

Gender-neutral parental leave: everyone benefits

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Michael Damiano (left), Head of Rare Disease and Rare Blood Disorders for UKIE | Anthony Swartbooi (middle), Trade Marketing Specialist, South Africa | Webster Baroni (in blue, right picture), Project Manager, Sanofi Brazil, with their families.

Gender-neutral parental leave is about more than just letting a father spend time with a new child. It's more than a way to make sure that families can choose what's right for them.

It's part of an approach that puts equality at the center of our lives, whether that's at the office, at home, or in society. Gender-neutral parental leave encourages increased women's labor-market participation, helps reduce the pay gap, and increases men's participation in household work.¹

Michael Damiano, Head of Rare Disease and Rare Blood Disorders for UKIE, and Anthony Swartbooi, Trade Marketing Specialist, South Africa, are both fathers who took parental leave – and both at first felt uneasy about it. Michael describes being “apprehensive and quite nervous” when it came time to ask for leave. Anthony worried because “When I was growing up, men were presented as stoic, and parental leave was for women.”



Anthony Swartbooi, Trade Marketing Specialist, South Africa with his family.

“If we change the narrative from, ‘How will parental leave impact me?’ to, ‘How will parental leave impact my family?’, it calls for a totally different conversation.”

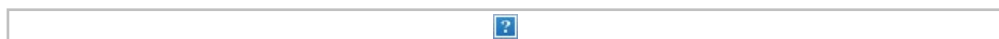
Anthony Swartbooi, Trade Marketing Specialist, South Africa

Things are changing, but challenges remain. In the first year of our policy, close to 3,000 employees benefited. But while 43% were men, only 26% of those men took full parental leave. It's one thing to have a policy – it's another to build a culture where that policy is accepted, applied, and embraced.

Everybody plays a role...

These two fathers want you to know that whatever your gender, whatever your job title, you play a part in making gender neutrality a reality in the workplace.

If Michael managed to take his full parental leave not once but twice, it was, he says, because he had the support of his direct managers at the time. “They told me that I needed to role model the behaviors. They encouraged me to take the full leave and supported me doing it.”



Michael Damiano, Head of Rare Disease and Rare Blood Disorders for UKIE with his family.

"I want to ask each people manager here at Sanofi to recognize the responsibility you have to create an environment where your team feels supported to take leave."

Michael Damiano, Head of Rare Disease and Rare Blood Disorders for UKIE

...and everybody wins

Anthony notes that the policy has great knock-on effects for society as a whole. "Dads who take parental leave contribute to closing the gender pay gap and helping moms return to work sooner, so my motivation is as much about advocating for gender equality and the well-being of the family as it is for the rights of dads."

Michael points out that there are benefits for colleagues as well: both of his parental leaves provided a development opportunity for someone else.

Neither father has any regrets about having taken parental leave. Anthony calls it "One of the best decisions I have ever made and a period in my life that I will forever cherish."

"I promise you," says Michael, "you won't remember that Excel file or PowerPoint deck you created. But you will remember the moments you spent with your new baby a few weeks after they were born."

Sanofi is committed to gender equality

Gender-neutral parental leave is an important part of our approach. At Sanofi, we grant all new parents 14 weeks of paid leave to welcome a new child into their lives. Regardless of country, gender, and sexual orientation, any employee recognized as the child's parent as per local legislation or practice can benefit. This is just one way we're driving equality in the workplace and helping take gender bias out of parental leave.

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Gender balance

We're the #1 healthcare company for gender equality, with a plan to ensure women and men are represented equally among our senior leaders by 2025.

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Mentoring for Gender Equity

In 2022, Emmanuelle Valentin was one of 50 Sanofians who dedicated a year to mentoring young girls with Capital Filles.

Read the article



Allyship

Allyship is about taking personal accountability, taking action, and working alongside under-represented communities to help achieve

clear shared outcomes of equity, inclusion, and justice for all people.

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References

1. European Institute for Gender Equality (2019) Gender Equality Index 2019: Work-life balance. Accessed 12 July 2023

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