Family leave and sectoral inequalities: Policy, take-up and wage bargaining

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NERI Labour Market Conference: 16 May 2024

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?
- **How is parental leave shared?**
- What can unions do about it?

JOURNAL OF FAMILY STUDIES
2023, VOL. 29, NO. 6, 2524–2539
https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2023.2179527

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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

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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

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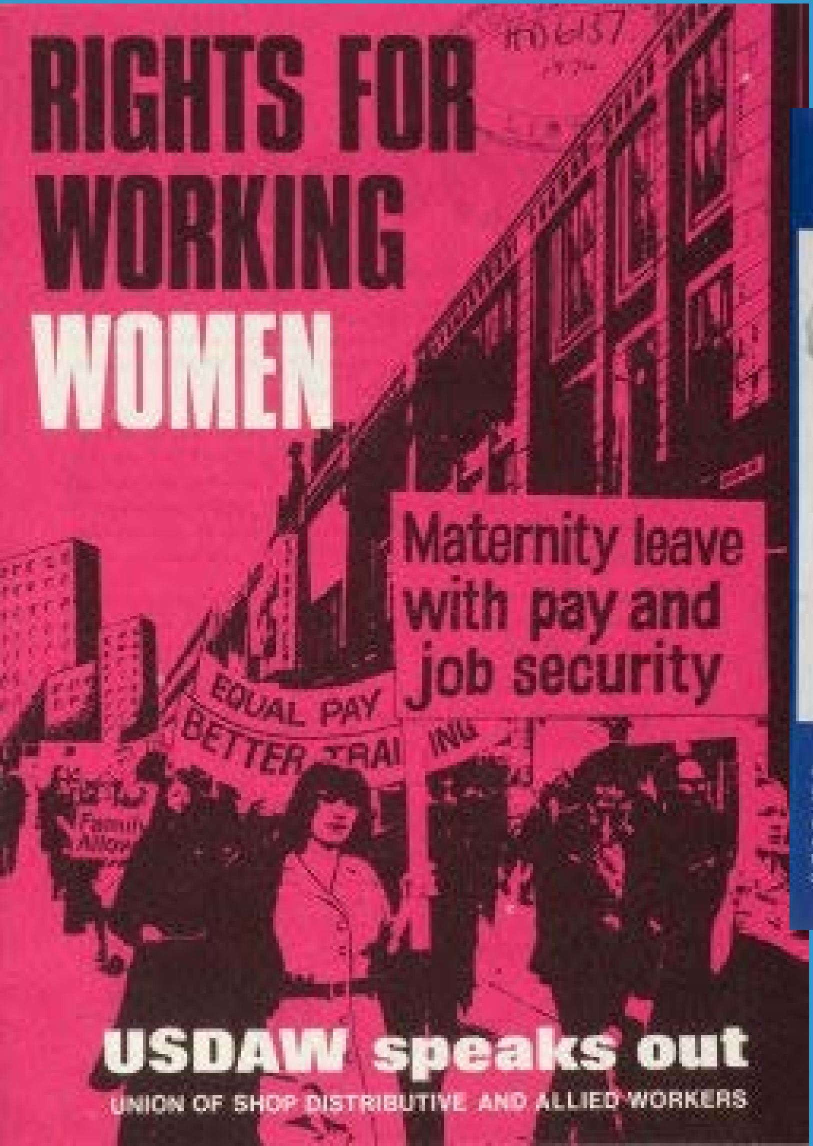
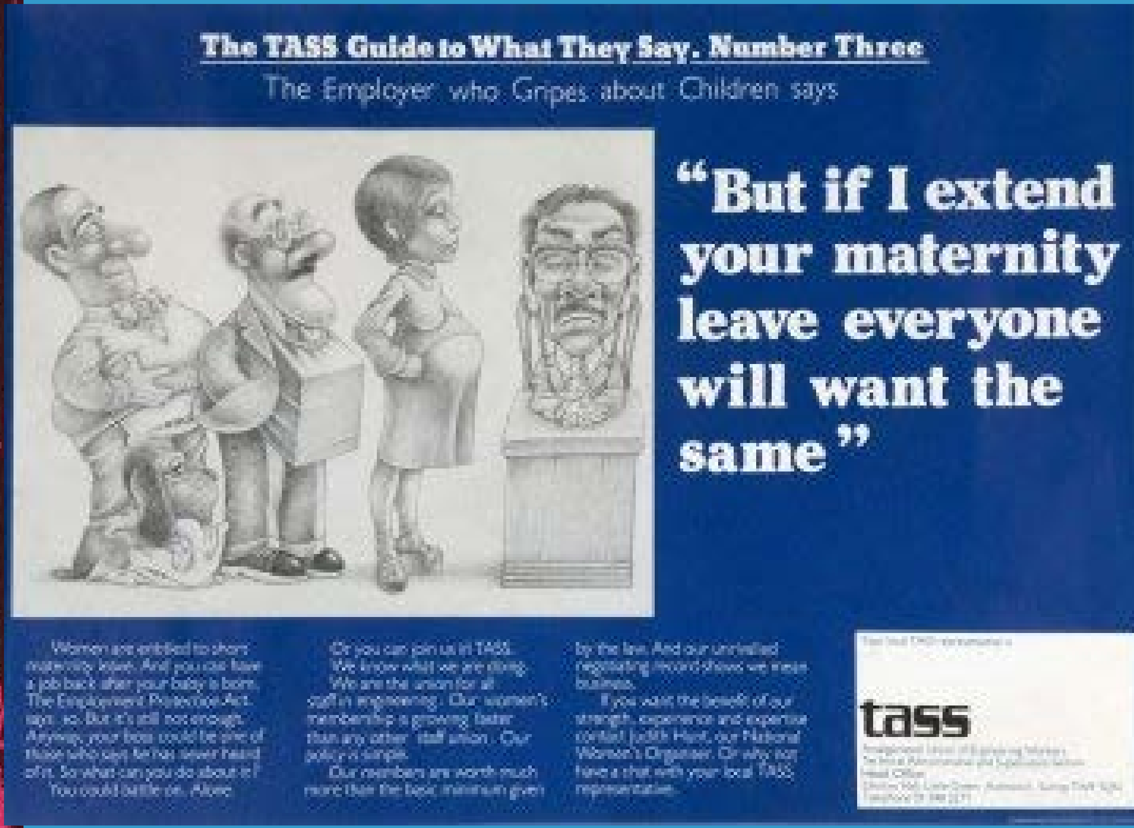
https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2023.2179527

