

## Citi S'pore extends paternity leave to 4 weeks

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Fathers working at Citi Singapore can now take up to four weeks of paid paternity leave-double that of the previous policy which provided for the government-mandated two weeks.

Mothers will continue to receive the statutory 16 weeks.

The move is part of a review of parental leave policies across the bank's global operations. It will be raising leave provisions - paternity, maternity, or both - in 74 markets this year, Citi said in a press statement yesterday.

The policy was launched on Jan 21 this year but is backdated to Jan 1 for the first 18 countries, including Singapore. It applies to staff of all nationalities. The leave must be used within a year of the child's birth.

The bank decided on the adjustments globally after it engaged an external vendor to assess its parental leave offerings against its peers, said Citi Singapore head of human resources Jorge Osorio.

"The increase in paid paternity leave benefits for our employees in Singapore enables fathers to be physically present for their new child and the mother during a crucial period," he said.

"It also helps to drive greater gender equality, transform the perception that caregiving is only a female responsibility and create a more level playing field at home and at work."

Mr Osorio said 142 staff members took paternity leave last year.

Citi said the initiative is part of building an inclusive workplace.

Citi Singapore had said in January that it raised the pay of women at its bank who earned less than their male peers for equal work performance, in response to the gender pay gap that was found.

**An Institute of Policy Studies report released in January recommended extending paternity leave beyond the statutory two-week entitlement to support fathers in active parenting.**

Mr Richard Yeong, Citi's Asia-Pacific audit head for global functions technology, found out about the better paternity leave benefits before his daughter Alyssa was born on Feb 12.

The Singaporean, who is a first-time father, used three weeks of paternity leave and plans to take the remaining week when needed.

Mr Yeong, 38, said the additional week took the stress off looking for alternative childcare arrangements to support his wife Sabrina, 31, a mobility consultant, so they did not need to trouble their parents as much.

"The extra time at home enabled me to pick up more tips on baby care from the confinement nanny," he said.

"What I enjoyed most was seeing my daughter's cherubic face every day, witnessing her incremental growth and having conversations with her - although it was one-sided."