

# [Challenges of maternity leave](https://assignbuster.com/challenges-of-maternity-leave/)

Maternity Leave

We are finally at a point where woman have embarked on the achievement and movement to allow women of all backgrounds to successfully participate and contribute to the workforce. While this lifestyle is empowering and certainly something to celebrate, it also steps outside of the traditional family roles, where the husband goes to work each day and the wife stays in with the children. The text, “ Women’s Voices, Feminist Visions,” explains that the family model is disrupted when both parents go to work, yet it is “ the most frequent model for domestic partnerships today.” The result is that women are the most typical gender to work a “ double day,” in that they work, and come home to the housework and childcare. (Shaw 449). Both employers and society make it difficult for women who try to balance working and raising a family.

While we place so much emphasis on the working woman, we often overlook her role or desire to be a mother. We do not address women entering motherhood as a concern or consider how it will interfere with her work life. With the way our society is structured, it is simply not practical to have a child and try to maintain a position in the workforce all at once. This is made clear with how we treat mothers who require a maternity leave. Employers simply do not recognize the need for women to establish a comfortable routine with their children, particularly right after birth. My research concerns the lack of a mandatory policy for maternity leave, and how it is a gender issue for women. This research will explain what the detriments are to women who do not receive a maternity leave with benefits and why that is disadvantageous.

In the article, “ The Effects of Paid Maternity Leave: Evidence From Temporary Disability Insurance,” author, Jenna Sterns writes: “ Maternity leave programs are designed to provide compensated and job-protected time off from work so that mothers can prepare for and recover from child birth and new parents can stay home to care for their infants. The United States is the only industrialized nation in the world without a national policy granting new mothers access to paid time off from work.” (85). The only benefit that women may receive for giving birth, and post-partum relations is upheld by “ The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993, providing 12 weeks of leave, and no further provisions regarding a paid leave.” (Mandal 1471). This benefit is highly limited to places of employment with 50 or more employees, who have worked at least 1250 hours for that employer in the prior year.” (Mandal 1471). Countries all over the world participate in a maternity leave policy and understand just how critical it is for a mother to have time with her new baby. Women in China are entitled to “ 128 days of maternity leave with provisions to extend the time further,” while a woman’s employer in the United States might, if they are required to, allow 12 weeks’ time, unpaid. (Minghui 1).

As of 1964, the Civil Rights Act has been amended with the Pregnancy Discrimination Act which stating that “ employers treat pregnancy and childbirth like any other temporary disability, which enforced Temporary Disability Insurance programs, providing benefits to expectant mothers.” (Sterns 85). However, this amendment is only required by certain corporations meeting a threshold of employees. While the job security may be enforced, taking a maternity leave still directly exposes women to possible discrimination in the workplace. A woman can take her suggested 12 weeks, but it is unlikely that she will take more. In the article, “ The Maternal Health Outcomes of Paid Maternity Leave: A Systematic Review,” the author, Zoe Aitken states that the outcomes of taking too short, or too long of a leave can be “ detrimental” to reentering the workforce. (33). The length of a woman’s leave is not seen as a foundational requirement for her and her family, but rather how committed she is to her job. Discrimination continues when it comes to maternity leave as some private employers might be “ reluctant to hiring a woman who does not have children, for a fear of later granting a long maternity leave.” (Minghui 2). Within the United States policy, a woman might be inclined to take her 12 weeks off but might be hesitant to ask for additional time off, as this might prevent her from future promotions or business opportunities.

There are mental and physical consequences associated with not taking a proper maternity leave that can impact the mother as well as the new baby. Sterns suggest that the allowance of a paid maternity leave will help reduce “ physical and mental stress” that could associate during pregnancy. (Sterns 85). Maternity leave and post-partum health are shown to be directly correlated with “ positive associations.” (Avendano 46). Because “ new mothers are subsequently at increased risk for a range of psychiatric disorders including depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and postpartum psychosis.” the mandated length of a maternity leave should be highly reconsidered. (pg 45).

Studies conducted on this exact issue regarding mental health of the mother not having a fair amount of time away for maternity leave is linked to higher rates of depression. Conversely, studies are showing that maternity leave is associated with postpartum health outcomes. (Mandal 1471). Women fare better with a paid maternity leave as well. In a specific study “ The Effect of Paid Leave on Maternal Mental Health,” Bidisha Mandal, the author reports that there “ is a lower likelihood of major depressive order among women who returned early to work, but still received paid time off.” (1471). The report shows that women, of all ethnicities report higher and more positive results if they received a maternity leave with pay. (pg 1475).

The conclusion of this analysis is clear: women who choose to experience the right of motherhood, are being pulled in two different directions, and it is problematic. They are being coerced to get back to work, rather than establish a caretaking routine for their child. Yet, they are expected by society to be the perfect mother, and maintain orderliness and cleanliness in the home, but not until after they have put in a long day at the workplace. It is unfair to women to have to make this choice. This pressure results in consequential mental health effects, as well as discrimination in the work place.

A proper vision for this issue is to have a mandatory, paid maternity policy for all women who undergo pregnancy and giving birth, an appropriate amount of time off work with their child, as well as paid time for bereavement if there are any complications with the birth. Women should feel entitled to taking on their new role, and they should be encourage to do so. Offering a woman compensation for taking a leave for her job is a step in the right direction to show a societal change in the concern for a woman’s health, mentally and physically.

The strategy for funding this issue could be found in the employer’s business insurance funded by employees through a group policy. An endorsement could cover members under the policy, paying for lost wages to the employer, as well as paying maternal benefits to the mother. This solution would satisfy the employer, as well as the employed mother. There should be an agreed amount of time to be out of work, and if the mother requests more time, that would be at her discretion, though those expenses may not be covered, dependent on what the policy states. I think a healthy amount of time to be able to offer job security to the mother should be at least 1 full year, and it should be recognized as a legal right. Probationary periods should exist under the policy to employees, granting them these benefits if they have been employed for at least 2 years. This should prevent any person from abusing these rights.

## Works Cited

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