



## FAST FACTS

### Questions and Answers about Paid Sick Days/Paid Sick Leave

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#### How do paid sick leave policies vary between countries?

- **Fact 1:** “The 22 countries studied use various means to support employed adults while they are unable to work. Some require employers to provide pay while their workers are out sick (Australia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom); others operate social insurance systems whereby the government covers sick pay using tax revenues (Canada, France, Ireland, Italy, Japan). Most countries use a combination of employer mandates and social insurance (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Luxembourg, Norway, Spain, and Sweden)” (Heymann, Rho, Schmitt, Earle, 2009:6).
- **Fact 2:** “U.S. federal law provides no financial support for a worker with a 5-day flu. Canada and Japan are the only other countries of the 22 analyzed here that have no mandated support for workers at the national level. Japanese law provides paid sick days for “serious” illnesses (lasting up to 18 months)..In Canada, decisions regarding job protection for short-term sick leave are made at provincial level, though long-term illness insurance is provided nationally. Eleven countries ----Australia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Norway, and Switzerland--provide the median-wage worker with full pay while recovering from a 5-day illness.” (Heymann, Rho, Schmitt, Earle, 2010:7).

- **Fact 3:** “In Greece and the Netherlands, workers receive the full-time equivalent of 3.5 days of pay when they are out sick for 5 consecutive days; in the Netherlands, workers receive 70% percent of pay from the first day of illness, while in Greece, workers receive 50 percent of pay for the first 3 days and full pay for the last 2 days. In Sweden, paid sick days cover 3.2 FTE days (full-time equivalent) of pay during a 5-day illness; workers are entitled to receive 80 percent of wages, but there is no legal guarantee of payment for the first sick day” (Heymann, Rho, Schmitt, Earle, 2010:7).
- **Fact 4:** “Spain provides 1.2 FTE days out of 5, France provides 1, Ireland guarantees 0.7, and the United Kingdom provides 0.4 FTE sick days. Benefits are less generous in these countries primarily because they provide no legal guarantee of pay during the first 3 days of illness-related absences” (Heymann, Rho, Schmitt, Earle, 2010:7).

### How many paid sick days is considered enough?

- **Fact 1:** “The mandates range from a low of 3 days of paid sick leave in Tacoma, Washington, to a high of 10 days in San Diego, California. In an effort to address concerns about the potential impact on small employers, some of the enacted laws stipulate that the number of paid sick days is to vary based on the size of the employer, with large employers being required to provide more paid sick days” (DeRigne, Stoddard-Dare, Quinn, Collins, 2018:2).

### Who benefits most from paid sick days?

- **Fact 1:** “Prior research suggests that women are more likely than men to benefit from sick leave. Women function as society's main caregivers—not only for children, but also for the elderly and the disabled (Heymann, 2000; National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP, 2009, Smith and Schaefer, 2012). Accordingly, prior work has identified clear differences in leave-taking behavior by gender (Henrekson & Persson, 2004), and has indicated that women miss work more often than men to care for sick children (Smith & Schaefer, 2012)” (Lindemann, Houser, White, 2015:1).
- **Fact 2:** “Each child under the age of 6 adds about 5% to the probability that a mother will be absent from work during a single year (Vistnes, 1997).” (Lindemann, Houser, White, 2015:1).

- **Fact 3:** “Those with paid sick leave are also more likely to obtain additional routine preventive health care services such as blood pressure, cholesterol, and fasting blood sugar/diabetes checks, and flu vaccination than those without it” (DeRigne, Stoddard-Dare, Quinn, Collins, 2018:2).
- **Fact 4:** “Given the high rates of female employment in the US [37], these findings may point to a need for a greater number of paid sick days among women, and underline the importance of PSD policies that reduce the economic impact of gendered childcare behavior on families. PSD laws are thus important for women, children, and entire families in the workplace” (Piper, Youk, James, Kumar, 2017:11).

### Who is most at a disadvantage in not having access to paid sick days?

- **Fact 1:** “Moreover, poor women are among the sociodemographic groups with the least access to leave: two-thirds of low-income women and three-fourths of very poor women do not get paid when they miss work to care for sick children (Wyn, Ojeda, Ranji, & Salganicoff, 2003).<sup>1</sup> In fact, one study (Oxfam America, 2013) found that 19% of low-wage working mothers had lost a job from being sick or caring for a sick child.” (Leindemann, Houser, White, 2015:1).
- **Fact 2:** “Only 27 percent of part-time private-sector workers have paid sick days or leave, compared to 71 percent of full-timers. Low-wage workers are also much less likely to have paid sick days or leave than higher wage workers” (Heymann, Rho, Schmitt, Earle, 2010:18)
- **Fact 3:** “Seventy percent of the US civilian population working full time have paid sick leave benefits, while only 19 percent of part-time workers have this benefit. That leaves nearly forty-nine million workers without access to paid sick leave” (DeRigne, Stoddard-Dare, Quinn, 2016:1).
- **Fact 4:** “Research has demonstrated that employees without paid sick days are more likely to delay and forego needed health care for both themselves and their family members and are less likely to have seen a medical professional in the last 12 months” (DeRigne, Stoddard-Dare, Quinn, Collins, 2018:2).
- **Fact 5:** “Children of mothers without paid sick leave have been found less likely to receive annual well child visits, dental checkups, flu vaccination and obesity and vision screenings, and more likely to visit the ER, and receive delayed medical care” (DeRigne, Stoddard-Dare, Quinn, Collins, 2018: 2).

