



The Time for Paid Sick Days Is Now: Survey Shows Overwhelming Public Support for a Paid Sick Days Workplace Standard

A new survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago and commissioned by the Public Welfare Foundation demonstrates that lack of access to paid sick days has **significant negative consequences for public health, health care costs, and families' financial security.**¹ The survey also shows that **overwhelming majorities support paid sick days laws as a matter of basic labor policy.**

The survey results could not be clearer: It is time for policymakers to guarantee access to paid sick days to the over 40 million U.S. workers who currently lack them.² Workers should not have to risk their job to care for their families and shouldn't have to risk their own well-being—and the public's health—to do their job.

Key Findings on Health & Economic Security

Lack of Access to Paid Sick Days Impacts Public Health

- ⇒ **More than half of all workers without paid sick days (55%) have gone to work sick.** And workers without paid sick days are nearly twice as likely as those with paid sick days to say they have sent their child to school or daycare sick. As the 2009 H1N1 pandemic most recently showed, going to work or school while sick increases the likelihood of spreading infection and creates significant public health risks.

Lack of Access to Paid Sick Days Drives Up Health Care Costs

- ⇒ **Workers without access to paid sick days are twice as likely as those with access to say they have gone to the emergency room to get care for themselves because they were unable to take time off of work to get medical care.** Workers without paid sick days are two-and-a-half times as likely to say they have taken a child or other family member to the emergency room because they were unable to take time off of work. Unnecessary ER visits mean additional burdens on our health care system and cost billions of dollars per year.

Lack of Access to Paid Sick Days Jeopardizes Workers' Economic Security

- ⇒ **Workers face job loss and workplace discipline for taking sick time.** Nearly one quarter of workers (23%) say they have lost a job or were told they would lose a job for taking time off to deal with a personal or family illness, including nearly one-sixth (16%) who say they have actually lost a job. Nearly one-sixth (16%) also say they or a family member were fired, suspended, written up or otherwise penalized or were told they would face such penalties for illness-related absences.³

¹ T. Smith and J. Kim, *Paid Sick Days: Attitudes and Experiences*, National Opinion Research Center and the Public Welfare Foundation (June 2010) ("NORC Report"), available at www.publicwelfare.org. Data were collected via a telephone survey of 1461 adults in the United States, conducted from March 18 through May 6, 2010. Except where otherwise noted, the data reported in this fact sheet come from the survey data.

² Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Compensation Survey, Employee Benefits in Private Industry (2009).

³ NORC believes that respondents understood "job loss" to incorporate both being fired from a job and voluntarily leaving a job because of the inability to address an illness or medical need. See NORC Report at 5, note 7.

Key Findings about Public Attitudes

Public Support for a Paid Sick Days Law Is Broad and Runs Deep

- ⇒ **Across demographic and political backgrounds, the public overwhelmingly supports a law that would guarantee paid sick days to all workers.** Fully three-quarters (75%) favor a law providing a “minimum number” of paid sick days for all workers. Eighty-six percent favor a specific proposal that requires **7 paid sick days** annually for full-time employees, including 69% who strongly favor providing workers with 7 paid sick days.
 - ✓ About ninety percent of Democrats, three-quarters of independents, and three-quarters of all but the staunchest Republicans support a law requiring a minimum number of paid sick days. Even six in ten strong Republicans favor a paid sick days law.
 - ✓ Eighty-five percent of seniors and 82% of retirees—a group that is particularly likely to need care—favor a law providing a minimum number of paid sick days.
 - ✓ Women (88%), African-Americans (90%), and unmarried parents (85%)—precisely those with lower access rates and more caregiving responsibilities—are particularly strong supporters.

The Public Views Paid Sick Days as a Worker’s Right

- ⇒ **Three-quarters of respondents agree that paid sick days is a basic worker’s right, just like being paid a decent wage.** Seven in ten (69%) say paid sick days are a very important standard to protect workers’ rights—the same share as believe minimum wage and overtime laws are very important.

The Public Favors Candidates Who Support Paid Sick Days

- ⇒ **Candidate support for paid sick days legislation will pay dividends in voter support.** Nearly half of respondents (47%) would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports paid sick days for all workers, whereas only 14% would be less likely to support a pro-paid sick days candidate.
 - ✓ Candidates who support paid sick days are particularly appealing to women (59% more likely to vote for), younger people (54%), older baby boomers (55%), both white and African-American voters (58%), and unmarried parents (57%).
 - ✓ Democrats — both those who are staunch partisans and those with weaker Democratic affiliation—are especially likely to be energized by a pro-paid sick days candidate.

The Time is Now

The public has spoken and so can you. Visit www.paid sick days.org to learn more and get involved in federal and state campaigns to guarantee access to paid sick time.