

# Paid Annual Leave and a Weekly Day of Rest

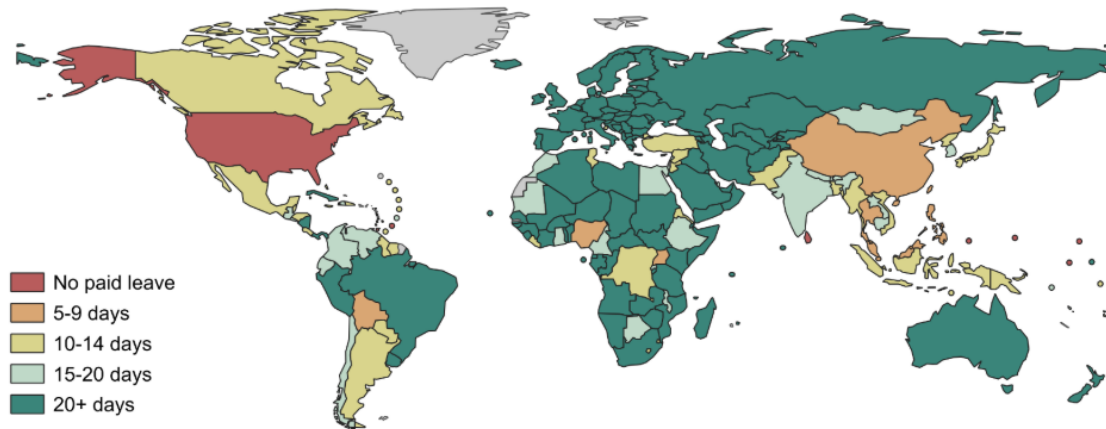
Rest and recreation are fundamental to a [healthy](#) and balanced life. Two policies—long established as fundamental labor rights—can help ensure these conditions are accessible to all: paid annual leave and a guaranteed weekly day of rest. Along with providing time for relaxation and leisure, paid annual leave can be essential for meeting common needs not covered by other forms of leave, such as visiting family members, moving, or attending non-medical appointments. At least one guaranteed day of rest each week is likewise critical to workers’ physical and mental health. Research has shown that risks of occupational injury and major industrial accidents [increase](#) alongside [consecutive](#) work shifts, especially for night shifts or shifts of longer than eight hours.

Since 1970, the International Labor Organization (ILO) has established that all workers should have at least three weeks of paid annual leave. Even older ILO conventions—adopted in 1921 and 1956—provide that workers should have at least 24 hours of guaranteed rest each week. More recently, the ILO has [made clear](#) that these rights extend to workers who have historically been excluded from many labor protections, including domestic workers. This brief examines national-level protections for annual leave and weekly rest in the laws of all 193 UN member states.

## Which Countries Guarantee Paid Annual Leave?

**All but nine countries worldwide—the US, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, and six small island nations—now guarantee at least some amount of paid annual leave.** An additional nine countries guarantee a short duration of paid leave each year between 5 and 9 days. Most countries around the world, 55%, guarantee over 20 days of paid annual leave each year.

