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# Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ Over Specific Policies

*Personal experiences with leave vary sharply by income*

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## Terminology

Throughout this report, when referring to attitudes toward paid leave policies, the terms “family and medical leave” and “taking time off from work for family or medical reasons” refer to taking time off following the birth or adoption of one’s child, to care for a family member with a serious health condition, or to deal with one’s own serious health condition. In order to distinguish between the experiences of those who took time off from work (or who needed or wanted to take time off but weren’t able to do so), the term “parental leave” refers specifically to time taken off from work following the birth or adoption of one’s child; “family leave” refers to taking at least five days off from work to care for a family member with a serious health condition; and “medical leave” refers to taking at least five days off from work to deal with one’s own serious health condition.

“Leave takers” refers to those who were employed in the past two years and took time off from work during this time following the birth or adoption of their child, to care for a family member with a serious health condition, or to deal with their own serious health condition. “Paid leave” refers specifically to paid leave for parental, family or medical reasons.

References to whites and blacks include only those who are non-Hispanic and identify as only one race. Hispanics are of any race.

References to college graduates or people with a college degree comprise those with a bachelor’s degree or more. “Some college” refers to those with a two-year degree or those who attended college but did not obtain a degree. “High school” refers to those who have attained a high school diploma or its equivalent, such as a General Education Development (GED) certificate.

## Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ Over Specific Policies

*Personal experiences with leave vary sharply by income*

A growing share of working parents and an aging population have put pressure on more American workers as they balance family caregiving responsibilities and work obligations. Amid these changes, the issue of paid family and medical leave has captured the attention of policymakers and advocates [across the political and ideological spectrum](#).

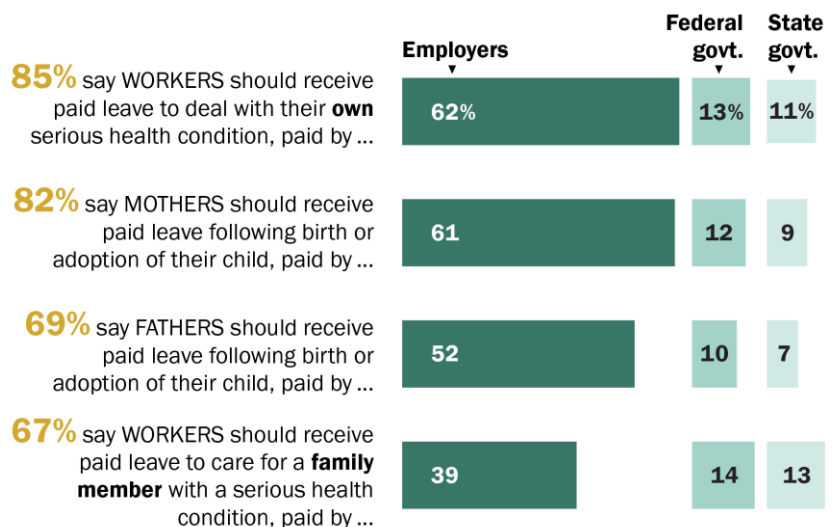
A new study conducted by Pew Research Center finds that Americans largely support paid leave, and most supporters say employers, rather than the federal or state government, should cover the costs. Still, the public is sharply divided over

whether the government should require employers to provide this benefit or let employers decide for themselves, and relatively few see expanding paid leave as a top policy priority.

While majorities of adults express support for paid leave for mothers and fathers after the birth or adoption of their child, as well as for workers who need to care for a family member with a serious health condition or to deal with their own medical issues, support is greater in some cases than in others. About eight-in-ten Americans (82%) say mothers should have paid maternity leave, while fewer (69%) support paid paternity leave. And those who favor paid maternity *and* paternity leave say mothers should receive considerably more time off than fathers (a median of 8.6 weeks off for mothers vs. 4.3 weeks for fathers).

### Most Americans say workers should receive paid family and medical leave

*% saying each group should receive paid leave from ...*



Note: Net support for paid leave calculated before rounding. Percent saying workers should be able to take unpaid leave or should not be able to take leave and share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016.

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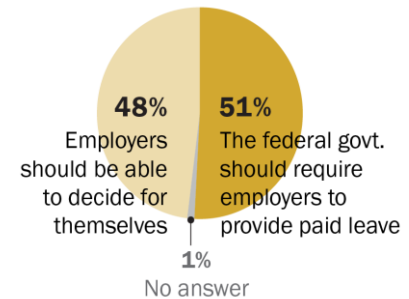
There is also broader support for paid leave for workers dealing with their own serious health condition (85% say workers should be paid in these situations) than there is for those caring for a family member who is seriously ill (67% favor paid leave for these workers).

The wide-ranging study of public attitudes about paid family and medical leave also included nearly 6,000 interviews with Americans who have recently taken leave (or were unable to take leave when they needed or wanted to do so), in order to reflect direct personal experiences as well as policy views. The survey finds that 64% of those who took leave in the past two years say they received at least some pay during their time off. A large majority of them (79%) say that some or part of that pay came from vacation days, sick leave or paid time off (PTO) they had accrued prior to their leave. Only 20% of those who got paid – or 13% of all “leave takers” – say they had access to family and medical leave benefits paid by their employer.

The study reveals a sharp income divide in the way workers navigate these situations. Middle- and higher-income leave takers are much more likely than their lower-income counterparts to have access to paid time off – whether through a specific employer-provided paid leave benefit or by using accrued time off. Six-in-ten leave takers with household incomes between \$30,000 and \$74,999, and an even higher share (74%) of those with incomes of \$75,000 or more, say they received at least some pay when they took time off from work for family or medical reasons. In contrast, only 37% of leave takers with annual household incomes under \$30,000 say they received pay. Many lower-income leave takers say they faced difficult financial tradeoffs during their time away

## No consensus on federal government mandate

% saying ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016.  
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### Note on terminology:

Throughout this report, when referring to attitudes toward paid leave policies, the terms “family and medical leave” or leave from work for “family or medical reasons” refer to time off following the birth or adoption of one’s child, to care for a family member with a serious health condition, or to deal with one’s serious health condition.

In order to distinguish between the experiences of those who took time off from work (or who needed or wanted to take time off but were unable to do so) under different circumstances, the term “parental leave” refers to taking time off from work following the birth or adoption of a child; “family leave” refers to taking at least five days off from work to care for a family member with a serious health condition; and “medical leave” refers to taking at least five days off from work to deal with one’s own serious health condition.

from work, including 48% among those who took unpaid or partially paid parental leave who say they went on public assistance in order to cover lost wages or salary.

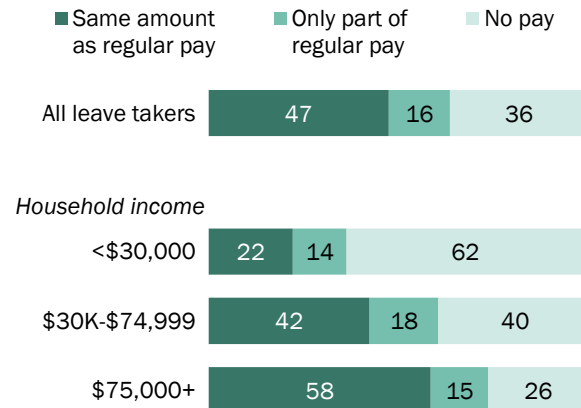
The need for family and medical leave – whether paid or unpaid – is broadly felt across the United States. Roughly six-in-ten Americans (62%) say they have taken or are very likely to take time off from work for family or medical reasons at some point. Among adults who have been employed in the past two years, about a quarter (27%) say that they took time off during this period following the birth or adoption of their child, to care for a family member with a serious health condition, or to deal with their own serious health condition. In addition, 16% of Americans who were employed in the past two years report that there was a time during this period when they needed or wanted to take time off from work but were unable to do so.

Those who weren't able to take leave when they needed or wanted to tend to be among the nation's lower-income workers. Among adults employed in the past two years with annual household incomes under \$30,000, three-in-ten say they were unable to take leave when they needed or wanted to at some point in the past two years. By comparison, only 14% of those with incomes of \$30,000 or more fall into this category. Across income groups, those who didn't take time off when they needed or wanted to cite financial concerns more than any other reason when asked why they didn't take time off from work when they needed or wanted to; about seven-in-ten (72%) say they couldn't afford to lose wages or salary. This is also the reason cited most often by those who were able to take some time off but wish they had taken more.

These findings are based on two nationally representative online surveys conducted by Pew Research Center with support from [Pivotal Ventures](#): one a survey of 2,029 randomly selected U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016, and the other a survey of 5,934 randomly selected U.S.

### Leave takers with lower incomes are the least likely to say they received at least some pay

*% of leave takers who say they received \_\_\_ when they took time off from work for parental, family or medical reasons*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. "Leave takers" refers to those who have taken time off for parental, family or medical reasons in the past two years. Source: Survey of U.S. adults who took or needed/wanted to take leave conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 14, 2016. "Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ Over Specific Policies"

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adults ages 18 to 70 who have taken – or who needed or wanted but were unable to take – parental, family or medical leave in the past two years, conducted Nov.17-Dec.14, 2016.<sup>1</sup>

The study also finds that adults who are employed or looking for work value flexibility as much as they value having paid family or medical leave. When asked what benefits or work arrangements help them most or would help most personally, about as many cite being able to choose when they work their hours (28%) as cite having paid family or medical leave (27%); about one-in-five (22%) say having flexibility to work from home would help them the most.

However, among those who have taken leave in the past two years or have needed or wanted to do so, having paid leave for family or medical reasons is cited as being the most helpful more than any other benefits or work arrangements. About four-in-ten (38%) in this group point to paid family or medical leave, while the second-most cited item – having flexibility to choose their schedule – is seen as most helpful by 24% of those who have taken leave or needed or wanted to do so in recent years.

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<sup>1</sup> For more details about how the surveys were conducted, see the [Methodology](#) section of the report.



## The changing demographic landscape in the U.S.

The long-term rise in U.S. women's [labor force participation](#), [particularly among mothers](#), has led to an increasing share of infants living in homes where all parents are working. In 2016, 50% of children younger than 1 year of age were living in such an arrangement – 40% with two working parents and 10% with a single working parent. Thirty years earlier, this share was 39%; and in 1976, just 20% of infants were living in a home where all parents were working.

Meanwhile, as the elderly population in the U.S. continues to grow, the number of people involved in informal caregiving of older adults is expected to rise. About 15% of the population was ages 65 or older in 2015, and [projections](#) suggest that by 2050 about one-in-five (22%) Americans will fall into this category. [These older people are more likely to be employed than in the past](#); in 2016 almost one-in-five people ages 65 or older were still working, [up from 12% in 1980](#), according to Pew Research Center analysis of Current Population Survey data.

In recent years, 25 million working people reported that they [provided unpaid care](#) to someone with an aging-related condition in the previous three to four months – 16% of the employed civilian population in the U.S., according to Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) American Time Use Survey data. And for some people family caregiving is a multigenerational endeavor. A 2015 [Pew Research Center survey](#) found that about half (47%) of adults ages 40 to 59 had at least one parent ages 65 or older, and were also either raising a child younger than 18, or had given financial support to an adult child in the past year.

More than ever, caregiving responsibilities extend to both women and men. While in 1965 married fathers living with their children spent about [2.5 hours a week on child care](#), that number rose to seven hours a week by 2015. In comparison, moms spent about 15 hours a week caring for their child in 2015. And when it comes to providing care for older adults, men and women are similarly likely to have done so in the prior three to four months. Among the employed civilian population, about 15% of men say as much, as do 18% of women, according to the BLS.

## Most supporters of paid leave say pay should come from employers rather than from state or federal government

About three-quarters of Americans who support paid leave for mothers (74%) or fathers (76%) following the birth or adoption of a child say pay for time off should come from employers, and a similar share (72%) of those who favor paid medical leave for workers with a serious health condition say the same. When it comes to who should cover the cost of paid leave for workers when they take time off to care for a family member with a serious health condition, a smaller majority (59%) of paid-leave supporters say pay should come from employers, while about two-in-ten say it should come from federal (22%) or state (20%) government.

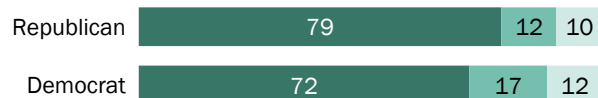
The majority of paid-leave supporters across the political spectrum are more likely to look to employers rather than to government to cover the costs of providing this benefit, although Democrats express more support for government-paid family and medical leave than do Republicans. For example, about a third (32%) of Democrats who say workers should have paid leave from work to deal with their own serious health condition say pay should come from either the federal or state government, compared with 21% of Republican supporters of paid medical leave. And while 45% of Democrats who support paid leave for workers who take time off to care for a seriously ill family member say the government should pay for this benefit, 31% of Republicans who support paid leave for this reason say the same. More modest but still

### Across party lines, most supporters of paid leave say pay should come from employers

Among those who support paid leave in each situation, % saying pay should come from ...

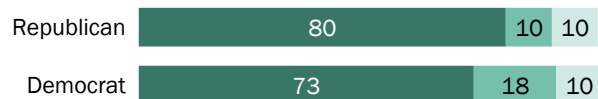
#### Mothers, following birth or adoption

■ Employers ■ Federal government ■ State government



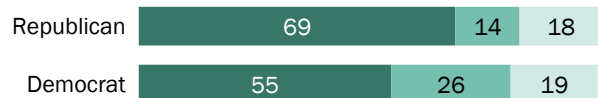
#### Fathers, following birth or adoption

■ Employers ■ Federal government ■ State government



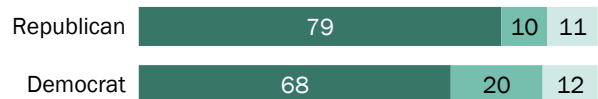
#### Workers, to care for a family member with a serious health condition

■ Employers ■ Federal government ■ State government



#### Workers, to deal with their own serious health condition

■ Employers ■ Federal government ■ State government



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016. "Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ Over Specific Policies"

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significant partisan differences are also evident on views of who should pay when mothers and fathers take leave.

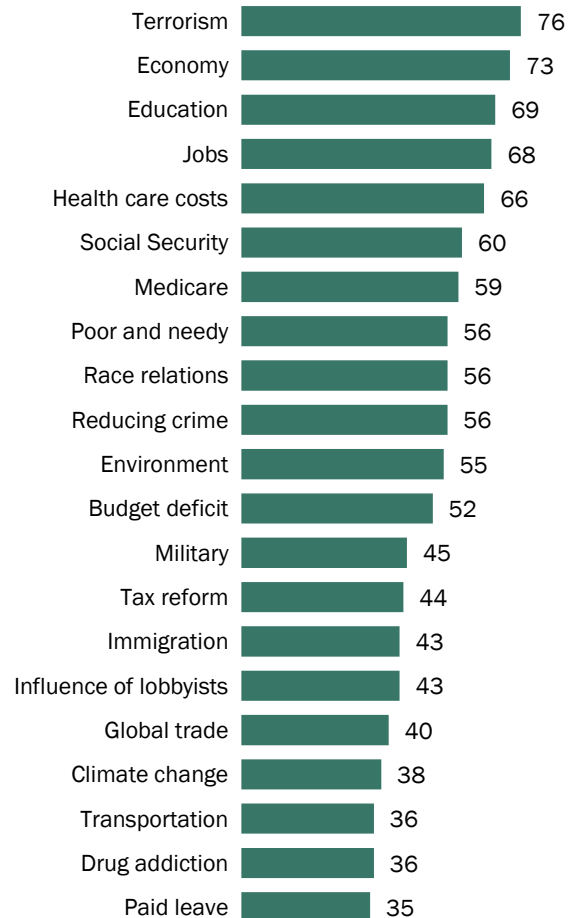
Overall, Democrats are more supportive of paid leave than are Republicans and independents, though at least three-quarters of each group say mothers should have access to paid maternity leave and that workers should be able to take paid leave to deal with their own serious health condition. Democrats, Republicans and independents are less supportive of paid leave for fathers and for workers who need to care for a family member with a serious health condition than they are of paid maternity and medical leave. Still, most Democrats and independents – and just over half of Republicans – express support for paid leave in each of these two situations.

Women and young adults also generally express more support for paid leave than do men and those ages 30 and older. For example, 82% of adults ages 18 to 29 say fathers should be able to take paid leave following the birth or adoption of their child, compared with 76% of those ages 30 to 49, 61% of those 50 to 64, and 55% of adults 65 and older.

Despite the broad support for paid leave, a Pew Research Center [survey](#) conducted Jan. 4-9, 2017, about the public's policy priorities for President Donald Trump and Congress in the coming year finds that relatively few Americans (35%) see expanding access to paid family and medical leave as a top policy priority. In fact, expanding access to paid family and medical leave ranks at the bottom of a list of 21 policy items, along with improving transportation and dealing with drug addiction.

### Public's policy priorities for 2017

*% rating each a top priority for Trump and Congress*



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 4-9, 2017.

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## Most see at least some benefits for employers that provide paid leave

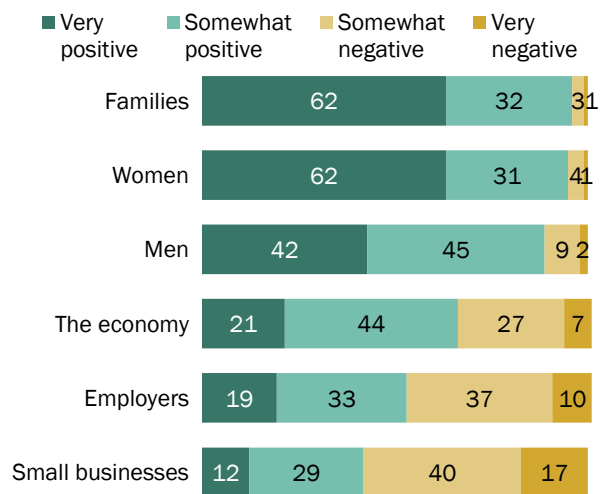
While Americans tend to favor employer-paid over government-paid leave for family or medical reasons, there is no consensus when it comes to a federal government mandate: About as many say the government should require employers to provide paid leave (51%) as say employers should be able to decide for themselves (48%). Opposition to a federal mandate is highest among those who oppose paid leave; among those who support paid family or medical leave, including those who say employers should pay, more say the government should require employers to offer this benefit than say it should be the employers' decision.

Still, regardless of whether they support a federal government mandate, most Americans think employers stand to benefit from providing paid family and medical leave. About three-quarters (74%) of the public says employers that provide paid leave are more likely than those that don't to attract and keep good workers; 78% of those who favor a government mandate and 70% of those who say employers should decide for themselves share this view.

Assessments of the overall impact of paid family and medical leave on employers are more mixed: 53% say universal access to paid leave would have a positive impact on employers, while 46% say the overall impact would be negative. When asked specifically about the impact on small businesses, the balance of opinion is decidedly negative. Roughly six-in-ten Americans (58%) say that universal access to paid leave would have a very or somewhat negative impact on small businesses, while 41% think the impact would be generally positive. By comparison, there is significant consensus around the potential benefits to women and families, with about six-in-ten Americans expecting "very positive" results. Overall, about two-thirds or more say the impact of universal paid leave on families (94%), women (93%), men (88%) and the

### Most see universal paid leave as good for families but bad for small businesses

*% saying that, if all Americans had access to paid leave for family or medical reasons, the impact on \_\_\_\_\_ would be ...*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. "Employers" and "small businesses" were each asked of a random half of the sample.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016. "Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ Over Specific Policies"

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economy (65%) would be at least somewhat positive.

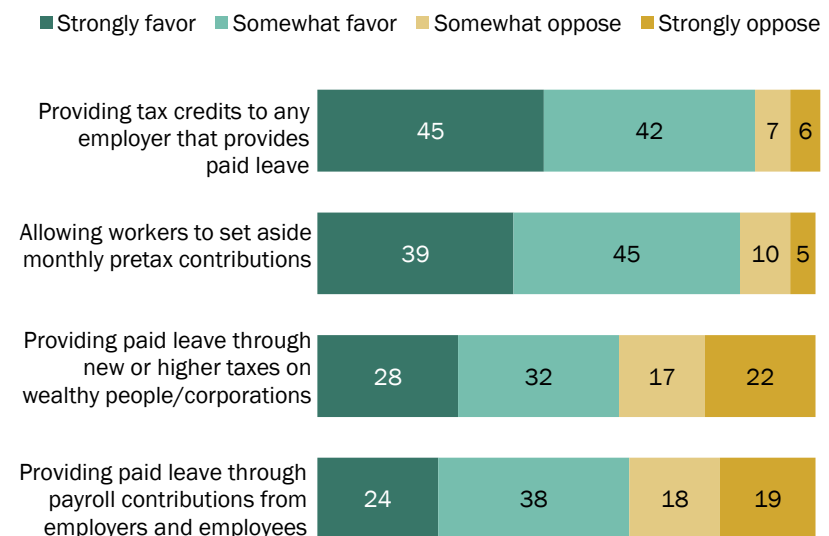
The public also makes a distinction between employers in general and small businesses in assessments of the trade-offs they may need to make in order to provide paid family and medical leave. About six-in-ten (59%) say most employers that provide paid leave can afford to do so without reducing salaries or other benefits. In contrast, a majority (69%) say most small businesses that offer paid leave have to cut back on salaries and other benefits in order to do so.

There's no public consensus on the best policy approach for providing paid family and medical leave. In general, the public has a more positive view of policies that incentivize employers or employees rather than those that create a new government fund to finance and administer the benefit.

Some 45% of Americans say they would strongly favor the government providing tax credits to any employer that provides paid leave. And roughly four-in-ten (39%) express strong support for allowing workers to set aside monthly pretax contributions into a personal account that can be withdrawn if they need to take leave from work.

### Of four policies tested, proposals in which paid leave benefits are provided directly from the government receive the least support

*% saying they \_\_\_ the following proposals for the government to deal with employees who need to take leave from work for family or medical reasons*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016.

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There is less support for a program where the government would provide paid leave to any worker who needs it using funding from new or higher taxes on wealthy people or corporations – 28% strongly favor this approach. Similarly, 24% strongly favor the establishment of a government fund for all employers and employees to pay into through payroll contributions that would provide paid leave to any worker who needed it.

Support for new government programs that would provide paid family and medical leave to all workers that need it is far stronger among Democrats than among Republicans or independents. Some 44% of Democrats say they would strongly support a government paid leave program funded by new or higher taxes on wealthy people or corporations, compared with about a quarter (24%) of independents and just 11% of Republicans. And while about a third (34%) of Democrats express strong support for a government paid leave fund that all employers and employees would pay into through payroll contributions, smaller shares of independents (20%) and of Republicans (15%) say they would strongly favor this approach.

Democrats are also more likely than Republicans or independents to say they would strongly support the government providing tax credits to employers that provide paid family and medical leave: About half (53%) of Democrats express strong support for this approach, compared with about four-in-ten Republicans (37%) and independents (41%).