## Do disadvantages vary by race, gender, age, socioeconomic status, etc.?

- **Fact 1:** “That racial minority groups the most likely to currently lack access to PSD” (Lindemann, Houser, White, 2015:4).
- **Fact 2:** “Access to paid sick leave varies by race, with Hispanic workers having the lowest rates of coverage” (Lindemann, Houser, White, 2015:1).
- **Fact 3:** “This health-related employment benefit is also less common among those who are younger, less educated, low income, in fair or poor health, and uninsured.<sup>5</sup> Only three out of ten low-income workers with a child in fair or poor health have paid sick leave benefits” (Lindemann, Houser, White, 2015:1).
- **Fact 4:** “Hispanics had a significantly lower prevalence of staying home when ill—for their own illness/injury, ILI, or influenza—than non-Hispanic Whites” (Piper, Youk, James, Kumar, 2017:10).
- **Fact 5:** “Older workers have less access to paid sick days than younger workers. In 2018, 40% of workers aged 50 years and older lacked paid sick days, compared to 38% of workers under age 50” (Ghilarducci, Farmanda, 2020:1)
- **Fact 6:** “Indeed, 50% of older workers in healthcare support occupations (which include home health aides, occupational and physical therapist assistants and others) do not have paid sick days according to authors’ calculations from the CDC data” (Ghilarducci, Farmanda, 2020:2)

## Who received paid sick leave during the pandemic?

- **Fact 1:** “Ideally, the COVID-19 response legislation would have permanently required employers to allow every worker to earn paid sick leave of, say, 14 days for any reason, not just due to a particular virus. But the current legislation does not go this far. It expires at the end of 2020 and is limited in scope: it only provides paid sick leave to those who are quarantined or who are seeking a medical diagnosis for COVID-19 symptom” (Ghilarducci, Farmanda, 2020:2)
- **Fact 2:** “This week, big retailers including Walmart Inc., Macy’s Inc. and Target Corp. made gestures toward addressing their workers’ safety by issuing emergency leave policies that relax requirements against missing work, and offer up to two weeks paid sick leave for workers with a COVID-19 diagnosis or who have been formally quarantine” (Sundar, Sindhu, 2020:1).

## What state and local laws are put into place in regard to paid sick days/leave?

- **Fact 1:** “Five U.S. states - California, Hawaii, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island - have legislation that provides eligible workers with temporary disability benefits that can provide paid sick leave for temporary illnesses that last longer than seven work days” (Heymann, Rho, Schmitt, Earle, 2010:17).
- **Fact 2:** “Three U.S. cities - Milwaukee, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. - have also passed legislation requiring that most employers provide a limited number of paid sick days to most employees” (Heymann, Rho, Schmitt, Earle, 2009:1).
- **Fact 3:** “Since all five states exclude illnesses of less than eight days from coverage, all the state plans provide zero full-time equivalent days of pay for a five-day illness. However, three of the five states provide about six weeks of full-time equivalent pay for a worker that misses 50 days of work due to illness: New Jersey (31), California (29), and Hawaii (28). New York provides almost 11 days of full-time equivalent pay for a fifty-day absence” (Heymann, Rho, Schmitt, Earle, 2009:13).
- **Fact 4:** “Rhode Island’s system grants 30 weeks of coverage, but at much lower benefit rates. As a result, the state’s system covers only about three days of full-time equivalent earnings over a fifty-work-day illness” (Heymann, Jin rho, Schmitt, Earle, 2009:13).
- **Fact 5:** “For a five-day flu, our representative worker, with six months of job experience in a firm of 25 employees, would receive full pay in Milwaukee and San Francisco as well as in Washington, D.C., although in the District of Columbia the law has important exemptions and conditions” (Heymann, Rho, Schmitt, Earle, 2009:15).
- **Fact 6:** “Since Washington, D.C., requires that a worker have one year of tenure with the same employer, our representative worker with only six months tenure is not eligible for paid sick days under the Washington, D.C., legislation” (Heymann, Rho, Schmitt, Earle, 2009:15).
- **Fact 7:** “For a fifty-day cancer treatment, Milwaukee and San Francisco guarantee nine days of full-time-equivalent paid sick days (the maximum number of days required under both city laws); and, Washington, D.C., provides five days of full-time equivalent paid sick days” (Heymann, Rho, Schmitt, Earle, 2009:15).

- **Fact 8:** “Washington State’s paid sick leave law was enacted directly by voter initiative in November 2016. The law requires that nearly all employers, regardless of size and industry, provide paid leave and that it be provided to nearly all workers, regardless of full- or part-time status. Workers accrue leave at the rate of at least 1 hour for every 40 hours worked and may take leave to care for themselves or a family member when sick or to seek preventative care. The law went into effect January 1, 2018” (Schneider, 2020:2).

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### **About the Author**

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