisioned by law or the prolonged leave until a child reaches age of three. All of them has been provided with timely payments and guarantees for the provision of a job of equal status and salary rate upon return from leave. Violations were rare and happened mostly in the regions. For instance, one of the respondents mentioned that his wife had been transferred to a part-time job when she returned to her place of employment, the hospital, due to internal reorganization. This was an illegal move, since legislation prohibits any changes in the structure or working hours for women who return from leave. But the pair decided not to appeal this decision since many people were laid off from the hospital, and they did not want to encounter any problems with the management in future.

The situation is quite different in the private sphere. The majority of participants agreed that private employment offers little or no job security and may violate the right to maternal or parental leave with impunity. These problems are particularly pervasive among small and medium-size businesses located in the regions. Some of the FGD participants, were

trying to assess this issue from different angles, accounting for the interests of the business owners and their employees:

M2[13]: “The problem with the private sector is that quite often they do not sign labor contracts with employees. This is particularly relevant for small businesses. For instance, it is very difficult for them to find a person who will agree to substitute the employee for 4 months. And the government does not provide any support for the business during the absence of a woman who is on maternity leave. So businesses are not interested in concluding formal contracts and try to provide women with shortened leaves.”

In a situation when jobs are scarce, women are ready to join take on informal employment which does not provide any social benefits. For instance, one of the female-participants was working without a formal contract in a private firm and had two pregnancies. In both cases she left work a few weeks prior to birth and resumed her work once the first child turned two months and the second child was only 40 days. In both cases she did not receive any payments during these leaves. To the question if she ever tried to negotiate a formal contract and formal maternity leave for herself, she responded that there was no need because her husband is the primary contributor to the family budget and there were no material strains associated with her temporary withdrawal from the labor market. Moreover, she acquired this position through her personal network and was afraid that excessive requests could jeopardize personal relations with her manager.

Another respondent shared a story about her sister who works in a wholesale shop as a computer operator. Even though she had a formal contract, her manager asked her to return to work once her child was one-month-old, which she did. She was not very happy about this arrangement but decided not to object since she only has a secondary school diploma and considers her chances of finding another office job in a small town are rather limited. Thus, the scarce employment opportunities

available to women make them less confident in negotiations and force them to accept the informal arrangements rather than being considered a trouble-maker.

### **3. Taking Paternity Leave**

Those participants who were aware of the provisions for two-weeks unpaid paternity leave never considered it a viable option because it is not paid. There were no instances within the personal networks of participants where a man used his right to the leave. The only story shared by a female-participant related to a non-Azerbaijani citizen taking paternal leave in an international organization operating in Azerbaijan. She was not aware of the details but believed that most probably the leave was fully compensated by the organization, and, as far as she remembers, the reaction of the local staff to this arrangement was marked with perplexity and ridicule (W8).

At the same time, some of the participants expressed their disappointment about not being aware of this opportunity earlier. For example, one of the female participants had a complicated second birth and her husband had to commute long distance between the office located in one town and the hospital in another town a few times a day for about two weeks. The possibility of taking paternal leave, even if not paid, retrospectively seemed a viable option since the constant commute was putting strain on their family budget and putting additional stress on her husband (W4).

### **4. Introduction of the Paid Paternity Leave Benefit**

The question “Would you (your husband) take a two-weeks long paid paternity leave?” was greeted by some of the participants with surprise as they confessed that they had never thought of such an option prior to this conversation. And while most of the participants considered that this can be a valid choice for their families, some informants raised reservations invoking the issue of (*national*) *mentality* as a potential

barrier to the implementation of the paternity leave policy. They deemed it at odds with the socially accepted concept of fatherhood, which equates men with the role of the breadwinner, claiming that men are not supposed to be engaged in responsibilities associated with *women's errands*:

W9: "What does "fathering" mean in Azerbaijan? It means to work somewhere, to earn money, to bring this money to the family, and not to come and to change diapers for a child. That's how our men show their care for women".

But following the dynamic of the discussion all the participants, even those, skeptical at the beginning, agreed that paid parental leave can be formally legalized and made available for those interested in taking it. The following rationales behind the introduction of paid paternity leave were discussed.

#### ***4.1. Increased mobility and special circumstances***

The focus groups demonstrated that childcare and the responsibilities associated with it are mostly considered *women's business*. Intergenerational support run by female family member(s) is regarded as the normal customary practice and considered one of the principal criteria for the speedy and smooth recovery of new mothers during the postpartum period. However, some of the participants noticed that the increased autonomy and mobility of young people makes this conventional arrangement often impossible.

