

Family Leave and What Unions Can Do About It. Lessons From Recent Reforms in Ireland

Dr Stephan Köppe

Assistant Professor of Social Policy



@welfaremarkets

NERI Seminar: 15 Nov 2023



UCD School of Social Policy,
Social Work and Social Justice

Scoil an Pholasaí Shóisialta, na
hOibre Sóisialta agus na Córa
Sóisialta UCD

Background



- Late introduction of paid leave for fathers (and shared parental leave)
- How does Ireland compare to the EU?
- How many fathers take leave?
- Who is taking leave?
- What can unions do about it?

RESEARCH ARTICLE



Ireland's paternity leave: sluggish benefit take-up and occupational inequalities

Stephan Köppe 

School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice, University College Dublin, Belfield, Dublin 4, Ireland

ABSTRACT

Ireland used to be a laggard in implementing modern fatherhood policies compared to its European neighbours. In 2016, it was one of the last EU countries to introduce paid paternity leave and three years later parental leave. These reforms indicate that Ireland is moving away from the US model of fatherhood to a social investment state closer to the Swedish model of shared parenthood. With the introduction of Paternity Benefit the Irish government aimed to achieve a take-up of about 46–61%, which is used as a yardstick to evaluate its success. First, this article assesses paternity leave take-up comprehensively through four different rates based on administrative and aggregate data. Overall, take-up had been increasing initially, but levelled already after four years at the lower government target. This is puzzling as countries with similar reforms reported a constant increase and higher take-up over time. Second, drivers for the low take-up are discussed. Specifically, occupational and class inequalities are key factors as only 55 percent of the male workforce have access to occupational top-ups in addition to the relatively low statutory benefit. Without increasing benefit generosity, take-up will stabilize at the rather modest levels in comparison to other European welfare states.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 15 September 2021
Accepted 7 February 2023

