

Fact Sheet

New Jersey Family Leave Insurance: Fathers and Non-Birth Parents

April 2023



Adding a new family member often requires a period of adjustment for most families. Whether this new family member arrives through childbirth, adoption, or fostering, families often need to take some time to adjust. Many families opt for parental leave taken by mothers—through temporary disability insurance (TDI) or a combination of TDI and parental leave (either through work or through state family leave insurance). In New Jersey, fathers and non-birth parents can take leave for bonding as well through New Jersey Family Leave Insurance (NJFLI). While NJFLI can also be used for leave taken for other medical reasons, this factsheet will focus on bonding leave, taken at the birth or placement of a child. This leave for bonding can be taken as 12 consecutive weeks or 56 days if taken intermittently before the child’s first birthday or within 12 months of the child’s placement in the home.ⁱ The wage replacement rate currently is 85% of a parent’s average weekly wage up to a maximum of \$1025 per week.

When fathers and non-birth parents take leave, they benefit in a variety of ways. In addition, the birth parents and children also benefit. These benefits can happen immediately, in the form of support for the adjustment to life with a new family member. They can also be long-term, in the form of mental health, physical health, or economic benefits for the family. However, these benefits cannot be realized unless fathers and non-birth parents take their leave. You can learn more about the FLI benefit and about how fathers and non-birth parents can take leave by visiting the [website](#) of the NJ Department of Labor.

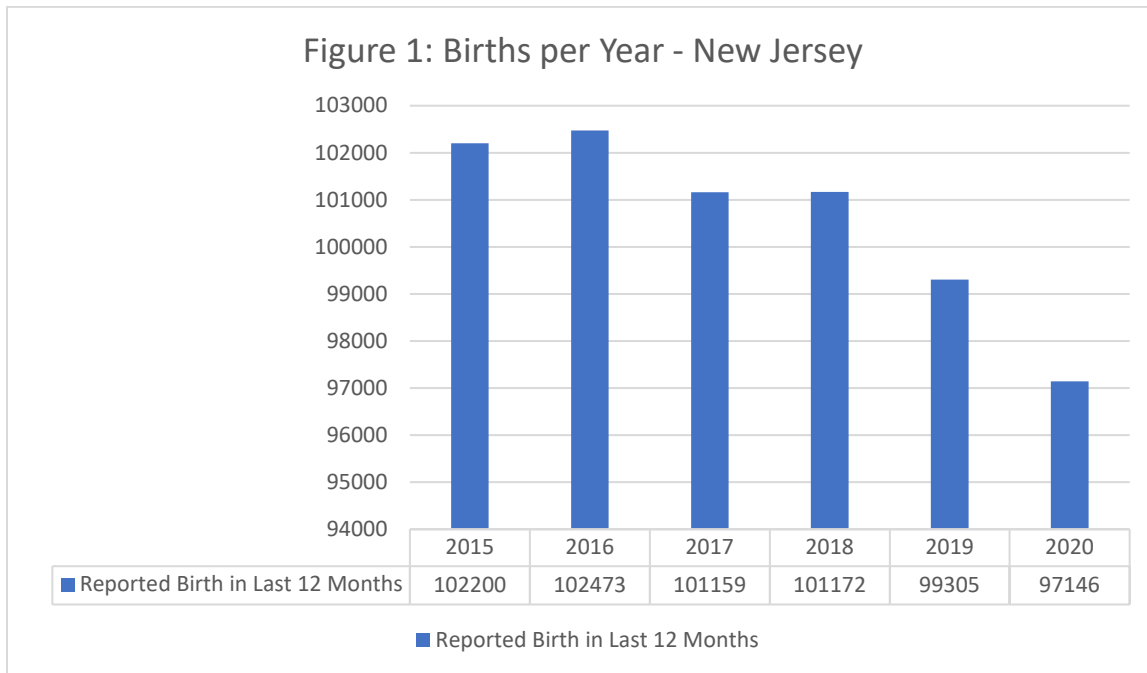
Key Points

- In New Jersey, around 25% of those who took bonding leave were men.ⁱⁱ
- Fathers are more likely to indicate they would take leave when the wage replacement is high (at least 70%).ⁱⁱⁱ In New Jersey, the wage replacement increased in July of 2020 to 85%.^{iv}
- Research indicates that leave-taking by fathers is associated with their increased participation in caregiving at home.^v
- Longer leaves by fathers—of at least two weeks—are associated with increased caregiving activities as compared to fathers who take shorter leaves.^{vi}
- Leaves taken by fathers are associated with increased relationship satisfaction and decreased household conflicts over housework.^{vii}
- Mothers and fathers report less stress over the transition to parenthood and report greater well-being across that transition when fathers take leave.^{viii}