Union support for maternity leave in the 1970s





Renewed focus in liberal welfare states

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Extension of Parents' Leave positive but payment rates need to be addressed

November 30, 2020

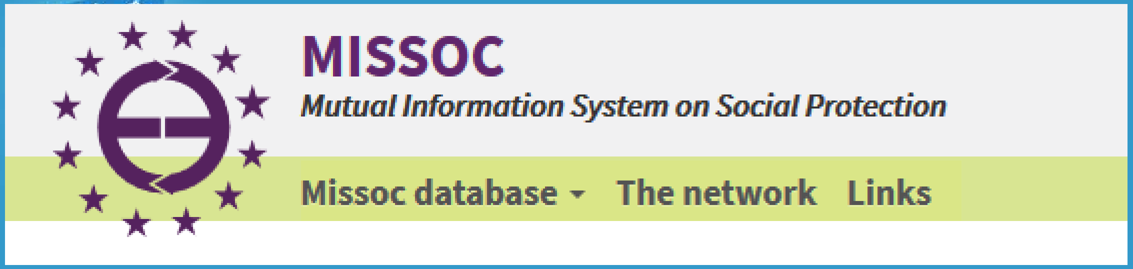
European Alignment?

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

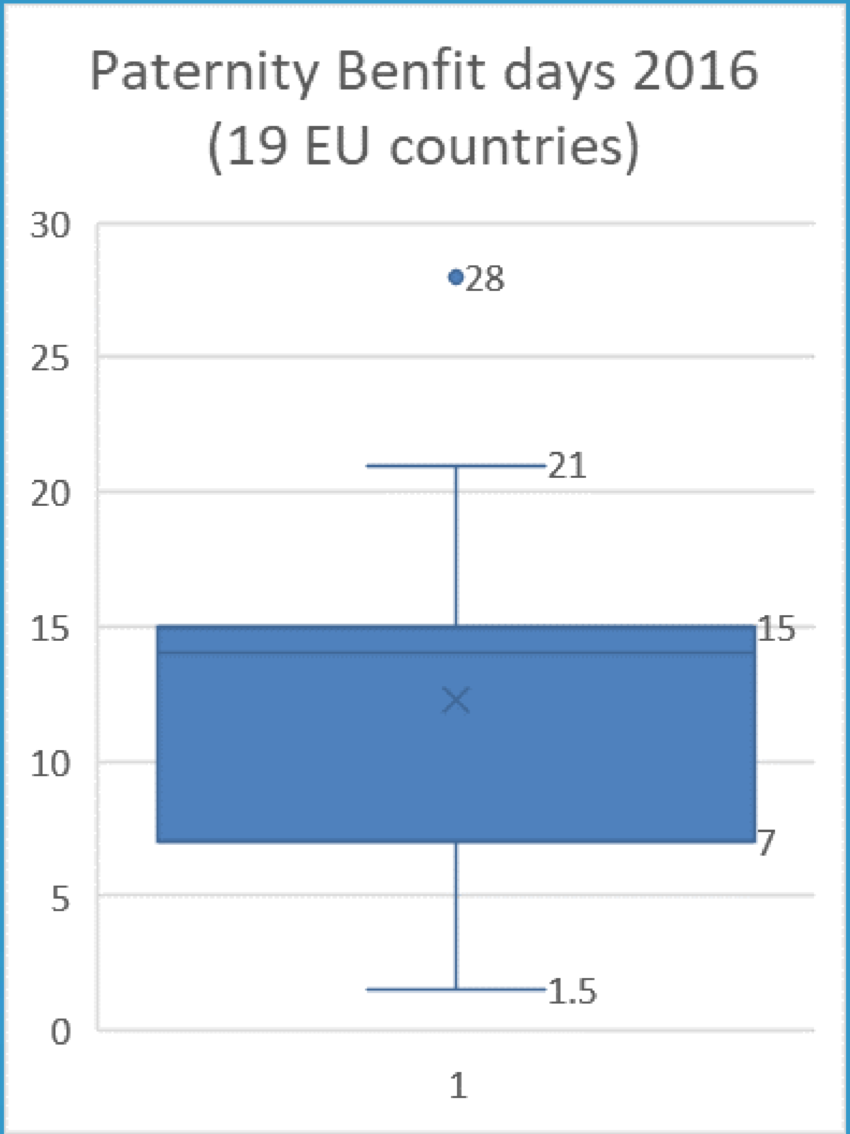