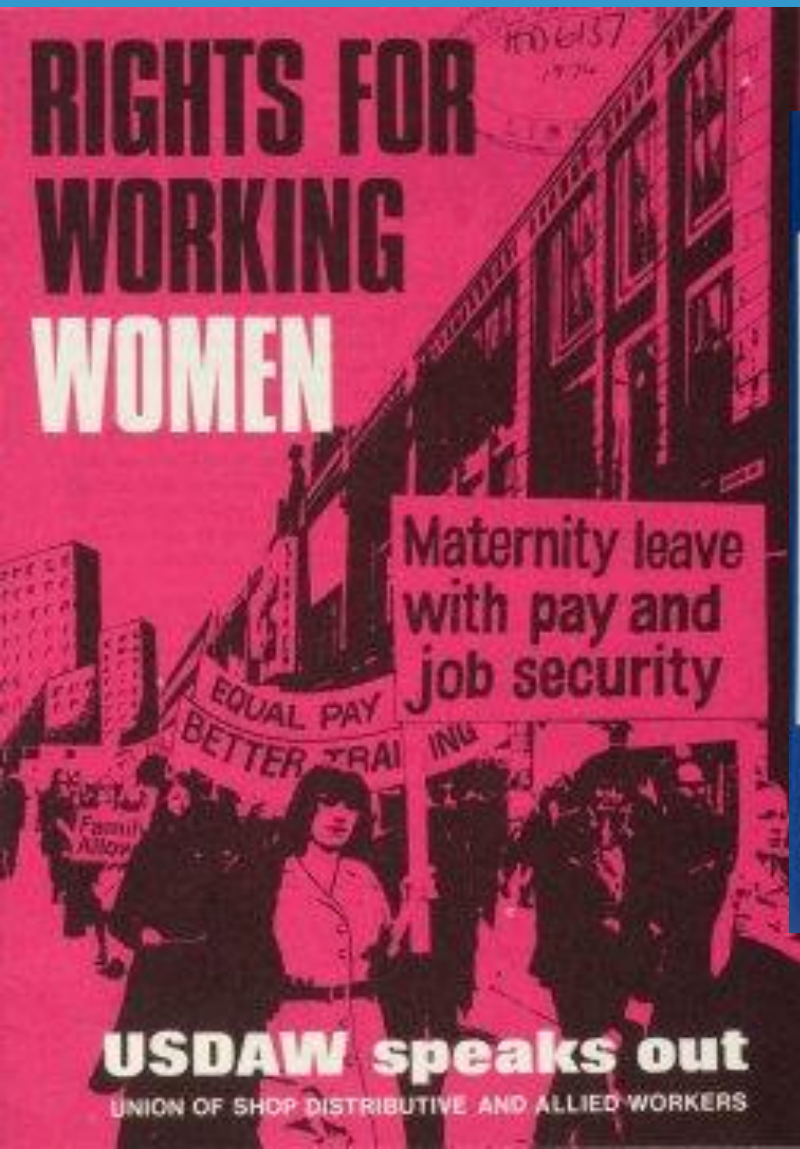
KEYWORDS

Paternity leave; family policy; leave policies; fatherhood; Ireland; social investment; take-up; occupational benefits; measurement



<https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2023.2179527>

Union support for maternity leave in the 1970s



The TASS Guide to What They Say. Number Three
The Employer who Gropes about Children says



“But if I extend your maternity leave everyone will want the same”

Women are entitled to short maternity leave. And you can have a job back after your baby is born. The Employment Protection Act says so. But it's still not enough. Anyway, your boss could be one of those who say he has never heard of it. So what can you do about it? You could battle on. Alone.

Or you can join us in TASS. We know what we are doing. We are the union for all staff in engineering. Our women's membership is growing faster than any other staff union. Our policy is simple. Our members are worth much more than the basic minimum given

by the law. And our unrivalled negotiating record shows we mean business.

If you want the benefits of our strength, experience and expertise contact Judith Hunt, our National Women's Organiser. Or why not have a chat with your local TASS representative.

tass
Associated Union of Engineering Workers
Technical Administration and Support Services Union
Head Office
Union Hall, Little Green, Richmond, Surrey TW9 2SQ
Telephone 01 846 2071

Renewed focus in liberal welfare states

AUFA

202201

AGE 11+

HR GETS A
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMPLAINT
STARTER SET

435 pieces

FALSE CHOICE

SABBATICAL vs PARENTAL LEAVE



WARNING: Discrimination is immoral and illegal.

WE
CHOOSE
AUFA

Paternity leave

Definition (Leavenetwork, Blum et. al 2017):

“Paternity leave is narrowly defined as a short period immediately after the birth that is only available to fathers (or in some countries also to same sex partners) and is in addition to Parental leave”

- This excludes father quotas in Parental leave schemes.



European Alignment



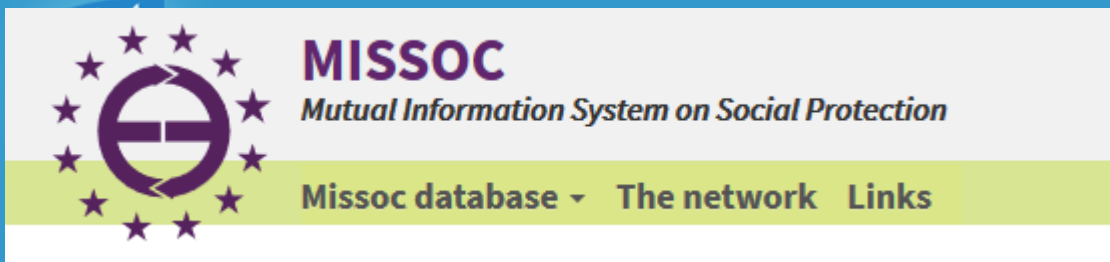
Paternity Benefit Ireland

Eligibility	Employee: 39 weeks social contributions, self-employed: 52 wks
Duration	2 weeks
Flexibility	Up to 6 months after birth, but in consecutive weeks
Rate	€230 pw (2016), flat rate
Occupational top-ups	Public employees: 100% of wage Private employees: 37 % of companies offer top-ups, mostly 100% of wage



Paternity Leave schemes

- 70% of EU-28 countries (excl. IE) offer paid PL schemes
- Mostly relative generous at 80-100% of salary
- If no Paternity Leave, then parental leave in 96% of countries (i.e. Cyprus)
- In 85% of countries dedicated Paternity leave or daddy quota in parental leave

