

PF1.3: Family cash benefits

Definitions and methodology

Family cash benefits (FCB) are defined here as child-related cash transfers to families. Such transfers can take many different forms. In general, the information presented in this indicator refers largely to what are often called ‘family allowances’, or alternatively ‘child allowances’ or ‘child benefits’ – periodical payments to a member of a household with dependent children to help with the costs of raising children. Family- or child-related cash transfers and/or other kinds of state financial support that are given only to very specific groups or are available only in specific circumstances are generally not included. This means that cash transfers specific to single parents/single-parent families, maternity, paternity, parental or home-care leave benefits and child-raising allowances, one-off payments for specific events (e.g. birth grants), and benefits targeted at very specific groups or for specific purposes (e.g. educational-support benefits, benefits for families with children with disabilities, etc.) are generally not included here. Child-related ‘refundable’ or ‘non-wastable’ tax credits (i.e. benefits that are paid in cash when the tax liability of a family is not large enough to make (full) use of a particular fiscal advantage or tax credit) are included if they are used in a similar manner to a family allowance (as in Australia, for instance). Otherwise, fiscal support is also not covered here.

Key findings

Family allowance cash benefits are a common but not universal feature of social protection systems in the covered Asia/Pacific countries (Table PF1.3.A). Six of the eight covered Asia/Pacific countries with available information provide financial support to families in the form of a family allowance of some sort (Australia, China, Japan, Korea, New Zealand and Thailand). In some cases (Australia and New Zealand), these benefits take the shape of ‘non-wastable’ tax credits, while in others (e.g. Japan, Korea and Thailand) they are provided as cash transfers.

In contrast to the universal family allowance benefits available in many OECD countries, many of the family allowances in the covered Asia/Pacific countries are means-tested (Table PF1.3.A), meaning that either eligibility for the benefit or the amount paid is conditional on family income. In Japan, for instance, eligibility for the main Child Allowance is limited to families with incomes below a certain threshold (JPY 9m for a two-child family in 2020); those with incomes above the threshold are not eligible to receive the main benefit, although they can receive a lower, secondary ‘Special Interim Allowance’ instead. Korea and Thailand are the main exception here, although the Thai ‘Child Assistance Benefit’ is limited to families with an employed and insured adult only.

The design of family allowances/child benefits transfers differs across countries (Table PF1.3.A). In several cases, the exact value of the benefit paid for each child depends on the child’s age and/or the number of children in the family, though the direction of the variation sometimes differs from country to country. In Australia, for example, the per-child value of the Family Tax Benefit Part A tax credit increases as children grow older. In Japan, on the other hand, the per-child value of the Child Allowance *decreases* as children grow up. The age limit on the benefit varies too. In most cases family allowances/child benefits are

Other relevant indicators: PF2.1: Key characteristics of parental leave systems; PF4.1: Typology of childcare and early education services

paid until children turn 15 or 16 (18 in New Zealand), sometimes with an extension if the child remains in education or training (Australia and New Zealand). In Korea and Thailand, however, the benefit is paid only until the child turns 6.

Two of the covered Asia/Pacific countries (Singapore and Viet Nam) do not provide families with cash support through a general family allowance or child benefit scheme, though both still look to offer financial support in other forms. Singapore, for example, provides families with support through schemes like a birth grant (the ‘baby bonus’) and a state-supported matched savings fund (the ‘Child Development Account’). Viet Nam provides a range of cash benefits to families and children with specific needs or in specific circumstances such as, for example, a single parent benefit and a disabled child allowance.

Data and comparability issues

Information on family cash benefits has been collected from a range of sources, including the United States Social Security Administration’s bi-annual publication “*Social Security Programs Throughout the World*”, government websites and publications by relevant government ministries, and a questionnaire sent to national authorities in the context of the OECD Benefits and Wages database.

As noted in the ‘*Definitions and methodology*’ section, the information in this indicator refers largely to ‘family allowances’, defined as periodical payments to a member of a household with dependent children to help with the costs of raising children (also sometimes known as ‘child allowances’ or ‘child benefits’). This definition includes only those periodic benefits that are designed to provide financial support to families for the purpose of bringing up children, and does not cover periodic benefits aimed at helping families with the cost of education. As a result, any periodic cash or in-kind benefits provided to families for educational purposes (such as the scholarships offered to children from disadvantaged backgrounds in Viet Nam) are not included here.

