

Finland gives parents 7-month parental leave

9th January, 2020



Finland is giving new parents more time to spend with their babies. The Finnish government has decided to give mothers and fathers seven months of parental leave. This means Finland will almost double the amount of its maternity leave and

paternity leave. The new Family Leave Policy will give 164 days to each parent. This is about seven months. Parents can also transfer up to 69 of their own days to their partner. This means it is possible for one parent to take nine months of parental leave. For single parents, Finland is giving all 328 days to the mother or father. Finland's current parental leave gives four months for maternity leave, and two months for fathers.

Finland's government said the new rules were necessary to help young families. Finland's Minister of Social Affairs and Health explained why the country is introducing the new rules. She said: "The model guarantees the child a place at the centre of family benefits, and it promotes wellbeing and gender equality." It will also help to increase the country's declining birth rate. The number of babies born in Finland has dropped for the past nine years. Last year, Finland had the lowest number of babies born in the country since 1868. Finland's neighbour Sweden has the most generous leave policy, offering 240 days per parent. The USA has no national paid leave for mothers or fathers.

Sources: cnn.com / forbes.com / npr.org

Writing

Companies should give new parents a year's paid leave. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

new parents / babies / double / maternity leave / transfer / possible / partner / rules / fathers / government / necessary / guarantee / benefits / gender equality / generous

True / False

- a) New parents will have more time to spend with their doctors. T / F
- b) Finland will almost double the current level of parental leave. T / F
- c) One parent can transfer leave days to his/her partner. T / F
- d) Single parents in Finland will be able to take 328 days of parental leave. T / F
- e) The government said the rules were necessary to help employers. T / F
- f) The new rules help to promote gender inequality. T / F
- g) Finland's birthrate is at its lowest for over a century. T / F
- h) The USA has no national paid parental leave. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. leave | a. needed |
| 2. double | b. pass on |
| 3. transfer | c. fairness |
| 4. single | d. time off |
| 5. current | e. large |
| 6. necessary | f. present |
| 7. introducing | g. falling |
| 8. equality | h. increase twofold |
| 9. declining | i. starting |
| 10. generous | j. unmarried |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you know about Finland?
- b) What do you think of seven months of paid leave for new parents?
- c) How much leave should parents get?
- d) Should parental leave be paid?
- e) Should mothers and fathers get the same amount of leave?
- f) Why is Finland giving so much parental leave?
- g) What effect will the new rule have on Finnish society?
- h) What kind of parent are you or would you be?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1. giving new parents more time to | a. parents |
| 2. double the amount | b. to their partner |
| 3. transfer up to 69 of their own days | c. equality |
| 4. it is possible for one parent | d. of its maternity leave |
| 5. single | e. to help young families |
| 6. the new rules were necessary | f. leave policy |
| 7. explained why the country is introducing | g. spend with their babies |
| 8. gender | h. birth rate |
| 9. the country's declining | i. the new rules |
| 10. Sweden has the most generous | j. to take nine months |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- What can governments do to help young families?
- What does the government do for young families in your country?
- How can governments reverse falling birth rates?
- What is the problem with falling birth rates?
- How much parental leave would you like?
- Why do you think the USA has no paid parental leave?
- What questions would you like to ask the Finnish government?

Spelling

- The Finnish tngeroevnm
- buoeld the amount
- raeiymntt leave
- rnesartf up to 69 of their own days
- silnge parents
- Finland's current artaepln leave
- rules were eascsnrey to help young families
- origndtnicu the new rules
- The model eugtasnera the child
- family ieeftnsb
- gender uitalqye
- the most esngroeu leave policy

Answers – Synonym Match

1. d	2. h	3. b	4. j	5. f
6. a	7. i	8. c	9. g	10. e

Role Play

Role A – Money

You think money is the best way to help new parents. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): babysitting, nursery or help with the housework.

Role B – Babysitting

You think babysitting is the best way to help new parents. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): money, nursery or help with the housework.

Role C – Nursery

You think nursery is the best way to help new parents. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): babysitting, money or help with the housework.

Role D – Help with the Housework

You think help with the housework is the best way to help new parents. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): babysitting, nursery or money.

Speaking – New Parents

Rank these with your partner. Put the best ways of helping new parents at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| • Education | • Money |
| • Free toys | • Babysitting |
| • Paid leave | • Chats |
| • Nursery | • Help with housework |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	T	d	T	e	F	f	F	g	T	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.