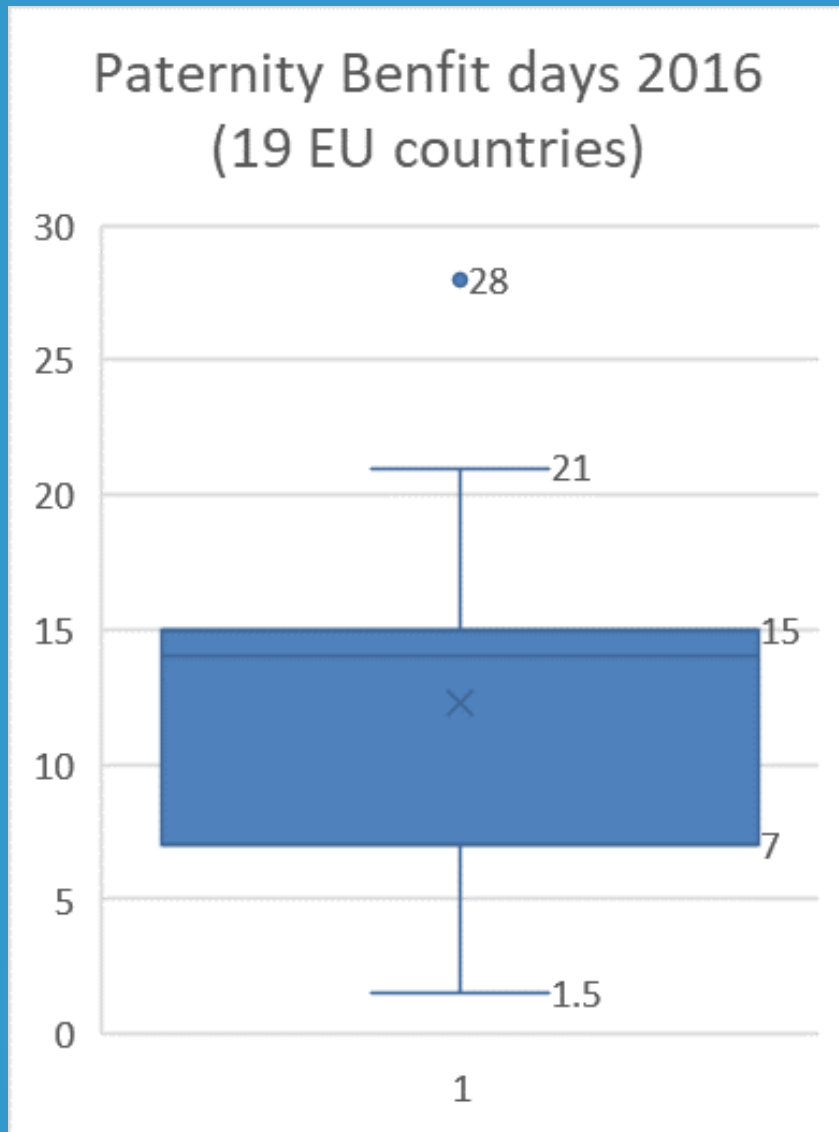


INTERNATIONAL NETWORK ON LEAVE POLICIES AND RESEARCH

12th International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research 2016

EDITED BY ALISON KOSLOWSKI (THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH), SONJA BLUM (AUSTRIAN INSTITUTE FOR FAMILY STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA), PETER MOSS (UCL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON)