The vast majority of Americans (85%) say that, if the government were to provide paid family and medical leave, the benefit should be available to all workers, regardless of their income, rather than being more narrowly targeted to those with low incomes. When it comes to paid parental leave specifically, about three-quarters (73%) believe that if the government were to provide this benefit, it should be available to both mothers and fathers.

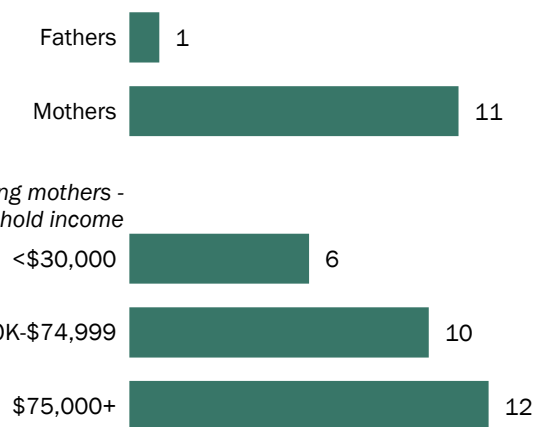
### About seven-in-ten fathers who take paternity leave return to work within two weeks

Most Americans (63%) believe that mothers generally want to take more time off from work than fathers after the birth or adoption of their child, and more say employers put greater pressure on fathers to return to work quickly (49%) than say mothers face more pressure (18%) or that both face about the same amount of pressure (33%) from employers.

The survey of adults who took leave or who needed or wanted to take leave but weren't

### Length of parental leave varies considerably by gender and income

*Median length of leave for those who have taken time off from work in the past two years following the birth or adoption of their child, in weeks*



Source: Survey of U.S. adults who took or needed/wanted to take leave conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 14, 2016.

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able to do so finds that among fathers who took at least some time off from work following the birth or adoption of their child in the past two years, the median length of leave was one week; about seven-in-ten (72%) say they took two weeks or less off from work. In contrast, the median length of maternity leave was 11 weeks. Among mothers with household incomes under \$30,000, however, the median length of leave was six weeks, compared with 10 weeks for those with incomes between \$30,000 and \$74,999 and 12 weeks for mothers with household incomes of \$75,000 or more.

For the most part, mothers and fathers who took parental leave in the past two years say taking time off did not have much of an impact – either positive or negative – on their job or career; 60% say this is the case. Still, women are about twice as likely as men to say taking time off following the birth or adoption of their child had a negative impact (25% vs. 13%, respectively).

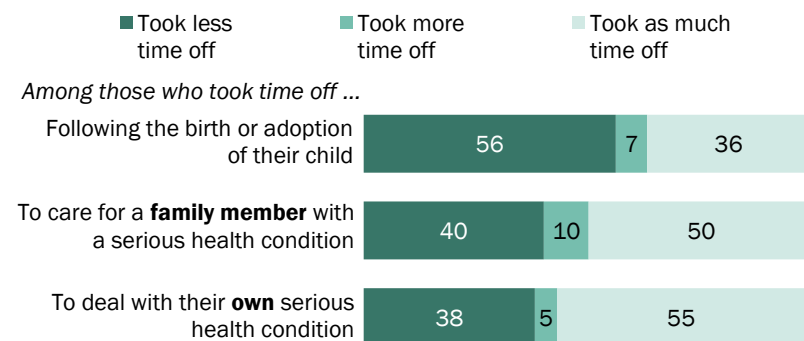
Just over half (56%) of parental-leave takers say they took less time off from work following the birth or adoption of their child than they needed or wanted to, while 7% say they took more time off and 36% say they took about as much time off as they needed or wanted to. Some 59% of fathers and 53% of mothers say they wish they had taken more time off from work than they did following the birth or adoption of their child.

Smaller but substantial shares of those who took time off from work to care for a family member with a serious health condition or to deal with their own health issue also say they took less time off from work than they needed or wanted to take (40% and 38%, respectively).

Financial concerns top the list of reasons why those who took leave for parental, family or medical reasons say they took less time off than they needed or wanted to. About seven-in-ten (69%) leave

### Just over half of parental-leave takers say they took less time off from work than they needed or wanted to

% of leave takers saying they \_\_\_ than they needed or wanted to



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. "Leave takers" refers to those who have taken time off for parental, family or medical reasons in the past two years. Source: Survey of U.S. adults who took or needed/wanted to take leave conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 14, 2016.

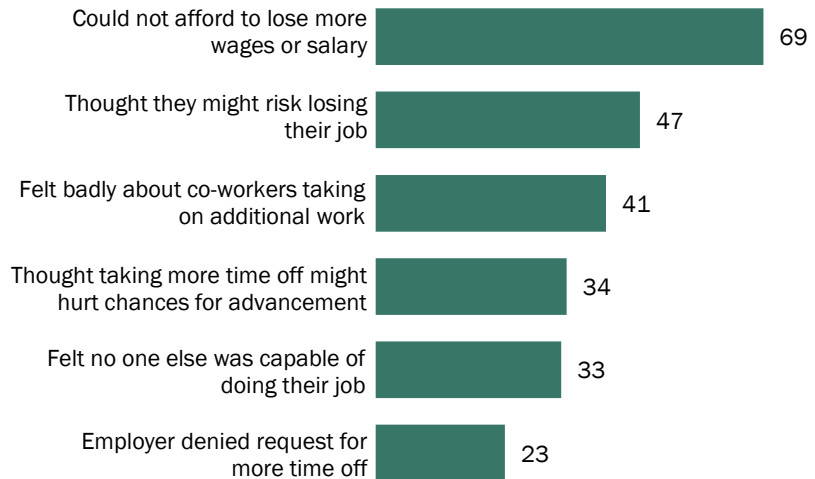
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takers who returned to work more quickly than they would have liked to say they couldn't afford to lose more wages or salary. About half (47%) say they thought they might risk losing their job, while 41% say they felt badly about co-workers taking on additional work. About a third thought taking more time off might hurt their chances for job advancement (34%) or felt that no one else was capable of doing their job (33%). And about a quarter (23%) of those who took less time off than they had needed or wanted to say their employer denied their request for more time off.

### Most who took less time off than they needed or wanted to cite loss of wages or salary as a reason

*% of leave takers who took less time off than they needed or wanted to saying each is a reason why this happened*



Note: "Leave takers" refers to those who have taken time off for parental, family or medical reasons in the past two years.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who took or needed/wanted to take leave conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 14, 2016.

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### Many leave takers take on debt or use savings in order to cover lost wages

Most Americans who took time off from work in the past two years for parental, family or medical reasons report that they received at least some pay during this time, with about half (47%) saying they received full pay; 16% say they received only some of their regular pay and 36% say they received no pay at all. Lower-income leave takers, as well as those without a bachelor's degree, are particularly likely to say they received only some or no pay. For example, among leave takers with household incomes of \$75,000 or more, roughly six-in-ten (58%) say they received the same amount as their regular pay, while 15% received partial pay and about a quarter (26%) were not paid. In contrast, just 22% of those with incomes under \$30,000 report that they received full pay, while 14% received only some of their regular pay and a majority (62%) received no pay during their time off from work.

Leave takers who did not receive their full wages or salary when they took parental, family or medical leave say they had to make sacrifices, such as cutting back on spending, dipping into



savings, or cutting their leave short, to compensate for the loss of income. Some, particularly those with lower incomes, took more consequential measures, such as taking on debt, putting off paying their bills, and going on public assistance.

Roughly six-in-ten (57%) parental-leave takers with household incomes under \$30,000 who did not receive their full pay when they took time off from work following the birth or adoption of their child say they took on debt to deal with the loss of wages or salary; about half say they went on public assistance (48%) or put off paying their bills (46%).

## Views of gender and caregiving are related to support for paid leave for new fathers

While most Americans are supportive of mothers and fathers taking leave from work – and receiving pay – following the birth or adoption of a child, many see mothers, and women in general, as more apt caregivers. The survey finds that a majority (71%) of Americans think it’s important for new babies to have equal time to bond with their mothers and their fathers, while about a quarter (27%) think it’s more important to bond with their mothers and just 2% say it’s more important for them to bond with their fathers. But when it comes to caring for a new baby, more say that, aside from breast-feeding, mothers do a better job than say both mothers and fathers do about an equally good job (53% vs. 45%); only 1% say fathers do a better job than mothers in caring for a new baby.

## Many lower-income parental-leave takers say they took on debt, went on public assistance or put off paying bills to cover lost wages or salary

*% of those who received only some pay or no pay when they took parental leave saying they did each of the following to cover lost wages or salary*

	All parental-leave takers %	— Household income —		
		<\$30K %	\$30K- \$74,999 %	\$75K+ %
Cut back on spending	75	78	81	69
Used savings set aside for this situation	54	52	50	57
Used savings set aside for something else	43	43	47	41
Took on debt	41	57	38	36
Cut their leave time short	38	37	33	41
Put off paying their bills	27	46	35	13
Received money from family or friends that they weren’t expected to pay back	23	44	19	18
Went on public assistance	21	48	28	5
Borrowed money from family or friends	19	45	17	11

Note: “Parental-leave takers” refers to those who have taken time off following the birth or adoption of their child in the past two years.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who took or needed/wanted to take leave conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 14, 2016.

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The public offers more gender-balanced views when asked who would do a better job caring for a family member with serious health condition – 59% say men and women would do an equally good job. Still, four-in-ten say women would do a better job in this situation (1% say men would).

Older adults and Republicans – especially those who describe their political views as conservative – are particularly likely to say that it’s more important for new babies to have more time to bond with their mothers than with their fathers and that mothers do a better job caring for a new baby.

Attitudes about gender roles and caregiving are linked, at least in part, to views about the impact of paid leave on men, as well as to support for paid paternity leave. Generally, adults with more gender-balanced views about mothers and fathers as caregivers for new babies are far more supportive of paid paternity leave than are those who say mothers are better caregivers. Those with more gender-balanced views are also more likely to say universal paid leave would have a *very* positive impact on men.

For example, among those who say mothers and fathers do about an equally good job caring for a new baby, 78% express support for paid paternity leave and half say universal paid leave would have a very positive impact on men. By comparison, among adults who say mothers do a better job, these shares are 61% and 37%, respectively. Significant differences remain when controlling for factors such as gender, age and political ideology, which are associated with support of paid leave for fathers and the impact of universal paid leave on men in general as well as with attitudes about gender and caregiving.

The remainder of this report examines in greater detail the public’s views about paid leave as well as the experiences of workers who have taken parental, family or medical leave in the past two years. Chapters 1-4 focus on findings from the survey of the general public. [Chapter 1](#) looks at the public’s evaluations of different paid leave policies, including who Americans think should be covered as well as who should pay. [Chapter 2](#) explores assessments of the impact of paid leave on families, the economy, employers and employees. [Chapter 3](#) looks at workers’ assessments of the benefits they receive from their employers and how family and medical leave fits in to the broader benefits landscape. [Chapter 4](#) explores views of gender and caregiving.

[Chapter 5](#) examines the experiences of those who took leave and those who weren’t able to take leave when they needed or wanted to do so. It looks at whether or not those who were able to take leave received any pay during this time and how they coped with the loss of income if they did not receive full pay. It also explores reasons why some people return to work sooner than they wish to after taking parental, family or medical leave, and why some aren’t able to take time off from work at all when they need or want to do so. Finally, [Chapter 6](#) provides some quotes from eight focus

groups of recent parental- and family-leave takers to illustrate the diverse and complex experiences of leave takers.

## Other key findings

- Americans express some concern that paid family and medical leave benefits can be abused. Some 55% think it is at least somewhat common for workers who have access to this benefit to abuse it by taking time off from work when they don't need to; 44% say this isn't particularly common.
- Most workers are at least somewhat satisfied with the benefits their employer provides (69%) and believe their employer cares a great deal or a fair amount about the personal well-being of their employees (66%). These assessments vary considerably by income, however; only about half of workers with household incomes under \$30,000 express some satisfaction with their benefits and say their employer cares about their employees' well-being, compared with majorities of those with higher incomes.
- Three-in-ten leave takers say it was difficult for them to learn about what leave benefits, if any, were available to them when they needed to take time off from work for parental, family or medical reasons, and this is particularly the case among those with a high school diploma or less and with lower incomes. Leave takers with lower incomes and those without a bachelor's degree are also less likely to say their supervisor and co-workers were very supportive when they took leave from work.
- Among those who took time off from work to care for a family member with a serious health condition in the past two years, women (65%) are far more likely than men (44%) to say they were the primary caregiver. Family-leave takers ages 65 and older were more likely than those who are younger to say they were caring for their spouse or partner during this time, while those ages 50 to 64 were particularly likely to be caring for one of their parents.

## 1. Support for paid leave policies

The vast majority of Americans think that mothers (96%) and fathers (85%) should be able to take leave from work following the birth or adoption of a child, and at least nine-in-ten say workers should be able to take leave from work to care for a family member with a serious health condition (94%) or to deal with their own serious condition (97%). But views about whether workers should receive pay while they are on leave for these reasons vary.

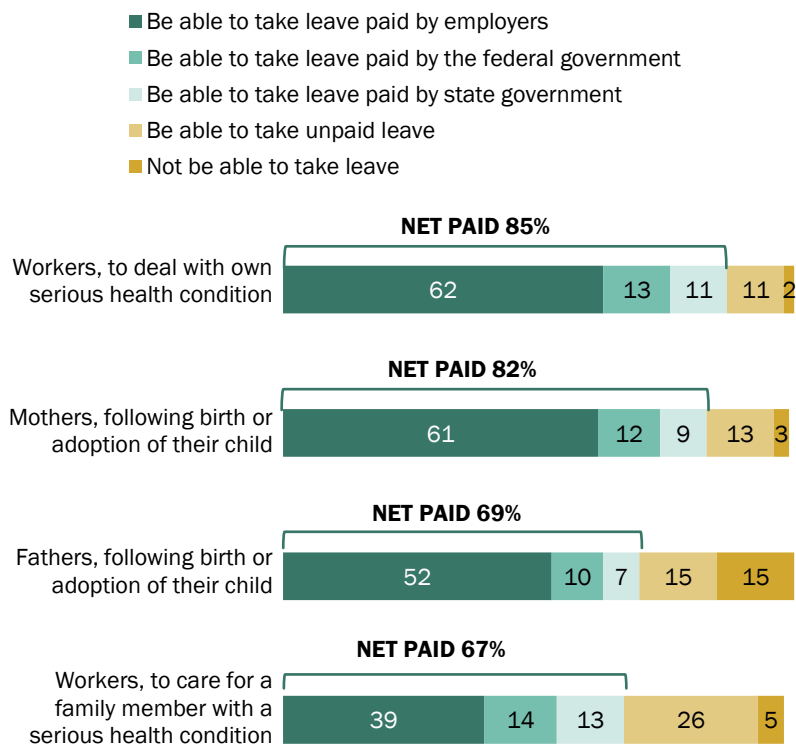
While majorities say workers should be paid for family and medical leave, support for paid leave is higher for workers who are dealing with their own health condition and for mothers who have just had or adopted a child. Smaller shares – though still majorities – of Americans say

that workers who are caring for an ill family member should be paid during their time away or that fathers should be paid for time off following the birth or adoption of a child. In fact, 15% of the public says fathers should not be able to take leave to care for a new baby or adopted child, regardless of whether or not they get paid.

For the most part, those who are in favor of paid family and medical leave say the pay should come from employers rather than from the federal or state governments. But Americans are divided when it comes to government mandates on employer-paid family and medical leave: 51% say the

### Most Americans say workers should receive paid family and medical leave

*% saying people in each situation should ...*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. NETs calculated before rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016.

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federal government should require employers to pay their employees when they take leave from work for family or medical reasons, and a similar share (48%) say employers should be able to decide for themselves.

Overall, about three-quarters of Americans say that if the government or employers were to provide paid leave following the birth or adoption of a child, it should be available to both mothers and fathers. Moreover, 85% say that if the government were to provide paid leave for family and medical reasons, it should be available to all workers regardless of income.

When asked about specific proposals for dealing with employees who need to take leave from work for family or medical reasons, more than four-in-ten (45%) say they would strongly favor the government providing tax credits to any employer that offers paid leave and 39% would strongly favor the government allowing workers to set aside monthly pretax contributions into a personal account that can be withdrawn if they need to take leave from work. Smaller shares say they would strongly favor a government paid leave program funded through higher taxes on wealthy people or corporations (28%) or a government fund that all employers and employees would pay into through payroll contributions to provide paid leave to any worker who needed it (24%).

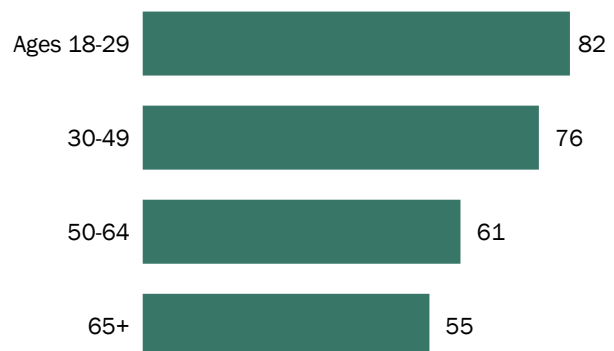
## Most Americans support paid leave following birth or adoption, to care for a family member with a serious illness or to deal with own illness

Americans are largely supportive of paid leave for mothers and fathers following the birth or adoption of a child, but more say mothers should receive pay when they take leave from work during this time than say fathers should (82% vs. 69%). Americans are also more supportive of workers receiving pay when they take leave from work to deal with their own serious health condition (85%) than when they take leave to care for a seriously ill family member (67%).

Support for paid leave in each of these situations is widespread across demographic groups but, in each case, women are somewhat more likely than men to say people should receive pay when they take leave from work.

### Significant age divides on views of paid paternity leave

*% saying fathers should receive paid leave following the birth or adoption of their child*



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016. "Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ Over Specific Policies"

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For example, while about three-quarters (73%) of women say fathers should receive pay when they take leave following the birth or adoption of their child, about two-thirds (65%) of men share this view. Similarly, seven-in-ten women say workers should have paid leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition, compared with 63% of men.

Young adults are also generally more supportive of paid leave than older adults, and the difference is particularly pronounced when it comes to paid leave for fathers. About eight-in-ten adults ages 18 to 29 (82%) say fathers should be able to take leave following the birth or adoption of a child and receive pay during that time, compared with 76% of those ages 30 to 49, 61% of those 50 to 64, and 55% of adults 65 and older.

Views of paid leave also differ across party lines, with Democrats generally more supportive than Republicans and independents. Still, at least three-quarters across each of the three groups say mothers should be able to take paid leave following the birth or adoption of a child and that workers should be able to take paid leave to deal with a serious health condition.

When it comes to fathers taking leave from work, 57% of Republicans say they should be able to take paid leave following the birth or adoption of a child; a similar share (55%) of Republicans say

workers should have paid leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition. In contrast, about eight-in-ten Democrats support paid leave in each of these situations (79% and 78%, respectively). Independents are in the middle: 67% say fathers should have paid leave following the birth or adoption of a child, and 62% say workers should have paid leave to care for a family member who is seriously ill.

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### More support for paid leave among Democrats than among Republicans and independents

*% saying each group should receive paid leave from their employers, the federal government or state government*

	Mothers following birth or adoption	Fathers following birth or adoption	Workers to care for a family member w/serious health condition	Workers to deal with own serious health condition
	%	%	%	%
Republican	75	57	55	79
Men	70	52	51	76
Women	79	62	60	81
Democrat	90	79	78	93
Men	88	78	76	92
Women	91	80	80	94
Independent	80	67	62	84
Men	77	61	59	83
Women	83	73	65	85

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016.

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Republican women tend to be more likely than Republican men to support paid leave. About six-in-ten Republican women (62%) say fathers should have paid leave following the birth or adoption of a child, compared with 52% of Republican men. Similarly, while 60% of Republican women say workers should have paid leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition, about half (51%) of Republican men share this view. Gender differences among Republicans are also evident when it comes to paid leave for mothers, but majorities of both groups say mothers should be able to take paid leave following birth or adoption (79% of Republican women and 70% of Republican men).

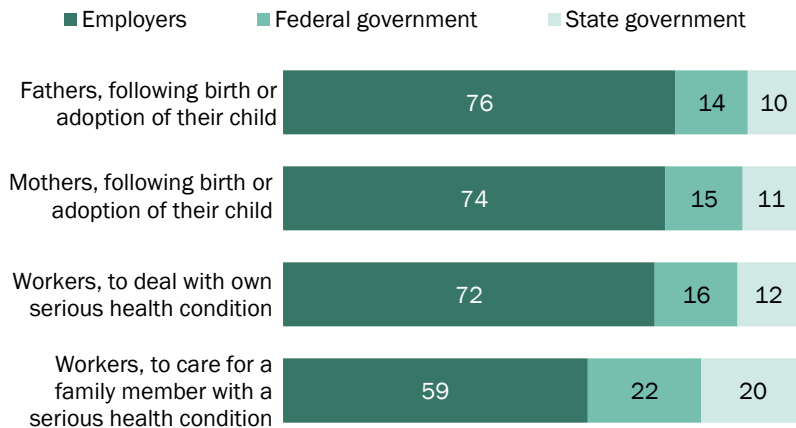
Among independents, gender differences are only notable when it comes to paid leave for fathers. About three-quarters (73%) of independent women say fathers should be able to take paid leave, compared with 61% of independent men. Democratic men and women are about equally likely to say people should have paid leave in each of the four situations asked about in the survey.

## Most supporters of paid leave say employers should pay

Among those who support paid leave, majorities say pay should come from employers, while relatively few say government – either federal or state – should provide pay. This is particularly the case when it comes to paid leave for fathers and mothers following the birth or adoption of a child and to workers who need to deal with their own serious health condition: At least seven-in-ten of those who say people should be able to take paid leave in each of these three situations say the pay should come from employers (76%, 74% and 72%, respectively).

### Among those who support paid leave, most say pay should come from employers

*% saying each group should receive pay from \_\_\_\_, among those who support paid leave in each situation*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016.

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When it comes to paid leave for workers who take time off to care for a family member with a serious health condition, opinions about who should provide pay are somewhat less lopsided. Although a majority (59%) say pay should come from employers, about four-in-ten say it should come from either federal (22%) or state (20%) governments.

Majorities of Democrats, Republicans and independents who say workers should be able to take paid family and medical leave look to employers to cover the cost. But Democrats tend to be more supportive than Republicans of federal government-paid leave. Among those who say fathers should be able to take leave and receive pay during that time, 18% of Democrats say the pay should come from the federal government, compared with 10% of Republicans. One-in-ten among each group say state governments should provide pay.

The same pattern is evident among those who say that mothers should receive pay when they take leave following birth or adoption and that workers should receive paid leave to care for a family member's serious health condition or their own condition. In each case, Democrats are more likely than Republicans to say pay should come from the federal government and Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say pay should come from employers; both groups are about equally likely to say pay should come from state governments.