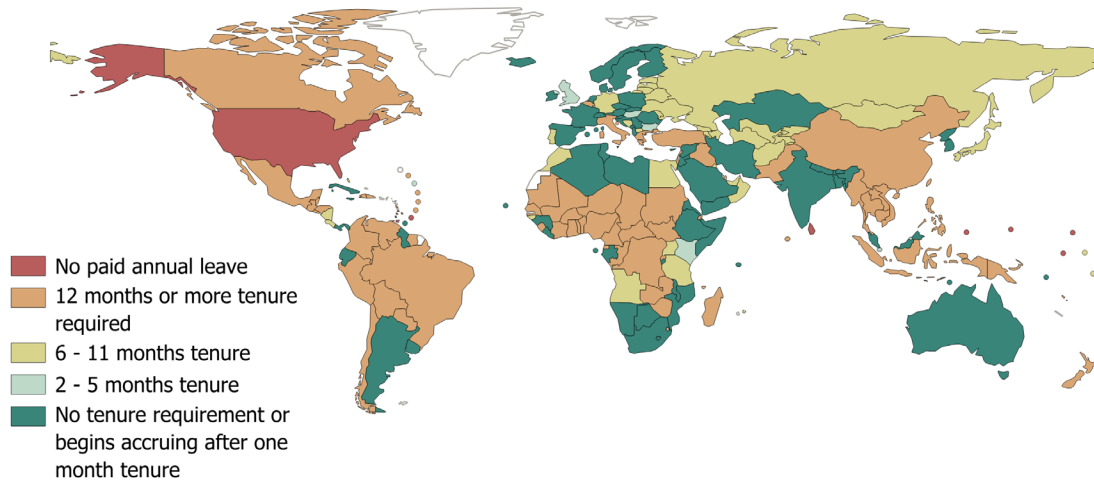
## Is paid annual leave available to workers?



The average duration of paid annual leave is longest in European countries, reflecting regional standards: the EU Working Time Directive requires that all EU countries provide at least four weeks of paid annual leave to all workers. In contrast, **in the US, the largest country without any paid annual leave, 1 in 5 workers in the private sector have no access to even a single paid vacation day.** The differences are stark across income level: among workers in the bottom tenth of the income distribution, [just 43%](#) have any paid vacation time, compared to 95% in the top tenth.

Some countries have minimum tenure requirements before workers become eligible for paid annual leave. In 36% of countries, one year of tenure with the same employer is required. A similar share of countries, however, have no minimum tenure requirement or allow workers to begin accruing paid annual leave after a month on the job. The remainder have tenure requirements that are shorter than one year.

## For how long do workers need to have worked for the same employer to access paid annual leave?



## Which Workers Are Eligible to Take Paid Annual Leave?

### *Part-Time Workers*

**Most countries make paid annual leave available to part-time workers as well as full-time workers;** in 91 countries, this is explicitly established by law. Only one country with paid annual leave, Seychelles, specifically excludes part-time workers from eligibility.

### *Domestic Workers*

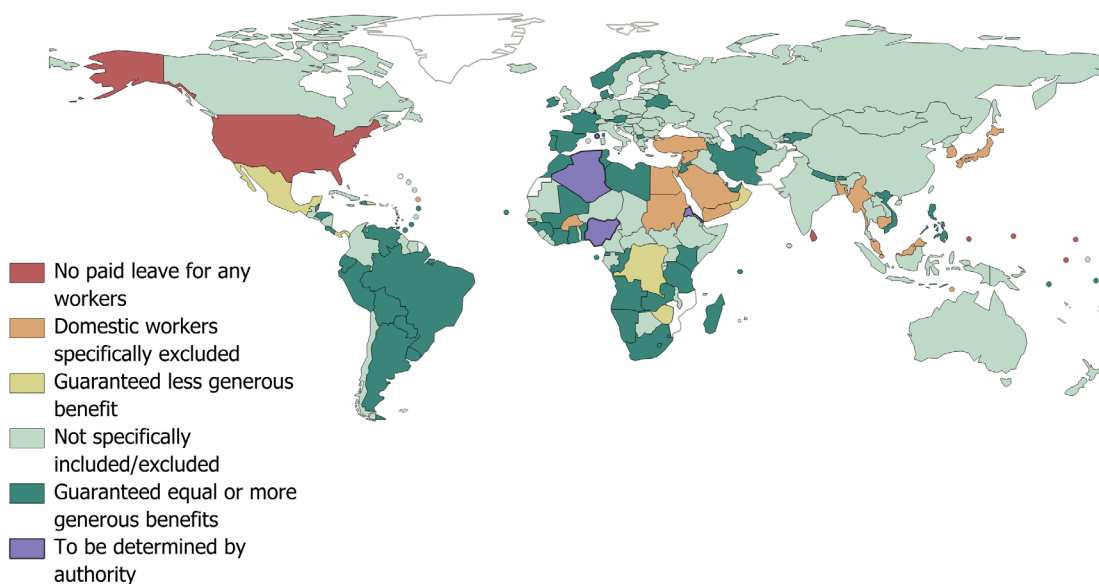
Across many countries, domestic workers and agricultural workers have historically faced exclusion from basic social and labor protections. In countries like the [United States](#) and [Brazil](#), these exclusions were codified in the decades following the formal abolition of slavery, providing a new legal means of reinforcing racial and socioeconomic stratification. Today, these carveouts continue to disproportionately affect low-wage workers, immigrants, and women, especially women of color.

