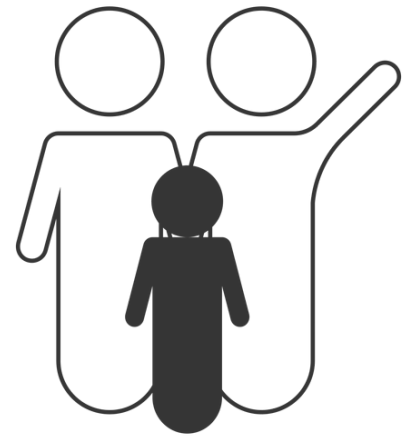


# Provide Paid Family Leave in the United States

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## Important History: Family and Medical Leave Act

In 1993, the United States signed into law the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) which provides eligible workers 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for the care of newborn children, newly adopted children, or seriously ill family members. To qualify, the employee must:

- Work for a firm with at least 50 employees
- Have been employed at that firm for at least 1,250 hours [1]

The U.S. is the **ONLY** country in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that does not offer paid leave to mothers on a national level [2]

## Key Points

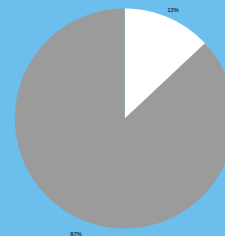
- In the United States, access to paid family leave is mainly available to high socioeconomic individuals [2]
- Paid family leave benefits both mother and child
- Funding paid family leave through employees prevents employer discrimination against female workers [3]
- Family leave must be paid, non-transferable for both men and women, broad in coverage, collectively financed, and include great flexibility of when employees can draw benefits [4]

## The Basics

### What is Paid Family Leave?

Paid family leave (PFL) refers to the partially or fully compensated leave from work for reasons of child care or the care of an ill family member. [2]

### As of 2015:

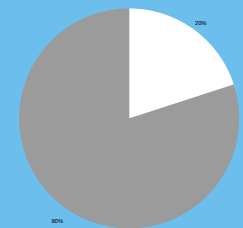


**13 %**

of U.S. workers reported having access to paid family leave [3]

**20 %**

of low-income and part-time workers reported having **NO** access to family leave (paid or unpaid) [3]



In 2012,

**2.8 million**

American workers passed on taking leave because they could not afford to go unpaid [3]

## Individual State's Paid Family Leave Policies

California, Rhode Island, and New Jersey offer family leave insurance (FLI) programs that provide cash benefits to eligible workers that take leave to take care of children or seriously ill family members [1]. New York, the District of Columbia, Washington, and Massachusetts also have FLI programs that are just beginning or in the process of implementation [2].

### Roadblocks

- Family leave is seen as a women's issue
- Lack of female descriptive representation in Congress
- Employers are unwilling to fund paid leave
- Employer discrimination against female employees

### What Should Be Done?

The best policy solution would be for the United States to **expand FMLA** in order to provide family leave that is paid, available for both men and women, broad in coverage, collectively financed, and that has great flexibility of when workers can draw benefits. **Expanding FMLA** to provide a program for paid family leave is politically feasible because the policy would be expanding on an already established federal program, decreasing compliance costs associated with creating a new program. Under this policy, the newly **expanded FMLA** would require the paid family leave program to be funded through employees, not employers. Funding the expansion through employees' payroll taxes would decrease the chance of employers lobbying against the establishment of national paid family leave. Further, it would decrease the chances of employer discrimination against women. This policy option is very similar to the policy created by California in which a social safety net is created to support individuals taking family leave. Similar to those policies, individuals would be able to withdraw funds directly from the federal government when taking family leave, which would provide all individuals of every socioeconomic background access to paid family leave.

### Who Benefits?

Men and women benefit from this policy because the paid leave is offered to both men and women, and it provides a period of time for the mother and child to form a bond, and for the mother to fully recover from labor [5]. Women who received paid leave experienced a **51%** decrease in the chances of being re-hospitalized and a **47%** decrease in the odds of their child being re-hospitalized at 21 months post-birth compared to women who took either unpaid or no leave at all [3]

### Monetary Benefits

In California, **9%** of employers reported cost savings from decreased employee turnover because more employees were able to return to their same positions after their leave was over [3]. Further, individuals have the chance to save **\$1700-3000**, which equates to **\$40 million** nationally, in re-hospitalization costs since paid family leave decreases chances of re-hospitalization after birth. [3,6]

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