Paternity Leave days 2016

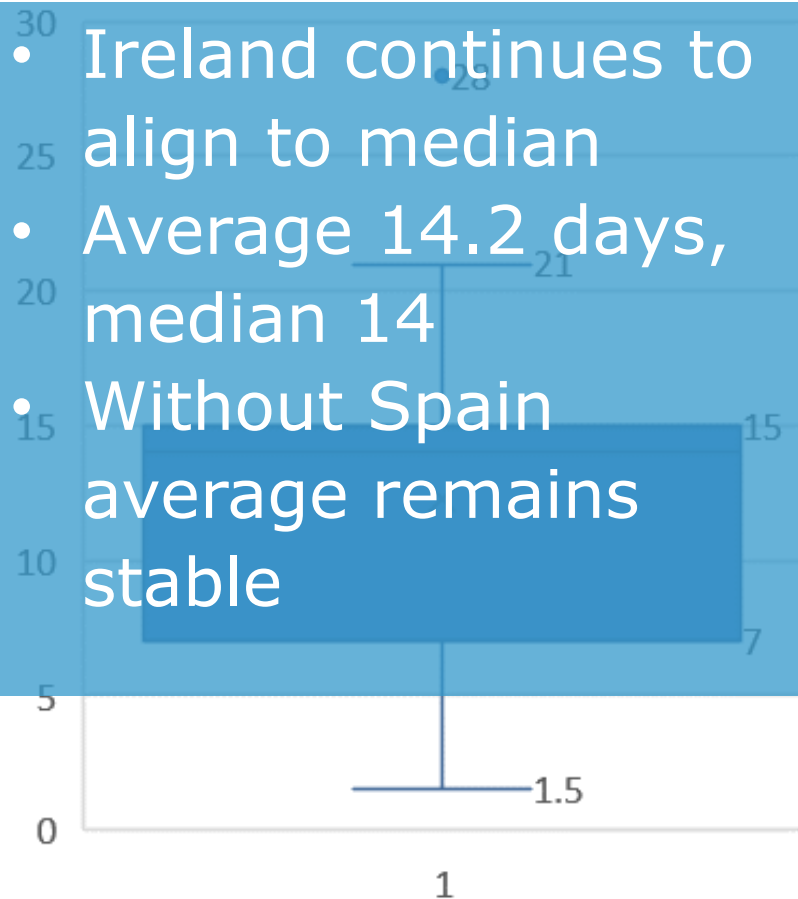


- Ireland aligns to median
- 68% of countries with PL offer 14 days or more
- Average 12.3 days, median 14
- Irish force majeure leave could be used in the past (3 days/year, 5 in 2 years)

Paternity Leave 2019

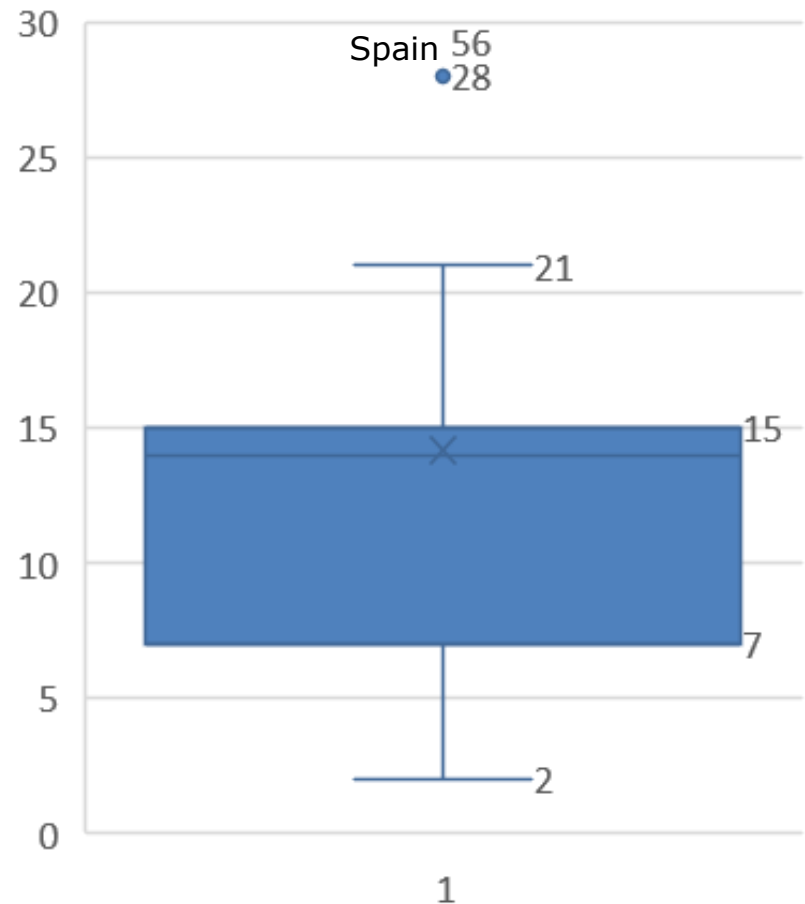
Paternity Benefit days 2016
(19 EU countries)

- Ireland continues to align to median
- Average 14.2 days, median 14
- Without Spain average remains stable



Paternity Benefit days 2019
(23 EU countries)

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-
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Policy Aims

- The Department of Social Protection estimates about 30-40,000 claimants per annum, which would resemble a take-up rate of about 46-61% among all fathers.