M2: "The biggest challenges are for those pairs who live at a distance from their families and do not receive any support. In these cases, the right to paternity leave for a man becomes particularly important as he is the only supporter of his wife."

The absence of domestic helpers becomes even more apparent if a woman experiences complications during childbirth. These women's health issues, defined as *special circumstances*, were

often quoted by the respondents to justify the introduction of fully paid paternity leave.

The idea of *special circumstances* when men are allowed to take upon themselves domestic duties, fully or partially, without compromising their masculinity resonates with the findings of Humay Akhundzade in her research about nuclear families in Baku. In her study, men thought of themselves as *egalitarian*, despite not sharing an equal burden of domestic responsibilities. They were only ready to do *wife's work* in hypothetical extreme situations, for instance, when their wife was ill or "something happens" (Akhundzade 2015).

#### **4.2. Intergenerational Changes in Attitudes**

One of the most often invoked themes of discussion during the focus groups was a change in young people's attitudes towards the family. All participants agreed that there is an increasing tendency towards autonomy, that couples are not willing to reside with their parents any longer and live by the *rules of elderly*. Moreover, they actively use social media to learn patterns of behavior of *modern families*, become more egalitarian and have deeper ties of affection, which they project into their relationship.

Along with these changes, attitudes towards pregnancy, expectant women and young mothers are also changing:

W4: "There are differences in attitudes. I have witnessed in childhood that when a baby was crying a father told mom: 'Take him and calm him down.' Men were not supposed to hold children! But, for example, my husband told me: 'Go, drink tea, I will take care of the baby' [...] Earlier it was unacceptable and embarrassing for a pregnant woman to be in the same room with elder people, especially men, but now it is different. Even a newlywed man can say in the presence of other people: 'We are expecting a baby' [...] this is no longer shameful."

W1: "There is a great difference between generations. If you pay attention, you will notice that there is a big difference in young people's attitudes in comparison even with those who are 10 years older. In patterns of behavior, lifestyle and thinking,[...] young couples are trying to support each other, consult each other on various issue, but previously that was not the case. Their opinions hold equal value, but previously a man was the ultimate source of the decision-making."

Participants noted that the younger generation strives towards more egalitarian relationships based on mutual support and understanding, rather than a rigid hierarchy, according to which women should obey men in all circumstances. The exposure of young people to *positive role models* in movies or in social media was cited among the possible drivers of this positive change. The willingness to be modern and to act as a progressive father in public was described as one of the common patterns of self-portrayal in social media among educated urban youth.

Even though attitudes among the younger generation tend to change, participants recognized the division of household responsibilities and norms associated with male and female jobs as a pervasive practice. Participants noted that in order to achieve real change, a new generation of fathers should demonstrate their commitment to gender equality in line with the guiding principle: *Actions speak louder than words*.

M1: "If a father says: 'I won't be doing anything, bring me my tea, bring me meal,' in this way he teaches me an appropriate behavior[...] And there is no need to tell me anything. I learn from his actions and in the future I will take it with me to my new family. I won't serve my wife tea, I won't help her[...] If today I bring my wife a cup of tea, it does not mean that I have been subjugated, or that my wife is in a dominant position. It is just a revelation of my sympathy, my sincerity towards my wife. And if my son sees it, he will realize that

this makes families happy.”

Respondents indicated that cultural notions of what being a good father means are changing and that paternity increasingly implies that the father should be involved and have a close father-child relationship. Nevertheless, they did not question the traditional role of males as breadwinners. Similarly, the interviewed men and women found it natural that mothers are the primary caregivers in accordance with culturally expected gender roles. Allowing mothers to be in those roles, providing them with all necessities to ensure that they can dedicate themselves fully to mothering responsibilities, was associated with positive masculine values such as sacrifice, hard work, and providing protection.

#### ***4.3. Positive Impact on Intra-Family Dynamics***

Participants regarded parental leave as an opportunity for the whole family to come together and share the precious moments of this new experience. The postpartum period was considered as equally important for physical and emotional well-being of men. The participants believed that spending this time together with a newborn baby helps both parents adjust to the expanded family and contributes to deeper intimacy and affectionate relationships in the family.

Moreover, this engagement can bring certain important revelations for new fathers. For example, it can make men aware of the challenges associated with the birth of a child and recognition of the inputs made by women:

M1: “A working man leaves home in the morning and comes back in the evening. This person does not have an opportunity to provide attention to children or a newborn. When he comes home, he sees that his wife cleaned the baby, fed them and you think that all the problems are resolved. But if you would spend these 14 days next to your wife you will better understand her, what does it take for her to keep everything in order. You will witness all of that with your own eyes. And

when she says she's tired you won't be questioning her: 'What have you been doing the whole day? You just looked after a child and fed him!'"

