



Paid Family and Medical Leave: By the Numbers

By the CAP Women's Initiative September 27, 2017

Paid family and medical leave—a program that allows workers to take paid time off for the birth or adoption of a new child or to care for their own illness or injury or that of a loved one—is now being widely debated among policymakers and the public. This fact sheet details some of the key data on the need for and support of a comprehensive national paid leave program.

Who has access to paid family and medical leave?

- Only 13 percent of private sector workers have paid family leave.¹
- Only 41 percent of private sector workers have medical, or short-term disability, leave.²
- Three states—California, New Jersey, and Rhode Island—have implemented paid family and medical leave programs; three others—New York; Washington, D.C.; and Washington—have passed them.³

Women are the majority of caregivers, and women's work is critical for family economic stability

- More than 64 percent of mothers were either primary or co-breadwinners in 2015—the year for which the most recent data are available.⁴
 - 42 percent of mothers were sole or primary breadwinners, responsible for bringing home at least half of family earnings.⁵
 - 22.4 percent were co-breadwinners, bringing in from 25 percent to 49 percent of family earnings.⁶
- The share of breadwinning mothers has increased from previous years, continuing a long-running trend of women's earnings and economic contributions becoming increasingly important to their families.⁷

While women are a majority of caregivers, both women and men have caregiving responsibilities—and not just for the birth or adoption of a new child.⁸ Out of the 20 million people who take unpaid leave through the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) each year:⁹

- 21 percent use it for the birth or adoption of a new child.
- 73 percent use it to care for their own injury or illness or that of a loved one.
 - 55 percent is used for an employee’s own medical condition.
 - 18 percent is used to care for the health conditions of a child, spouse, or parent.¹⁰

What are the costs and economic impacts of not having paid leave?

- Working families in the United States lose at least \$20.6 billion in wages every year due to a lack of access to paid family and medical leave.¹¹
- Lack of access to paid family and medical leave also has long-term economic effects, including lower labor force participation and reduced lifetime earnings as a result of time taken out of the labor force.
 - In California, implementation of the state’s paid family and medical leave program led to an 8 percent increase in labor force participation of family caregivers in the short run and a 14 percent increase in labor force participation of family caregivers in the long run.¹²

Experience of business with paid leave

Nearly 10 years after the implementation of paid family and medical leave in California, a study found that:

- Nine out of 10 employers reported that paid family leave had a “positive effect” or “no noticeable effect” on productivity, performance, and profitability.
- On turnover and employee morale, 96 percent and 99 percent of employers, respectively, reported either “a positive effect” or “no noticeable effect.”
- 87 percent of employers reported no added costs due to the paid family leave program, and 9 percent of employers reported cost savings.¹³

Small businesses support paid leave

- Recent polling shows that 70 percent of small-business owners think it is important to establish a gender-neutral federal paid family and medical leave program that workers can use to care for themselves or a family member. Forty-two percent believe that establishing such a program is “very important.”¹⁴
- This support among small-business owners is growing. In 2013, a similar poll found that 45 percent of small-business owners supported proposals to create a publicly administered paid family and medical leave program.¹⁵ In just four years, that number has grown to 70 percent.¹⁶
- 61 percent of small-business owners support using a combination of employer and employee contributions to administer paid family and medical leave.¹⁷

Broad public support for paid family and medical leave

Almost 70 percent of those who voted for President Donald Trump support a national social insurance program for paid family and medical leave, alongside 89 percent of those who voted for Hillary Clinton.¹⁸

Working families need comprehensive paid family and medical leave

These data clearly show that working families need a comprehensive paid family and medical leave plan that addresses all of their caregiving needs. Here are the key features of a paid leave plan that meets the needs of working families:¹⁹

1. Available to all workers

Paid family and medical leave should be available to people regardless of the size or industry of their employers and whether they work full time, part time, or are self-employed. Workers should also have the ability to relocate or switch jobs without losing access to leave, and it must be gender neutral in the amount of leave offered.

2. Comprehensive and specific in addressing serious family and medical needs

This includes addressing a serious health condition of oneself or a family member; caring for a new baby, a newly adopted child, or a newly placed foster child; or addressing the needs that may arise from a family member's deployment in the military.