## Americans favor longer paid leave for mothers than for fathers

Views about how long a worker should receive pay while they are on leave for family or medical reasons differ according to the circumstances. Among those who say mothers should have paid leave when they take time off from work following the birth or adoption of a child, 75% say they should receive pay for at least six weeks. This includes 41% who say mothers should receive 12 weeks or

### About four-in-ten who support paid leave say mothers should receive pay for 12 weeks or more

*% saying each group should receive pay for \_\_\_ among those who say they should receive paid leave from their employers, the federal government or state government*

	Mothers following birth or adoption	Fathers following birth or adoption	Workers to care for a family member w/serious health condition	Workers to deal with own serious health condition
	%	%	%	%
0-2 weeks	7	34	33	25
3-5 weeks	16	26	24	25
6-8 weeks	22	14	7	8
9-11 weeks	12	6	6	7
12 weeks or more	41	18	27	33
Median (in weeks)	8.6	4.3	4.3	4.3

Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016.

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more of paid leave. A far smaller share (38%) of those who say fathers should receive pay following birth or adoption say they should be covered for six weeks or more, with just 18% saying fathers should have at least 12 weeks of paid leave; about a quarter (26%) say fathers should receive between three and five weeks of paid leave, while about a third (34%) say fathers should receive pay for two weeks or less.

Among those who say workers should have paid leave from work to care for a family member with a serious health condition, a third say workers should receive pay for up to two weeks and 24% say these workers should receive pay for three to five weeks; four-in-ten say workers should receive pay for at least six weeks, including 27% who say they should receive pay for 12 weeks or more to care for a seriously ill family member.

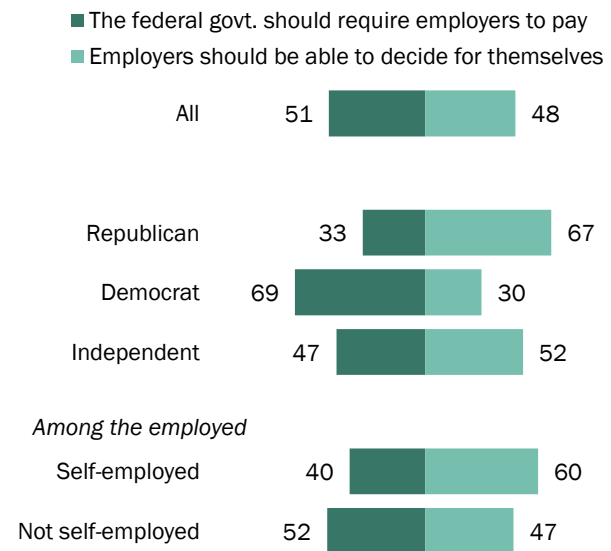
A quarter of those who say workers should be able to take paid leave to deal with their own serious health condition say workers should receive pay for up to two weeks, and another quarter say they should receive between three and five weeks of paid leave; a third say workers should receive at least 12 weeks of paid leave to deal with their own serious condition.

## No consensus on federal government mandate

While Americans tend to favor employer-paid over government-paid leave for family or medical reasons, they are about evenly divided when it comes to whether or not the federal government should *require* employers to provide paid leave. About as many say the federal government should require employers to pay their employees when they take leave from work for these reasons (51%) as say employers should be able to decide for themselves (48%).

### Americans are divided on whether the federal government should require employers to provide paid leave for family or medical reasons

% saying ...



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.  
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016.  
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There is a sharp partisan divide on this issue. About seven-in-ten Democrats (69%) say the federal government should require employers to provide paid leave, while 30% say employers should be able to decide for themselves. Republican views are nearly the mirror image of those of Democrats: 67% of Republicans say employers should be able to make their own decision about whether or not to provide paid leave, while 33% say the government should require employers to do so. Independents are more evenly divided, with 52% saying employers should be able to decide for themselves and 47% saying the government should require employers to pay their employees when they take leave from work for family or medical reasons.

Among Republicans, those who describe their political views as conservative are far more likely than those with more moderate views to say employers should be able to decide for themselves; 74% of conservatives say this, compared with 54% of moderate or liberal Republicans. Views on this question do not vary significantly between Democrats who describe themselves as liberal and those who say they are moderate or conservative.

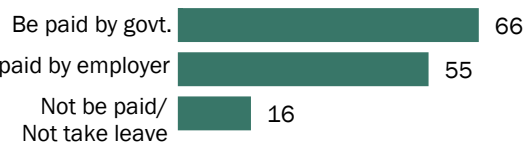
Perhaps not surprisingly, among the employed, self-employed adults are considerably more likely than those who are not self-employed to say employers should be able to decide for themselves whether to pay their employees when they take leave from work for family or medical reasons: 60% of those who are self-employed say employers should have a choice, compared with 47% of those who are not self-employed.

Support for a federal mandate requiring employers to provide paid leave is particularly widespread among those who indicate that workers taking leave should receive pay from either the federal or state government. Still, even among those who say pay for workers who are on leave should come from employers,

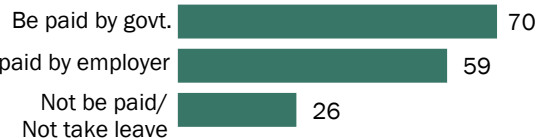
### Support for a federal mandate is lowest among those who oppose paid leave

*% saying the federal government should require employers to provide paid family and medical leave*

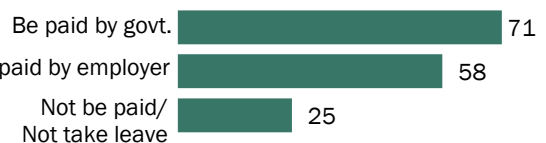
#### Among those who say mothers, following birth or adoption, should ...



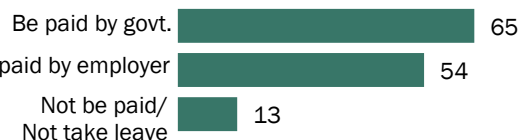
#### Among those who say fathers, following birth or adoption, should ...



#### Among those who say workers who need to care for a family member w/ a serious health condition should ...



#### Among those who say workers who need to deal with own serious health condition should ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016. "Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ Over Specific Policies"

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half or more (depending on the reason for taking leave) say this should be required by the federal government. Those who say workers should not be able to take leave or should be able to take leave without pay are the most opposed to a federal government mandate.

For example, among those who say mothers should receive paid leave from either the state or federal government, 66% say the federal government should require employers to provide pay, as do 55% of those who say mothers should receive paid leave from their employers. In contrast, just 16% of those who say mothers should have unpaid leave or should not be able to take leave at all say the government should require employers to provide paid family and medical leave.

## Large majorities say that if paid leave were available, mothers and fathers as well as all workers regardless of income should have access

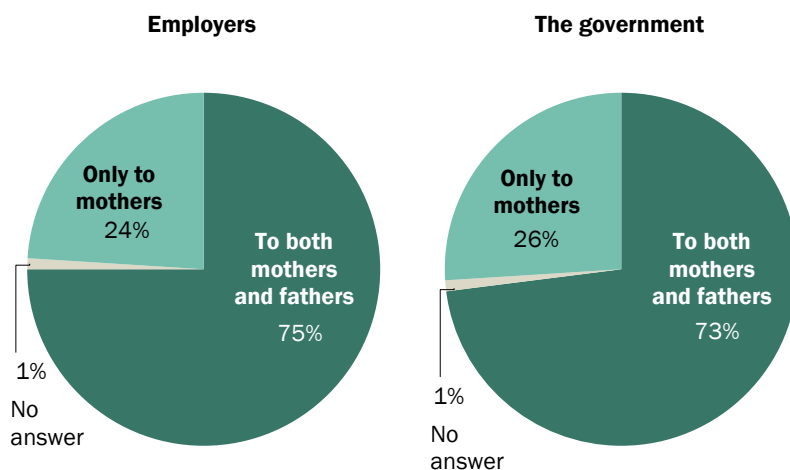
Three-quarters of Americans say that if employers were to provide paid leave to their employees following the birth or adoption of their child, the benefit should be available to both mothers and fathers; about the same share (73%) say paid leave should be available to both if the government were to provide it. About a quarter say paid leave should be available only to mothers, whether provided by employers (24%) or the government (26%).

Older Americans – particularly older men – are the most likely to say paid leave should be available only to mothers following the

birth or adoption of a child, if it were to be available at all. Overall, about six-in-ten adults ages 65 and older say both mothers and fathers should benefit if employers (60%) or the government (58%) were to provide paid leave, while about four-in-ten say this should only be available to

### About three-quarters say if employers or government were to provide paid leave following birth or adoption, both mothers and fathers should be eligible

*% saying that if \_\_\_ were to provide paid leave following the birth or adoption of a child, it should be available ...*



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016.

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mothers. In contrast, about eight-in-ten adults younger than 30 and ages 30 to 49, and about seven-in-ten among those 50 to 64, say paid leave should be available to both mothers and fathers if employers or the government were to provide this benefit.

Older men and women express significantly different views on whether both mother and father or just mothers should receive paid leave if employers or the government were to provide it. Among women 65 and older, about two-thirds say both parents should have access to paid leave if employers (66%) or the government (64%) were to provide it. Men in this age group are about evenly split, with about half saying paid leave should be available to both parents and the other half saying it should be available only to mothers.

Republicans are more likely than Democrats or independents to say that, if employers or the government were to provide paid leave, it should be available only to mothers, but majorities across all three groups say both mothers and fathers should have access to this benefit if available. For example, about six-in-ten Republicans (62%) say that if the government were to provide paid leave, it should be available to both mothers and fathers, while 37% say it should be available only to mothers. Larger majorities of Democrats (81%) and independents (74%) say both mothers and fathers should have access to paid leave if the government were to provide it, while 19% and 24%, respectively, say only mothers should. The pattern is similar when it comes to employer-provided paid leave.

When asked whether paid leave should be available to all workers or only to those with lower incomes, more than eight-in-ten (85%) Americans say that if the government were to provide paid leave for family or medical reasons, this benefit should be available to all workers regardless of their income; 14% say it should be available only to those with low incomes.

While large majorities across demographic groups say all workers regardless of income should have access to paid leave if the government were to provide it, those with lower incomes are somewhat more likely to say it should be available only to workers with low incomes. One-in-five Americans with annual household incomes under \$30,000 say this, compared with about one-in-ten (11%) of those with incomes of \$75,000 or more.

## More than four-in-ten strongly favor tax credits for employers that offer paid leave

While Americans express broad support for paid leave for fathers and mothers following the birth or adoption of a child and for workers who need to care for an ill family member or deal with their own serious health condition, there is no clear consensus about the best approach to provide paid leave for workers who need it for family or medical reasons.

Of four proposals tested, the most popular is the government providing tax credits to employers that provide paid leave, with 45% of Americans saying they would strongly favor this approach. About four-in-ten (39%) say they would strongly favor the

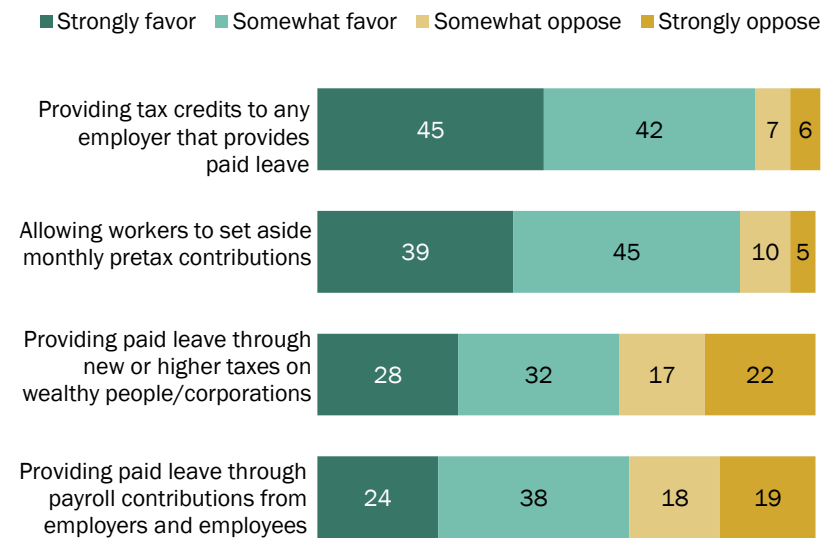
government allowing all

workers to set aside monthly pretax contributions into a personal account – similar to a flexible spending account – that can be withdrawn if they need to take leave from work.

Proposals in which paid leave benefits are provided directly by the government receive less support: 28% of Americans say they would strongly favor a program where the government would provide paid leave to any worker who needs it using funding from new or higher taxes on wealthy people or corporations, and 24% express strong support for the establishment of a government fund that all employers and employees would pay into through payroll contributions in order to provide paid leave to any worker who needed it.

### Of four policies tested, proposals in which paid leave benefits are provided directly from the government receive the least support

*% saying they \_\_\_ the following proposals for the government to deal with employees who need to take leave from work for family or medical reasons*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016.

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Overall, majorities of six-in-ten or more say they would at least somewhat favor each of the four proposals to provide paid leave to workers who need it for family or medical reasons. But far more say they would strongly or somewhat *oppose* government-paid leave programs funded through new or higher taxes on the wealthy or corporations (39%) or through payroll contributions from all employers and employees (37%) than say they would oppose the government providing tax credits to employers that provide paid leave (13%) or allowing workers to set aside monthly pretax contributions into a personal account to be withdrawn if they need to take leave from work (15%).

Democrats are far more supportive of these proposals than Republicans or independents. About eight-in-ten Democrats (78%) would favor a program where the government would provide paid leave with funding from new or higher taxes on the wealthy or corporations; just over half (56%) of independents and just 38% of Republicans would favor this. And while about three-quarters (74%) of Democrats would be at least somewhat supportive of a government fund which employers and employees would pay into through payroll contributions, this proposal receives narrower support from independents (57%) and Republicans (53%).

There is more partisan agreement when it comes to the government allowing workers to set aside monthly pretax contributions into a personal paid leave account (88% of Republicans and 83% each of Democrats and independents would favor this at least somewhat) and providing tax credits to employers that provide paid leave (84%, 91% and 85%, respectively). Still, Democrats are far more likely than Republicans or independents to say they would *strongly* favor tax credits for employers that provide paid leave; 53% say this, compared with 37% of Republicans and 41% of independents.

## 2. Public assessments of the impact of paid leave on the economy, families, employers and employees

Many Americans believe that increased access to paid family and medical leave would reap positive benefits in a number of ways, and most say that offering paid leave can give employers an edge in employee recruitment and retention in a competitive marketplace. At the same time, the public sees the challenges that some employers – particularly small businesses – face in providing paid family and medical leave benefits for their employees.

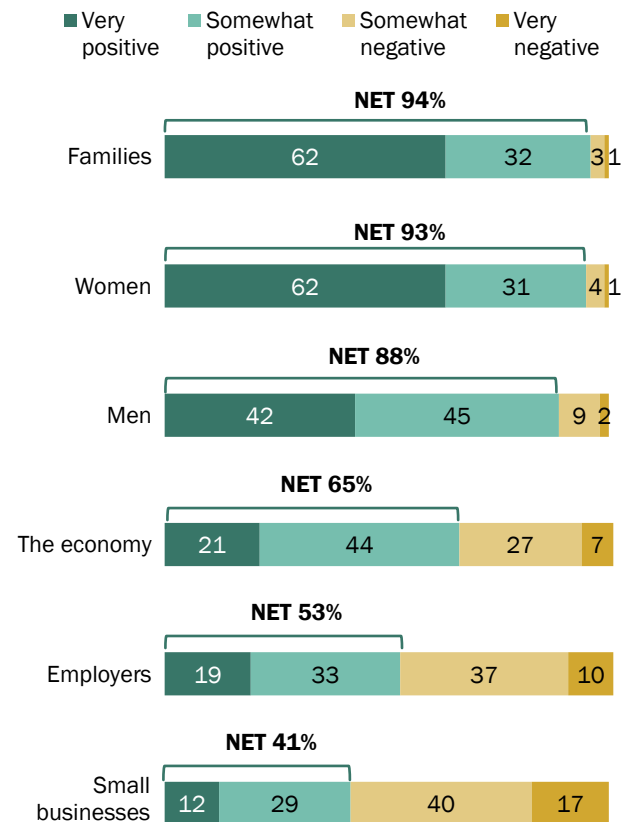
When asked what the consequences would be if all Americans had access to paid leave for family or medical reasons, about nine-in-ten or more say that this would have a very or somewhat positive impact on families, women and men. And about two-thirds (65%) think the impact on the economy would be positive as well.

Views of the impact on employers and small businesses are more mixed, with 53% saying universal access to paid leave would have a positive impact on employers and just 41% saying the same for small businesses.

Despite widespread support for paid leave and positive views of its impact on families in particular, many Americans have concerns that some workers exploit these policies by taking time off from work when they do not need it. More than half say it is common for workers to abuse paid family and medical leave in this way (16% say this is very

### Most say access to paid family and medical leave for all Americans would be positive for families, women, men and the economy

% saying that, if all Americans had access to paid leave for family or medical reasons, the impact on \_\_\_ would be ...



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. NETs calculated before rounding. "Employers" and "small businesses" were each asked of a random half of the sample. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016. "Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ Over Specific Policies"

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common, while 39% say it is somewhat common). Republicans are more likely than Democrats and independents to perceive the abuse of paid leave benefits as common.

## Most say that if all Americans had access to paid leave, the impact would be positive for individuals, families and the economy

The overwhelming majority of Americans see paid leave as having at least a somewhat positive impact on women (93%) and families (94%), including 62% who say paid leave would have a *very* positive impact on each. About nine-in-ten (88%) also say that if all Americans had access to paid leave, the impact on men would be at least somewhat positive, but fewer (42%) say it would have a very positive impact. And while most (65%) see the impact of universal paid leave on the economy as generally positive, just 21% say it would be very positive.

### Democrats more likely than Republicans to see impact of paid leave as positive

*% saying that if all Americans had access to paid leave for family or medical reasons the impact on \_\_\_\_ would be very or somewhat positive*

	Families	Women	Men	The economy	Employers	Small businesses
	%	%	%	%	%	%
All	94	93	88	65	53	41
Ages						
18-29	96	94	90	70	62	48
30-49	94	93	91	69	57	46
50-64	94	94	87	64	48	38
65+	92	91	81	53	42	28
Republican	93	91	83	52	41	30
Democrat	96	96	91	77	64	52
Independent	95	94	89	64	48	38

Note: "Employers" and "small businesses" were each asked of a random half of the sample. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016.

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When it comes to effects on employers, assessments of the impact of paid leave are more mixed, though somewhat more say its impact on employers in general would be at least somewhat positive (53%) than say it would be at least somewhat negative (46%). When asked about the impact of paid leave on small businesses specifically, the balance of opinion shifts further – about four-in-ten (41%) say that access to paid leave for all Americans would be positive for small businesses, while 58% say the effects on small businesses would be negative.

Larger shares of Democrats than of Republicans or independents say that if all Americans had access to paid leave, the impact on employers in general and on small businesses in particular would be at least somewhat positive. Among Democrats, 64% say the impact on employers would



be positive, and 52% say the same about the impact on small businesses, compared with 41% and 30% of Republicans, respectively.

Partisan differences are also evident when it comes to the impact of universal paid leave on the economy (77% of Democrats and 64% of independents say it would be positive vs. 52% of Republicans). And while large majorities across partisan groups say paid leave would have at least a somewhat positive impact on men, women and families, Democrats are far more likely than Republicans to say the impact on each of these would be *very* positive.

Americans ages 65 and older tend to hold less positive views than their younger counterparts concerning the impact of universal paid leave on employers, small businesses and the economy. For example, roughly half (53%) of adults 65 and older say the impact on the economy would be positive, compared with 70% of adults 18 to 29, 69% of those 30 to 49, and 64% of those 50 to 64.

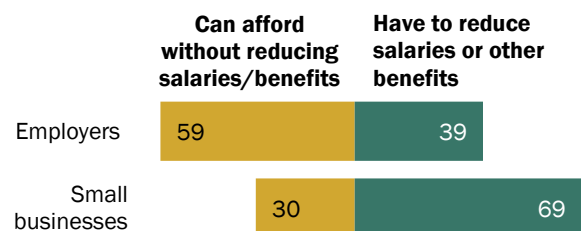
## Majority sees paid leave as affordable for most employers, but less so for small businesses

About six-in-ten Americans (59%) – including similar shares of men and women, as well as adults across education and income levels – say that most employers that provide paid leave for family and medical reasons can afford to do so without reducing salaries or other benefits. When asked specifically about small businesses that provide paid leave, however, far fewer (30%) say this type of employer can afford to provide this benefit without reducing salaries and other benefits.

As with other attitudes concerning paid leave, differences emerge across party lines. Fully 68% of Democrats say most employers that pay their employees when they take leave can provide this benefit without cutting salaries or other benefits, compared with 56% of independents and 47% of Republicans who say the same. And while four-in-ten Democrats say most small businesses that provide paid leave

### Most say employers that provide paid leave can afford to do so without trade-offs; three-in-ten say the same about small businesses

*% saying that for \_\_\_\_\_ that pay their employees when they take leave for family or medical reasons, most ...*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. "Employers" and "small businesses" were each asked of a random half of the sample.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016. "Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ Over Specific Policies"

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can afford to do so without reducing salaries or other benefits, three-in-ten independents and even fewer Republicans (21%) share this view.

Whites and Hispanics also offer differing views about the trade-offs employers may need to make in order to provide paid leave, with Hispanics far more likely than whites to say most small businesses – and most employers in general – that provide paid leave can do so without reducing salaries and other benefits.<sup>2</sup> For example, 58% of Hispanics say this is the case in regard to small businesses, compared with just 22% of whites.

Those with household incomes below \$30,000 are also more likely than those with higher incomes to say most small businesses that offer paid leave can do this without reducing salaries or other benefits. While those in the lower income group are about evenly divided, with 47% saying small businesses can afford to do this and 53% saying they cannot, majorities of those with incomes between \$30,000 and \$74,999 (67%) and those with incomes of \$75,000 or more (77%) say most small businesses can't afford to provide paid leave without tradeoffs.

## Views about trade-offs vary across demographic groups, party affiliation

% saying that for \_\_\_\_\_ that pay their employees when they take leave for family or medical reasons, most ...

	Employers		Small businesses	
	Can afford without reducing	Have to reduce salaries/benefits	Can afford without reducing	Have to reduce salaries/benefits
	%	%	%	%
All	59	39	30	69
White	54	44	22	77
Hispanic	69	29	58	41
<i>Household income</i>				
<\$30,000	61	34	47	53
\$30K-\$74,999	61	37	30	67
\$75,000+	57	42	23	77
Republican	47	52	21	79
Democrat	68	30	40	59
Independent	56	42	30	69

Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. "Employers" and "small businesses" were each asked of a random half of the sample. Blacks not shown due to small sample size. Whites include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race; Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016. "Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ Over Specific Policies"

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<sup>2</sup> Questions about "employers" and "small businesses" were each asked of a random half of the sample. The views of blacks on these questions were not analyzed due to small sample sizes.