The metaphor of *one glass of tea*, which we saw above, was widely used by both men and women as an example of the minimum care which a man can offer to his wife. Women noted that they do not expect men to take upon themselves the equal share of responsibilities for a newborn, but just to be around and be willing to provide symbolic or psychological assistance in the first place. This display of compassion and understanding was usually cited as an important precondition for a positive atmosphere in the family.

When describing the concrete expectations from their husbands' activities while at home, women most often anticipated men just to hold the baby while the mother is busy (having her meal, cleaning or cooking). The scenario when a man takes a child outside for a walk, was described as one of the best options, which provides benefits for child health and helps mothers acquire *free time* to attend to her daily chores or care for herself.

Women were noting that men might not be skillful enough to perform household chores or they might do them carelessly. For some women the idea that a man can share part of their domestic responsibilities was not just unrealistic, but insulting, meaning that they as women have failed to take care of their families in line with social expectations. As one of the respondents exclaimed: (W2) "Who, what kind of woman would want her husband to be engaged with domestic responsibilities?!"

In FGDs the anticipations of men's greater involvement in childcare along with the culturally sanctioned norm of fathers as breadwinners has been associated with the so-called "supportive fatherhood model" (Wall et al. 2007), when men are *just around* and ready to provide moral support when needed. At

the same time both parties are comfortable with the traditional division of labor wherein the majority of tasks related to childcare and household responsibilities are performed by women. This resonates with the finding of the *UN* study on women in the private sector of Azerbaijan, which indicated that women expect from their male partners only partial inputs rather than true parity in the distribution of domestic labor (UNDP 2018).

Female informants reinforced the idea that they are not comfortable with seeing men in the position of primary caregivers. The stereotype that men cannot take care of children as well as women is pervasive. During the discussion, phrases such as *motherly instinct*, *special bond between mother and child* were invoked to stress the *physiological ties* between mothers and children that were unattainable for fathers. This stereotypical representation of men was confirmed by data from the IMAGES survey, in which approximately three-quarters of the men and women agreed with the statement that men do not know how to take care of babies (UNFPA/SCFWCA 2018).

While there are certain patterns of change in the attitudes and perception of fatherhood among the young generation, the traditional division of gender roles continues to be a dominant pattern in the relationship of married couples.

#### **4.4. Paternity Leave as a Social Right of Men**

A few participants noted that paternity leave is a social right of men, something to which they are entitled. The Azerbaijani government took the commitment to mainstream gender equality in all state programs and legislation (Commitment to Action 2015), and the absence of paid paternity leave provisions can be recognized as violation of men's social rights:

W5: "It is the parental right of men. They should realize that they have become parents. In rural areas men work, work, work

from dawn to dusk and do not even know how they became fathers. It also relates to men working in private sector. If only they would have had an opportunity, in other words, financial coverage, even for one week they would have had a chance to realize that they have become fathers and how that's beautiful!"

One of the respondents noted that there is a negative stereotype among her male colleagues that women are in a more privileged position in comparison to men since they are entitled to 126 days of maternity leave:

W10: "I have often heard the jealous remarks from young, educated males between 28 and 32 years, who work in the leading business companies: 'Women come and work for a few years and then retreat to give a birth and get some leisure.'"

She considers that the introduction of paid paternity leave will help to elevate these feelings of exclusion and discrimination among working men because quite often these men must take upon themselves some additional responsibilities to substitute their female colleagues on maternity leave. Introduction of paternity leave may help men reevaluate women's efforts since maternity leave is not a time for recreation but involves serious responsibilities and restructuring of the personal life.

## **5. Labor Market and Job Security**

The structure of the labor market and policies governing it play a crucial role in enabling positive changes towards the reconceptualization of *fathering models* towards greater equality. However, the current structure of the labor market and the low level of job security were often named by informants as key impediments to the implementation of parental leave policies in Azerbaijan.

For instance, according to labor market indicators, female employment has risen steadily in Azerbaijan from 2005.

However, this increase in female employment has been witnessed chiefly in rural areas where women are most likely to be informally employed in the low-wage agricultural sector. Women are also employed primarily in the low-wage public sector, which offers flexible or part-time arrangements, including education, healthcare, trade and the social services spheres (Table 1, Azerbaijan State Statistical Committee (2020b) or are engaged in trade Private sector work is regarded by women as particularly demanding and hard to reconcile with the burden of household responsibilities. (UNDP 2018) The private sector, specifically agriculture, trade, catering and service provisions, is also considered to be the most affected by the shadow economy (Jabbarov 2019). Women and men employed in the shadow economy, i.e., without official contracts, are ineligible for certain social benefits, including health-related leaves.