INTERNATIONAL NETWORK ON LEAVE POLICIES AND RESEARCH

12th International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research 2016

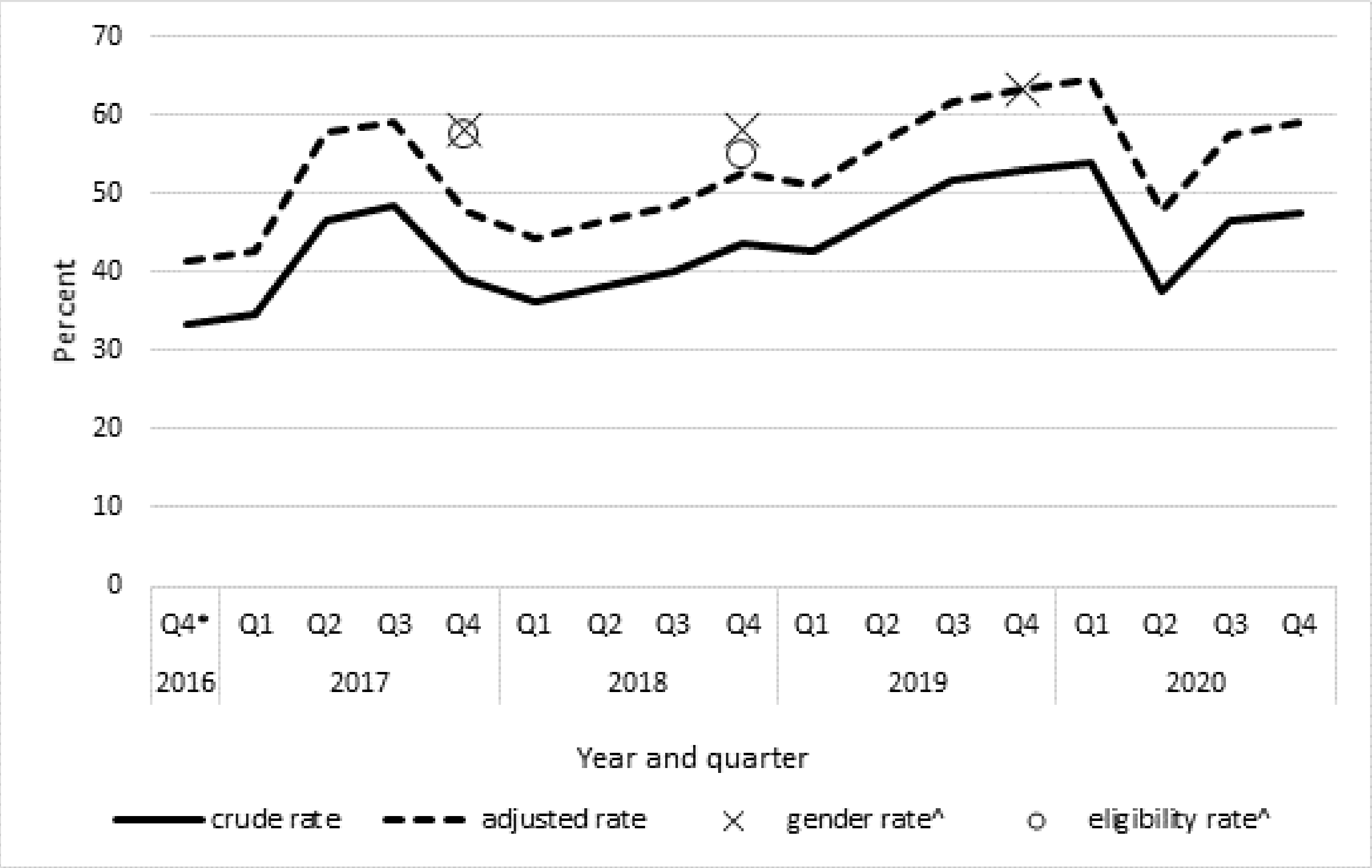
EDITED BY ALISON KOSLOWSKI (THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH), SONJA BLUM (AUSTRIAN INSTITUTE FOR FAMILY STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA), PETER MOSS (UCL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON)