On occasion some education-related benefits may be provided solely to families with low incomes, after a means-test, for the purpose of redistributing income in favour of those with insufficient resources, rather than to provide free access to education. These benefits may be considered as ‘family benefits’ in the wider sense, but are not generally included here.

Sources and further reading: United States Social Security Administration (2018), “Social Security Programs Throughout the World”, <https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/progdesc/ssptw/>; OECD Tax and Benefit Models, <http://www.oecd.org/social/benefits-and-wages.htm>

Table PF1.3.A. **Family Cash Benefits, 2020**

	Name (English)	Maximum annual amount for one child aged 3-12 (national currency)	Benefit per additional child increases/decreases with:	Upper age limit	Upper age limit for those in education or training	Means test on:	Notes/Other
Australia	Family Tax Benefit (FTB) Part A	5 621	+ o	15	19	Family income	Family tax benefit (FTB) part A is targeted at helping families with the cost of raising children.
	Family Tax Benefit (FTB) Part B	4,500.45	- n	15	19	Income of second earner in the couple	FTB part B is targeted towards families with one main income (inc. single parents)
China	(Varies across localities)	..	..	..	..	..	Municipalities provide various kinds of support (including cash benefits like family allowances and post-retirement subsidies) to families that comply with family planning policies. Municipalities also offer mean-tested income support and medical assistance programmes to low income families. Exact details vary across localities.
Indonesia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Japan	Child allowance	120,000	- + (from 3rd child)	15	..	Family income	A Special Interim Allowance of 60,000 JPY per year is available to families with incomes above the income threshold
Korea	Child allowance	1,200,000	o o	6	..	..	The child allowance is a universal (non-means-tested) cash benefit available for children age six and under.

Family Database in the Asia-Pacific Region, <http://oe.cd/fdb-asia>
OECD and OECD KOREA Policy Centre

Malaysia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
New Zealand	Family tax credit	4821.96	+	-	18	19	Family income		The 'family tax credit' is a means-tested non-wastable tax credit
Singapore	None	..	..	..	..	..	..		No general family allowance or child benefit, though many families are entitled to a birth grant ("baby bonus") worth up to SGD 2,000. Many families can also receive further financial support through family- or child-related tax reliefs and rebates such as the "Parenthood Tax Rebate" (a semi-non-wastable tax credit worth up to SGD 20,000 per child) and the Working Mother's Child Relief, through subsidies for centre-based childcare like the "Child Care / Infant Care Subsidy", and through other schemes like the "Child Development Account" (a special state-supported matched savings fund for children to be spent on educational and health-related expenses).
Thailand	Child allowance	4800	o	o	6	..	Not means-tested		Eligibility limited to employed and insured persons only. Paid for up to a maximum of three children at any one time. Additional benefits available for low-income families.
Viet Nam	None	..	..	..	..	..	..		No general family allowance or child benefit, though a range of cash social protection benefits are available to families and children with specific needs or in specific circumstances (e.g. single parent benefit, disabled child allowance, educational scholarships for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, orphaned child benefit, etc.)

Note: The information in this table refers largely to what are often called 'family allowances', or alternatively 'child allowances' or 'child benefits', plus also child-related 'refundable' or 'non-wastable' tax credits. It does not include financial support specific to single parents/single-parent families, maternity, paternity, parental or home care leave benefits and child-raising allowances, one-off payments for specific events (e.g. baby bonuses), or benefits targeted at very specific groups or for specific purposes (e.g. educational-support benefits, benefits for families with children with disabilities, etc.). All benefit amounts are shown on an annualised basis. ".." indicates that no information is available or not applicable. Data for Korea refer to 2019. "+" = increases; "-" = decreases; "0" = remains the same; "+/-" = both increases and decreases at different points; "n" = no effect.

Sources: [Australia, Japan, Korea and New Zealand: OECD Tax and Benefit Models country chapters](#); [China, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam: Social Security Programs Throughout the World](#); China, Korea, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam: National correspondents; [Singapore: Ministry of Social and Family Development](#)