These patterns of female employment signify that it is more economically beneficial for a family to agree to a woman's (but not a man's) temporary withdrawal from the labor market. Given the gender pay gap, women's contributions do not usually make up the primary share of the household budget. There is also a large proportion of economically non-active women (45% out of the total number of economically non-active people), who regard housekeeping as their primary responsibilities (Table 2, Azerbaijan State Statistical Committee (2020c).

Table 1. Employed population by sex and economic activity at main workplace				
<i>Thousand persons, in per cent to total and sex distribution, (%)</i>				
Economic activities	In per cent to total		Sex distribution	
	women	men	women	men

Agriculture, forestry and fishing	42,2	30,7	56,2	43,8
Mining	0,2	1,4	10,4	89,6
Manufacturing	3,6	7,1	32,2	67,8
Electricity, gas and steam production, distribution and supply	0,1	0,9	11,0	89,0
Water supply; waste treatment and disposal	0,5	0,8	35,8	64,2
Construction	1,3	13,2	8,7	91,3
Trade; repair of transport means	18,6	9,9	63,6	36,4
Transportation and storage	0,7	7,3	8,6	91,4
Accommodation and food service activities	1,4	1,7	43,6	56,4
Information and communication	1,5	1,0	58,8	41,2
Financial and insurance activities	0,5	0,8	36,1	63,9
Real estate activities	1,3	2,3	34,8	65,2
Professional, scientific and technical activities	1,2	1,7	39,3	60,7
Administrative and support service activities	1,2	2,6	30,4	69,6
Public administration and defense; social security	2,0	8,8	17,8	82,2
Education	12,0	3,7	75,2	24,8
Human health and social work activities	6,0	1,7	76,2	23,8
Art, entertainment and recreation	1,9	1,4	56,2	43,8
Other service activities	3,8	3,0	53,8	46,2
Total, %	100,0	100,0	48,3	51,7

thousand persons	2408,1	2580,1	X	X
------------------	--------	--------	---	---

Table 2. Distribution of economically inactive population by categories and sex					
(Thousand persons, in per cent to total and sex distribution, %)					
Categories	In per cent to total		Sex distribution		
	Women	men	women	men	
Students of day institutions, pupils of senior classes	15,4	28,7	50,7	49,3	
Pensioners by age, long service, concessionary terms	27,5	30,8	63,1	36,9	
Pensioners on disability	9,0	26,9	39,0	61,0	
Persons receiving income from property	2,2	9,1	31,6	68,4	
Persons keeping house, taking care of children and other family members	45,9	4,5	95,1	4,9	
Total, %	100,0	100,0	65,7	34,3	
thousand persons	1419,5	741,8	x	x	

Some of the participants were quite skeptical about the positive implications of launching the fully paid paternal leave policy because it may bring adverse results and deepen the disparities between rural and urban areas:

W10: "It is impossible to organize that [*paternity leave*] unless there is a social protection system with greater coverage in place. There is a disparity between the capital and the regions. The majority of the men in the regions do not have permanent labor contracts, whereas those who do, do not get enough of a salary and are often interested in side

employment or a second job to satisfy family needs.”

Another structural constraint men can face is a gendered culture of their employment places and attitudes of the management towards paternity leave. For instance, one of the women informants shared a story about how her husband, who works in the government sector, was willing to take a short break soon after the birth of a child but was not allowed to.

In other words, the participants consider that managers and other men at the workplace may influence new fathers' decisions about using their leave and even may prevent such decisions. The general expectations of men to devote themselves to work while women assume responsibility for domestic affairs, tends to inhibit men's use of family leave benefits even in countries with progressive family policies such as Sweden (Haas and Hwang 1995; 2019).

## ***6. Women's Careers and Parental Leave***

The discussion of the potential impact of the prolonged maternity leave on the professional life or the careers of women were marginal and brought up only in one of the focus groups by a man (M6). During the discussion he mentioned a documentary video about Estonian experiences which he watched by chance. The video argued that some of the professions require women return to work following childbirth because they may lose their qualifications or opportunity for professional growth. So, the introduction of paternity leave or institutionally provided care for children helps women to maintain their employment status and not jeopardize career advancements. This way, he argued, the government helps employers retain competent and skillful employees. The participant regarded this as an example of the best practices, which can be applied in Azerbaijan.