## About three-quarters say that providing paid leave gives employers an advantage in employee recruitment and retention

In spite of the potential trade-offs that may be involved in providing paid leave, most Americans think that employers stand to gain by offering these benefits, particularly in employee recruitment and retention. About three-quarters (74%) of Americans think that employers that pay their employees when they take leave from work for family or medical reasons are more likely than employers that do not provide paid leave to attract and keep good workers, including 57% who say that these employers are a lot more likely to do so. Only 19% say that providing paid leave does not make much difference in an employer's ability to recruit and retain good workers.

The view that providing paid leave puts employers at an advantage when it comes to recruitment and retention is widespread across demographic and partisan groups. For example, about eight-in-ten Americans with at least a bachelor's degree (81%) say that employers that provide paid leave are more likely to attract and keep good workers, as do 74% of those with some college experience and 69% of those with a high school education or less. And at least seven-in-ten Democrats (77%), independents (76%) and Republicans (71%) hold this view.

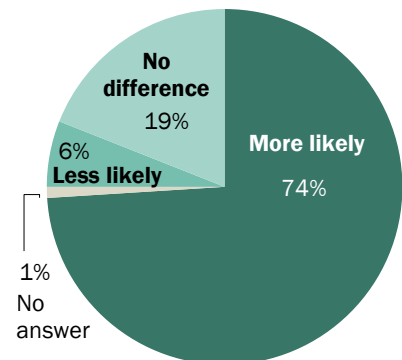
### More than half think paid leave benefits are commonly abused

Although most Americans support paid family and medical leave, many also express concerns that these policies can be abused. Some 55% think that when workers have access to paid leave for family or medical reasons, it is at least somewhat common for them to abuse this benefit by taking time off when they do not need it. Overall, 16% say exploiting these benefits in this way is very common, and about four-in-ten (39%) believe it is somewhat common, while a similar share (38%) think it is not too common and 6% say this is not at all common.

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### Majority see advantage in employee recruitment and retention for employers that provide paid leave

*% saying that, in general, employers that provide paid leave for family or medical reasons are \_\_\_ than employers that don't to attract and keep good workers*



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016. "Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ Over Specific Policies"

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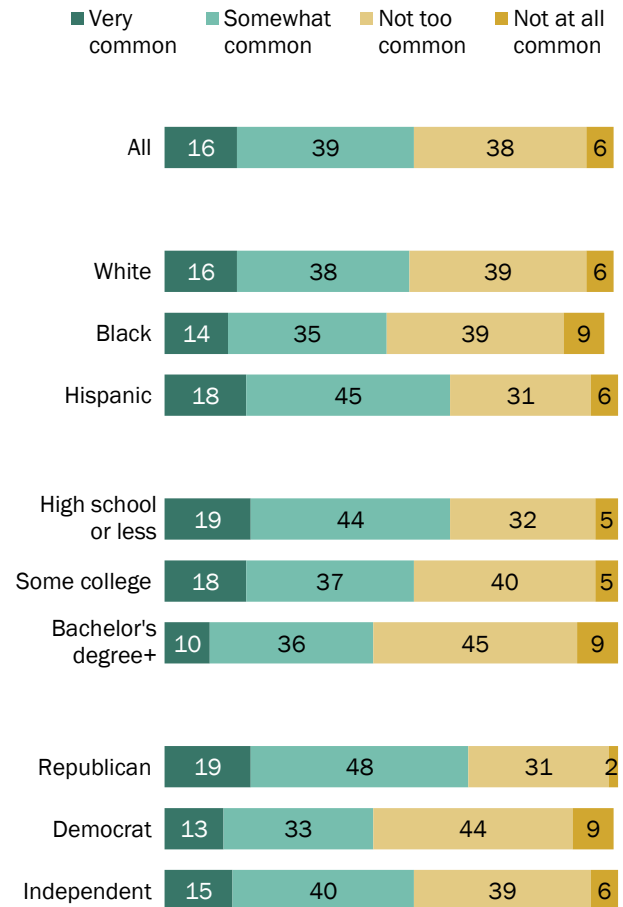
Republicans are far more likely than Democrats and independents to think it's at least somewhat common for workers to abuse paid family and medical leave benefits by taking time off from work when they do not need it. Two-thirds (67%) of Republicans think this is common, compared with 46% of Democrats and 55% of independents.

Views on the prevalence of paid leave abuse also vary by education. About six-in-ten (62%) adults with a high school education or less say abuse of these benefits is at least somewhat common, compared with 55% of those with some college experience and 46% of college graduates.

The survey also finds that a larger share of Hispanics (62%) than whites (55%) or blacks (49%) say that workers commonly exploit paid leave by taking time off from work when they don't need it.

### Republicans more likely than Democrats and independents to say workers commonly abuse paid leave

*% saying that it is \_\_\_ for workers to abuse paid family and medical leave benefits by taking time off from work when they don't need it*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. "Some college" includes those with a two-year degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016. "Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ Over Specific Policies"

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### 3. Views of paid leave relative to other workplace benefits

Most Americans support paid family and medical leave. But when it comes to what benefits or work arrangements are or would be most helpful to them personally, flexibility is valued as much as paid leave.

About four-in-ten workers who are not self-employed (43%) say their employer offers paid leave following the birth or adoption of a child, to care for a family member with a serious health condition or to deal with one's own serious condition. This is significantly lower than the share of workers who say their employer offers them health insurance (78%); paid time off for vacations, doctor's appointments, or to deal with minor illnesses (74%); or a 401(k) or other retirement savings program (71%).

Still, American workers are largely satisfied with the benefits their employers provide: About seven-in-ten (69%) say they are at least somewhat satisfied with their benefits,

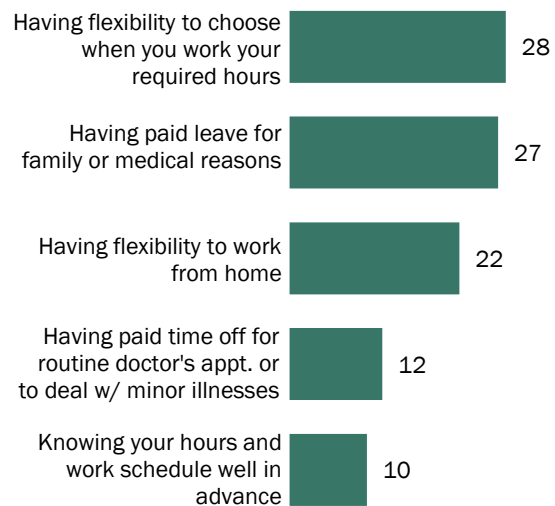
including 27% who are very satisfied. And roughly two-thirds say their employer cares a great deal (22%) or a fair amount (45%) about the personal well-being of their employees.

#### Paid leave seen as one of the most helpful benefits or work arrangements

When asked which of five benefits or work arrangements is or would be the most helpful to them personally, about three-in-ten Americans who are either employed or looking for work (28%) cite having flexibility to choose when they work, provided they put in their required hours. About as many (27%) say paid leave for family or medical reasons would be the most helpful. Roughly one-in-five (22%) point to flexibility to work from home, while fewer say paid time off for a routine doctor's appointment or to deal with minor illnesses (12%) or knowing their hours and work schedule well in advance (10%) would be the most helpful benefit or work arrangement to them.

#### No consensus about what is the most helpful benefit or work arrangement

*% of Americans who are employed or looking for work saying each benefit or work arrangement is or would be the most helpful to them*



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016. "Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ Over Specific Policies"

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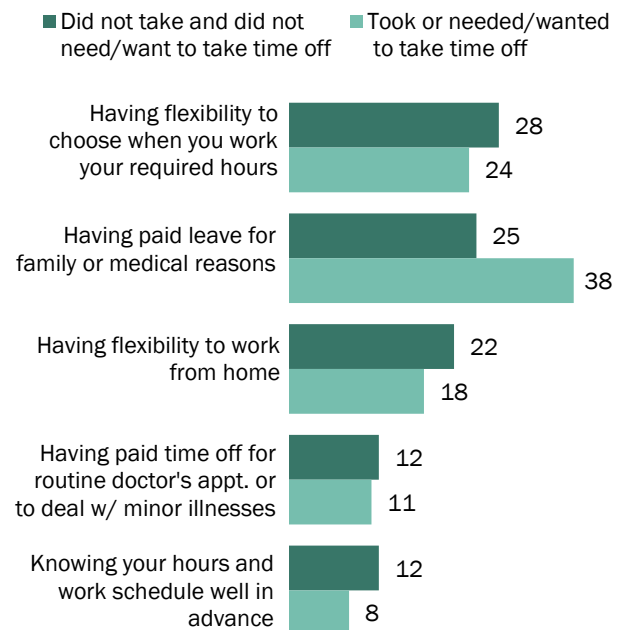
The share saying paid leave for family or medical reasons would be the most helpful benefit or work arrangement to them is fairly consistent across demographic groups, but those who have taken or have needed or wanted to take time off in the past two years for these reasons are more likely than those who have not been in this situation to say this would be particularly helpful. In fact, among people who have taken or have needed or wanted to take leave recently, having paid leave for family or medical reasons is cited more than any of the other benefits or work arrangements listed as the most helpful: 38% say having paid leave would be the most helpful benefit or work arrangement for them personally, followed by having flexibility to choose their work schedule (24%) or to work from home (18%), having paid time off for a routine doctor's appointment or to deal with minor illnesses (11%), and knowing their hours and work schedule well in advance (8%).

### One-in-five don't know if their employer offers paid leave

While most Americans believe employers that pay their employees when they take leave from work for family or medical reasons are more likely to [attract and keep good workers](#), and many say this would be a helpful benefit to them personally, the survey reveals that one-in-five workers who are not self-employed are not sure whether or not their own employer offers this benefit to them. Far fewer say they aren't sure if their employer offers paid time off for vacations, routine doctor's appointments or to deal with minor illnesses (9%); if their employer offers a 401(k) or other retirement savings program (8%); or if they have access to employer-provided health insurance (6%).

### Paid leave seen as particularly helpful among those who have taken or needed or wanted time off for family or medical reasons

*% of Americans who are employed or looking for work who \_\_\_ in the past two years saying each benefit or work arrangement is or would be most helpful to them*



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016; survey of U.S. adults who took or needed/wanted to take leave conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 14, 2016.

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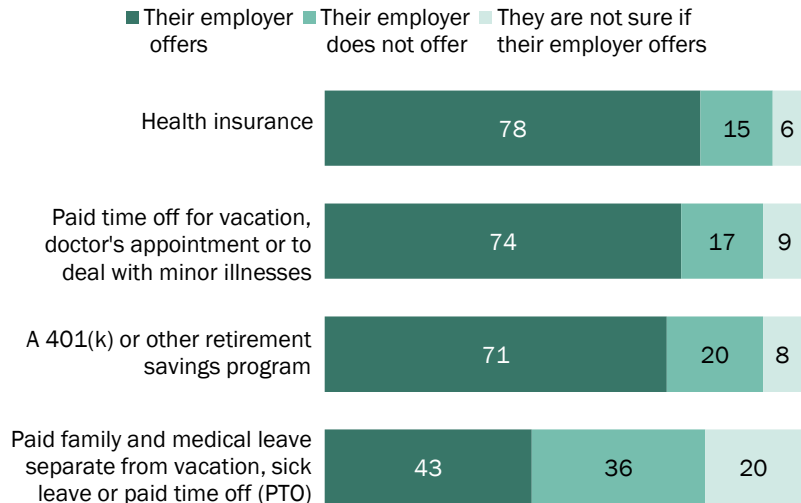
About four-in-ten (43%) employed Americans say their employer offers them paid leave, separate from vacation, sick leave or paid time off (PTO), following the birth or adoption of a child, to care for a family member with a serious health condition or to deal with their own serious condition; 36% say their employer does not offer them this benefit.

The share of employed Americans who report that they have access to paid family or medical leave provided by their employer is considerably higher than that reported by the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics \(BLS\)](#), which bases its estimates on compensation information provided by employers. Yet, consistent with BLS statistics, 13% of Pew Research Center [survey respondents](#) who have taken time off from work for family or medical reasons in the past two years say they received pay as part of family or medical leave benefits paid by their employer, separate from vacation, sick leave or PTO. This suggests that some workers who think they have access to employer-paid family and medical leave may not, in fact, have access to this benefit.

Workers employed by government (53%) or by nonprofit organizations (49%) are more likely than those employed by private, for-profit companies (40%) to say their employer offers them paid family or medical leave. It is worth noting, however, that among those who have taken paid time off from work for these reasons in the past two years, those who were employed by a private, for-profit company were somewhat more likely than those who were employed by government or by a nonprofit organization to say at least some of their pay came from family or medical leave benefits provided by their employer.

## About four-in-ten Americans say their employer offers paid family and medical leave

*% of workers who are not self-employed saying \_\_\_\_ each of these benefits to them*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016.

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Workers with at least a bachelor's degree (52%) are significantly more likely than those with some college (38%) or with a high school education or less (37%) say this benefit is available to them through their employer.

While fewer than half of all workers who are not self-employed say their employer provides paid family and medical leave separate from vacation, sick leave or PTO, solid majorities say their employer offers health insurance (78%), paid time off for vacations, doctor's appointments, or to deal with minor illnesses (74%), or a 401(k) or other retirement savings program (71%). As is the case with paid leave, those with at least a bachelor's degree are more likely than those with less education to say they have access to each of these benefits.

## Most say they are satisfied with their benefits and believe their employer cares about employees' well-being

About seven-in-ten workers who are not self-employed (69%) say they are at least somewhat satisfied with the benefits their employer provides, including 27% who say they are *very* satisfied. Three-in-ten are either somewhat (19%) or very (11%) dissatisfied with their benefits. Most (66%) also say their employer cares a great deal or a fair amount about the personal well-being of their employees, while a third say their employer does not care much or at all.

Those with annual household incomes below \$30,000 are less likely than those with higher incomes to say they are at least somewhat satisfied with their benefits and to say their employer cares at least a fair amount about the personal well-being of its employees. About three-quarters (76%) of those with household incomes of \$75,000 or more express satisfaction with their benefits, as does a somewhat narrower majority (64%) of those

### Lower-income workers are the least satisfied with their benefits

Based on workers who are not self-employed

% saying they are ___ with their benefits	All	Household income			
		<\$30,000	\$30,000-\$74,999	\$75,000+	
Very/Somewhat satisfied	69	49	64	76	
Very/Somewhat dissatisfied	30	48	34	24	

% saying their employer cares ___ about the personal well-being of employees	All	Household income			
		<\$30,000	\$30,000-\$74,999	\$75,000+	
A great deal/fair amount	66	52	65	70	
Not much/Not at all	33	47	34	29	

Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.  
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016.  
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with household incomes between \$30,000 and \$74,999. In contrast, among those with incomes below \$30,000, about as many say they are satisfied (49%) as say they are dissatisfied (48%) with the benefits their employer offers.

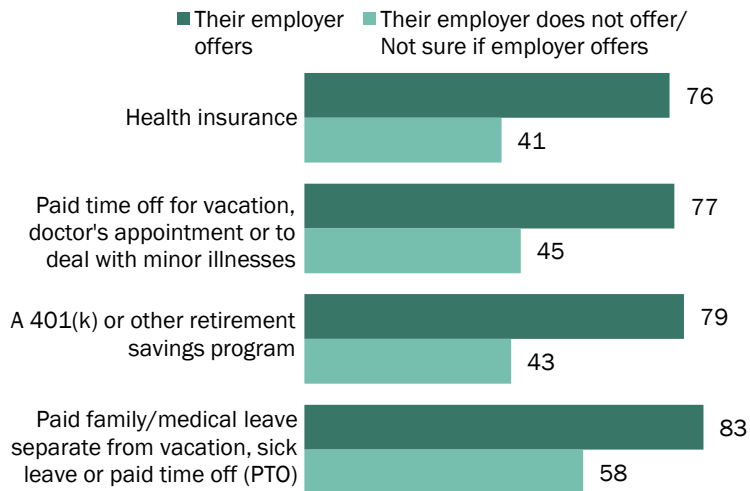
Similarly, while seven-in-ten employed Americans in the higher income group and 65% of those in the middle income group say their employer cares a great deal or a fair amount about their employees' well-being, about half (52%) of those with annual household incomes below \$30,000 say the same.

Those who say their employer offers them health insurance, retirement savings programs, sick leave, vacation or personal time off, or paid family and medical leave are more likely than those who say they do not have access to each of these benefits – or are not sure if they do – to express satisfaction with their benefits overall and to say their employer cares about the personal well-being of their employees. Still, at least half or more of those who do

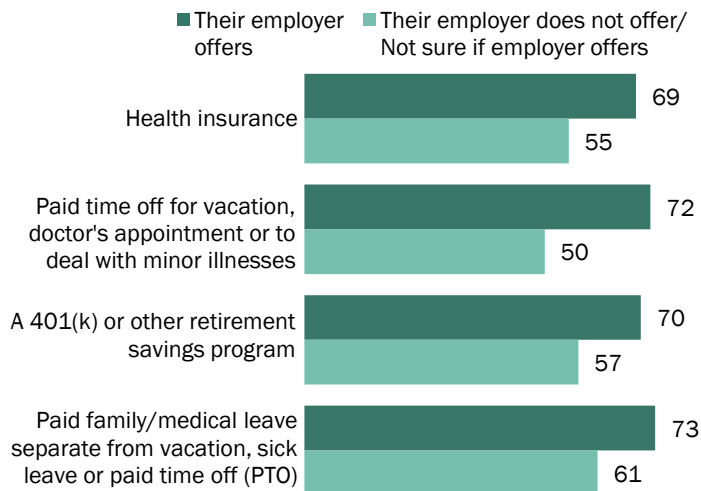
### About six-in-ten of those without employer-paid family and medical leave say they are satisfied with benefits and that employer cares about employee well-being

Based on workers who are not self-employed

% saying they are somewhat or very *satisfied* with their benefits overall among those who say \_\_\_ each of these benefits



% saying their *employer cares* a great deal or a fair amount about employees' personal well-being among those who say \_\_\_ each of these benefits



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016.  
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not receive each of these benefits or are not sure say their employer cares about the personal well-being of their employees a great deal or a fair amount, and many say they are at least somewhat satisfied with their employer benefits.

## 4. Gender and caregiving

While majorities of Americans express [support for paid leave](#) for both mothers and fathers following the birth or adoption of a child, the survey suggests that the public sees different roles for men and women when it comes to caring for children or for other family members. Moreover, many Americans say men face more pressure than women from society and from employers to focus on their job or career.

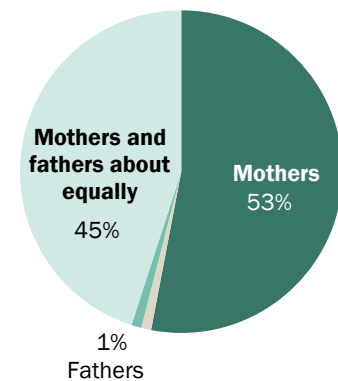
In a series of questions aimed at exploring the roles of mothers and fathers with new babies, the survey finds that a majority (71%) think it's important for a new baby to have equal time to bond with their mother and their father. Yet a somewhat larger share of Americans think that, aside from breast-feeding, mothers would do a better job caring for a new baby than say both mothers and fathers would do about an equally good job (53% vs. 45%); only 1% say fathers would do a better job than mothers. In addition, most (63%) say mothers generally want to take more time off from work than fathers do after the birth or adoption of their child.

When it comes to caring for a family member with a serious health condition, a majority (59%) say men and women would do about an equally good job, but a substantial share (40%) say women would generally do a better job than men (just 1% say men would do a better job than women).

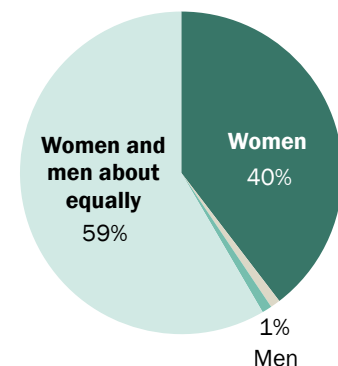
Many Americans (45%) also say that, in general, caregiving responsibilities when a family member is seriously ill fall mainly on women, but the perceptions of men and women differ widely: 59% of women say caregiving responsibilities fall mainly on their own gender, compared with 29% of men who say these responsibilities fall mainly on women. About seven-in-ten men (69%) – and 40% of women – say caregiving responsibilities fall equally on men and women.

### In caring for a new baby or a seriously ill family member, many say women would do a better job than men

*% saying that, aside from breast-feeding, \_\_\_ do a better job caring for a new baby*



*% saying that when it comes to caring for a family member with a serious health condition, \_\_\_ would do a better job*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer shown but not labeled.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016.

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## About half say American society values the contributions men make at work more than the contributions they make at home

Asked what American society values more these days when it comes to men, about half (53%) of all adults point to the contributions men make at work, while just 5% say society values the contributions men make at home more and 41% say society values both equally. In contrast, a majority (56%) of Americans say that, when it comes to women, society values the contributions they make at work and at home equally. Still, more say society places greater value on the contributions women make at home (28%) than say society values the contributions women make at work more (15%).

For the most part, assessments of what American society values more when it comes to both men and women do not vary substantively across demographic groups.

However, Americans with at least a bachelor's degree are far more likely than those with less education to say society places greater value on the contributions men make at work; two-thirds among the more highly educated say this, compared with about half (51%) of those with some college and 43% of those with a high school diploma or less education.

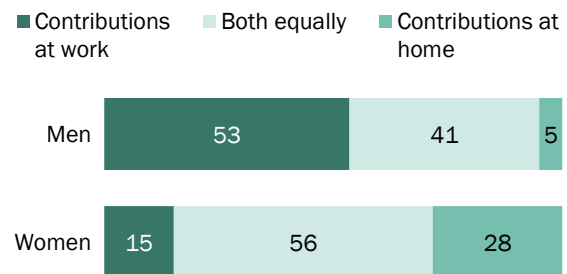
In turn, about half (49%) of those with a high school diploma or less and 42% of those with some college education say society places equal value on the contributions men make at work and at home, while just 29% of those with a college degree or more share this view. A similar pattern is evident when looking at income. Those with higher household incomes are more likely than those with lower incomes to point to the contributions men make at work as being more valued, and those with lower incomes are more likely to say society values the contributions men make at work and at home about equally.

## Men and women disagree on who has more caregiving responsibilities

A narrow majority (54%) of Americans say that, in general, when a family member has a serious health condition, caregiving responsibilities fall on both women and men equally. Still, more than

### When it comes to men, more say society places greater value on contributions they make at work than at home

*% saying that, when it comes to men/women, American society places more value on ...*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.  
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016.  
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four-in-ten (45%) say caregiving responsibilities fall mainly on women, while virtually no one (1%) says they fall mainly on men.