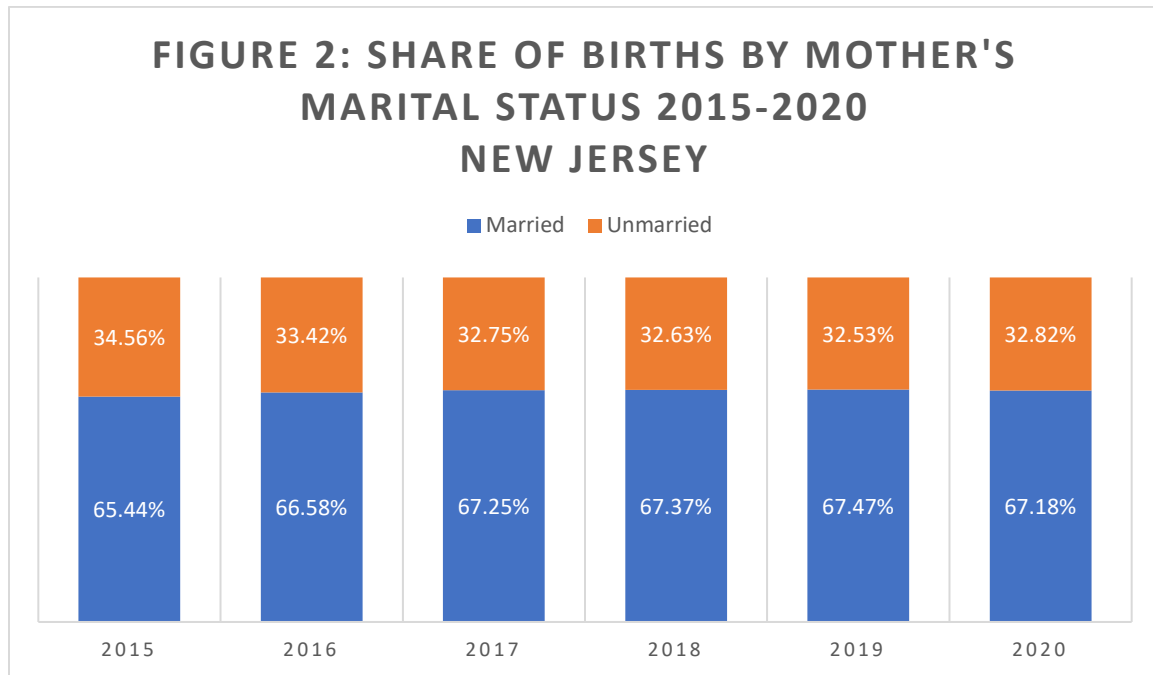
- Mothers are more likely to return to work more quickly when fathers take leave.^{ix}
- Some portion of the gender pay gap may result from the expectation by employers that women are more likely to leave a job for some portion of time to bond with a new child. If companies expect fathers to also take leave, they may be less inclined to penalize mothers through lower wages or decreased opportunities for advancement. There is evidence that the gender wage gap narrows when fathers take leave.^x

Fathers and other non-birth parents in New Jersey have access to the state’s Family Leave Insurance (FLI) program. However, they do not use it at nearly the rates as mothers, accounting for only 25% of the leaves for bonding.

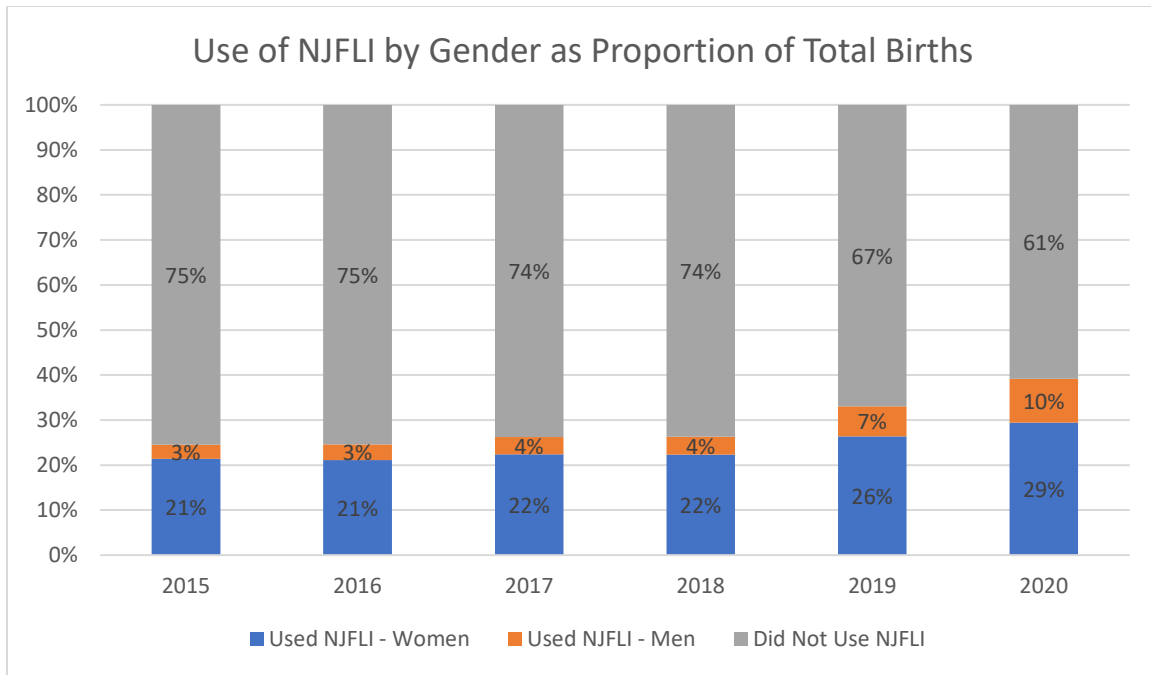
According to the New Jersey Department of Health, women have reported around 100,000 births per year for the last five years^{xi}. This means that there were around 100,000 births each year for which one or both parents could take leave, if eligible. The table below shows the numbers of births in New Jersey per year from 2015-2020.^{xii}