Women informants were not as much interested in the discussion of the possible implications of maternity leave on their careers; instead, they showed quite a loyal attitude towards

the traditional division of responsibilities. None of the women mentioned any challenges related to reconciliation of their family lives and professional responsibilities. It seems that being a *good mother and wife* is regarded as a primary duty for women, whereas career holds second place.

The majority of the women FGD participants belonged to the educational or healthcare sectors, which allows for certain flexibility in terms of working hours and stable job opportunities. At the same time, these sectors are rather horizontal and provide limited prospects for professional aspirations or career growth. Work in these spheres is often stereotypically portrayed as an ideal match for *female nature* and is regarded as a continuation of the domestic care work for women. Moreover, quite often the administrative or leading positions in these institutions are occupied by men, which demonstrates the existence of the so-called *glass escalator*, advantages that men receive in female-dominated professions.

For these reasons, women FGD participants were quite comfortable with taking prolonged maternity leaves, even up to three years. Any substantial implications for women's employment status or careers were not discussed. The central preoccupation of the FGDs were related to the improvement of provisions of prolonged leave either by linking it to women's salaries (and providing certain fixed percentage from the salary through the entire duration of the leave) or providing universal monthly allowances to families until a child reaches certain age (child benefit).<sup>[14]</sup>

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study discussed the legal provisions, institutional context and social attitudes towards parental leave in Azerbaijan. It demonstrated that as the modern family in Azerbaijan is changing, the family welfare policies need to adapt to these new conditions and provide opportunities for

fathers to assume gender-equal parenting roles (or at least roles with more gender parity). The FGDs certify that young men are increasingly interested not just in stable employment schemes and career goals but also in the enlargement of possibilities to develop emotional involvement with their children. Thus, the introduction of paid paternal leave was discussed as an important milestone towards these goals.

While introducing changes, it is important to understand the national normative and institutional context and incorporate social and economic incentives to encourage parents to make use of the new opportunities. Drawing on the current state of affairs and best practices used worldwide in terms of provision of leave policies to families, I would like to suggest the following general recommendations:

1. It is important for Azerbaijan to *develop a long-term family policy*. This policy should encompass the government's vision and conceptualization of the family relationship, define government assistance to families with young children and define the framework of parental leave schemes to be included in the country's legislation and regulations. It may also help to divide responsibilities between government bodies and set clear-cut goals and objectives.
2. It is necessary for the country to *"legalize" paternal leave* by introducing it as a new legislative norm. This includes making leave paid at rates comparable with the salary rate of the seeker. The existing provision for unpaid leave cannot be considered a viable option because it puts additional strain on family budgets and thus, according to the statistics, is never used (*please see section "Family Welfare Policies in Azerbaijan" above for details*). Paternal leave should come with a guarantee of employment provisions and release men from attestation (an exam to determine qualifications or educational attainment) similar to the current legislative provisions pertaining to maternity leave

(Labor Code, 1999. Article 66).

3. Azerbaijan should *improve the system of maternity leave coverage* and ensure that more women are included and qualify to receive maternal leave benefits. The monitoring and system of fines should be in place to make sure that public or private entities do not violate women's right to leave and observe the regulations related to its duration.
4. All leave policies need to *be inclusive and available to all social strata*.<sup>[15]</sup> Special considerations should be developed to ensure that leave policies apply to agricultural workers, seasonal workers, temporary workers, etc, regardless of gender.
5. *Adoptive and single parents regardless of gender* should be entitled to paid paternal, maternal and parental leave provisions.
6. *The introduction of paternal leave policies* should be accompanied by measures to encourage the use of leave by fathers. For instance, awareness raising campaigns can be launched and "parenting schools" established. Appropriate government bodies should take into consideration the experience of UNFPA in organizing various projects that promote responsible fatherhood and media campaigns on gender equitable parental leave policy.
7. It is important to acknowledge the structural constraints and *organize consultations with employers* to address them. For example, both public and private sector companies can develop special protocols and internal policies (for instance, within the framework of the Codes of Ethics) and address issues of gender equality and non-discrimination in the workplace.
8. Leave policies should also be combined with *policies to improve the system and provisions of institutional childcare*. These new policies should include quality, accessibility and affordability of childcare services available to families. The institutional infrastructure

of childcare facilities should be improved. The government should also consider setting up the nurseries where appropriate.