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)

Take up: paternity benefit take-up rates by quarter

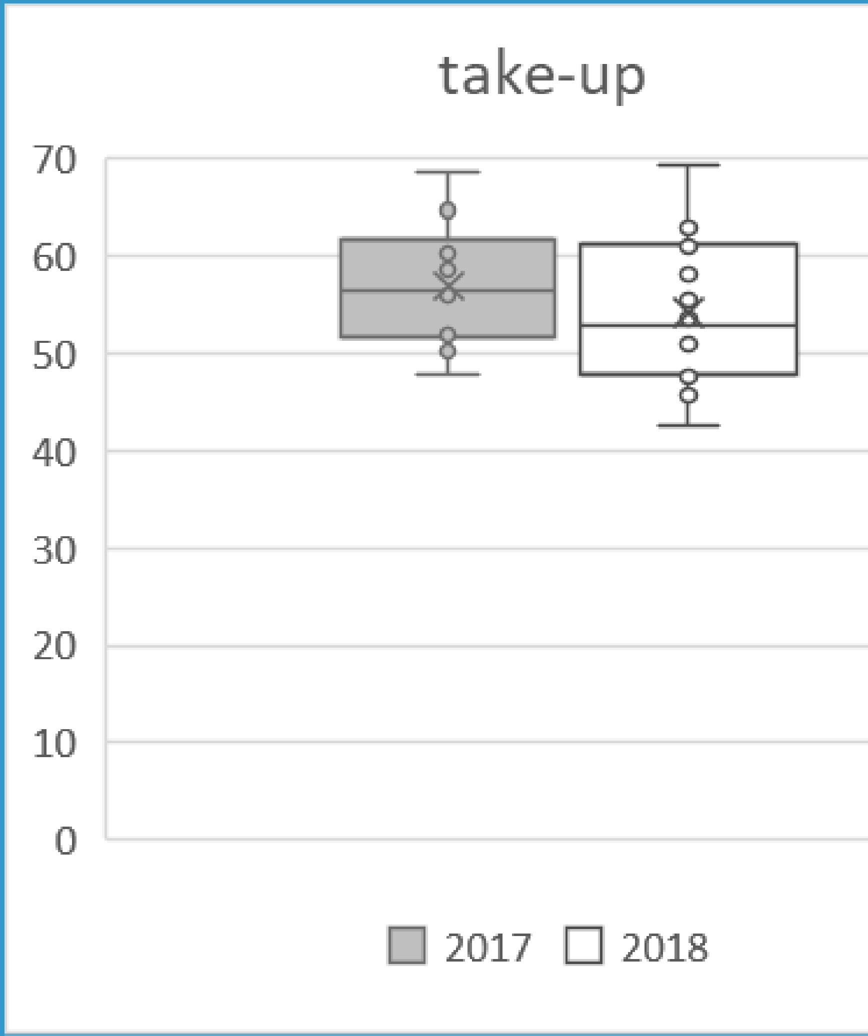


- Slight increase over time
- take-up at lower target in 2019
- Strong Covid-19 effect

