

# Latinos and Their Families Need Paid Sick Days

**MARCH 2020**

Latinos have the highest labor force participation rate of any racial or ethnic group in the United States and are the fastest-growing segment of the workforce,<sup>1</sup> yet they are the least likely to have access to paid sick days. More than half of Latino workers—an estimated 15 million people—are unable to earn a single paid sick day, forcing them to choose between their health or the health of their families and their economic security when they get sick or need to care for a sick loved one.<sup>2</sup> Latinos are projected to make up more than one-quarter of the U.S. population by 2060,<sup>3</sup> meaning that what is good for Latinos is good for America's economy as a whole.

Racial and ethnic disparities in income and access to job benefits are a direct consequence of White supremacy in the United States and how our country systematically devalues people of color and their labor. While racism and sexism are often thought of as individual bias, history shows us that systemic discrimination in pay and exploitation of workers based on race, class, gender, and immigration status can be traced all the way back to this country's immigration policies, from the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Immigration Act of 1924, to the Bracero program of the 1940s-1960s, to the Trump administration's Muslim bans and the humanitarian crisis on our Southern border. Many of these policies stemmed from our horrific past of enslaving Africans and their descendants; and colonial attempts to destroy Native communities.

These historic and modern-day policies have wide-ranging impacts. The inability of most Latinos to earn paid sick days can have devastating consequences. As our nation faces an outbreak around coronavirus, it is past time for a national paid sick days standard that would protect the well-being of Latinos and all working families.

## **Too Many Latinos are Forced to Choose Between Their Jobs and Their Health or the Health of Their Families**

Despite high labor force participation, Latinos are the least likely of any racial or ethnic group to have access to paid sick days.

- More than half of Latinos—including 55% of men and 51% of women—are unable to earn a single paid sick day through their jobs.<sup>4</sup>

- Latinos disproportionately work in occupations in which employers do not provide paid sick days, including food preparation and serving; construction; building and grounds cleaning and maintenance; and production.<sup>5</sup> When Latinos in these occupations cannot earn paid sick days, they often have no choice but to go to work sick, which puts their health and the health of their co-workers, customers and the public at risk.<sup>6</sup>

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**“75 PERCENT OF LATINOS SUPPORT PAID SICK DAYS LEGISLATION.”**

— National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, 2010

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**Getting sick can have serious economic consequences for Latinos without paid sick days.**

- On average, Latinos are paid less and have less savings and less access to wealth than White workers. More than a quarter (27%) of Latino households have no net savings or assets to draw on during an unexpected loss of income.<sup>7</sup> And, as of 2018, more than one in six Latinos was living in poverty.<sup>8</sup> These conditions make it much more difficult to weather a loss of income due to illness or health needs.
- Just a few days of lost pay is equivalent to losing an entire month’s worth of groceries or health care expenses for a typical family without paid sick days.<sup>9</sup> Since Latino workers are paid less, on average, than workers overall, a loss of income can add up even more quickly.<sup>10</sup>
- Job loss due to illness is a serious threat to Latino families without paid sick days. Nationally, nearly one in four adults report having lost a job or being told they would lose a job for taking time off due to illness or to care for a sick family member.<sup>11</sup>

**Many Latino workers risk their health because they can’t earn paid sick days.**

- Latinos are less likely than their peers to report accessing preventive health services, such as screenings for breast, cervical and colorectal cancers, and have substantially higher mortality rates from diabetes, hypertension, and liver disease.<sup>12</sup> Workers without paid sick days are less likely to go to the doctor or access preventive care.<sup>13</sup>
- Lack of paid sick leave puts Latino workers and their families at a heightened risk of exposure to contagious illness. During the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, an estimated 1.2 million additional cases of flu-like illness among Latinos can be attributed to lack of sick leave.<sup>14</sup>

**When Latino parents and caregivers are denied paid sick days, their entire families suffer.**

- Latinos are more likely to have large families than other workers and often have greater caregiving responsibilities.<sup>15</sup> Six in 10 Latina mothers (60%) are key

breadwinners for their families.<sup>16</sup> These working parents need time to care for their children when they get sick and time to take them for checkups and immunizations to help keep them healthy.<sup>17</sup>

- More than one-quarter of Latinos live in multigenerational households,<sup>18</sup> and Latinos are also more likely to have adult caregiving responsibilities than other racial and ethnic groups. More than 20% of Latinos serve as caregivers to an adult family member or someone close to them, and on average, Latino caregivers spend about 40% more time providing care than White caregivers.<sup>19</sup> Latino family caregivers who are denied paid sick days face additional—and sometimes impossible—barriers to taking time away from work to accompany their loved ones to doctor’s appointments, administer medication or deal with a medical emergency.