Women are about twice as likely as men to say caregiving responsibilities fall mainly on women when a family member has a serious health condition (59% vs. 29%), while men tend to say responsibilities fall on both equally. About seven-in-ten men say this (69%), compared with 40% of women.

Among women, the view that family caregiving responsibilities fall mainly on women is particularly common among those ages 30 or older. While young women ages 18 to 29 are about evenly divided between those who say caregiving responsibilities fall mainly on their gender (45%) and those who say they fall equally on women and men (51%), majorities of women ages 30 to 49 (60%), 50 to 64 (62%), and 65 and older (68%) say these responsibilities fall mainly on women. There are no similar divisions among men in different age groups.

When asked whether women or men would do a better job caring for a family member with a serious health condition, a majority (59%) of Americans say both would do about an equally good job, while 40% say women would do a better job than men and just 1% say men would do a better job. Larger shares of women than men say women would do a better job caring for a family member with a serious health condition (45% vs. 34%), but more women say both would do an equally good job than say their own gender would (54% of women say both equally).

The view that women would be better caregivers than men is shared more widely among older Americans. Some 46% of those ages 50 to 64 and an even higher share (56%) among those 65 and older say women would do a better job than men when it comes to caring for a seriously ill family member, compared with about three-in-ten adults ages 18 to 29 (31%) and 30 to 49 (30%). Older

### Women are twice as likely as men to say caregiving responsibilities fall mainly on women

*% saying that when a family member has a serious health condition, caregiving responsibilities ...*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. Fewer than 0.5% of women ages 50 to 64 say caregiving responsibilities fall mainly on men.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016. "Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ Over Specific Policies"

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women are particularly likely to say their own gender would be better at providing care for a family member with a serious health condition: 63% of women ages 65 and older say this is the case, compared with 48% of their male counterparts and 50% of women ages 50 to 64, 37% of women 30 to 49, and a third of adult women younger than 30.

## Many say mothers do a better job caring for a new baby than fathers, but about seven-in-ten say it's equally important for babies to bond with both

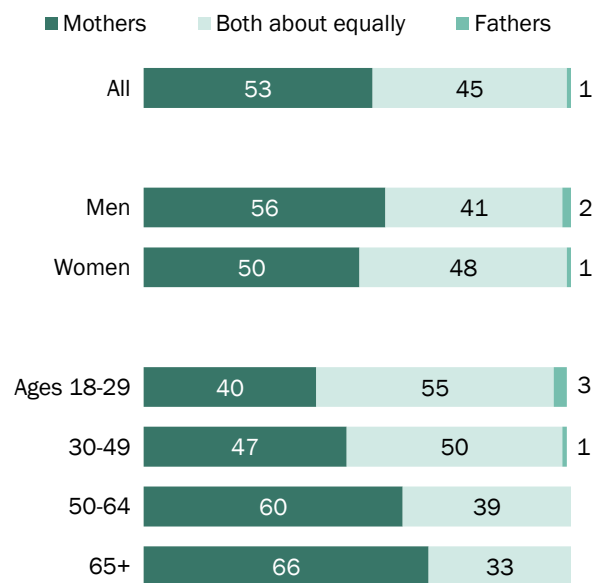
While more Americans say men and women would be equally good at providing care for a family member with a serious health condition than say women would be better caregivers, the balance of opinion on who does a better job caring for a new baby tilts the other way: 53% of Americans say that, aside from breast-feeding, mothers generally do a better job caring for a new baby than fathers, while 45% say both do about an equally good job.

The view that mothers do a better job than fathers caring for a new baby is more common among men than women (56% vs. 50%, respectively) and among those ages 50 and older. Six-in-ten Americans ages 50 to 64 and about two-thirds (66%) of those 65 and older say mothers do a better job than fathers, compared with 47% of those ages 30 to 49 and 40% of adults younger than 30.

Young women are more likely than men or women in any age group to have a more gender-balanced view of the job mothers and fathers do caring for a new baby. About six-in-ten adult women younger than 30 (62%) say both mothers and fathers do about an equally good job, while about a third (34%) say mothers are better caregivers; men in the same age group are evenly divided between those who say mothers and fathers do an equally good job and those who say mothers do a better job (47% each).

### When it comes to caring for a new baby, about half say mothers do a better job than fathers

*% saying that, aside from breast-feeding, \_\_\_ do a better job caring for a new baby*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. Fewer than 0.5% of those ages 50 to 64 and 65 and older say fathers do a better job.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016. "Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ Over Specific Policies"

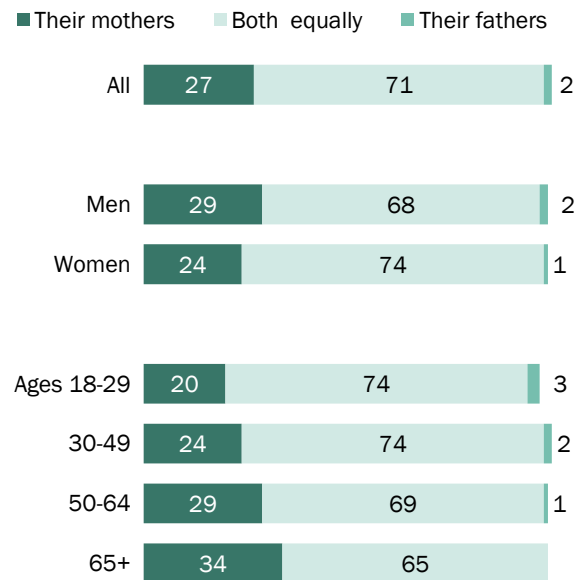
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Across political lines, Republicans who describe their views as conservative stand out. About two-thirds (64%) in this group say mothers do a better job than fathers caring for a new baby, while 34% say both mothers and fathers do about an equally good job. Among Republicans who say their views are liberal or moderate, as well as among conservative or moderate Democrats and liberal Democrats, opinions are more evenly divided between those who say mothers are better caregivers for new babies and those who say mothers and fathers are equally good.

Still, a majority (71%) of Americans say it's equally important for new babies to have as much time to bond with their fathers as with their mothers. This is particularly the case among those who say both mothers and fathers do an equally good job caring for a new baby – 89% of this group says it's equally important for babies to bond with mothers and fathers. Even so, a majority (58%) of those who say mothers are better caregivers also say it's important for babies to bond with both equally.<sup>3</sup>

### About seven-in-ten say it's important for new babies to have equal time to bond with their mothers and fathers

*% saying it's more important for new babies to have more time to bond with ...*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. Fewer than 0.5% of those ages 65 and older say it is more important for new babies to bond with their fathers.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016. "Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ Over Specific Policies"

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Majorities across demographic and partisan groups say it's important for new babies to have equal time to bond with their mothers and their fathers, but women are somewhat more likely to say this is the case (74% vs. 68% of men), as are adults younger than 50 (74% vs. 68% of those ages 50 and older). And while about three-quarters of liberal (74%) and moderate or conservative (73%) Democrats as well as moderate or liberal Republicans (73%) say it's important for new babies to have equal time to bond with mothers and fathers, six-in-ten Republicans who describe themselves as conservative share this view.

<sup>3</sup> The sample size for those who say fathers are better caregivers is too small to analyze separately.

## Men and women agree mothers want to take more time off than fathers

A majority of Americans – including 66% of women and 61% of men – think mothers generally want to take more time off from work than fathers following the birth or adoption of a new child. But views on who wants to take more time off vary considerably across age groups. About eight-in-ten adults ages 65 and older (78%) say mothers generally want to be home longer with a new child than fathers, as do seven-in-ten adults ages 50 to 64 and a narrower majority (59%) of those 30 to 49. In contrast, adults ages 18 to 29 are evenly divided: 47% say mothers want to take more time off than fathers, and the same share says both mothers and fathers generally want to take about the same amount of time off from work when they have a new child.

Household income is also related to opinions about who wants to stay home longer when a new child arrives. About two-thirds of those with annual household incomes between \$30,000 and \$74,999 (66%) and those with incomes of \$75,000 or higher (68%) say mothers generally want to take more time off from work than fathers. Among those with incomes below \$30,000, however, about the same shares say mothers want to take more time off as say mothers and fathers generally want to take about the same amount of time off from work after the birth or adoption of a new child (49% and 47%, respectively).

Majorities across party lines say mothers generally want to take more time off from work than fathers, but this is particularly the case among Republicans: 75% of Republicans say this, compared with about six-in-ten Democrats (59%) and independents (61%).

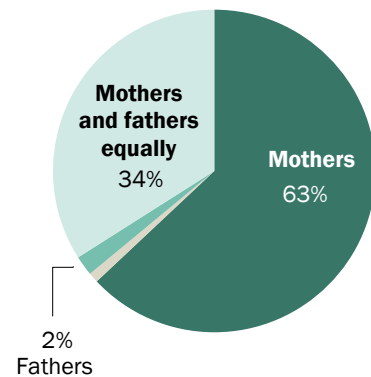
## Larger share of the public says fathers, rather than mothers, are pressured to return to work quickly after the arrival of a child

About half of adults say employers put greater pressure on fathers than mothers (49%) to return to work quickly after the birth or adoption of a new child. This is significantly higher than the share saying mothers face more pressure than fathers (18%) or that both face about the same amount of pressure (33%) from employers. Views on this question vary slightly by gender, with men and

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### Most say mothers want to take more time off from work than fathers after birth or adoption

*% saying mothers and fathers want to take about the same amount of time off or that mothers/fathers want to take more time off after the birth or adoption of a new child*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer shown but not labeled.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016.

"Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ Over Specific Policies"

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women each more likely than the other to say their own gender faces more pressure from employers to return to work quickly (20% of women and 15% of men say mothers face more pressure; 52% of men and 46% of women say fathers do). About a third of each group say employers put about the same amount of pressure on mothers and fathers.

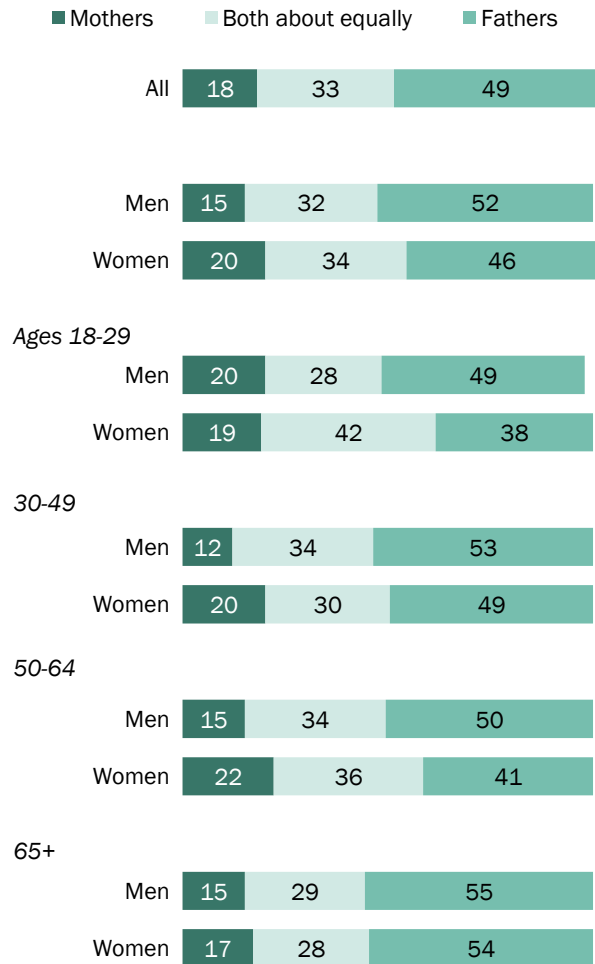
Gender differences are more pronounced among adults ages 18 to 29; about four-in-ten women in this age group (42%) say employers put about the same amount of pressure on fathers and mothers to return to work quickly after welcoming a new child, while 28% of young men share this view. In turn, about half (49%) of adult men younger than 30 say fathers face more pressure than mothers, compared with 38% of women in this age group who say the same. About one-in-five young men (20%) and women (19%) say employers put more pressure on mothers than on fathers.

Among adults ages 30 to 49 and those 50 to 64, similar shares of men and women say employers put about the same amount of pressure on both mothers and fathers, but somewhat higher shares of women than men say mothers face more pressure (20% vs. 12%, respectively, among those ages 30 to 49 and 22% vs. 15% among those 50 to 64). And while half of men ages 50 to 64 say employers put more pressure on fathers, 41% of women in this age group say this is the case.

Differences also emerge across education and income lines. For example, about half of those with household incomes of \$75,000 or more (53%)

### Women 18 to 29 more likely than male counterparts to say employers pressure mothers and fathers equally to return to work quickly after birth or adoption

*% saying employers put more pressure on \_\_\_ to return to work quickly after the birth or adoption of a new child*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016. "Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ Over Specific Policies"

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and those with incomes between \$30,000 and \$74,999 (49%) say employers generally put more pressure on fathers than on mothers to return to work quickly after the birth or adoption of a new child. Among those with household incomes under \$30,000, however, opinions are more evenly divided, with about as many saying there is more pressure on fathers (39%) as say fathers and mothers face about the same amount of pressure (42%). Similarly, 56% of adults with a bachelor's degree or higher say employers put more pressure on fathers to return to work quickly, compared with 48% of those with some college and 43% of those with a high school diploma or less education.

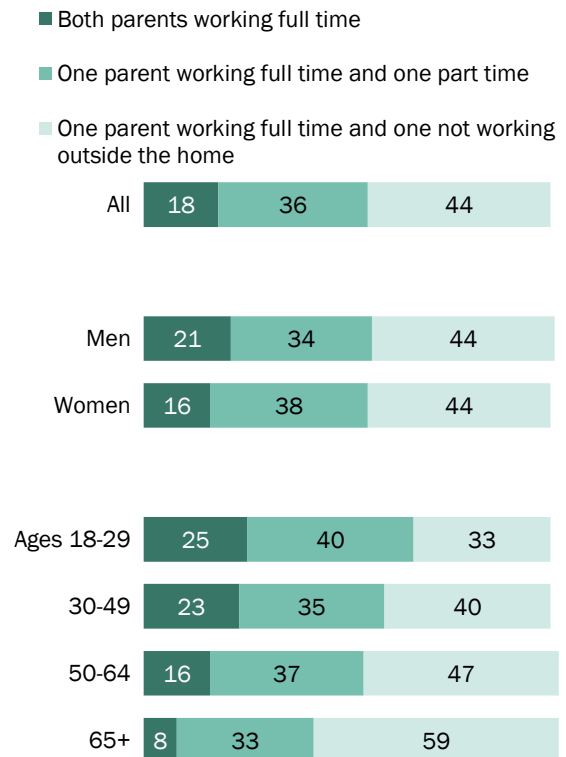
## A plurality says it's ideal for young children to have a stay-at-home parent

Most two-parent households today [include two parents who work](#) at least part time. Still, a 44% plurality of Americans say the ideal situation for a young child in a household with both a mother and a father is for one parent to work full time and one parent to not work outside the home; 36% say the ideal situation for young children is to have one parent working full time and one working part time, while about one-in-five (18%) say having both parents working full time is ideal.

Opinions about the ideal situation for children with a mother and a father vary considerably across age groups, with adults ages 65 and older particularly inclined to say young children are better off with an at-home parent: About six-in-ten adults in this age group (59%) say this is the ideal situation, compared with about half (47%) of those ages 50 to 64 and even smaller shares of those 30 to 49 (40%) and those younger than 30 (33%). Still, among the two younger groups, more say the ideal situation for young children is to have one parent working full time and one part time

## Few say having two full-time working parents is the ideal situation for children in two-parent households

% saying \_\_\_ is the ideal situation for a young child in a two-parent household with a mother and a father



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016. "Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ Over Specific Policies"

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than say it's better for children when both parents work full time (40% vs. 25% among those ages 18 to 29 and 35% vs. 23% among those 30 to 49).

Republicans who describe their views as conservative are far more likely than Americans with other partisan or ideological orientations to prefer a situation for young children where one parent works full time and one parent does not work outside the home: Six-in-ten conservative Republicans say this is the ideal situation, compared with 45% of moderate or liberal Republicans, 37% of moderate or conservative Democrats and 32% of liberal Democrats. Only about a quarter or fewer among each group say it's ideal for young children in two-parent households to have two full-time working parents.

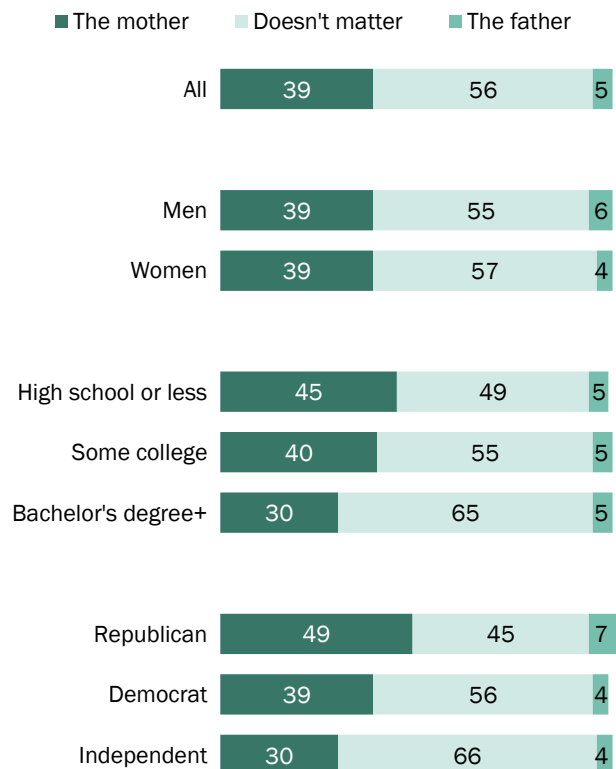
For the most part, Americans who say the ideal situation for young children in a two-parent household with a mother and a father is for one parent to work full time and the other parent to work part time or to not work outside the home say it doesn't matter which parent works part time or stays home (56% say this). Still, about four-in-ten (39%) say the mother should be the one who works part time or doesn't work outside the home, while just 5% point to the father.

Here, too, political orientation is a factor.

Among Democrats and independents who say it's ideal for young children to have one parent at home at least part time, far more say it doesn't matter which parent works part time or stays at home (56% of Democrats and 66% of independents) than say the mother (39% and 30%, respectively) or the father (4% of each) should be the one. Republicans offer more mixed

### About four-in-ten who say children are better off with a parent working part time or not working outside the home say this parent should be the mother

*% saying \_\_\_ should be the one who works part time or does not work outside the home, among those who think these would be the ideal situations for young children*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. "Some college" includes those with a two-year degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016. "Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ Over Specific Policies"

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views: 49% say the mother should stay home or work part time and 45% say it doesn't matter which parent does this.

Educational attainment is also related to views of which parent should work part time or stay home with their young children. Among college graduates who say the ideal situation for children with a mother and a father is for one parent to work full time and one parent to either work part time or not work outside the home, about two-thirds (65%) say it doesn't matter which parent doesn't work full time; 30% say the mother should be the one who works part time or is not employed; and 5% say it should be the father. A narrow majority (55%) of those with some college education but without a bachelor's degree say it doesn't matter which parent stays home or works part time; 40% say it should be the mother; and 5% say it should be the father. By comparison, among those with a high school education or less, about as many say it doesn't matter (49%) as say the mother should be the one who does not work full time (45%).

## 5. An inside look at family and medical leave in America: The experiences of those who took leave and those who needed or wanted to but couldn't

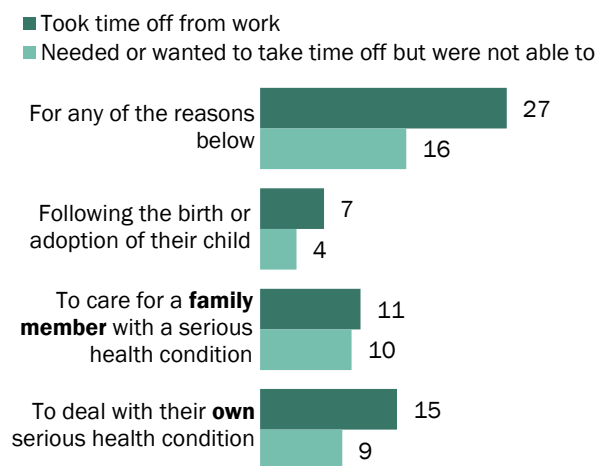
About a quarter (27%) of Americans who have been employed for pay in the past two years, including those who are or were self-employed, report that they took time off from work during this period following the birth or adoption of their child, to care for a family member with a serious health condition, or to deal with their own serious condition. Some 6% have taken time off from work for more than one of these three reasons during this period.<sup>4</sup>

The experiences of these leave takers, including the amount of time they took off, whether or not they received pay during that time, and how they coped with the loss of wages or salary if they didn't vary considerably depending on factors such as their gender, educational attainment and household income.

For example, the survey finds that the median length of leave for mothers after the birth or adoption of a child is 11 weeks, compared with one week for fathers.<sup>5</sup> Among mothers, those with household incomes of \$75,000 or more and those with incomes between \$30,000 and \$74,999 tend to take more time off after birth or adoption than those with incomes below \$30,000 (a median of 12 weeks and 10 weeks, respectively, for the higher and middle income groups vs. six weeks for mothers with lower incomes).

### About a quarter of workers took time off for parental, family or medical reasons in the past two years

*% of those who were employed, including self-employed, in the past two years saying they \_\_\_ during this time ...*



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016. "Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ Over Specific Policies"

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<sup>4</sup> Those who said they took time off from work for more than one reason in the past two years were asked which one happened most recently and were instructed to think about their most recent experience as a leave taker for the remainder of the survey. Similarly, those who said there was a time in the past two years when they needed or wanted to take time off for more than one reason but were not able to do so were asked which one happened more recently and were instructed to think about their most recent experience for the rest of the survey.

<sup>5</sup> The survey was conducted among a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults ages 18 to 70 who have taken – or who needed or wanted but were unable to take – parental, family or medical leave in the past two years. For more details, see the [Methodology](#) section of the report.

Overall, lower-income leave takers – including those who have taken time off from work for parental, family or medical reasons – are less likely than those with higher incomes to say they received at least some pay during their time off.<sup>6</sup> In fact, about six-in-ten (62%) leave takers with household incomes under \$30,000 say they received no pay at all, compared with 40% of those with incomes between \$30,000 and \$74,999 and even fewer (26%) among those with incomes of \$75,000 or more.

The survey findings reveal that the financial consequences of not receiving full pay during family or medical leave can be substantial for many workers. About eight-in-ten leave takers (78%) who say they received no pay or received only part of their regular pay when they took time off from work for parental, family or medical reasons say they cut back on spending to cover lost wages or salary during that time. A third or more say they used savings they had set aside for something else (50%), cut their leave time short (41%), took on debt (37%) or put off paying their bills (33%); about a quarter say they borrowed money from family or friends (24%) or received money from family or friends they weren't expected to pay back (23%), and 17% went on public assistance.