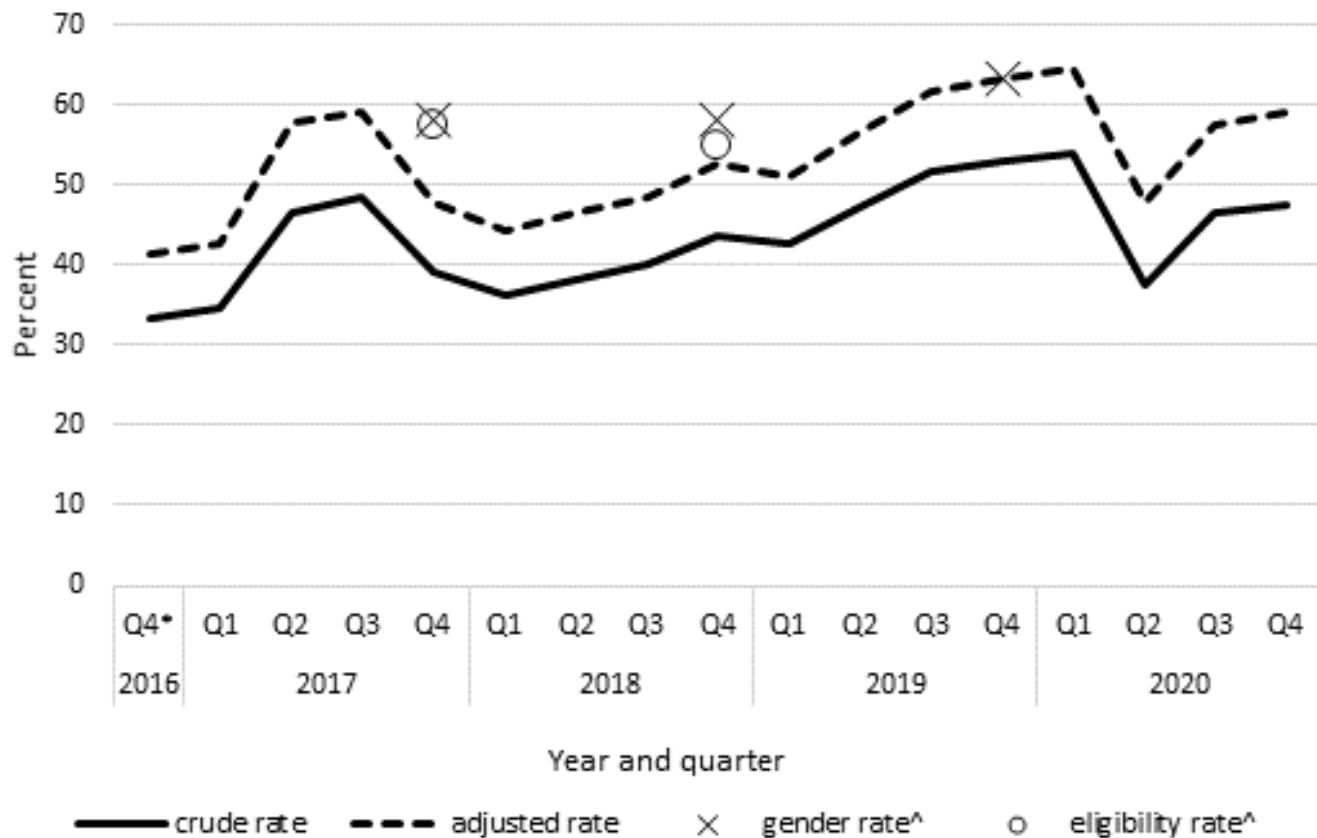


Measurement of take-up

- Various rates used in the literature
- Mostly measured in surveys up until 2000s
- Often lack of accurate administrative data to assess eligibility
- Measure take-up with aggregate and official claimant data
 - Crude rate = PB / births
 - Adjusted rate = $PB / (\text{employment rate of 20-49 old men} * \text{births})$
 - Gender rate = $PB / MB \text{ claimants}$
 - Eligibility rate = inverted non-take-up, uses birth registrations and social contributions history