As of 2026, **a third of countries, 34%, explicitly guaranteed paid annual leave to domestic workers.** For example:

- **Uruguay** guarantees paid annual leave and specifically provides that “All labor law and social security rules...shall apply to domestic workers.”
- **Ireland** guarantees paid annual leave and indicates that “employees in other people’s homes have an equal entitlement to the employment rights and protections available to any other employee.”
- **Vietnam**, in a section of the labor code specifically focused on domestic workers, provides that “If the worker has worked for 12 months for an employer, he or she is entitled for 12-day leave in the year...When taking annual leave, the worker shall receive an advance payment that equals at least the payment for the days off.” Vietnam also guarantees domestic workers paid holidays.

At the same time, **10% of countries still explicitly exclude domestic workers from these benefits**, while an additional 4% provide less paid annual leave to domestic workers compared to other workers. Most countries, 45%, guarantee paid annual leave without specifying whether the law covers domestic workers.

### Is paid annual leave available to domestic workers?



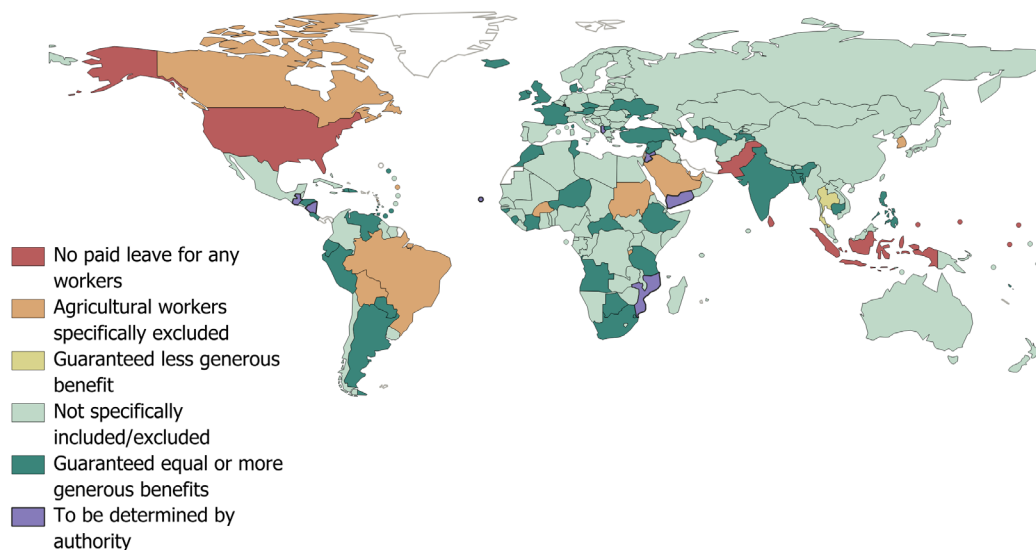
## *Agricultural Workers*

A quarter of countries globally specifically guarantee paid annual leave to agricultural workers. For example:

- **Austria** guarantees paid annual leave through the Agricultural Labor Act of 2021, which provides 30 days of paid leave for workers with less than 25 years of service and 36 days for those who have worked longer.
- **Central African Republic** guarantees paid annual leave for agricultural workers in the general labor code, which establishes that “[a]ny worker, employee or apprentice of industrial, commercial, craft or agricultural establishments, even if they are in the form of a cooperative and any employee of the liberal professions, civil societies, associations and groups of any nature whatsoever or, are entitled to paid leave each year at the expense of the employer.”
- **Grenada’s** Employment Act guarantees annual leave to “every agricultural worker...of not less than the following...two weeks for the first year of employment.”