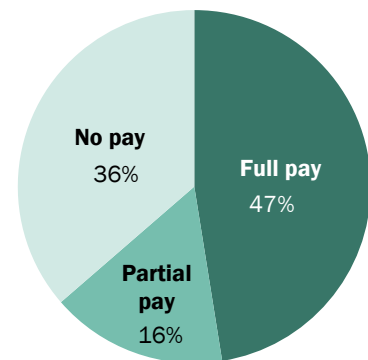
Lower-income leave takers – especially those who took parental leave – are particularly likely to say they had to resort to more consequential measures to make up for the loss of income during their time off. About six-in-ten parental-leave takers (57%) with household incomes under \$30,000 who did not receive their full pay during their leave say they took on debt, while roughly half say they went on public assistance (48%) or put off paying bills (46%).

The survey also explores the experiences of those who say there was a time in the past two years when they *needed or wanted* to take time off from work following the birth or adoption of a child, to care for a family member with a serious health condition, or to deal with their own serious

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### About half of workers say they received full pay when they took time off from work for parental, family or medical reasons

*% of leave takers who say they received \_\_\_ when they took time off from work for parental, family or medical reasons*



Note: Fewer than 0.5% of respondents didn't offer an answer. "Leave takers" refers to those who have taken time off for parental, family or medical reasons in the past two years.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who took or needed/wanted to take leave conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 14, 2016.

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<sup>6</sup> Throughout this chapter, the term "parental leave" refers to time taken off from work following the birth or adoption of a child; "family leave" refers to taking at least five days off from work to care for a family member with a serious health condition; and "medical leave" refers to taking at least five days off from work to deal with one's own serious health condition.

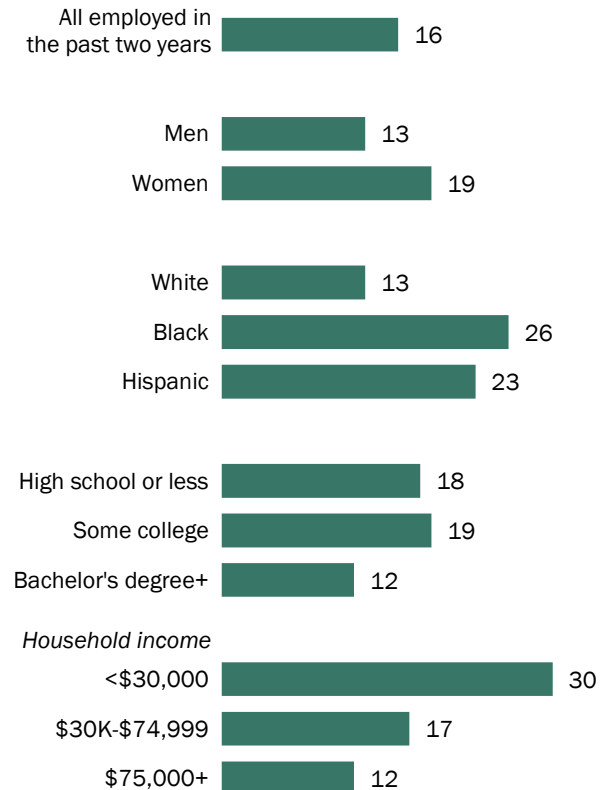
condition but were *unable* to do so for some reason. About one-in-six (16%) American adults who were employed in the past two years say this happened to them during this time, and the share is higher among women as well as among blacks and Hispanics, those without a bachelor's degree and those with annual household incomes under \$30,000.

For example, about a quarter of blacks (26%) and Hispanics (23%) who were employed in the past two years report that there was a time during this period when they needed or wanted to take time off from work but were not able to do so; 13% of employed whites say this happened to them. Similarly, three-in-ten workers with annual household incomes under \$30,000 say they had this experience in the past two years, compared with 17% of those with incomes between \$30,000 and \$74,999 and 12% of those with incomes of \$75,000 or more.

The reasons some people aren't able to take time off from work when these situations arise vary, but most (72%) say they couldn't afford to lose wages or salary. Just over half (54%) of those who didn't take leave when they needed or wanted to say they didn't take time off from work because they thought they might risk losing their job, a concern that is particularly common among lower-income workers. In addition, 42% of workers who needed or wanted to take leave but were unable to do so say they felt badly about co-workers taking on additional work, 40% thought taking time off might hurt their chances for advancement, 36% felt no one else was capable of doing their job, and 32% had their request for time off denied by their employer.

### Demographic differences emerge when looking at those who needed or wanted to take leave but weren't able to

*% saying there was a time in the past two years when they needed or wanted to take time off from work for parental, family or medical reasons but were not able to*



Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. "Some college" includes those with a two-year degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016. "Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ Over Specific Policies"

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## About seven-in-ten fathers say they took two weeks or less off from work following the birth or adoption of their child

The amount of time workers take off from their jobs for parental, family or medical reasons differs depending on the situation. For example, among those who have taken time off from work in the past two years following the birth or adoption of their child, the median length of leave was 4.3 weeks. For those who took time off from work to care for a family member with a serious health condition in the past two years, the median length of leave was two weeks, similar to the median amount of leave taken by those who were dealing with their own serious health condition (2.1 weeks).

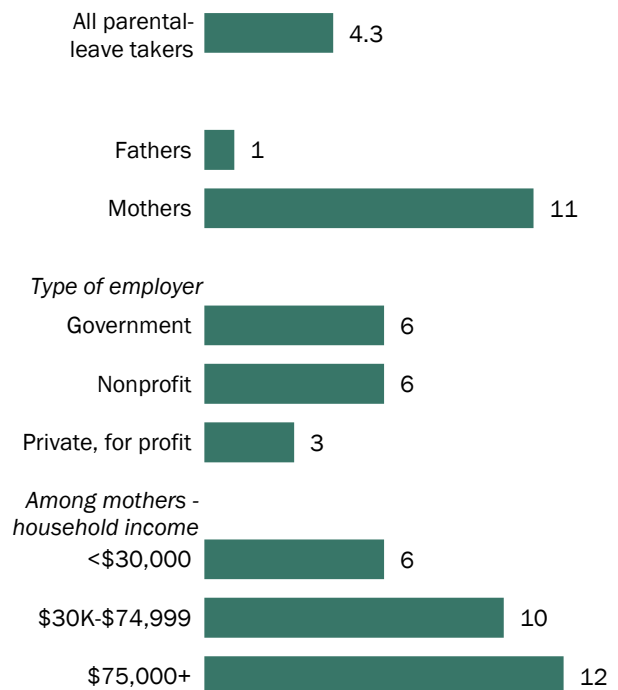
Mothers take much longer leaves than fathers: a median of 11 weeks for mothers vs. one week for fathers. In fact, about seven-in-ten fathers (72%) say they took two weeks or less off from work following the birth or adoption of their child. In contrast, about half (47%) of mothers who took time off from work in the past two years following birth or adoption say they were off for 12 weeks or more. Still, 17% of women say they returned to work less than six weeks after the birth or adoption of their child.

Women with lower household incomes generally take far shorter leaves than those with higher incomes. The median length of leave was 12 weeks for mothers with household incomes of \$75,000 or more and 10 weeks for those with incomes between \$30,000 and \$74,999. In contrast, the median length of leave for mothers with household incomes under \$30,000 was six weeks.

Among all parents who took time off from work following the birth or adoption of their child in the past two years, those who were employed by government or by a nonprofit organization generally

### Length of parental leave varies considerably by gender, type of employer and income

*Median length of leave for those who have taken time off from work in the past two years following the birth or adoption of their child, in weeks*



Source: Survey of U.S. adults who took or needed/wanted to take leave conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 14, 2016.

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took longer leaves than those who were employed by a private, for-profit company (median of six weeks for those in government or in nonprofits vs. three weeks for those in for-profit companies).<sup>7</sup>

For the most part, parents take time off from work all at once following the birth or adoption of their child; 78% say they did this, compared with 16% who say they took time off in separate blocks or as needed. Fathers (22%) are more likely than mothers (9%) to say they took time off in separate blocks or as needed following the birth or adoption of their child.

Among those who took time off from work to care for a family member with a serious health condition in the past two years, 15% took at least six weeks off, and this is more common among women than among men who have taken time off to care for a seriously ill family member (19% vs. 11%). Regardless of the number of weeks they took off, about half (48%) say they took this time off all at once, while about as many (49%) took it in separate blocks or as needed.

Older workers typically take longer leaves than younger workers to deal with their own serious health conditions. Roughly a third (36%) of workers ages 50 and older who took time off for this reason say they were off for at least six weeks, compared with 27% of those 30 to 49 and 23% of those younger than 30. About two-thirds (68%) of those who have taken time off to deal with their own serious health condition took the time off all at once, while 29% say they took it in blocks or as needed.

### **For many parents, amount of time off after birth or adoption of a child wasn't enough**

Among those who took time off from work following the birth or adoption of their child, 56% say they took less time off than they needed or wanted to, while 36% say they took about as much time off as they needed or wanted to and 7% say they took more time than they needed or wanted.

Compared with those who took time off for parental reasons, workers who took time off to care for a family member with a serious health condition or to deal with their own serious condition are more satisfied with the amount of time they spent away from their jobs. About half (50% of those who took leave to care for an ill family member and 55% who took leave because of their own medical condition) say they took about as much time off as they needed or wanted, while close to four-in-ten say they wish they had taken more time off than they did. One-in-ten of those who took

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<sup>7</sup> This analysis does not include those who were self-employed when they took parental leave. There are too few self-employed parental-leave takers to analyze separately.

time off from work to care for an ill family member and 5% of those who were dealing with their own serious health condition say they took more time off than they needed or wanted to.

Mothers and fathers, as well as parents across racial, educational and income groups, give similar assessments of the amount of time they took off from work following the birth or adoption of their child. For example, about six-in-ten fathers who took time off from work (59%) say they took less time off than

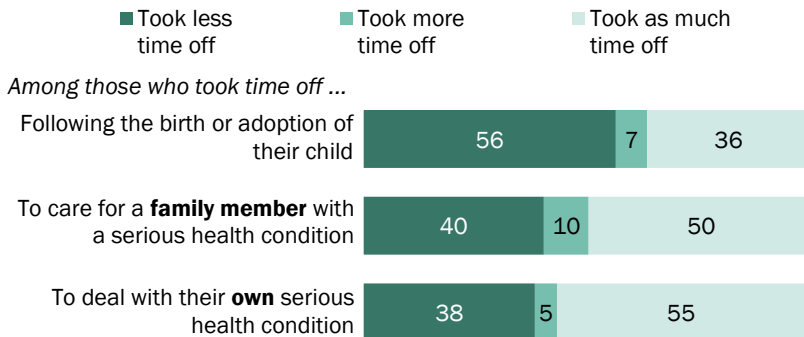
they needed or wanted to, while 5% say they took more time off and 35% say they took about as much time off as they needed or wanted to. Among mothers, 53% wish they had taken more time off, while 10% say they took more time off than they needed or wanted to; 37% said they took about the right amount of time off.

There is a significant income gap in satisfaction with the amount of time taken off among workers who took leave to care for an ill family member or to deal with their own health problem. Among those who took time off from work in the past two years to care for a family member with a serious health condition, six-in-ten workers with annual household incomes of \$75,000 or more say they took as much time off as they needed or wanted to. By comparison, only about four-in-ten of those with incomes below \$75,000 say the same.

Those with lower incomes who took time off to deal with their own serious health condition are also less likely than those with higher incomes to say they took as much time off as they needed or wanted to. About four-in-ten (42%) of those with household incomes under \$30,000 say this is the case, while about as many (47%) say they took less time off than they needed or wanted to. Among those with household incomes of \$75,000 or more, six-in-ten say they took as much time off as they needed or wanted (35% say they wish they had taken more time off).

## Just over half of parental-leave takers say they took less time off from work than they needed or wanted to

% of leave takers saying they \_\_\_\_\_ than they needed or wanted to



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. "Leave takers" refers to those who have taken time off for parental, family or medical reasons in the past two years. Source: Survey of U.S. adults who took or needed/wanted to take leave conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 14, 2016.

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## Concerns about loss of wages or salary top the list of reasons why some take less time off than they need or want to

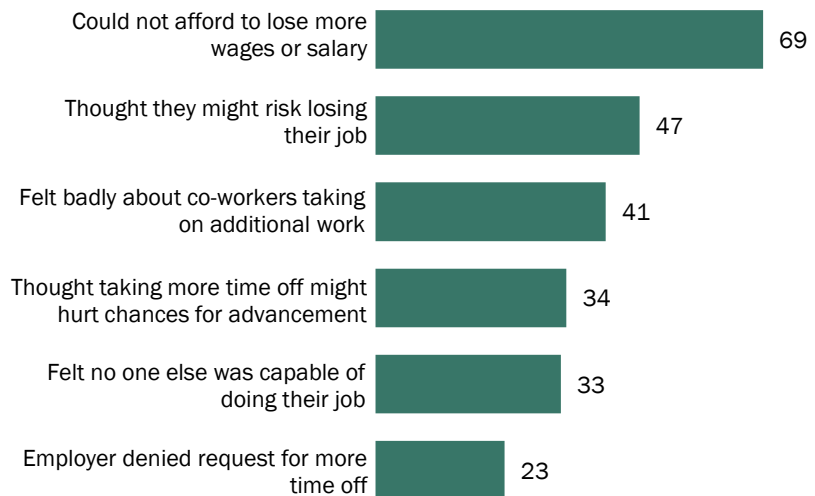
When those who say they took less time off from work than they needed or wanted to following birth or adoption of their child, to care for a family member with a serious health condition or to deal with their own serious condition are asked why they did not take more time off, financial concerns top the list of reasons. About seven-in-ten (69%) say they could not afford to lose more wages or salary.

Nearly half (47%) of leave takers who took less time off from work than they needed or wanted to say they thought they might risk losing their job if they took more time off, while 41% say they felt badly about co-workers taking on additional work. About a third thought taking more time off might hurt their chances for job advancement (34%) or felt that no one else was capable of doing their job (33%). Roughly a quarter (23%) of those who took less time off than they needed or wanted to say their employer denied their request for more time off.

Across income levels, majorities of leave takers who say they took less time off from work than they needed or wanted to cite loss of wages or salary as a reason. But while most (63%) of those with household incomes below \$30,000 say they thought they might risk losing their job if they took more time off, middle- and higher-income workers are much less likely to point to this as a factor (47% among those with incomes between \$30,000 and \$74,999 and 42% among those

### Most who took less time off than they needed or wanted to cite loss of wages or salary as a reason

*% of leave takers who took less time off than they needed or wanted to saying each is a reason why this happened*



Note: "Leave takers" refers to those who have taken time off for parental, family or medical reasons in the past two years.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who took or needed/wanted to take leave conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 14, 2016.

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earning \$75,000 or more). Differences across income groups are not as pronounced on any of the other items.

Those who say there was a time in the past two years when they needed or wanted to take time off from work but were not able to do so also point to financial and career concerns as reasons why they didn't take time off. About seven-in-ten (72%) say not being able to afford to lose wages or salary was a reason why they didn't take time off. About half thought they might risk losing their job (54%), while about four-in-ten say they felt badly about their co-workers taking on additional work (42%) or worried that taking time off might hurt their chances for job advancement (40%); 36% of those who did not take leave when they needed or wanted to felt no one else was capable of doing their job and 32% say their request for time off was denied.

### **Lower-income, less-educated workers are the least likely to receive pay when taking time off for parental, family or medical reasons**

A majority of Americans who took time off from work in the past two years for parental, family or medical reasons say they received at least some pay during this time, including 47% who received the same amount as their regular pay and 16% who received only part of their regular pay; 36% of leave takers received no pay.

Experiences vary dramatically by income. A majority (62%) of leave takers with household incomes under \$30,000 say they received no pay when they took time off from work for parental, family or medical reasons. In contrast, six-in-ten leave takers with household incomes between \$30,000 and \$74,999 (60%) and an even higher share (74%) of those with incomes of \$75,000 or more say they received at least some pay, including 42% of those in the middle income group and 58% of those in the higher income group who say they received full pay during the time they were off from work.

The pattern is similar when it comes to educational attainment. About six-in-ten (59%) leave takers with a bachelor's degree or more education say they received full pay during their time off from work, compared with 47% of those with some college experience and even fewer (34%) among those with a high school education or less. Roughly half (48%) of those with a high school diploma or less received no pay during their parental, family or medical leave.

Fathers are far more likely than mothers to say they received the same as their regular pay when they took time off from work following the birth or adoption of their child: 62% of fathers say this,

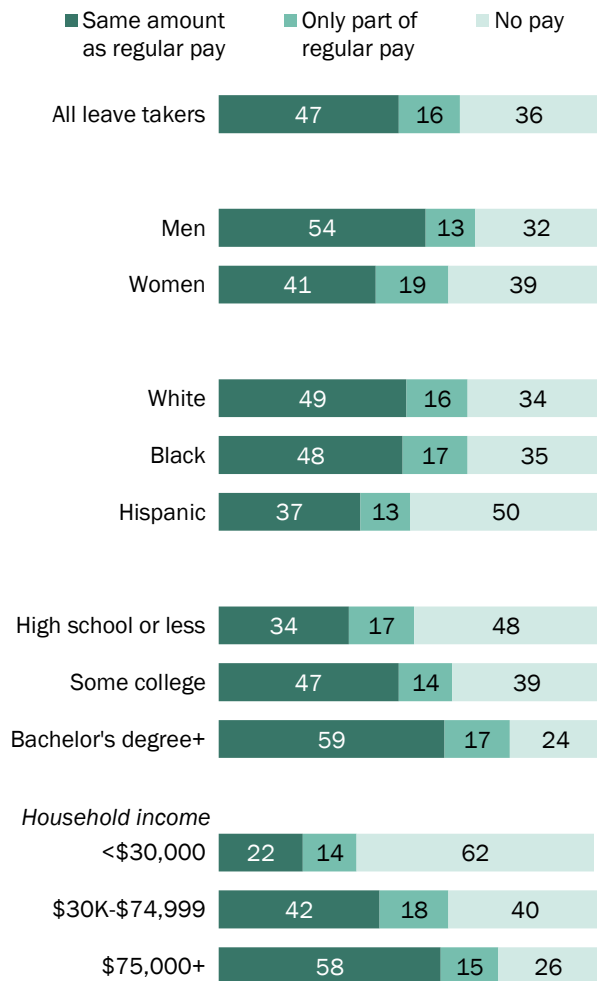
compared with only a quarter of mothers. This may be, at least in part, because fathers report having taken considerably less time off from work than mothers. Seven-in-ten fathers and six-in-ten mothers say they received at least some pay during their time off from work. Men and women who took time off in the past two years to care for a family member with a serious health condition or to deal with their own serious condition are about equally likely to say they received pay, including similar shares who say they were paid the same as their regular pay.

Among all leave takers who received only part of their regular pay, a majority say it was difficult for them to have enough money to cover their basic expenses during their time off from work (41% say it was somewhat difficult, 18% say it was very difficult). This is particularly the case for those who took leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition (65% say it was difficult to cover basic expenses) or to deal with their own serious health condition (64%). About half (49%) of those who took time off from work following the birth or adoption of their child and received only part of their regular pay say it was hard for them to cover their basic expenses during their leave.

Leave takers with annual household incomes under \$30,000 (75%) and those with incomes between \$30,000 and \$74,999 (63%) are more likely than those with higher incomes to say it was difficult for them to cover their basic expenses when they were receiving only part of

## Leave takers with lower incomes and less education are the least likely to say they received at least some pay

*% of leave takers who say they received \_\_\_ when they took time off from work for parental, family or medical reasons*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. "Leave takers" refers to those who have taken time off for parental, family or medical reasons in the past two years. Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. "Some college" includes those with a two-year degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who took or needed/wanted to take leave conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 14, 2016.

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their pay. But even among those with incomes of \$75,000 or more, half say this was the case.

### About eight-in-ten used vacation days or sick leave in order to receive pay; about one-in-five had employer-paid leave separate from vacation or sick leave

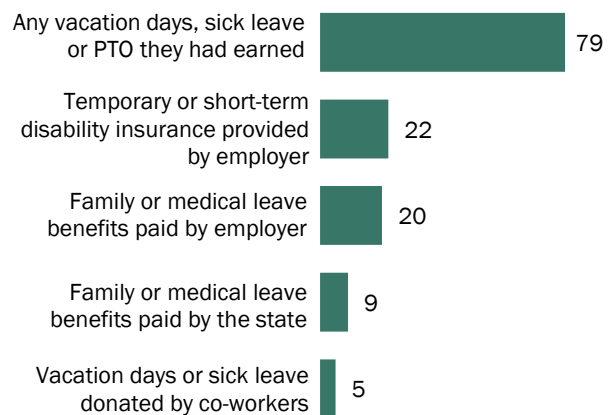
About eight-in-ten Americans (79%) who received at least some pay when they took time off from work in the past two years for parental, family or medical reasons report that at least part of their pay came from vacation, sick leave or paid time off (PTO) they had earned. Roughly one-in-five say at least some of the pay they received was part of temporary or short-term disability insurance provided by their employer (22%) or part of family or medical leave benefits paid by their employer (20%). Relatively few say they received pay from family or medical leave benefits paid by their state (9%) or from vacation days or sick leave donated to them by their co-workers (5%).

Among those who received pay when they took time off from work following the birth or adoption of their child, an equal share of mothers (76%) and fathers (74%) say at least part of their pay came from vacation, sick leave or PTO they had earned. But mothers are far more likely than fathers to report that at least some of the pay they received was part of temporary or short-term disability (50% vs. 10%), family or medical leave paid by their employer (35% vs. 23%), and family or medical leave paid by the state (23% vs. 7%).

Those who took paid time off from work following the birth or adoption of their child are more likely than those who took paid time off to care for a family member with a serious health condition or to deal with their own serious condition to say they received at least some pay as part of family or medical leave benefits paid by their employer, separate from vacation, sick leave or PTO (28% vs. 15% and 17%, respectively).

### About eight-in-ten leave takers who received pay used vacation days, sick leave or PTO they had earned

*% of leave takers who received full or partial pay saying at least some of their pay came from ...*



Note: "Leave takers" refers to those who have taken time off for parental, family or medical reasons in the past two years.  
Source: Survey of U.S. adults who took or needed/wanted to take leave conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 14, 2016.  
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Leave takers who were employed by a private, for-profit company are somewhat more likely than those who were employed by government or by a nonprofit organization to say at least some of their pay was part of family or medical leave benefits paid by their employer (22% vs. 15%).

Leave takers who received pay when they took time off from work for parental, family or medical reasons in the past two years report that they often needed to combine various benefits in order to cover their wages or salary during their leave. Most leave takers who received pay (62%) say their pay came from only one source. Still, about three-in-ten (29%) say their pay came from two or more benefits.