Take up: paternity benefit take-up rates by quarter



- Slight increase over time
- take-up at lower target in 2019
- Strong Covid-19 effect

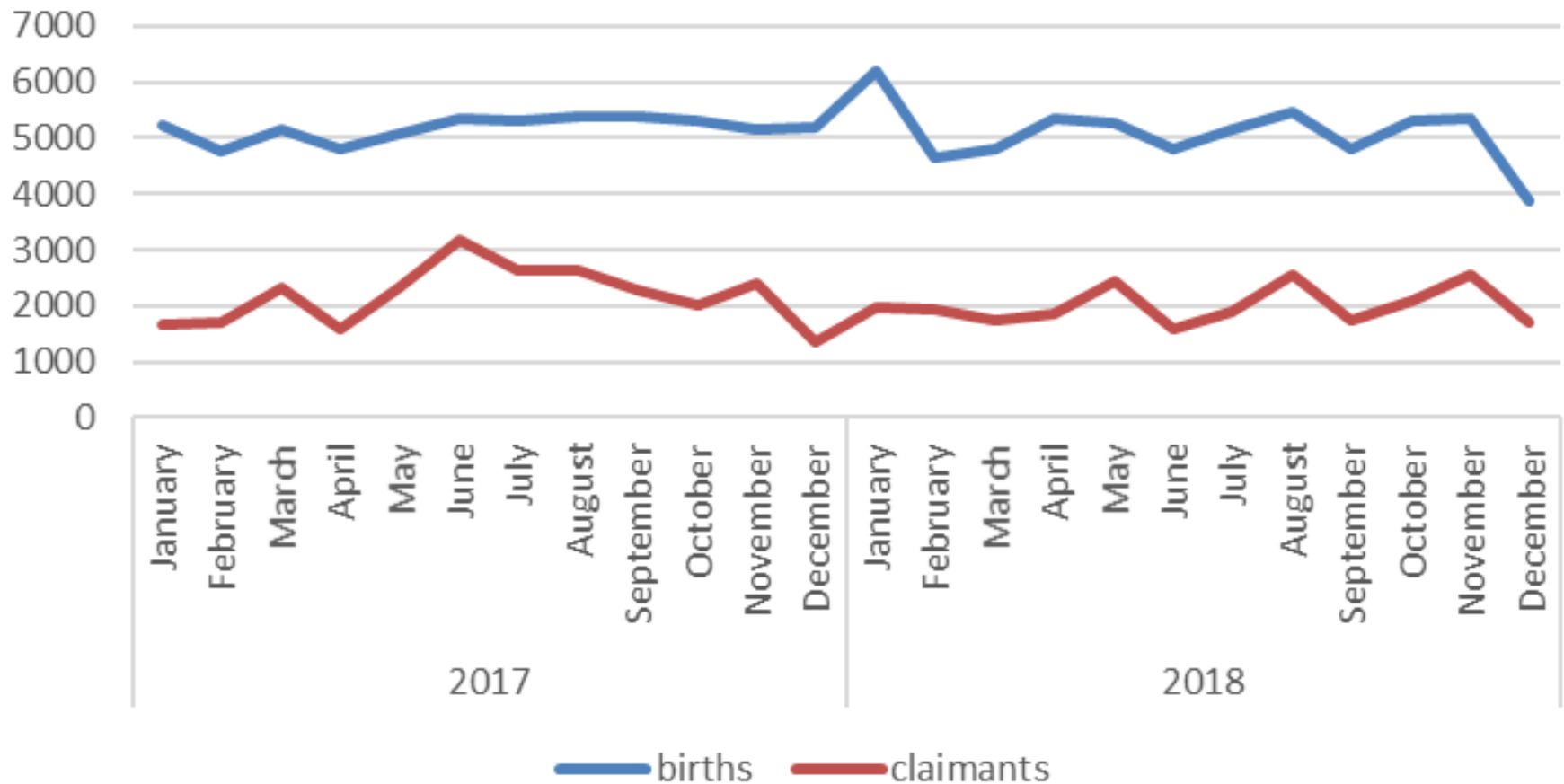
Differences in take-up

- No seasonal effect, covid-19 mirrors economic crisis
- Self-employed
- Occupational inequalities
- Older and younger fathers