## Annex 1

### Participants of Focus Group Discussions

	Place of residence	Education	Marital Status	Field of Employment	Age	Number of Children
<b>Women</b>						
W1	Goytepe	Bachelor	Married	Education	47	2
W2	Zagatala	Bachelor	Married	Education	38	1
W3	Ganja	Master	Divorced	Not specified	26	1
W4	Ganja	Vocational	Married	Accounting	37	2
W5	Barda	High Education	Married	Education	56	1
W6	Barda	Vocational	Married	Medicine	30	3
W7	Agdjabedi	Bachelor	Married	Education	32	2
W8	Baku	Master	Single	Finance	32	
W9	Baku	Master	Single	Medicine	30	
W10	Baku	Master	Single	Development	31	
<b>Men :</b>						
M1	Barda	Bachelor	Married	Education	35	3
M2	Terter	Bachelor	Single	Education	26	
M3	Ganja	Master	Married	Education	42	3
M4	Ganja	Vocational	Married	Construction	27	2
M5	Ganja	Master	Married	Education	25	1
M6	Samukh	Bachelor	Married	Public Service	45	3

## Bibliography:

Aassve, A., Goisis, A. and Sironi, M (2012), Happiness and Childbearing Across Europe. Soc Indic Res 108, 65–86 (2012).

Additions and Amendments to Legislative Acts (2007), “Gender (kişi və qadınların) Bərabərliyinin Təminatları Haqqında” Azərbaycan Respublikası Qanununun tətbiqi ilə əlaqədar Azərbaycan Respublikasının bəzi Qanunvericilik Aktlarına əlavələr və Dəyişikliklər Edilməsi Barədə (2007). [Additions and Amendments to some Legislative Acts of the Republic of Azerbaijan in connection with the implementation of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Provisions of Gender (Men and Women) Equality”]. Retrieved from: <https://e-qanun.az/framework/14117>

Akhundzade, H. (2015), Gender Arrangements in Contemporary Azerbaijani Urban Families. From Private to Public – Transformation of Social Spaces in the South Caucasus. Tbilisi.

Amin M., Islam A., and Sakhonchik A. (2016), Does paternity leave matter for female employment in developing economies? Evidence from firm-level data, Applied Economics Letters, 23:16, 1145-1148, DOI: 10.1080/13504851.2016.1139669

Azerbaijan State Statistical Committee (2020a), Preschool Educational Institutions, Retrieved from: [https://www.stat.gov.az/source/education/en/001\\_2.1-3en.xls](https://www.stat.gov.az/source/education/en/001_2.1-3en.xls).

Azerbaijan State Statistical Committee (2020b), Employed population by sex and economic activity at main workplace. Retrieved from:

[https://www.stat.gov.az/source/gender/en/qk/005\\_5en.xls](https://www.stat.gov.az/source/gender/en/qk/005_5en.xls).

Azerbaijan State Statistical Committee (2020c), Distribution of economically inactive population by categories and sex. Retrieved from: <https://www.stat.gov.az/source/gender>

Azerbaijan State Statistical Committee (2020d), *Gender statistics*.[https://www.stat.gov.az/source/gender/en/qk/005\\_5en.xls](https://www.stat.gov.az/source/gender/en/qk/005_5en.xls);  
[https://www.stat.gov.az/source/gender/en/qk/005\\_10en.xls](https://www.stat.gov.az/source/gender/en/qk/005_10en.xls)

Azimli, N. (2018), "Count Us In, Please." A Study of Gender-Based Employment Disparities in Azerbaijan. CRRC Study Series on Public Policy Issues. Baku, Azerbaijan.

Brandth, B, and Kvande, E. (2018), Masculinity and fathering alone during parental leave. *Men and Masculinities*, 21(1), 72-90.

Blum, S., Kosłowski, A., Macht, A. and Moss, P. (2018), *International Review of Leave Policies and Research*. Retrieved from: [http://www.leavenetwork.org/Lp\\_And\\_R\\_Reports](http://www.leavenetwork.org/Lp_And_R_Reports)

Commitment to Action (2015), "Commitment Statement on behalf of Azerbaijani Government, Global Leaders 'Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. New York, United Nations." Retrieved from:  
<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Initiatives/StepItUp/Commitments-Speeches/Azerbaijan-StepItUp-CommitmentStatement-201509-en.pdf>

Cook, Linda J. (2012), "The Political Economy of Russia's Demographic Crisis: States and Markets, Migrants and Mothers," in *The Political Economy of Russia*, ed. Neil Robinson, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Cools, S., Fiva, J.H. and Kirkebøen, L.J. (2015), Causal Effects of Paternity Leave on Children and Parents. *Scand. J. of Economics*, 117: 801-828. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sjoe.12113>

Coltrane, S. (1996), *Family man*. New York: Oxford University Press

Connell R. W. (1990), *The State, Gender, and Sexual Politics: Theory and Appraisal*. *Theory and Society* 19, no. 5 : 507–544. Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers

Doherty, W. J., Kouneski, E. F., and Erickson, M. F. (1998), Responsible fathering: An overview and conceptual framework. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 60(2), 277–292.