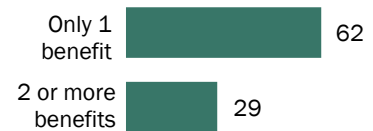
Mothers who received pay when they were on leave from work following the birth or adoption of their child are the most likely to report that their pay was part of two or more benefits (60% vs. 22% of fathers who received pay when they took time off for the same reason). This reflects, at least in part, the fact that mothers tend to take more time off from work than fathers, which may require tapping into additional benefits in order to receive pay.

Among those who say there was a time in the past two years when they needed or wanted to take time off from work for parental, family or medical reasons but were not able to do so, half say they had access to paid vacation, sick leave or PTO at the time; 26% say they had access to temporary or short-term disability insurance provided by their employer; 21% say they had access to family or medical leave benefits paid by their employer; and 14% say they had access to family or medical leave benefits paid by the state.

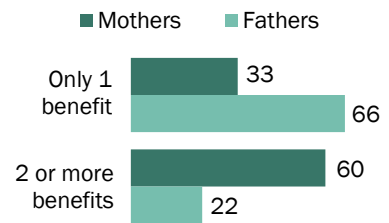
Among workers who weren't able to take time off when they needed or wanted to, those with household incomes of \$75,000 or more are far more likely than those with lower incomes to say they had access to vacation, sick leave or PTO at the time. Six-in-ten in the higher income group say this, compared with 49% of those with household incomes between \$30,000 and \$74,000 and just 29% of those with incomes under \$30,000. And while about a third (34%) of those with incomes of \$75,000 or more say they had access to temporary or short-term disability insurance

### About three-in-ten leave takers who received pay combined two or more benefits

*% of all leave takers who received full or partial pay saying their pay came from ...*



*% of parental-leave takers who received full or partial pay saying their pay came from ...*



Note: Share of respondents who said they were not sure or who didn't offer an answer for any of the listed benefits not shown. "Leave takers" refers to those who have taken time off for parental, family or medical reasons in the past two years. Source: Survey of U.S. adults who took or needed/wanted to take leave conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 14, 2016. "Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ Over Specific Policies"

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and a quarter say they had access to family or medical leave paid by their employer, fewer among those in the middle and lower income groups say the same (19% in each group say they had access to temporary or short-term disability and 15% and 13%, respectively, say they had access to employer-paid family or medical leave).

### **In addition to cutting back on spending, many cut their leave short, take on debt or use savings to cover lost wages**

People who take unpaid or partially paid time off from work for parental, family or medical reasons often have to make financial sacrifices to compensate for the shortfall in earnings. About eight-in-ten (78%) say they cut back on their spending during this time, while half say they used savings they had set aside for something else to cover lost wages or salary. Fewer than half say they used savings they had set aside for the particular situation that led them to take time off (45%), cut their leave short (41%) or took on debt (37%).

A third of leave takers who received no pay or received only some of their regular pay say they put off paying their bills during their time off, while about a quarter say they borrowed money from family or friends (24%) or received money from family or friends that they weren't expected to pay back (23%). About one-in-five (17%) say they went on public assistance in order to cover lost wages or salary.

While majorities of leave takers across income groups who received no pay or only some pay during their time off say they cut back on spending during this time, those with household incomes under

### **Many lower-income parental-leave takers say they took on debt, went on public assistance or put off paying bills to cover lost wages or salary**

*% of those who received only some pay or no pay when they took parental leave saying they did each of the following to cover lost wages or salary*

	All parental-leave takers	— Household income —		
		<\$30K	\$30K-\$74,999	\$75K+
	%	%	%	%
Cut back on spending	75	78	81	69
Used savings set aside for this situation	54	52	50	57
Used savings set aside for something else	43	43	47	41
Took on debt	41	57	38	36
Cut their leave time short	38	37	33	41
Put off paying their bills	27	46	35	13
Received money from family or friends that they weren't expected to pay back	23	44	19	18
Went on public assistance	21	48	28	5
Borrowed money from family or friends	19	45	17	11

Note: "Parental-leave takers" refers to those who have taken time off following the birth or adoption of their child in the past two years.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who took or needed/wanted to take leave conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 14, 2016.

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\$30,000 are far more likely than those with higher incomes to say they had to take more consequential measures, such as taking on debt, putting off paying their bills, and going on public assistance, in order to cover their lost wages or salary, and this is particularly the case among those who have taken parental leave in the past two years.

About six-in-ten parental-leave takers (57%) with household incomes under \$30,000 who did not receive their full pay when they took time off from work following the birth or adoption of their child say they took on debt to deal with the loss of wages or salary; roughly half say they went on public assistance (48%) or put off paying their bills (46%).

Among those with household incomes between \$30,000 and \$74,999, a smaller but not insignificant share (28%) say they went on public assistance during the time they took off from work following the birth or adoption of their child; just 5% of those with household incomes of \$75,000 or more say they did this. About a third (35%) of those in the middle income group also say they put off paying their bills, compared with 13% of those with higher incomes.

## Leave takers who received full pay for parental, family or medical time off are more likely to say they then went back to work for same employer

More than eight-in-ten Americans (86%) who took time off from work in the past two years for parental, family or medical reasons say they continued working for the same employer following this time off; 7% went to work for a new employer and 7% did not go back to work.

Leave takers who received pay – particularly those who were paid the same amount as their regular pay – are more likely than those who took unpaid time off to say they went back to work for the same employer: 97% of those who received full pay and 85% of those who received part of their regular pay say this is the case, compared with 74% of those who did not receive any pay. Among those who did not receive pay, 13% say they went back to work

### Nearly all leave takers who received full pay say they went back to work for the same employer

*% of leave takers saying they went back to work for the same employer after they took time off from work for parental, family or medical reasons*



Note: "Leave takers" refers to those who have taken time off for parental, family or medical reasons in the past two years.  
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for a new employer and 13% did not go back to work.

One-in-eight mothers (12%) who took time off from work following the birth or adoption of their child say they did not go back to work after their time off; just 1% of fathers say this is the case. Among fathers, 95% went back to work for the same employer; 79% of mothers did the same.

### Leave takers with higher incomes and a bachelor's degree are more likely to say their supervisor was very supportive when they needed to take time off from work

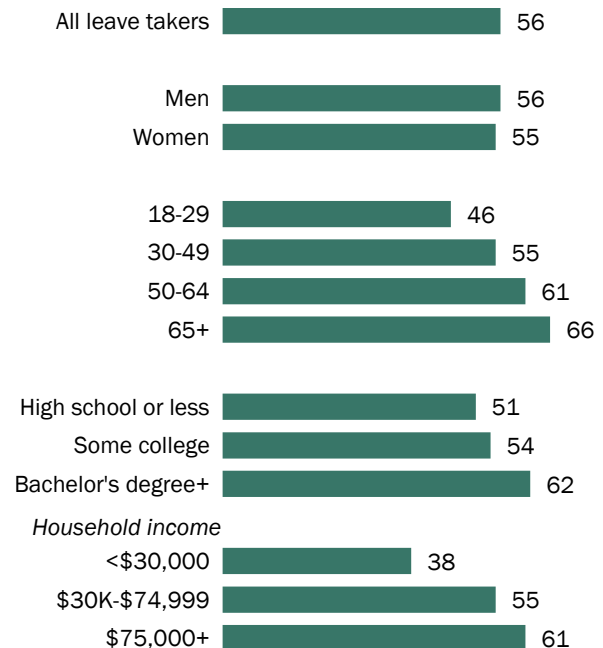
About eight-in-ten leave takers (83%) say their supervisor was at least somewhat supportive when they took time off from work for parental, family or medical reasons, including 56% who say their supervisor was very supportive. Similar shares of those who took time off following the birth or adoption of their child (58%), to care for a family member with a serious health condition (53%) or to deal with their own serious condition (56%) say their supervisor was very supportive when they needed to take time off from work.

Older adults, as well as those with higher household incomes, are particularly likely to say their supervisor was very supportive. For example, about two-thirds (66%) of leave takers ages 65 and older and 61% of those ages 50 to 64 say their supervisor was very supportive, compared with 55% of those ages 30 to 49 and 46% of those younger than 30.

Among leave takers with annual household incomes of \$75,000 or more, about six-in-ten (61%) say their supervisor was very supportive when they took time off from work, compared with 55% of those with middle incomes and just 38% of those with incomes under \$30,000. Similarly, higher shares of those

### Fewer than half of lower-income leave takers say their supervisor was very supportive when they took time off

*% of leave takers saying their supervisor was very supportive when they took time off from work for parental, family or medical reasons*



Note: "Leave takers" refers to those who have taken time off for parental, family or medical reasons in the past two years. "Some college" includes those with a two-year degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who took or needed/wanted to take leave conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 14, 2016.

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with at least a bachelor's degree (62%) than those with some college (54%) or with a high school diploma or less (51%) describe their supervisor as very supportive.

When it comes to taking leave following the birth or adoption of a child, mothers and fathers are about equally likely to say their supervisor was very supportive (57% and 59%, respectively). There are also no significant differences in the shares of women and men saying their supervisor was very supportive when they took time off to care for a family member with a serious health condition or to deal with their own serious condition.

The vast majority (89%) of leave takers also say their co-workers were very or somewhat supportive when they took time off from work, with 61% saying their co-workers were very supportive. As is the case with assessments of a supervisor's support, older leave takers and those with higher incomes are more likely than those who are younger and have lower incomes to say their co-workers were very supportive. Men and women across the different types of leave – parental, family and medical – are about equally likely to report that their co-workers were very supportive when they took time off from work.

### **Many workers report responding to phone calls, emails while on family or medical leave**

About four-in-ten (42%) leave takers say they had to respond to work-related emails or phone calls during their time off frequently (14%) or occasionally (28%); most say they rarely (26%) or never (32%) had to do this. Those who took time off to care for a family member are more likely than those who took parental or medical leave to say they had to do this at least occasionally (52% vs. 39% each among those who took parental or medical leave).

Leave takers with a bachelor's degree or more education and those with higher incomes are more likely than those with less education and lower incomes to say they had to respond to work-related emails or phone calls at least occasionally. For example, 53% of those with at least a bachelor's degree say they had to do this, compared with 38% of those with some college experience and 33% of those with a high school education or less.

Men and women who took leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition or to deal with their own serious condition are about equally likely to say they had to respond to work-related emails or phone calls while they were taking time off from work. Among those who took time off following the birth or adoption of their child, however, a higher share of men than women say they had to do this at least occasionally during their time off (44% vs. 34%).

Most leave takers (69%) who had to respond to work-related email or phone calls at least occasionally say they were not bothered by this, but about three-in-ten (31%) say it did bother them. Those who were taking time off from work following the birth or adoption of their child (38%) or to deal with their own serious health condition (31%) are more likely than those who were taking time off to care for an ill family member (24%) to say it bothered them to have to respond to work-related emails or phone calls.

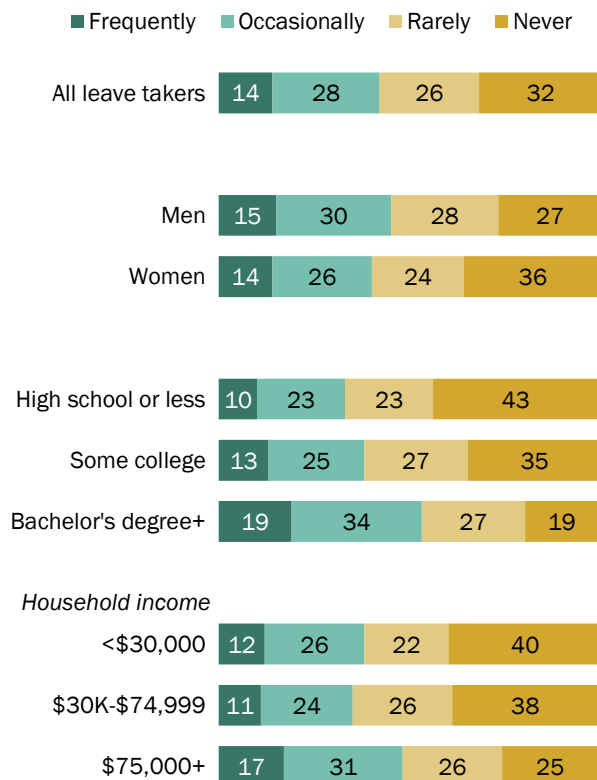
### Many who took or needed or wanted to take time off say it was hard for them to learn about available benefits

Three-in-ten leave takers say it was difficult for them to learn about what leave benefits, if any, were available to them when they took time off from work for parental, family or medical reasons, and this is particularly the case among those who say their supervisor wasn't supportive when they took time off: 64% of those who say their supervisor was not too or not at all supportive say it was difficult to learn about leave benefits, compared with 24% of those with more supportive supervisors.

Leave takers with lower incomes and without college experience are more likely than those with higher incomes and at least some college experience to say it was difficult for them to learn about leave benefits that might be available to them. For example, about four-in-

### About half of leave takers with a bachelor's degree, higher incomes say they had to respond to work-related communication

*% of leave takers saying they had to respond to work-related emails or phone calls when they took time off from work for parental, family or medical reasons ...*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. "Leave takers" refers to those who have taken time off for parental, family or medical reasons in the past two years. "Some college" includes those with a two-year degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree.

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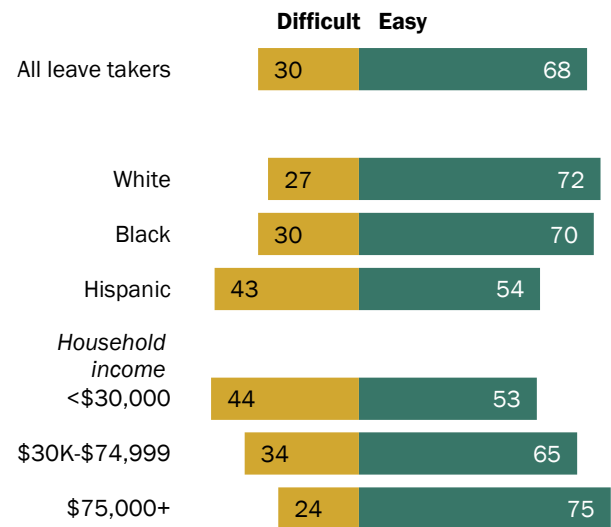
ten (44%) of those with household incomes under \$30,000 said this was the case, compared with 34% of those with incomes between \$30,000 and \$74,999 and 24% of those with household incomes of \$75,000 or more.

Among Hispanics who have taken time off from work for parental, family or medical reasons in the past two years, 43% say it was hard to learn about benefits that might be available, more than the shares of white (27%) or black (30%) leave takers who say the same. Hispanics who needed or wanted to take leave but were not able to do so are also more likely than their white and black counterparts to say it was difficult for them to learn about what benefits, if any, might be available to them when they needed or wanted to take time off (58% vs. 47% and 38%, respectively).

Overall, about half (49%) of those who didn't take time off when they needed or wanted to say it was hard for them to learn what leave benefits, if any, were available to them when they needed or wanted to take time off from work for parental, family or medical reasons but were not able to do so.

### Hispanics and those with lower incomes are particularly likely to say it was difficult to learn about leave benefits

*% of leave takers saying it was very or somewhat \_\_\_\_\_ for them to learn about what leave benefits, if any, were available to them*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. "Leave takers" refers to those who have taken time off for parental, family or medical reasons in the past two years. Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who took or needed/wanted to take leave conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 14, 2016.

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## A quarter of women say taking time off from work after birth or adoption had a negative impact on their job or career

About one-in-five Americans who took leave from work in the past two years (21%) say taking time off had a negative impact on their job or career, while 16% say it had a positive impact; 63% of leave takers say it didn't make much difference.

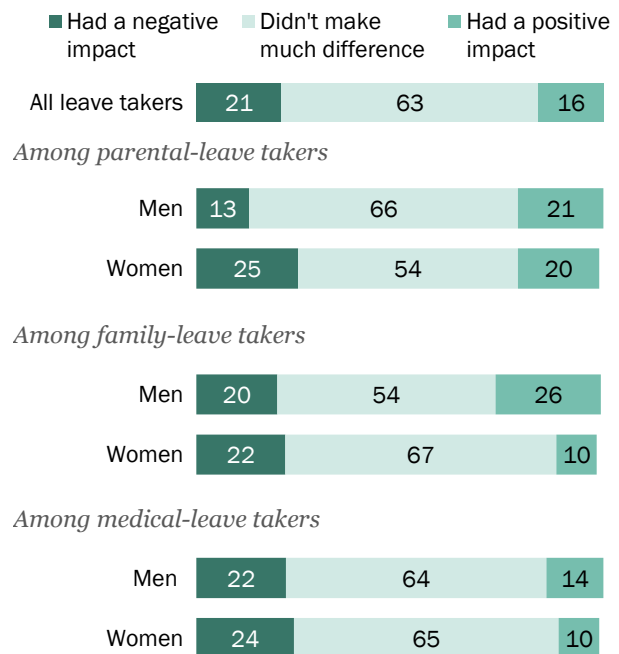
Among those who took time off from work following the birth or adoption of their child, women are nearly twice as likely as men to say this had a negative impact on their job or career: 25% of women say this, compared with 13% of men. Men, in turn, are more likely than women to say the time they took off following the birth or adoption of their child didn't make much difference on their job or career (66% vs. 54%).

When it comes to taking time off to care for a family member with a serious health condition, about one-in-five men (20%) and women (22%) say taking time off had a negative impact on their job or career. However, higher shares of men than women who took time off from work for this reason say taking time off had a positive impact at work: About a quarter (26%) of men say this, compared with just 10% of women. There are no gender differences when it comes to assessments of the impact of taking time off to deal with one's own medical issue.

Assessments of the impact on one's family of taking leave are decidedly positive, particularly when it comes to taking time off from work following the birth or adoption of a child or to care for a family member with a serious health condition. About eight-in-ten (79%) of those who took

### Men, women offer somewhat different views of the impact of taking parental or family leave on their job or career

% saying taking time off from work for parental, family or medical reasons \_\_\_\_ on their job or career



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. "Leave takers" refers to those who have taken time off for parental, family or medical reasons in the past two years.

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parental leave say taking time off had a positive impact on their family, as do 72% of those who were caring for an ill family member. Among those who took time off to deal with their own serious health condition, just 34% say this had a positive impact on their family, while 17% say it had a negative impact and 48% say it didn't make much difference.

For those who were not able to take time off from work when they needed or wanted to, significant shares say the inability to take leave had a negative impact on their family; overall, 45% say this is the case, while 21% say not taking time off had a positive impact on their family and a third say it didn't make much difference.

### In deciding who will care for an ill family member, geography and closeness of the relationship come into play

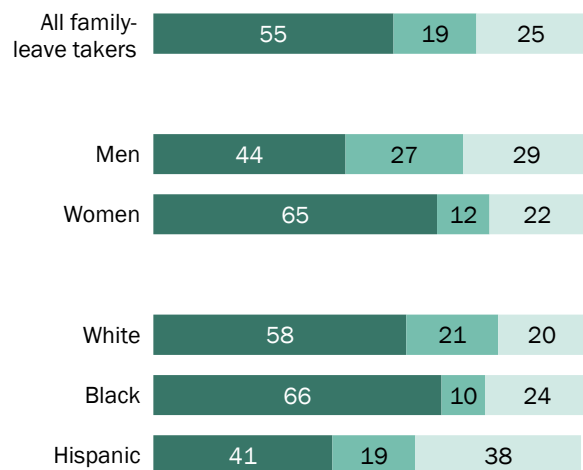
Just over half (55%) of those who took time off from work to care for a family member with a serious health condition in the past two years say that they provided more care than anyone else in their family for these family members; about one-in-five (19%) say someone else in their family provided more care and a quarter say they and others in their family provided about the same amount of care.

Primary caregiving responsibilities tend to fall to women more than men. For example, 65% of women who took time off from work to care for an ill family member say they were the primary caregiver, compared with 44% of men. Higher shares of whites and blacks (58% and 66%, respectively) than Hispanics (41%) who took time off from work for this reason say they were the primary caregiver. Hispanics, in turn, are more likely than whites and blacks to say caring responsibilities were shared about equally by them and others in

### About two-thirds of women who took family leave say they were the primary caregiver for their ill family member

% of family-leave takers saying ...

- They provided more care than anyone else in their family
- Someone else in their family provided more care
- They and others in their family provided about the same amount of care



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. "Leave takers" refers to those who have taken time off in the past two years. Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race.

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their family (38% vs. 20% and 24%).

Families weigh a variety of factors in deciding how to delegate caregiving responsibilities. Among those who took time off to care for a family member who was ill, about half say they considered who lived closer to the family member who needed care (49%), who had a closer relationship with the family member who needed care (49%), and who would do a better job providing care (48%).<sup>8</sup> Some 36% say who had fewer work responsibilities was a factor, while fewer (28%) say who had fewer family responsibilities was a factor.

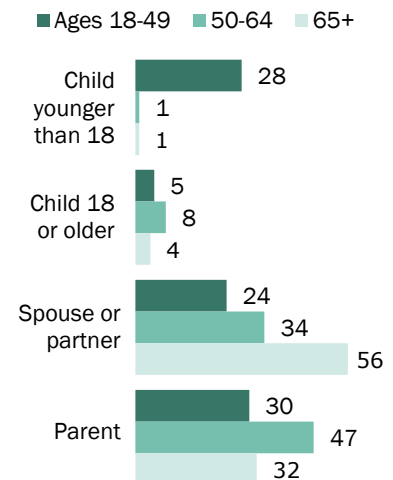
### Many ages 65 and older who take time off to care for an ill family member are caring for a spouse or partner; those 50 to 64 tend to be caring for a parent

For the most part, those who took time off from work in the past two years to care for a family member with a serious health condition say they were caring for only one seriously ill family member during this time; 87% say this is the case, while 12% were caring for more than one family member with a serious health condition.

Those who were caring for only one family member with a serious health condition were typically caring for one of their parents (36%) or for their spouse or partner (29%). Some 17% say they were caring for their child younger than 18, while fewer say they were caring for their adult child (6%), a sibling (3%) or a grandparent (3%). Adults ages 65 and older who took time off from work to care for a family member with a serious health condition are far more likely than those who are younger to say they were caring for a spouse or partner; 56% in the older group say this, compared with 34% of those 50 to 64 and 24% of those younger than 50. In turn, larger shares of family-leave takers ages 50 to 64 than of those who are younger or older say they were caring for one of their parents when they took time off from work (47% say this vs. 32% of those 65 and older and 30% of those younger than 50). About three-in-ten (28%) adults younger than 50 who took time off from work to care for a

### Among family-leave takers ages 50 to 64, about half were caring for a seriously ill parent

*% of family-leave takers who were caring for only one family member who say this family member was their ...*



Note: "Leave takers" refers to those who have taken time off in the past two years. Source: Survey of U.S. adults who took or needed/wanted to take leave conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 14, 2016.

