

# Parental Leave Coverage for the Informal Economy and Traditionally Uncovered Workers



WORLD Policy Analysis Center

## KEY FINDINGS

**57%**

*of countries explicitly guarantee paid maternal leave to self-employed workers.*

**38%**

*of countries explicitly guarantee paid maternal leave to domestic workers.*

**29%**

*of countries explicitly guarantee paid maternal leave to agricultural workers.*

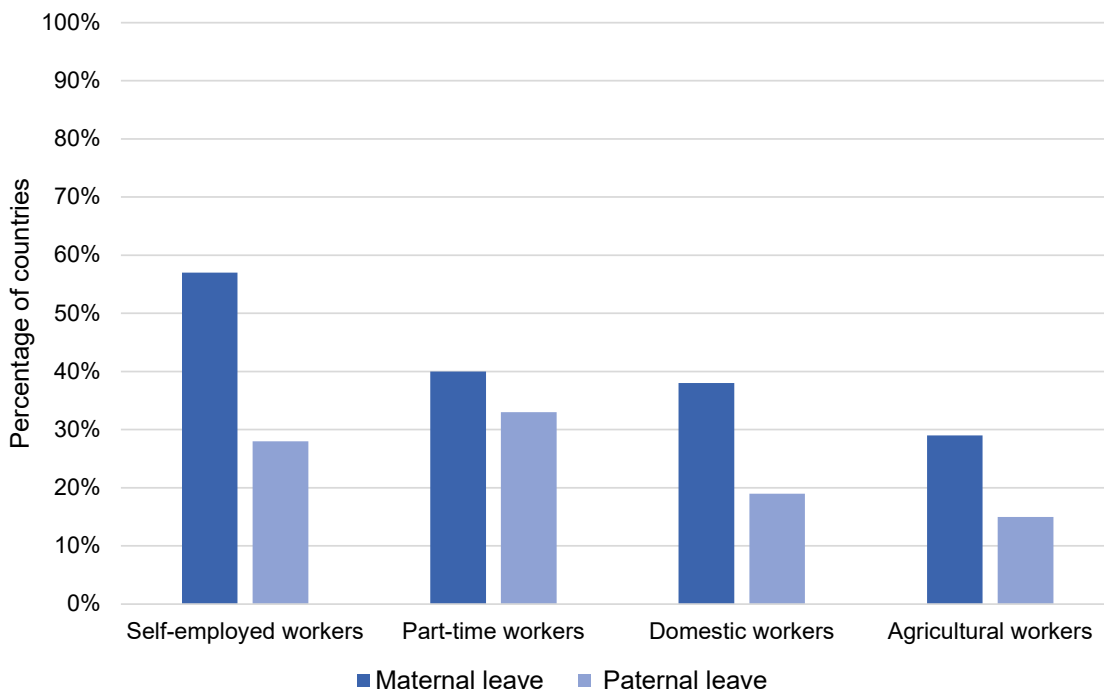
## Social Protections and the Informal Economy

- According to the International Labour Organization, more than 60% of the world’s total working population—or 2 billion people globally—are engaged in the informal economy.
- This group comprises people in a range of occupations in both urban and rural settings, including agricultural workers, domestic workers, home-based workers, street vendors, waste pickers, contributing family workers, and more.
- Across low- and high-income countries alike, informal workers are often excluded (in law and in practice) from key social protections

including paid parental leave.

- Evidence from across countries has demonstrated the benefits of paid parental leave policies, including increased gender equality in paid work and in caregiving. Paid parental leave includes:
  - *Maternal leave*, which includes maternity leave (reserved for mothers) and shared parental leave that can be taken by women
  - *Paternal leave*, which includes paternity leave (reserved for fathers) and shared parental leave that can be taken by men
- In every region of the world, there are countries that have affirmatively extended legal social protection coverage to informal and traditionally uncovered workers.

### Explicit legislative guarantees to parental leave



*Findings for part-time workers reflect guarantees to part-time workers either a) without a minimum threshold of hours, or b) to those working a quarter of full-time hours or less.*

## ABOUT THE DATA

This fact sheet presents expanded findings featured in **Chapter 6** of the open-access book [\*Equality within Our Lifetimes: How Laws and Policies Can Close—or Widen—Gender Gaps in Economies Worldwide\*](#) (Jody Heymann, Aleta Sprague, and Amy Raub; University of California Press, 2023).