Still, six percent have explicit exclusions for agricultural workers, while two countries provide less generous annual leave to agricultural workers. Most countries, 59%, are silent on whether their paid annual leave extends to agricultural workers.

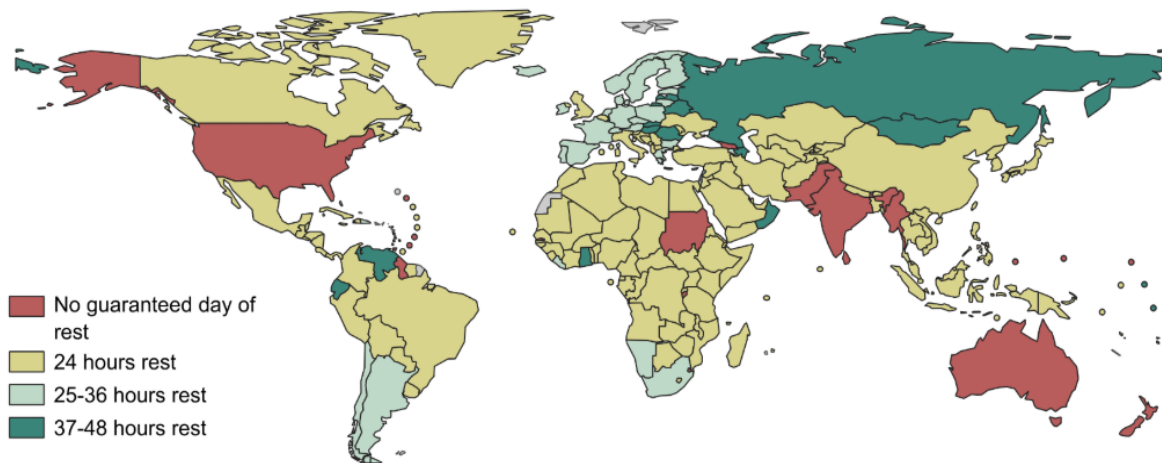
### Is paid annual leave available to agricultural workers?



## Which Countries Guarantee a Weekly Day of Rest?

**Only 21 countries—including the US, India, Australia, and New Zealand—fail to guarantee at least 24 hours of weekly rest.** Two-thirds of the world’s countries (66%) have laws providing for 24 consecutive hours of rest each week, while another 23% guarantee between 25 and 48 hours.