Differences in take-up

- Self-employed
- Occupational inequalities
- Older and younger fathers

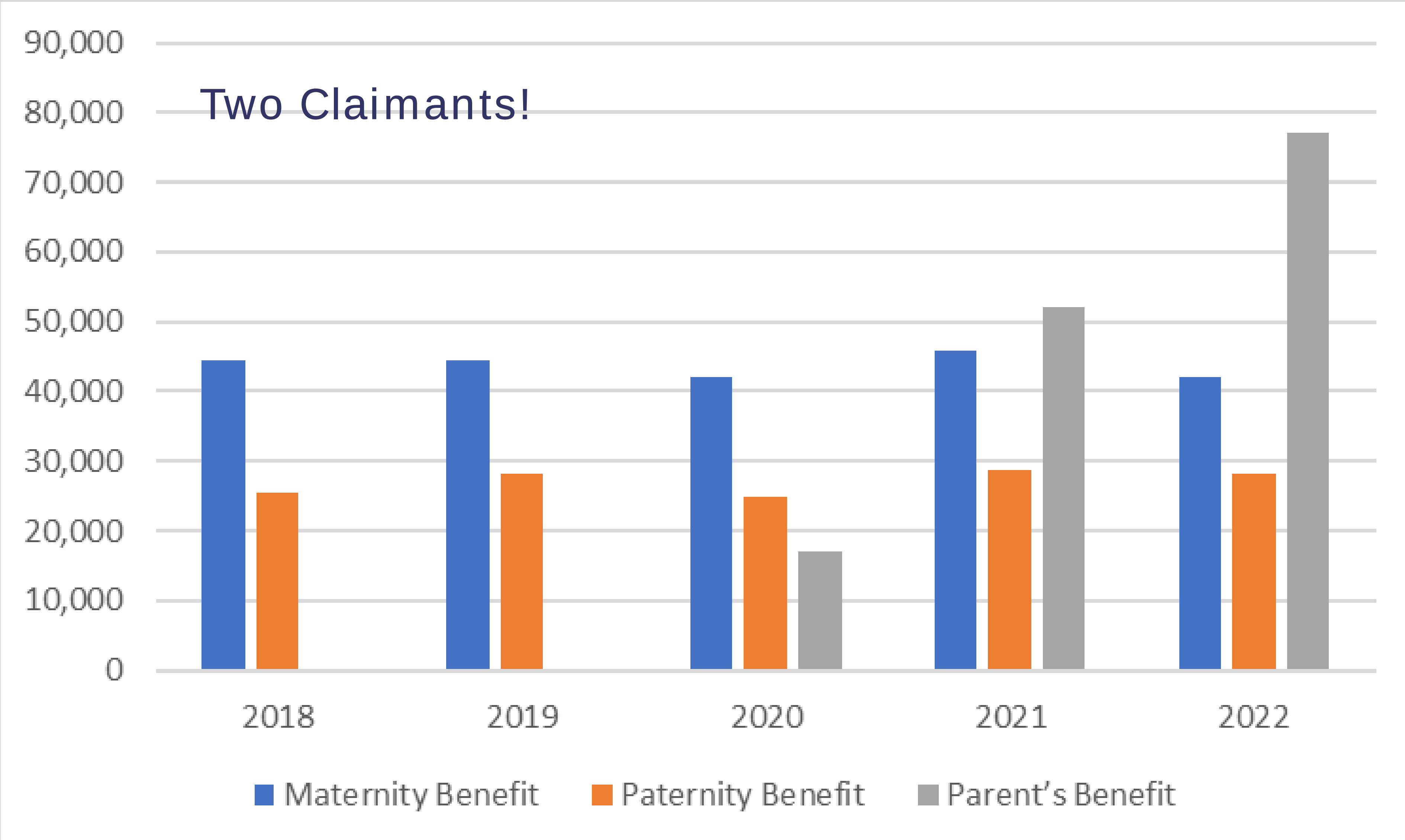
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (A)	%	45.6
Construction (F)	%	47.7
Wholesale and Retail Trade (G)	%	52.2
Transportation and Storage (H)	%	50.8
Accommodation & Food Service Activities (I)	%	42.5
Information and communication (J)	%	55.4
Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities (M)	%	53.5
Administrative and Support Service Activities (N)	%	47.6
Public Administration and Defence (O)	%	60.8
Education (P)	%	69.3
Human Health and Social Work Activities (Q)	%	58
Industry (B to E)	%	62.8
Financial & Real Estate (K,L)	%	62.1
Other NACE Activities (R-U)	%	49