Duffy S., Khan A., and van Esch P. (2019), Father's days: increasing the "daddy quota" in parental leave makes everyone happier. *The Conversation*, August 30. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com/fathers-days-increasing-the-daddy-quota-in-parental-leave-makes-everyone-happier-122047>

Esping-Andersen, G. (1999), *Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Family Code (1999), "Azərbaycan Respublikasının Ailə Məcəlləsi (1999) [Family Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan]." Retrieved from: <http://e-qanun.az/framework/46946>

Haas, L., and Hwang, Ph. (1995), Company culture and men's usage of family leave benefits in Sweden. *Family Relations* 44:28-36.

Haas, L., and Hwang, Ph. (2019), Policy is not enough – the influence of the gendered workplace on fathers' use of parental leave in Sweden, *Community, Work & Family*, 22:1, 58-76, doi: 10.1080/13668803.2018.1495616

ILO (2012), *Comparative study on promoting decent work through providing maternity protection and supporting workers with family responsibilities: ratifying and applying Conventions Nos 183 and 156 / International Labour Office*. Geneva.

ILO (2017), *World Social Protection Report 2017–19: Universal social protection to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals* International Labour Office – Geneva. Retrieved from: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-dgreports/-dcomm/-publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_604882.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-dgreports/-dcomm/-publ/documents/publication/wcms_604882.pdf)

Jabbarov M. (2019), Tax Reform and Its Impact on Shadow Economy (Vergi islahatlarının kölgə iqtisadiyyatına təsiri). Conference Speech. Retrieved from:

[http://www.audit.gov.az/Upload/Files/2019/Mikayil\\_Cabbarov\\_meruze.pdf](http://www.audit.gov.az/Upload/Files/2019/Mikayil_Cabbarov_meruze.pdf)

Kinoshita, Y., Guo, F. (2015), What can boost female labour force participation in Asia? IMF Working Paper WP/15/56. Washington, DC, IMF

Labor Code (1999), "Azərbaycan Respublikasının Əmək Məcəlləsi (1999) [Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan]." Retrieved from: <http://e-qanun.az/framework/46943>

Law on Gender Equality (2006), "Gender (kişi və qadınların) Bərabərliyinin Təminatları Haqqında" Azərbaycan Respublikası Qanunu (2006). [the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Provisions of Gender (Men and Women) Equality"] Retrieved from: <https://e-qanun.az/framework/12424>

Law on Labor Pensions (2008), "Əmək Pensiyaları Haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikasının Qanunu (2008) [Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Labor Pensions]." Retrieved from: <http://e-qanun.az/framework/11566>

Law on Preschool Education (2017), "Məktəbəqədər Təhsil Qanunu (2017), "Məktəbəqədər təhsil haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikasının Qanunu" [Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Preschool Education]" Retrieved from: <https://e-qanun.az/framework/35791>

Lewis, C. and O'Brien, M., eds. (1987), Reassessing Fatherhood: New Observations on Fathers and the Modern Family. London: Sage.

Margolis, R., Choi, Y., Holm, A., Mehta, N. (2020), The Effect of Expanded Parental Benefits on Union Dissolution. Journal of Marriage and Family. 83. 10.1111/jomf.12718

Marsiglio, W., Amato, P., Day, R. D., & Lamb, M. E. (2000), Scholarship on fatherhood in the 1990s and beyond. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 62, 1173-1191.

- Musumeci, R., Santero, A. (2018), Fathers, Childcare and Work: Cultures, Practices and Policies. Emerald Publishing Limited.
- ODI/UNICEF (2020), Universal child benefits: policy issues and options. London: Overseas Development Institute and New York: UNICEF. Retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/reports/universal-child-benefits-2020>
- OECD (2018), Is the Last Mile the Longest? Economic Gains from Gender Equality in Nordic Countries, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264300040-en>
- Presidential Decree (2018), “Uşağa qulluğa görə qismən ödənişli sosial məzuniyyətdə olanlara verilən müavinətin artırılması haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikası Prezidentinin Sərəncamı [Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan On the increase of the allowance given to those on partially paid social leave due to child care]” (<https://e-qanun.az/framework/38001>).
- Soviet Law (1990), “Изменения и Дополнения, которые Вносятся в Решения Правительства СССР о Государственной Помощи Семьям, Имеющим Детей [Changes and Additions to the Decisions of the Government of the USSR on State Assistance to Families with Children]” (1990). Retrieved from: [http://www.libussr.ru/doc\\_ussr/usr\\_17641.htm](http://www.libussr.ru/doc_ussr/usr_17641.htm)
- Statistics Explained (2019), Fertility statistics. (Retrieved from: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/pdfscache/1273.pdf>
- UNDP (2018), Gender Assessment Report–Women in the Private Sector of Azerbaijan: Opportunities and Challenges. Baku.
- UNICEF (2019), Paid parental leave and family-friendly policies: An evidence brief. New York, NY: The United Nations Children’s Fund.
- UNFPA/SCFWCA (2018), Gender equality and gender relations in