Is it Seasonal?

monthly births and PB claimants



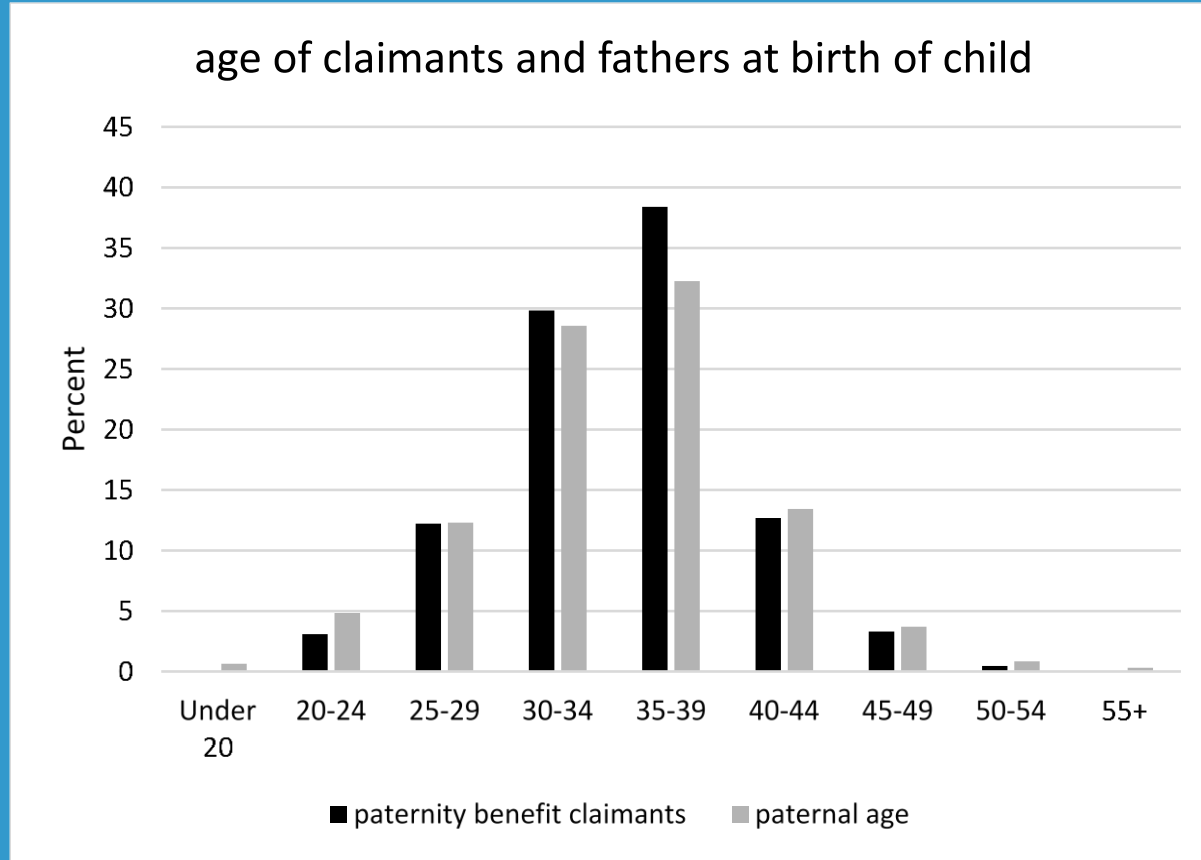
Differences in take-up

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Paternal age

Figure 2: Age of claimants and fathers at birth of child, 2017



Differences in take-up

- No seasonal effect, covid-19 mirrors economic crisis
- Self-employed
- Occupational inequalities
- Older and younger fathers



Data and Methods

- Labour Force Survey 2017
- 24 cases
- Total sample 35,000
- $N = 20,000$ men
- $N = 750$ maternity benefit claimants
- Estimations for rare events: Penalized Maximum Likelihood Estimation (Firth 1993)