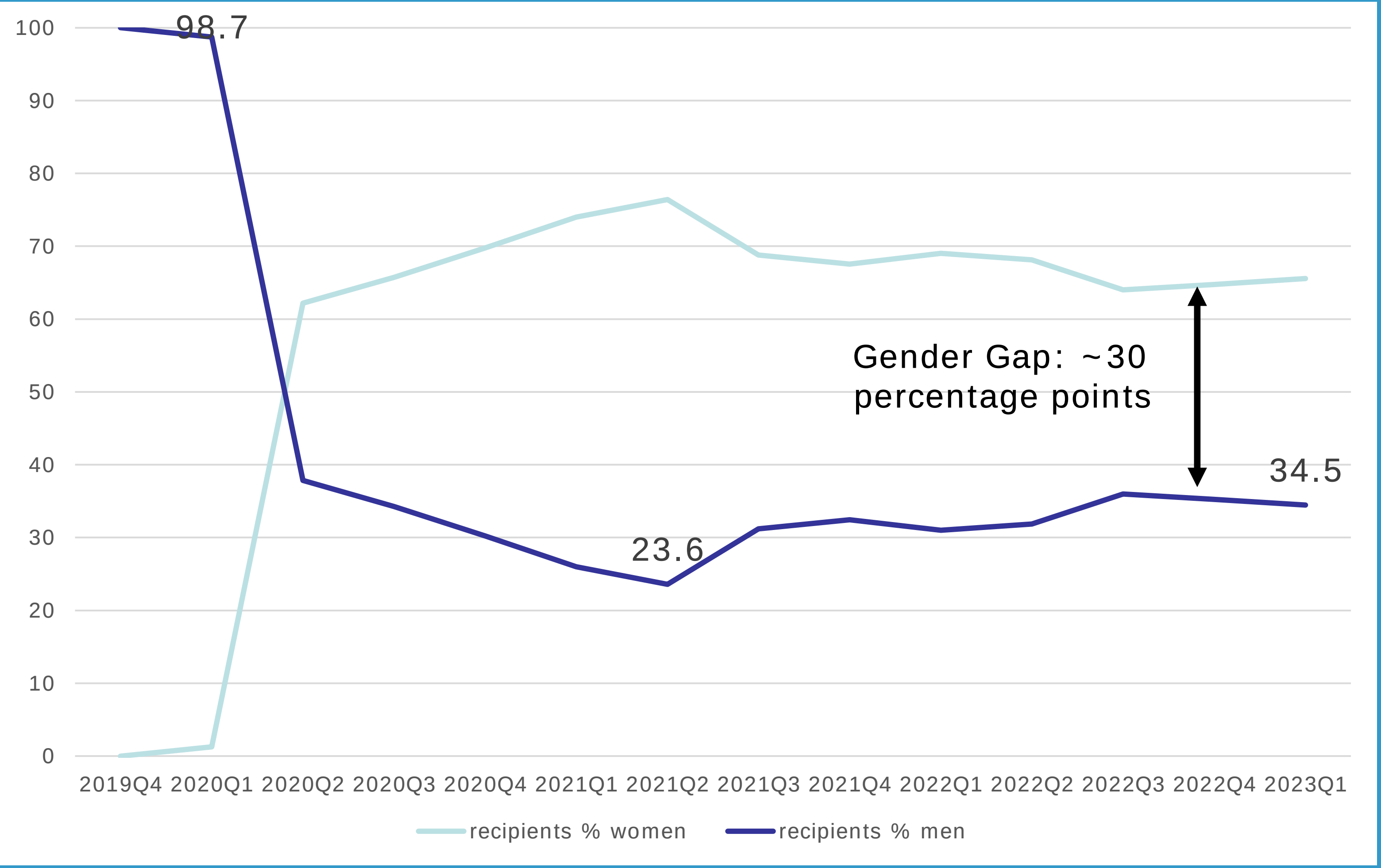
Shared Parental Leave since 2019

- Same rules as maternity/paternity leave
- Gradual increase in length: 2 weeks 2019, 5 weeks 2021, 7 weeks 2022, 9 weeks 2024
  - 2 years delay of EU work-life balance directive
- Higher occupational inequality than for paternity leave
  - Civil servants only flat rate
  - About 19% of companies offer top-ups (Ibec 2020)