**A national paid sick days law would enable millions of working people, including Latinos, to earn job-protected paid sick days.** Currently, 11 states (Arizona, California, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington), and 22 other jurisdictions have enacted paid sick days laws,<sup>20</sup> and a growing body of evidence shows that existing laws are working well.<sup>21</sup> Latino workers are often at the center of campaigns to pass these laws, joining advocates for workers, women and children, as well as public health experts, to win these important protections.

**The Healthy Families Act would set a national paid sick days standard.** For businesses with 15 or more employees, the Healthy Families Act would enable workers to earn up to seven job-protected paid sick days each year to recover from short-term illness, provide care for a sick family member, access preventive care or seek assistance related to domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking. Workers in businesses with fewer than 15 employees would earn up to seven job-protected unpaid sick days each year to be used for the same reasons, unless their employers chose to offer paid sick days. All people across the United States—Black, Brown, and White—should have a fair shot at getting the care they need or caring for a loved one.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020, January 22). *Table 3. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population by age, sex, and race*. Retrieved 3 March 2020, from <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat03.htm>; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. ((2020, January 22). *Table 4. Employment status of the Hispanic or Latino population by age and sex*. Retrieved 3 March 2020, from <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat04.htm>; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor Statistics. (2016, September 28). Hispanics will make up nearly 20 percent of the labor force in 2024. *The Economics Daily*. Retrieved 3 March 2020, from <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2016/hispanics-will-make-up-nearly-20-percent-of-the-labor-force-in-2024.htm>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2018, Sex by Age by Employment Status for the Population 16 Years and Over (Hispanic or Latino), Table C23002I*. Retrieved 3 March 2020, from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=C23002I&hidePreview=false&tid=ACSDT1Y2018.C23002I&vintage=2018>; Xia, J., Hayes, J., Gault, B., & Nguyen, H. (2016, February 17). *Paid Sick Days Access and Usage Rates Vary by Race/Ethnicity, Occupation, and Earnings*.

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Retrieved 3 March 2020, from Institute for Women's Policy Research website: <https://iwpr.org/publications/paid-sick-days-access-and-usage-rates-vary-by-raceethnicity-occupation-and-earnings/> (Unpublished calculation based on the number of Hispanic or Latino workers in the civilian labor force multiplied by the percent of employed Hispanic workers without paid sick days)

<sup>3</sup> Vespa, J., Medina, L., & Armstrong, D. M. (2020, February). *Demographic Turning Points for the United States: Population Projections for 2020 to 2060* (Table 3. Population by Race and Ethnicity: Projections 2030 to 2060). Retrieved 9 March 2020 from U.S. Census Bureau website: <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2020/demo/p25-1144.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> See note 2, Xia, J., Hayes, J., Gault, B., & Nguyen, H.

<sup>5</sup> Latinos comprise 17.5 percent of the employed civilian population but comprise 26 percent of food preparation and serving workers (19 percent paid sick days access rate); 35 percent of construction and extraction workers (30 percent paid sick days access rate); 37 percent of building and grounds cleaning and maintenance workers (34 percent paid sick days access rate); and 23 percent of production workers (52 percent paid sick days access rate). U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). *Table B24010: Sex by Occupation for the Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over (Hispanic or Latino, 2018)*. Retrieved 26 February 2020, from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=B24010I&hidePreview=false&tid=ACSDT1Y2018.B24010I&vintage=2018>; U.S. Census Bureau. *Table B24010: Sex by Occupation for the Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over, 2018*. Retrieved 26 February 2020, from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=B24010&hidePreview=false&tid=ACSDT1Y2018.B24010&vintage=2018> (Unpublished calculations). For rates of access to paid sick days by occupation, see note 2, Xia, J., Hayes, J., Gault, B., & Nguyen, H., Figure 7.

<sup>6</sup> National Partnership for Women & Families. (2020, February). *Paid Sick Days Improve Public Health*. Retrieved 3 March 2020, from <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/paid-sick-days/paid-sick-days-improve-our-public-health.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Corporation for Enterprise Development. (2016). *Assets & Opportunity Scorecard: Extreme Asset Poverty Rate*. Retrieved 3 March 2020, from <http://www.assetsandopportunity.org/extreme-asset-poverty-rate-4/#sco-tab-race-data>

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). *POV-01. Age and Sex of All People, Family Members and Unrelated Individuals Iterated by Income-to-Poverty Ratio and Race, 2018*. Retrieved 3 March 2020, from <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/cps-pov/pov-01.html>