3. Affordable and cost-effective

A paid leave plan should replace enough of a worker's usual wages to support the time they need for care without jeopardizing their ability to afford basic necessities. It should also coordinate with existing benefits offered by employers and state and federal programs and be affordable for employers.

4. Inclusive

To ensure that a paid family leave plan recognizes today's diverse families and care responsibilities, it should be inclusive in its definition of "family," including covering care for elders and recognizing same-sex families.

5. Available without adverse employment consequences

Any paid leave plan must include provisions to protect workers against discrimination or retaliation for needing or taking leave. It should not force employees to give up important workplace rights or labor protections in order to use paid leave.

Conclusion

There is currently a legislative proposal, the Family and Medical Insurance Leave Act (FAMILY Act) that meets these key features by creating a comprehensive federal paid family and medical leave insurance program.

Working families have a clear, demonstrated need for and support of a comprehensive national paid family and medical leave program. Policymakers must act to address this pressing issue so that American workers and families can meet their caregiving needs without sacrificing their economic security.

CAP's Women's Initiative is a comprehensive effort to marshal CAP's broad expertise and promote public policies that enable women to participate fully in our economy and our society.

Endnotes

- 1 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2017* (U.S. Department of Labor, 2017), available at <https://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2017/ebbl0061.pdf>.
- 2 Ibid.
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- 4 Sarah Jane Glynn, "Breadwinning Mothers and increasingly the U.S. Norm" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2016), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2016/12/19/295203/breadwinning-mothers-are-increasingly-the-u-s-norm/>.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 National Alliance for Caregiving and the AARP Public Policy Institute, "Caregiving in the U.S.: 2015 Research Report" (2015), available at <http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/ppi/2015/caregiving-in-the-united-states-2015-report-revised.pdf>; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Table A-1, Time spent in detailed primary activities and percent of the civilian population engaging in each activity, averages per day by sex, 2015 annual averages," available at http://www.bls.gov/tus/tables/a1_2015.pdf (last accessed August 2017).
- 9 Jacob Alex Klerman, Kelly Daley, and Alyssa Pozniak, "Family and Medical Leave in 2012: Technical Report" (Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, 2012), available at <https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/fmla/FMLA-2012-Technical-Report.pdf>.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Sarah Jane Glynn and Danielle Corley, "The Cost of Work-Family Policy Inaction: Quantifying the Costs Families Currently Face as a Result of Lacking U.S. Work-Family Policies" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2016), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2016/09/22/143877/the-cost-of-inaction/>.
- 12 Joelle Saad-Lessler and Kate Bahn, "The Importance of Paid Leave for Caregivers: Labor Force Participation Effects of California's Paid Family and Medical Leave" (Center for American Progress, 2017), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/?p=439684>.
- 13 Eileen Appelbaum and Ruth Milkman, "Leaves That Pay: Employer and Worker Experiences with Paid Family Leave in California" (Washington: Center for Economic Policy Research, 2011), available at www.cepr.net/index.php/publications/reports/leaves-that-pay.
- 14 Shilpa Phadke and Danielle Corley, "New Polling Shows that Small Businesses Strongly Support Paid Family and Medical Leave," Center for American Progress, March 30, 2017, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/news/2017/03/30/429527/new-polling-shows-small-businesses-strongly-support-paid-family-medical-leave/>.
- 15 Small Business Majority, "Small Businesses Support Family Medical Leave," Press release, September 27, 2013, available at <http://www.smallbusinessmajority.org/our-research/workforce/small-businesses-support-family-medical-leave>.
- 16 Phadke and Corley, "New Polling Shows that Small Businesses Strongly Support Paid Family and Medical Leave."
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 John Halpin and Karl Agne, "American Voters Did Not Endorse Trump's Extremist Policy Agenda in 2016 Election" (Washington: Gerstein Bocian Agne Strategies and Center for American Progress, 2016), available at <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/content/uploads/2016/11/21072333/CAP-2016PostelectionPollingMemo-Final.pdf>.
- 19 Center for American Progress and the National Partnership for Women & Families, "Key Features of a Paid Family and Medical Leave Program that Meets the Needs of Working Families" (2014), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/reports/2014/12/01/102244/key-features-of-a-paid-family-and-medical-leave-program-that-meets-the-needs-of-working-families/>.