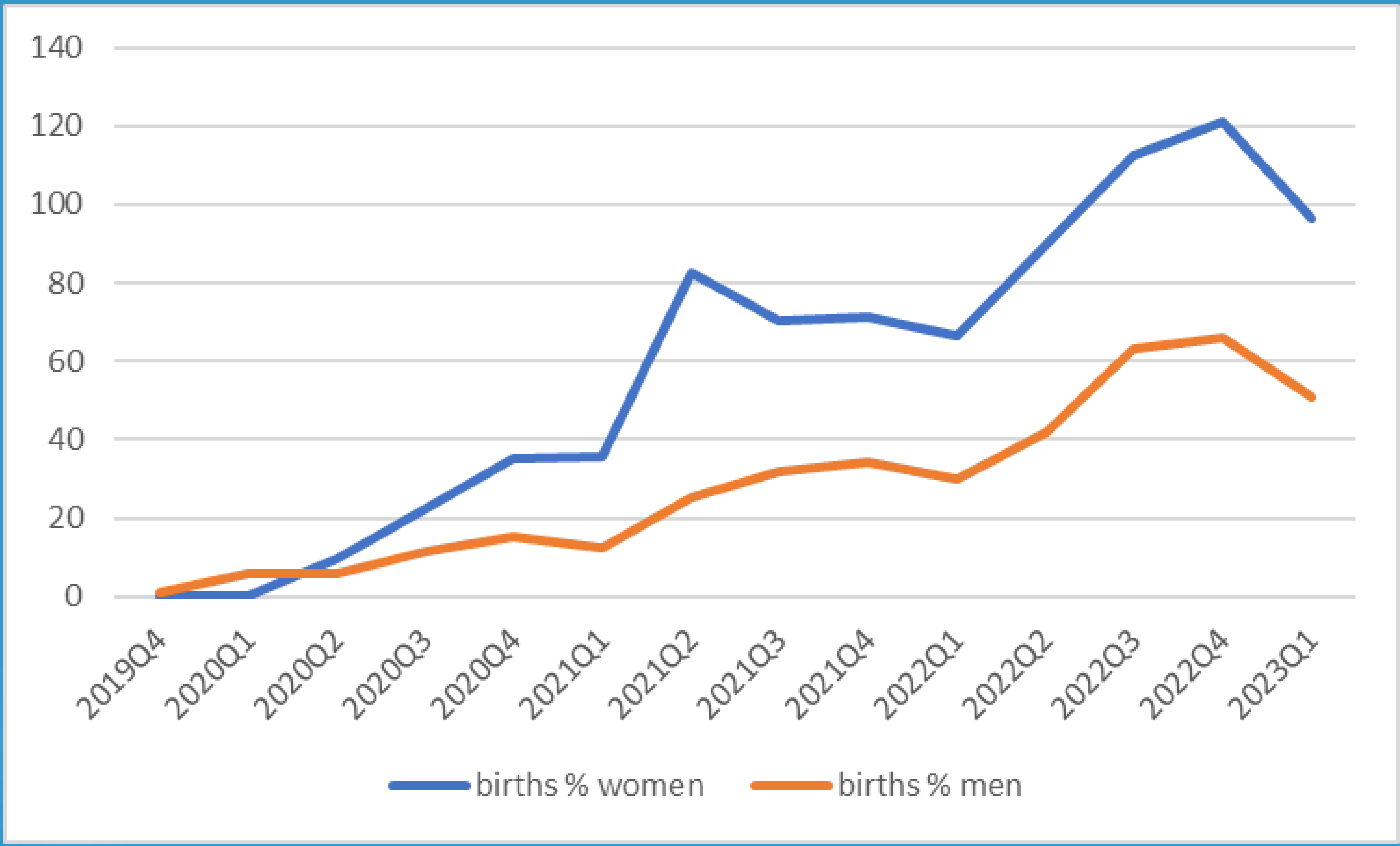
Highest take-up?