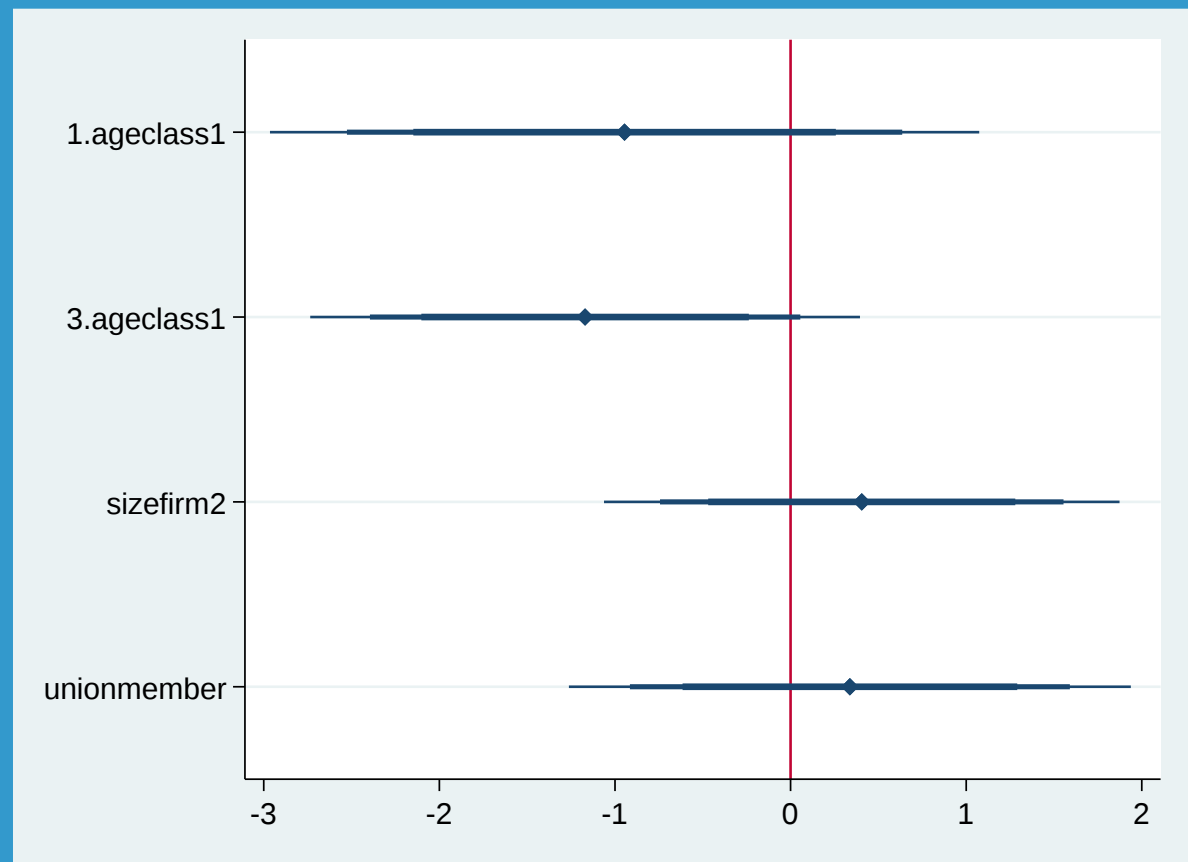
Bivariate relationships

All positive coefficients

- BA or higher
 - firm size (50+) *
 - Union membership
 - Employee
 - Professional class or higher (UK SOC)
 - Age: younger than 40, older than 24
- 
- Married ***

multivariate analysis: age (<25, 40+*), firm size, union membership

- Firth logit model



What can unions do about it?

Unions are powerful actors in the realm of occupational family policy and should yield that power. Gender-segregated sector unions have halted progress (see Andersen/Meyer 2001), e.g. ca. 27% female on SIPTU NEC, 20% ICTU Dublin office

- Negotiate more generous top-ups for paid parental leave (Parent's Leave)
- Negotiate more flexibility with employers, e.g. per day
- Demand more generous statutory payments, e.g. matched to pension rate
 - This will be costly as it will affect all family leaves
- Shorten Paid Maternity Leave, while extending Paid Parental Leave at same replacement rate.



Conclusion

- take-up reaches lower government target around 50%
- Take-up falls short in comparison to other countries with similar schemes (e.g. UK)
- Social profile: middle age (25-40), large international firms (100+) with top-ups, strong Covid-19 effect
- Unions can do more and use it as a recruitment campaign for female employees.



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Higher female union density since late 2000s