<sup>9</sup> Gould, E., & Schieder, J. (2017, June 28). *Work sick or lose pay?: The high cost of being sick when you don't get paid sick days*. Retrieved 3 March 2020 from Economic Policy Institute website: <https://www.epi.org/publication/work-sick-or-lose-pay-the-high-cost-of-being-sick-when-you-dont-get-paid-sick-days/>

<sup>10</sup> Latinas who hold full-time, year-round jobs in the United States are typically paid just 54 cents for every dollar paid to White, non-Hispanic men while Latinos are paid just 65 cents for every dollar paid to White, non-Hispanic men. U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). *Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) Supplement: Table PINC-05: Work Experience in 2018 – People 15 Years Old and Over by Total Money Earnings in 2018, Age, Race, Hispanic Origin, and Sex*. Retrieved 3 March 2020, from <http://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/cps-pinc/pinc-05.html> (Unpublished calculation based on the median annual wages of White, non-Hispanic men, Latinas and Latinos who worked full time, year-round in 2018)

<sup>11</sup> Smith, T. W., & Kim, J. (2010, June). *Paid Sick Days: Attitudes and Experiences* (p. 6). Public Welfare Foundation and National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago Publication. Retrieved 3 March 2020, from <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/paid-sick-days-attitudes-and-experiences.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Dominguez, K., Penman-Aguilar, A., Chang, M.-H., Moonesinghe, R., Castellanos, T., Rodriguez-Lainz, A., & Schieber, R. (2015, May 8). Vital Signs: Leading Causes of Death, Prevalence of Diseases and Risk Factors, and Use of Health Services Among Hispanics in the United States — 2009–2013. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly*, 64(17), 469-478. Retrieved 3 March 2020, from [http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6417a5.htm?s\\_cid=mm6417a5\\_w](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6417a5.htm?s_cid=mm6417a5_w)

<sup>13</sup> Peipins, L. A., Soman, A., Berkowitz, Z., & White, M. C. (2012, July 12). The lack of paid sick leave as a barrier to cancer screening and medical care-seeking: results from the National Health Interview Survey. *BMC Public Health*, 12(520). Retrieved 3 March 2020, from <http://www.biomedcentral.com/content/pdf/1471-2458-12-520.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Kumar, S., Crouse Quinn, S., Kim, K. H., Daniel, L. H., & Freimuth, V. S. (2012, January). The Impact of Workplace Policies and Other Social Factors on Self-Reported Influenza-Like Illness Incidence During the 2009 H1N1 Pandemic. *American Journal of Public Health*, 102(1), 134-140. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2011.300307

<sup>15</sup> Livingston, G. (2015, May 7). *Childlessness Falls, Family Size Grows Among Highly Educated Women*. Pew Research Center Publication. Retrieved 3 March 2020, from Pew Research Center website: <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/05/07/family-size-among-mothers/>; Glynn, S. J., & Farrell, J. (2012, November 20). *Latinos Least Likely to Have Paid Leave or Workplace Flexibility*. Retrieved 3 March 2020, from Center for American Progress website: <http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/GlynnLatinosPaidLeave1.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Glynn, S. J. (2019, May 10). *Breadwinning Mothers Continue To Be the U.S. Norm*. Retrieved 3 March 2020, from Center for American Progress website: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2019/05/10/469739/breadwinning-mothers-continue-u-s-norm/> (Breadwinner mothers are defined as single mothers who head a household or married mothers who earn at least 25 percent of a household's joint income)

<sup>17</sup> National Partnership for Women & Families. (2019, September). *Healthy Kids, Healthy Schools: The Case for a National Paid Sick Days Standard*. Retrieved 3 March 2020, from <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/healthy-kids-healthy-schools-the-case-for-paid-sick-days.pdf>

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<sup>18</sup> Cohn, D., & Passel, J. S. (2018, April 5). *A record 64 million Americans live in multigenerational households*. Retrieved 3 March 2020 from Pew Research Center website: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/05/a-record-64-million-americans-live-in-multigenerational-households/>

<sup>19</sup> National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP Public Policy Institute. (2015, June). *Caregiving in the U.S. 2015*. Retrieved 3 March 2020, from [http://www.caregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2015\\_CaregivingintheUS\\_Final-Report-June-4\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.caregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2015_CaregivingintheUS_Final-Report-June-4_WEB.pdf) (Latino caregivers spend an average of 31.2 hours per week providing care, compared to 21.9 hours on average for White caregivers.)

<sup>20</sup> National Partnership for Women & Families. (2019, May). *Current Paid Sick Days Laws*. Retrieved 3 March 2020, from <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/current-paid-sick-days-laws.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> National Partnership for Women & Families. (2020, February). *Paid Sick Days Are Good for Business*. Retrieved 3 March 2020, from: <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/paid-sick-days/paid-sick-days-good-for-business-and-workers.pdf>