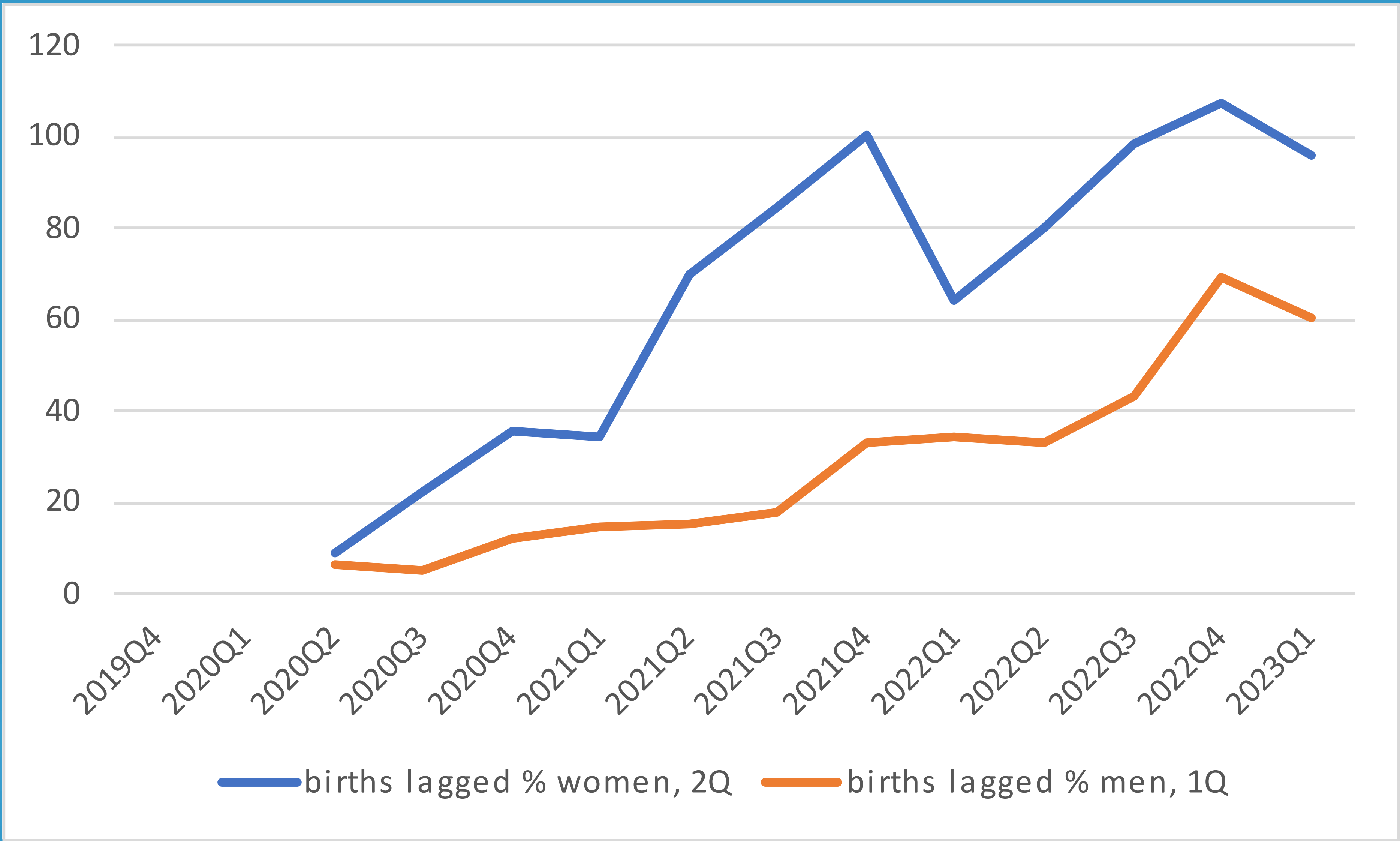
Shared Leave?



Take-up by crude rate (births)



Take-up by crude rate (lagged)



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 or new earnings-related sick leave
  - 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 highly gendered
- Father take-up falls short in comparison to other countries with similar schemes (e.g. UK)
- Unions can do more and use it as a recruitment campaign for female employees.

Thank you!

Article is Open Access

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Higher female union density since late 2000s