### Are workers guaranteed a weekly day of rest?

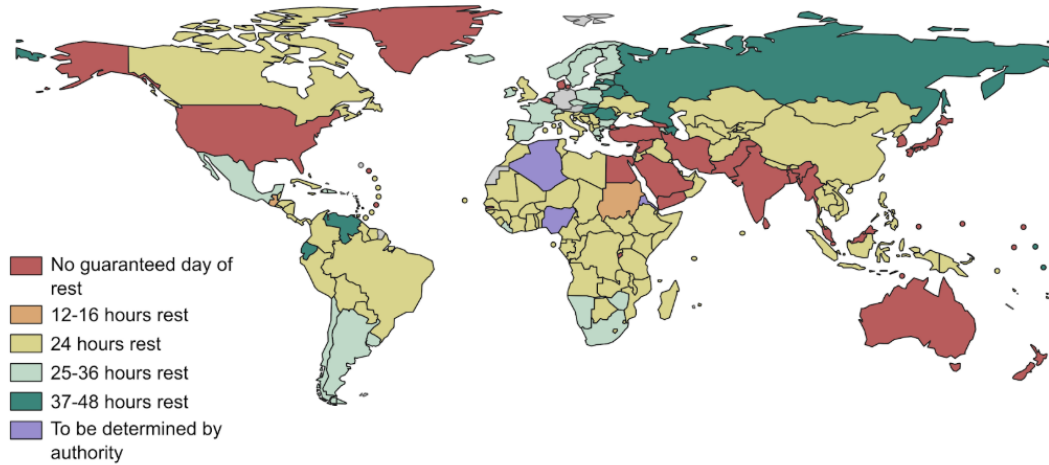


## Which Workers Are Guaranteed a Weekly Day of Rest?

### *Domestic Workers*

Many in-home domestic workers are expected to work every day. **In 18% of countries, the law reinforces these conditions by providing no weekly day of rest to domestic workers.** An additional two countries guarantee domestic workers weekly rest that falls short of the 24-hour ILO standard. **A majority of countries, 58%, guarantee 24 hours of rest per week for domestic workers; another 21% guarantee 25 to 48 hours.** While challenges in enforcing these rights are common across countries, their enactment in law is a critical first step toward their realization.

### Are domestic workers guaranteed a weekly day of rest?

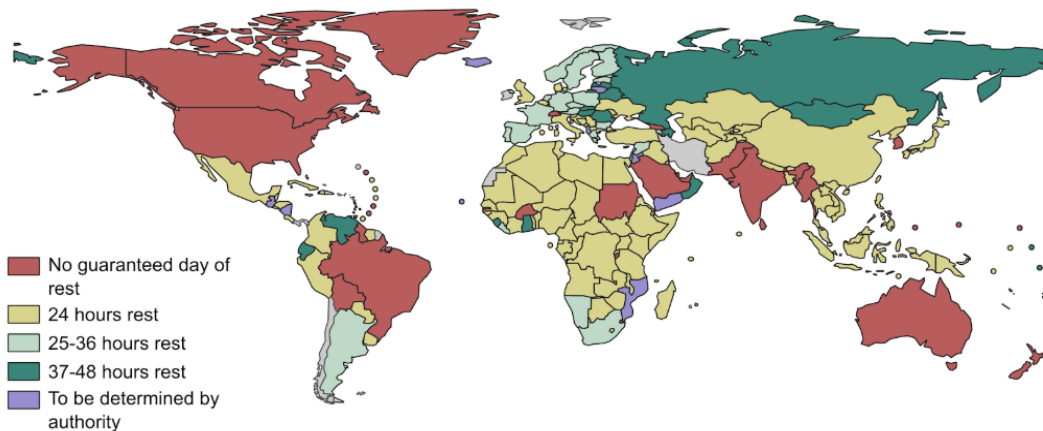


Source: Equal Futures, Health and Annual Leaves Database 2026

### Agricultural Workers

Similar to domestic workers, **17% of countries guarantee no weekly rest to agricultural workers**. Most—57%—provide 24 hours, whereas 21% provide more.

### Are agricultural workers guaranteed a weekly day of rest?



Source: Equal Futures, Health and Annual Leaves Database 2026

## The Future of Work Requires Getting the Basics Right

Over the past 50 years, workers' productivity has dramatically risen, yet in many countries, [hours of work](#) have only barely declined. Meanwhile, [burnout](#) and stress are on the rise in low- and high-income countries [alike](#), while occupational injury rates remain [high](#). Across 140 countries, a 2025 [survey](#) found that rates of employee engagement had reached their lowest level since 2020.

These conditions, alongside the rise of AI, are stimulating new conversations about the future of work—including the need for job retraining, the potential of [solutions](#) like an [AI dividend](#) or a four-day work week, and the importance of restructuring [unemployment systems](#). Given forecasts about large-scale job loss and its [inequitable](#) impacts, all of these proposals merit serious consideration. At the same time, it's also essential to ensure that the basics are in place. **Paid annual leave and weekly rest are fundamental labor rights that have been widely recognized for decades. All countries—especially the world's largest economies—can and should ensure they are fulfilled for all.**