Azerbaijan: current trends and opportunities. Findings from the Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES). Baku, Azerbaijan

Wall, K., Aboim, S. and Marinho, S. (2007), Fatherhood, Family and Work in Men's Lives: Negotiating New and Old Masculinities. *Recherches sociologiques et anthropologiques*, 38-2: 105-122

Wall, K. and Leitão, M. (2018), 'Portugal country note', in Blum, S., Kosłowski, A., Macht, A. and Moss, P. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2018*. Retrieved from: [http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp\\_and\\_r\\_reports/](http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/)

## References:

[1] This study was carried out within the framework of the "EU 4 Gender Equality: Together against gender stereotypes and gender-based violence" program, funded by the European Union, implemented jointly by UN Women and UNFPA. The study was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

[2] According to Gøsta Esping-Andersen (1999), welfare regimes are understood as the articulation of welfare programs and institutions – including the state, markets, and households – insuring households against social risks, and therefore promoting and protecting welfare.

[3] According to the sociologist Raewyn Connell (1990, 523), "each empirical state has a definable 'gender regime' that is ... linked to—though not a simple reflection of—the wider gender order of the society." According to her analysis, major features of the gender regime can be derived from the three main structures of the general gender order: the gender division of labor, the structure of power, and the structure of cathexis (people's emotional attachments to each other).

[4] Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark are the five Nordic countries

[5] In 2019, the European average fertility rate was 1.53, the fertility rates in Iceland, Denmark and Sweden were accordingly: 1.74, 1.70 and 1.71, only in Norway the rate was equal to European average of 1.53. (Statistics Explained 2019)

[6] "Neofamilialism is based on a set of norms that stress differentiated and biologically determined gender roles, women's primary role in motherhood and family life, and women's primary responsibility to society and nation to reproduce in the family rather than produce in the economy." (Cook 2012, 111)

[7] According to the data from the Azerbaijan State Statistical Committee there were in total 141.179 live births in 2019 (2020d). According to the data provided by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection on January 15, 2021, 18.506 women received maternity leave benefits in 2019 (official response to the letter of inquiry by UNFPA), which constitutes 13,1% of the total number of live births in the country.

[8] Although national legislation does not incorporate 'paternal leave' as a legal norm, for consistency and simplicity this report will be using the term 'paternal leave' when referring to the two-weeks unpaid leave pertained to the fathers of newborns.

[9] Official response by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection from January 15, 2021

[10] In Azerbaijan, women are concentrated in the low-paying, feminized health care and education sectors. The gender pay gap was 58% in 2019. The findings of the Azerbaijan State Statistical Committee suggest that a large percentage of women are economically inactive and dependent on the income of a family member (Azerbaijan State Statistical Committee, 2020c).

[\[11\]](#) In accordance with the Presidential Decree, the provisions of care to a child until three years of age is compensated with a monthly payment of 44 AZN until a child reaches 1,5 years and 28 AZN until 3 years. The minimum monthly salary in Azerbaijan had been established at a rate of 250 AZN per month.

[\[12\]](#) In accordance with Labor Code 1999, Article 132.2, partially paid child-care leave does not count towards employee tenure, and it is not taken into account when a mother's labor pension is calculated

[\[13\]](#) Demographic characteristics of the participants can be found in Annex 1.

[\[14\]](#) For more information on this policy option, please consult the publication: ODI/UNICEF (2020)

[\[15\]](#) It is important to monitor how social class and educational attainment affect women and men's engagement in paternal and parental leave schemes. For instance, a study in Chile found low-income men spent less time with children than middle-income men, while studies in Brazil, Mexico and the Caribbean suggest that lower-income unemployed men were more likely to care for their children due to economic necessity (ILO 2012). Thus, the constant monitoring of implementation of these policies is important to introduce timely adjustments.