



# THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

## Fact Sheet: Paid Family and Medical Leave

In every category, the United States lags behind the rest of the world in guaranteeing paid family and medical leave. The United States is the [only](#) industrialized nation that does not guarantee universal paid leave for new mothers. 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.

That greater support for caregiving translates into higher workforce participation among women. For example, workforce participation among women is [14 points higher](#) in Sweden and [5 points higher](#) in Canada, both countries that provide more consistent support.

### Limited Access to Paid Leave

About 30 percent of the U.S. labor force lives in states with comprehensive paid leave programs. [1]

Just [21 percent](#) of American workers have access to employer-provided [paid family leave](#) (i.e., parental and caregiving leave) and just [42 percent](#) of American workers have access to paid medical leave (including short-term disability) through an employer-provided plan.[2]

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 over 6 times more likely to have access to paid leave than the lowest-paid workers (see Figure below).

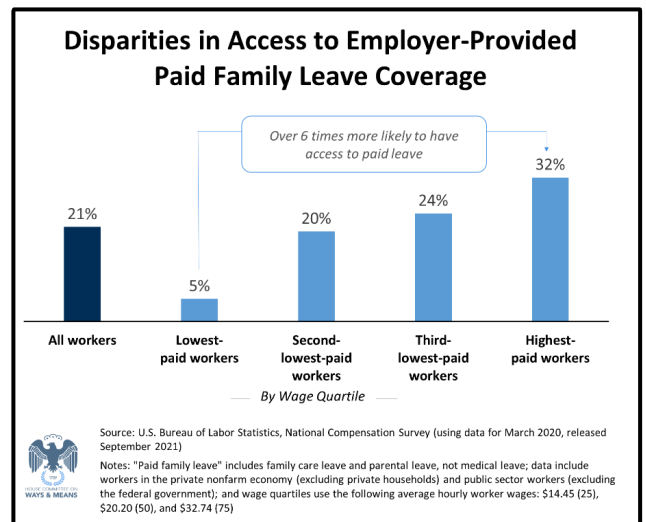
### States with family and medical leave insurance programs (and when benefits payable)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <a href="#">California (2004)</a>         | <a href="#">Connecticut (Jan. 2022)</a> |
| <a href="#">New Jersey (2009)</a>         | <a href="#">Oregon (Jan. 2023)</a>      |
| <a href="#">Rhode Island (2014)</a>       | <a href="#">Colorado (Jan. 2024)</a>    |
| <a href="#">New York (2018)</a>           |   |
| <a href="#">Washington (Jan. 2020)</a>    |   |
| <a href="#">D.C. (July 2020)</a>          |   |
| <a href="#">Massachusetts (Jan. 2021)</a> |   |

### Increasing Need for Paid Leave

Among married-couple families with children, [64.2 percent](#) had both parents employed, and [nearly three-quarters](#) of all women with children are in the labor force.

The senior 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, [over half](#) of Americans turning 65 today will develop a disability serious enough to require long-term care.



[1] 30 percent is the level once newly-enacted laws in Connecticut, Oregon, and Colorado are implemented.

[2] 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, [78 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, and [helps women stay in the workforce](#).

### Current Federal Law: Unpaid Leave

The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 ([FMLA](#)) provides eligible employees with up to 12 weeks per year of unpaid, job-protected comprehensive leave.

- 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 [56 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 ([51 percent](#)). Leave for pregnancy or a new child (25 percent) and for illness of a qualifying relative (19 percent) is less common.