



THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Fact Sheet: Paid Family and Medical Leave

The United States is the [only](#) industrialized nation that does not guarantee universal paid leave for new mothers; it's one of a handful of OECD countries that does not provide paid leave for [new fathers](#). The United States and South Korea are the [only](#) Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries that do not universally offer temporary income support in some form to workers with a serious medical condition. [Many countries](#) also provide national paid leave to employees engaged in family caregiving.

Limited Access to Paid Leave

Only about a quarter of the U.S. labor force lives in states that are covered by state-based comprehensive paid leave programs once newly-enacted laws are implemented.

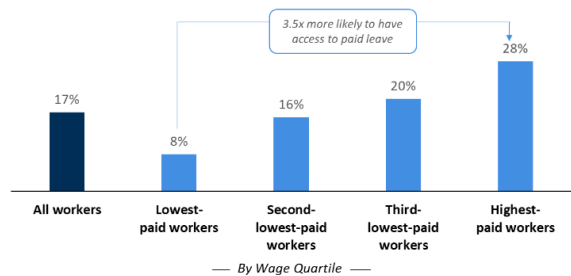
In addition, just [17 percent](#) of American workers have access to employer-provided [paid family leave](#) (i.e., parental and caregiving leave) and just under [40 percent](#) of American workers have access to paid medical leave (including short-term disability) through an employer-provided plan.[1]

There are significant inequities in access to paid leave for a wide array of Americans, including women, lower-income families, part-time workers, and people of color. For instance, the highest-paid workers are 3.5 times more likely to have access to paid leave than the lowest-paid workers (see Figure).

States with paid family and medical leave (and when benefits payable)

California (2004) Washington (Jan. 2020)
New Jersey (2009) D.C. (July 2020)
Rhode Island (2014) Massachusetts (Jan. 2021)
New York (2018)

Disparities in Access to Employer-Provided Paid Family Leave Coverage



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Compensation Survey (using data for March 2018)
Notes: "Paid family leave" includes family care leave and parental leave, not medical leave; data include workers in the private nonfarm economy (excluding private households) and public sector workers (excluding the federal government); and wage quartiles use the following average hourly worker wages: \$13.18 (25), \$19.87 (50), and \$31.55 (75)



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Increasing Need for Paid Leave

Among married-couple families with children, [62 percent](#) had both parents employed, and [nearly three-quarters](#) of all women with children are in the labor force.

The old-age population is a [growing share](#) of the United States population, driven in large part by the aging of the baby boomers into retirement. Families are facing [mounting demands, work-related strains, and costs](#) as a result of caregiving to the older population. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, [about half](#) of Americans turning 65 today will develop a disability serious enough to require long-term care.

[1] Access to paid family leave measures benefits provided by employers to employees. It does not include access to family leave insurance provided by states nor is it adjusted for whether the individual holding the job has met service requirements to use the employer's leave program. For comparative purposes, approximately 75 percent of workers have access to [paid sick leave](#) through their employers.



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Benefits of Paid Leave

Businesses

Improves [business productivity](#) and [delivers benefits](#) by boosting employee morale, reducing worker turnover, and making it easier to attract skilled workers.

Health

Has significant positive effects on the [health](#) of the [mother](#), the [father](#), and the [child](#) to be able to bond in the early months of the child's life.

Economy

Grows and strengthens the [labor force](#) and provides income security to families who might otherwise need [public assistance](#) to make ends meet.

Current Federal Law: The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA)

The [FMLA](#) provides eligible employees with up to 12 weeks per year of unpaid, job-protected comprehensive leave.

- The FMLA only applies to businesses with 50 or more employees, and to be eligible, employees must have worked 1,250 hours in the past year (about 24 hours per week) and with the same employer for at least a year.
- According to a Department of Labor funded survey, about [60 percent](#) of all employees report meeting these three eligibility conditions for the FMLA. That survey also found most leave taken is for the employee's own serious health condition ([55 percent](#)). Leave for pregnancy or a new child (21 percent) and for illness of a qualifying relative (18 percent) is less common.

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