Fathers are more likely to take leave and take longer leaves if they are married to the mother.^{xiii} Knowing the number of births that occurred to married parents can give a sense of the pool of fathers and non-birth parents who are more likely to take leave. The table below shows the numbers of births from 2015-2020 to married versus unmarried birth parents in New Jersey.^{xivxv}



While the available public data does not indicate whether parents took leave through their workplace, the difference in use of state-based leave among mothers versus fathers is stark. The number of bonding claims for births in New Jersey in 2020 totaled 37,877 so this would reflect around 39% of the births reported to the New Jersey Department of Health. Women represented 75% of the claimants while men represented 25%. As a percentage of total births, then, women using the state leave represent 29% of those births and men using the state leave represent 10% of those births. For the remaining 61% of births reported in New Jersey, it is unknown whether fathers or non-birth parents took parental leave through their workplace, used vacation or other PTO, or did not take leave at all. The following table displays those numbers for the years 2015-2020.^{xvi}



Summary

Leave-taking by fathers has been shown to have positive effects on the father as well as the rest of the family. However, as shown in the charts above, fathers use NJFLI for bonding at much lower rates than mothers. Therefore, it is important to continue to support fathers in their leave-taking and to inform more fathers of their eligibility for leave and the process by which they can apply for leave.

ⁱ <https://nj.gov/labor/myleavebenefits/worker/fli/>

ⁱⁱ NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development, “Family Leave Insurance Workload in 2020: Summary Report.”

ⁱⁱⁱ Harrington et al., “The New Dad: Take Your Leave.”

^{iv} NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development, “Family Leave Insurance Workload in 2020: Summary Report.”

^v Petts and Knoester, “Paternity Leave-Taking and Father Engagement”; Pragg and Knoester, “Parental Leave Use Among Disadvantaged Fathers.”

^{vi} Nepomnyaschy and Waldfogel, “Paternity Leave and Fathers’ Involvement with Their Young Children”; Petts, Knoester, and Waldfogel, “Fathers’ Paternity Leave-Taking and Children’s Perceptions of Father-Child Relationships in the United States.”

^{vii} Petts and Knoester, “Paternity Leave and Parental Relationships: Variations by Gender and Mothers’ Work Statuses”; Knoester, Petts, and Pragg, “Paternity Leave-Taking and Father Involvement among Socioeconomically Disadvantaged U.S. Fathers.”

^{viii} Cardenas et al., “Associations between Paid Paternity Leave and Parental Mental Health Across the Transition to Parenthood.”

^{ix} Ronsen and Kitterod, “Gender-Equalizing Family Policies and Mothers’ Entry into Paid Work: Recent Evidence From Norway.”

^x Andersen, “Paternity Leave and the Motherhood Penalty: New Causal Evidence.”

^{xi} <https://www-doh.state.nj.us/doh-shad/query/result/birth/BirthBirthCnty/Count.html>

^{xii} <https://www-doh.state.nj.us/doh-shad/query/result/birth/BirthBirthCnty/Count.html>

^{xiii} Petts, Knoester, and Li, "Paid Paternity Leave-Taking in the United States."

^{xiv} <https://www-doh.state.nj.us/doh-shad/query/result/birth/BirthBirthCnty/Count.html>

^{xv} Note: Because this chart shows only those who reported that they were married or unmarried at the time of the child's birth, so the totals may not match those in Figure 1.

^{xvi} Author's calculations using NJ birth data from NJDOH and NJFLI Summary Reports for indicated years.

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