- To fully realize the benefits of paid parental leave globally, it is essential to understand where and how countries are taking steps to close gaps in national-level policy coverage, and extend social protection for infant caregivers to all workers—including workers in the informal economy.

- 1/3 of countries (33%) explicitly guarantee paid *paternal* leave to part-time workers who work a quarter of full-time hours or less.

## Self-Employed Workers

Generally, countries that cover self-employed workers do so by structuring their paid parental leave programs as social insurance—which could include Uber drivers and others in the gig economy.

- Over 1/2 of countries (57%) guarantee paid *maternal* leave to self-employed workers.
- Just over 1/4 of countries (28%) guarantee paid *paternal* leave to self-employed workers.

## Part-Time Workers

Part-time employment is considered the most common form of non-standard employment globally, and women are more likely to be engaged in part-time employment than men.

- 40% of countries explicitly guarantee paid *maternal* leave to part-time workers working a quarter of full-time hours or less.

## Domestic Workers

It is estimated that over 80% of domestic workers are engaged in informal employment globally, making legal coverage and effective social protection implementation critical in this sector.

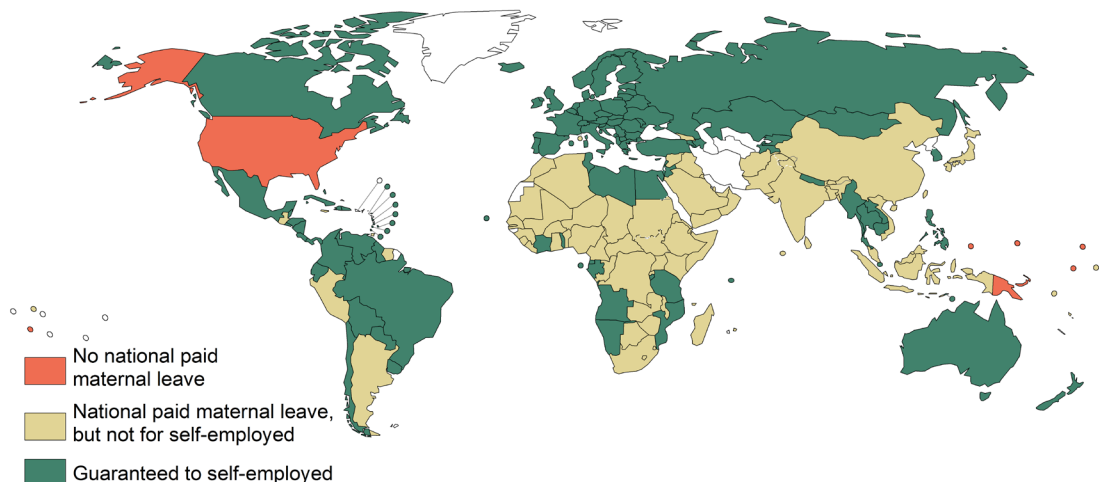
- Over 1/3 of countries (38%) explicitly guarantee paid *maternal* leave to domestic workers.
- Nearly 1/5 of countries (19%) explicitly guarantee paid *paternal* leave to domestic workers.

## Agricultural Workers

In rural areas where waged agricultural workers are employed, effective coverage of labor rights and social protections can be low.

- Just under 1/3 of countries (29%) explicitly guarantee paid *maternal* leave to agricultural workers.
- 15% of countries explicitly guarantee paid *paternal* leave to agricultural workers.

## Do countries guarantee self-employed workers access to paid maternal leave?



Source: WORLD Policy Analysis Center, Adult Labor Database, 2022



**WORLD Policy Analysis Center**

## ABOUT THE METHODOLOGY

This analysis relies on a systematic review of original labor and social security legislation in place as of January 2022 for all 193 United Nations member states. Further details on full methodology can be found at: [worldpolicycenter.org/topics/care/methods](https://worldpolicycenter.org/topics/care/methods).

## ABOUT WORLD

The **WORLD Policy Analysis Center (WORLD)** aims to improve the quantity and quality of globally comparative data on policies affecting health, development, well-being, and equity. With these data, WORLD informs policy debates; facilitates comparative studies of policy progress, feasibility, and effectiveness; and advances efforts to hold decision-makers accountable.

**Website:** [worldpolicycenter.org](https://worldpolicycenter.org)

**Email:** [world@ph.ucla.edu](mailto:world@ph.ucla.edu)