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<sup>8</sup> Only those who were caring for a family member other than their spouse or partner were asked if they considered who lived closer to the family member when deciding who would provide the most care.



family member with a serious health condition say they were caring for their child younger than 18; only 1% of those 50 and older say this.

## Along with physical recovery, flexibility and generosity of leave are among top factors couples consider when deciding who takes more time off after birth or adoption

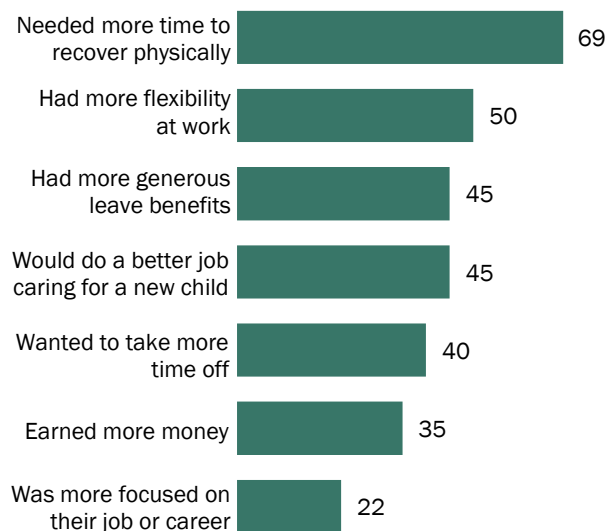
Among parental-leave takers with a spouse or partner who was employed at the time, about eight-in-ten (83%) say their spouse or partner took at least some time off from work, even if just a few days, following the birth or adoption of their child, while 17% say their spouse or partner did not take any time off. About a quarter (24%) of women who were married to or living with a partner who was employed when they took leave say their spouse or partner didn't take any time off after the birth or adoption of their child; just 8% of men say the same about their spouse or partner.

Nearly all women (95%) who were married or living with a partner who took time off from work following the birth or adoption of their child say their spouse or partner took less time off from work than they did; this is the case whether women were working full time or part time. Among men who took time off from work following the birth or adoption of their child, 82% say their spouse or partner took more time off from work than they did.

When parental-leave takers whose spouse or partner didn't take time off or who say that one took more time off than the other (rather than saying both took about the same amount of time off) are asked how they decided who would take more time off, most (69%) say they took into account who needed more time to recover physically. About half say they took into

### Physical recovery cited more than any other item as a factor in deciding who would take more time off after the birth or adoption of a child

*% of parental-leave takers who were married or living with a partner who was employed at the time saying they considered who \_\_\_ when deciding who would take more time off*



Note: "Leave takers" refers to those who have taken time off in the past two years.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who took or needed/wanted to take leave conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 14, 2016.

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consideration who had more flexibility at work (50%), who had more generous leave benefits (45%) and who would do a better job caring for a new child (45%). About four-in-ten say who wanted to take more time off (40%) or who earned more money (35%) was a deciding factor, while 22% say focus on job or career was.

Women and men are generally about equally likely to say each of these was a factor in deciding whether they or their spouse or partner would take more time off from work following the birth or adoption of their child, with two exceptions: Men are more likely than women to say that who wanted to take more time off was a deciding factor (48% vs. 34%), and women are more likely than men to point to earnings as a factor (42% vs. 27%).

## 6. Focus groups with adults who recently took, or needed or wanted to take, parental or family leave

Pew Research Center conducted a series of focus groups to better understand the experiences of people who have taken leave – paid or unpaid – to care for a new child or other family member and those who have needed or wanted to take leave but were unable to do so for some reason. These focus group discussions with a diverse selection of Americans supplement findings from the nationally representative survey of U.S. adults who took or [who needed or wanted to take leave](#) and provide a glimpse inside the lives of American workers who have navigated the variable landscape of family leave.

Focus group participants were asked to describe in detail their experiences with taking leave from work, reflecting on financial considerations, the ease or difficulty of arranging the leave, their satisfaction with their leave arrangements, emotional aspects of the leave, family dynamics, relationships with supervisors and co-workers, and the impact that taking leave may have had on their career. The conversations also explored participants' views about what, if anything, could have been done to improve their own leave-taking experience, along with broader attitudes about family leave policies in the U.S. and the role of employers and the government in providing benefits.

Discussions revealed that, in taking time off to care for a family member, no two workers' experiences are exactly alike. Some feel they were able to take a leave that was well-suited to their needs, while others found a way to manage despite the limitations of their employers' leave policies or faced challenges in their work or personal lives in the face of trying to cope with their caregiving responsibilities.

### Themes in focus group discussions of parental, family and medical leave

1. Family medical emergencies can put workers in crisis. Due in part to the unpredictability of these situations, caregivers may have a harder time structuring a successful leave than new parents do.
2. Receiving pay during a leave sometimes requires depleting accrued time off; without paid leave available, many workers often face difficult situations.
3. Many workers who take leave worry about the impact their absence will have on co-workers, and some also worry about the long-term consequences their leave may have on their career.
4. In addition to having access to paid leave, workers value flexibility in the way leave policies are administered.
5. Caregivers and new parents recognize the constraints employers face in granting paid leave, but they also see potential rewards for employers that provide robust leave policies.
6. There is little agreement about how paid family and medical leave benefits should be provided and what role government should play.

Though these focus groups are not necessarily representative of those who took or who needed or wanted to take leave generally, they can provide a more complete picture of the experiences of workers in situations like these and help explain why some express the views they do. Short biographical descriptions are provided for context and generally reflect the participant's experience at the time he or she needed or wanted to take leave. Several themes emerged in the focus group discussions:

**Family medical emergencies can put workers in crisis; due in part to unpredictability, caregivers may have a harder time than new parents structuring a successful leave**

According to the national survey, among leave takers who took less time off than they needed or wanted to, those who were caring for a family member with a serious health condition were far more likely than parental-leave takers to say the risk of losing their job if they took more time off was a reason they took less time off than they needed or wanted to (62% vs. 37%).

Many focus group participants talked freely about the painful experiences they had and the difficult decisions they had to make when caring for ill family members. Each story was unique, yet many shared certain elements — a sudden crisis for which they were unprepared, and a developing situation that was complex and many-faceted.

*“Well, one day was normal and the next day I was taking possession – inheriting two adult disabled children.”*

– Birmingham, Alabama, man who left his job to care for his parents and two disabled cousins

**About the focus groups**

Each focus group consisted of eight to 10 adults coming together for an hour and a half to two hours for a discussion led by a professional moderator. All participants had taken leave from work (or needed or wanted to take leave but were not able to) following the birth or adoption of a child or to care for a family member with a serious health condition in the past five years.

All focus groups included respondents from a mix of racial/ethnic backgrounds that reflected each location's demographic composition. The participants were also diverse in terms of household income, occupation and level of educational attainment.

Two focus groups were conducted in each location. These locations, in addition to representing geographic diversity, vary by the legal protections for workers that are mandated by the state.

**Birmingham, Alabama, Aug. 3, 2016**

**Columbus, Ohio, Aug. 10, 2016**

**Sacramento, California, Aug. 16, 2016**

Group 1: Caregivers for a family member with a serious health condition

Group 2: Parents with household income of \$40,000-\$125,000

**Denver, Colorado, Aug. 18, 2016**

Group 1: Parents with household income less than \$50,000

Group 2: Parents with household income of \$50,000 or more

*“Pregnancy you find out, kinda plan for it and you’re going to the doctor and they kind of knew around the time of birth or whatever but with surgery ... even I didn’t plan. Like I said, [she] had it done on a Wednesday and I thought I would be back to work, worst case, Tuesday or Wednesday, and I ended up being off about 4 weeks.”*

– Birmingham mother whose young daughter had unexpected complications during surgery

*“It’s the strangest thing to me that you can be in ICU one day and they send you home the next with nothing in between from a traumatic brain injury. And nothing – no training for us. So, it was kind of a learn as you go kind of thing.”*

– Columbus, Ohio, woman who worked as a teacher and cared for her mother

*“I had two days’ notice to fly up there and figure out what to do ... I wasn’t prepared for that.”*

– Small-business owner in Sacramento, California, who cared for his mother

Many caregivers found a way to manage their work and caregiving responsibilities, but several focus group participants had to change jobs or leave the workforce entirely in order to cope with the needs of their ill family member. As a caregiver in Columbus who cared for her parents said, “I put a lot of things on hold for five years.”

*“[T]heir medical leave, it depends on the circumstances. I got three days a month and she was in the hospital three days every week because her asthma was just that bad and so I was on the verge of losing my job because of missing too many days. ... But I got it worked out and ended up quitting because I just felt like I had to choose my job or my daughter’s health.”*

– Birmingham woman who quit her job to care for her daughter

*“[The school] had some special needs classrooms, but they were not able to actually handle her. So, there were phone calls basically every day. ... Slowly my work schedule just became part-time, which meant that I wasn’t eligible for a lot of things. ... And I just thought, oh my gosh, it’s just better for me to quit, because they’re going to fire me.”*

– Columbus mother who quit her job to care for her autistic daughter while dealing with her own medical issues

*“The one thing that kind of sticks in my mind is that in the beginning it was kind of accommodating, but as things kind of progressed, people became more inquisitive as to what the trade-offs [were] with me being gone or being in the office, that kind of stuff.”*

– Sacramento lobbyist who took care of his father

### **Receiving pay during leave sometimes requires depleting accrued time off; without paid leave available, many workers often face difficult situations**

According to the national survey, about eight-in-ten leave takers (79%) who received pay used vacation days, sick leave or paid time off they had earned. Leave takers in the survey, especially mothers following the birth or adoption of a child, often needed to combine various benefits to continue receiving pay.

In the focus groups, a number of mothers spoke about the sometimes complicated piecing-together of benefits that must be done to secure income during a maternity leave. Some participants, particularly among the caregivers, were resentful of having to use their personal paid time off before being able to take advantage of paid family leave.

*“[I] ended up taking two weeks of sick leave [during the waiting period for disability benefits]. I got paid for six weeks at 60 percent [through short-term disability insurance], which was almost all of my salary, minus all the taxes, and everything that comes out, and then I took another four weeks out of sick and vacation to stay home.”*

– Columbus mother who is a social services case manager

*“The first part I used my time and they matched, like if I used 4 hours, [they added] 4 hours ... so I was getting paid. By that time, short term disability was coming in because I had done the 4 weeks and everything, so about [the] time I came back they came up with a daycare [at work].”*

– Birmingham mother who works for a large health insurance company

*“My principal is the one that I have to say, ‘hey, can I be off,’ and she has to approve it and she is very compassionate. But at the same time the way our leave is set up, it’s there and we can use it but you have to exhaust everything else before it kicks in and then it’s only 12 weeks after that. So if for some reason my husband took a turn for the worst, I have to choose ... stay home and take care of him and my children or go to work because I can’t take care of him properly without the insurance.”*

- Birmingham woman who works for the school system and is caring for both her mother and her husband

Among the focus group participants, some parents and caregivers who took leave without pay faced difficult trade-offs including having to rely on other people, taking out loans or selling their assets in order to meet their financial obligations.

*“I basically had to calculate ... how much time can I take off and still hit the numbers I need to and it was three days.”*

- Birmingham father who works for an IT company

*“I was just working a temporary assignment so I couldn’t get any kind of family leave or anything but it was really, really rough. Some days I would just have to let them know I couldn’t come in because I had to assist her and that would mean not a full paycheck and that was very stressful.”*

- Birmingham woman caring for her mother

*“I took out a collateral loan. So, turned over the title to my car and that covered me for a little bit and then I did a loan with my dad and I had to pay him back when I got my [tax refund]. So, those were – that was my only option was taking out those loans.”*

- Lower-income Denver, Colorado, mother who worked in a call center when her child was born

*“I went and applied for Medicaid and got food stamps and did all of that.”*

- Lower-income Denver mother who quit her job in retail after giving birth because her employer did not provide any time off

*“When she was born, she had complications so she was in the NICU for about two weeks. I ended up – wanted to ask them to take a long extended parental leave, but I didn’t want to leave the establishment unmanaged because I was the only manager. ... I ended up taking about a week and just coming and going for hours going back and forth. It was kind of hard to not be able to take a real, full leave because we didn’t have vacation time.”*

- Lower-income Denver father who worked in retail when his child was born

**Many leave takers worry about the impact their absence will have on co-workers, and some also worry about the long-term consequences their leave may have on their career**

According to the national survey, about four-in-ten (41%) leave takers who took less time off than they needed or wanted to cite feeling badly about co-workers taking on additional work as a reason they didn't take more time, while roughly a third (34%) thought taking more time off might hurt their chances for job advancement.

Many participants, especially the family caregivers, said that their absence from work had caused difficulties for their employers and co-workers, and even for themselves, as some said they were expected to make up the work they missed during their leave. These workers said they felt guilty about the additional work they created for their colleagues or about the others they let down because of their time off from work, and some expressed concerns that taking a leave indeed harmed their promotion prospects.

*“All they are worried about there are numbers, get those cars built, get them off the line, boom, boom, boom. [When] I am not there, I am putting stress on another guy because they don't want to stop ... you don't stop that line, you don't slow down that line, because that's money. That's numbers, and numbers are numbers.*

– Autoworker in Birmingham who helped his parents take care of his grandmother

*“[W]hen I had to go out on leave, I felt very guilty and obligated because here I am as the supervisor having to take time off and I have a staff of 20 for a very highly regulated position that not a lot of people have information on. So when I left, I felt terrible. So I think that added to my decision, too, to end my leave earlier.”*

– Sacramento social service worker who took care of her disabled son

*“I work directly with kids and I had 65 kids on my caseload at the time, and so any sessions that I miss with them, those kids, I had to make up, so it was like I knew I was piling up more work later on down the road and so it was stressful for me.”*

– Sacramento speech therapist who helped care for her father

*“I was supposed to be promoted to manager, and then I found out two days before I came back from leave that they'd given it to somebody else, and I said, I had told my boss when exactly I was coming back, she knew I was coming back at the end of this week, and – and she gave it to somebody else instead, even though this had been in the works for like a year and a half.”*

– Columbus retail worker who took maternity leave



### **In addition to having access to paid leave, workers value flexibility in the way leave policies are administered**

According to the national survey, when asked what benefits or work arrangements would be most helpful to them personally, people who have taken or have needed or wanted to take leave recently cite having paid leave for family or medical reasons as the most helpful (38%), followed by having the flexibility to choose their own work schedule as long as they work the required hours (24%) or to work from home (18%).

Among the focus group participants, caregivers and new parents who were given some flexibility in how they took their leave were very grateful. At the same time, *not* having such flexibility was one of the biggest complaints the focus group participants expressed. Not surprisingly, when asked how family and medical leave policies could be improved, caregivers and new parents alike said increasing flexibility is key.

*“I would’ve appreciated being able to just work from home a little bit more and in some respects I kind of could and I – actually I did, but again that guilt comes in, it’s like you always ask – you feel like you’re asking for something special, something out of the ordinary and I just wish that it just felt more normal.”*

– State worker in Sacramento who takes care of her elderly mother

*“They also allow for flexible scheduling, so when I was pregnant, and even a few weeks before, I could work from home, and even after I went back full-time, I still worked from home a few days a week and they were really cool with that, so that kind of helps with that balance.”*

– Denver mother who works for a nonprofit

*“Well, I had to change my schedule to work the night shift. So I was working from 10 to 7 in the morning, and then my husband is a [postal] carrier so he has to work days. So that was how we balanced it. [...] I would stay home during the day. I was tired, but then I didn’t have any bonding time with my child at night because I was working all night. And so it was hard.”*

– Sacramento mother who works for a federal agency

### **Caregivers and new parents recognize the constraints employers face in granting paid leave, but they also see potential rewards for employers that provide robust leave policies**

According to the national surveys, about three-quarters (74%) of all Americans say that employers that pay their employees when they take leave from work for family or medical reasons are more likely than employers that don't provide paid leave to attract and keep good workers.

Focus group participants acknowledged the constraints employers face in granting paid leave and even unpaid leave. At the same time, they felt employers have much to gain if they help their workers cope with a new child or a family medical emergency.

*“I think it’s a tough situation for employers to pick up the bill, although I think it would be great, and I think some companies and employers would, but ... I know plenty of companies that are still struggling, and for them to take on that would be a pretty significant expense.”*

– Columbus father who works in health care research

*“[I]f I was a CEO ... maybe you don’t want to pay your employees to have time off, but at the same [time], or like an opposite view, you need to keep your employees happy if you expect them to do a good job. You don’t want disgruntled people working for you so ... yeah, I would make sure that my employees have enough resources ... to take advantage of the programs that are available to them, so I would think that’s important to keep your employees happy.”*

– Sacramento father who works for the state government

*“[I]f parents have the security and stability and the time to heal physically, emotionally, they know they’re taken care of, they know they have a safe place to pump if they choose to breast-feed, they know they have all that, you are gonna have a much more productive employee, and you’ve also got an employee who has better health, their children have better health. Like, you’re gonna get more out of that person, I think, but it is hard in the front. I can see how it’s easy to not – you know, it’s a huge expense.”*

– Denver mother who left her job and now runs a small business

### **There is little agreement about how paid family and medical leave benefits should be provided and what role the government should play**

According to the national survey, while Americans are largely supportive of paid parental, family and medical leave, they are divided when it comes to government mandates on employer-paid

leave: 51% say the federal government should require employers to pay their employees when they take leave from work for family or medical reasons, and a similar share (48%) say employers should be able to decide for themselves.

Several participants expressed frustration that the leave policies offered by their employers did not fully meet their needs. Yet, there was no consensus about what role, if any, the federal government should play in ensuring more generous family and medical leave benefits for workers.

*“[W]e planned, we saved, our kids were not unexpected, but that doesn’t mean that I shouldn’t be home to bond with my child. Or that it’s not hard, or I’m not exhausted. Or time off wouldn’t have helped me be a better person, be a better employee, be a better father. I mean, you can plan all you want, and be financially sound all you want, but being at home with your child, I mean, that’s priceless. I mean, how do you get that back? You can’t get that back.”*

– Denver father who works as a banker

*“I believe that there’s just not enough focus on people’s lives. Like I said earlier, you work so hard at this job, but why? If they’re going to provide you with [so few] choices ... That beginning time – the first few months, the first few weeks with your child – those make a significant impact on the bonding experience of the child. I think that’s so important and a lot of corporations, a lot of different businesses, they don’t care.”*

– Denver mother who works as a nurse

*“[I]f it needs to be a cultural shift, then I don’t think the onus can be just on companies, because companies are gonna find a way to get out of paying certain things. I mean, I just feel like if it’s gonna be something we value as a society, it needs to be valued just like we say we value certain things in this country.”*

– Denver mother who works for a nonprofit

*“I am very much supportive of it coming from some sort of government. If it can’t come from the government, then have them provide some sort of incentive to companies to make them want to write off something. Nobody should have to feel like they have to choose ‘I want to have a career or a family.’ I think a lot of people feel like you can’t have both.”*

– Denver mother who works as a flight attendant

*“[T]here needs to be something. I don’t know what that agency would be named, I don’t know what it all would do, but there are so many people that are at risk, there are so many lives that are at risk and there’s no real – people are making too difficult of a choice every day: ‘Do I go to work? Or do I take care of this person who I love dearly?’ ”*

– Columbus woman who works for the state government

*“I mean, I don’t think the government should pay for it, because, I mean, we’d all be paying for it anyway because it would be in our taxes, so it’s the same thing as saving. So if you’re gonna have a baby, you save, there’s really no difference.”*

– Denver father who works as a sales manager

*“Shifting the burden totally one direction or another, I don’t think, is correct. It has to be a partnership with both business, the government and the families, because we all have stakes in it.”*

– Denver father who works for the state government

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## Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on two nationally representative online surveys conducted by Pew Research Center. The general public survey (Sample 1) was conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 2016, among a sample of 2,029 adults 18 years of age or older. The survey of adults who took or needed or wanted to take leave (Sample 2) was conducted Nov. 17-Dec. 14, 2016, among 5,934 adults ages 18 to 70 who were employed for pay at some point in the past two years and who took – or who needed or wanted but were unable to take – time off from work following the birth or adoption of their child (parental leave), to care for a family member with a serious health condition (family leave), or to deal with their own serious health condition (medical leave) during that time. Both surveys were conducted by the GfK Group in English and Spanish using KnowledgePanel, its nationally representative online research panel.

KnowledgePanel members are recruited through probability sampling methods and include both those with internet access and those who did not have internet access at the time of their recruitment (KnowledgePanel provides internet access for those who do not have it and, if needed, a device to access the internet when they join the panel). A combination of random-digit dialing (RDD) and address-based sampling (ABS) methodologies have been used to recruit panel members (in 2009 KnowledgePanel switched its sampling methodology for recruiting panel members from RDD to ABS). The panel includes households with landlines and cellular phones, including those only with cell phones, and those without a phone. Both the RDD and ABS samples were provided by Marketing Systems Group (MSG).

KnowledgePanel continually recruits new panel members throughout the year to offset panel attrition as people leave the panel. All active members of the GfK panel were eligible for inclusion in this study. In all, 3,268 panelists were invited to take part in the Sample 1 survey and 36,488 panelists were invited to take part in the screener for the Sample 2 survey. All sampled members received an initial email to notify them of the survey and provide a link to the survey questionnaire. Additional follow-up reminders were sent to those who had not yet responded as needed.

The final samples of 2,029 adults for Sample 1 and 5,934 adults for Sample 2 were each weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, race, Hispanic origin, education, region, household income, home ownership status and metropolitan area to parameters from the Census Bureau's March 2016 Current Population Survey (CPS). This weight is multiplied by an initial sampling or base weight that corrects for differences in the probability of selection of various segments of GfK's sample and by a panel weight that adjusts for any biases due to nonresponse and noncoverage at the panel recruitment stage (using all of the parameters described above).

Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting at each of these stages.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% confidence level for Sample 1 and Sample 2, as well as for different groups within Sample 2:

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Sample 1 survey conducted November 17-December 1, 2016  
 Sample 2 survey conducted November 17-December 14, 2016

<b>Group</b>	<b>Unweighted sample size</b>	<b>- Margin of error - Plus or minus ...</b>
Sample 1	2,029	2.3 percentage points
Sample 2	5,934	2.1 percentage points
<b>Sample 2 subgroups:</b>		
Took leave	5,227	2.2 percentage points
Parental leave	945	4.6 percentage points
Family leave	1,373	4.3 percentage points
Medical leave	2,909	3.0 percentage points
Needed or wanted to take leave	2,259	3.4 percentage points
Parental leave	236	9.9 percentage points
Family leave	1,008	5.0 percentage points
Medical leave	1,015	5.1 percentage points

Note: Some Sample 2 respondents reported that they took time off from work for more than one reason in the last two years. These respondents were asked questions related to the most recent time they took time off from. Similarly, some respondents said that they took time off *and* there was a time when they needed or wanted to but were unable to do so. These respondents were asked questions about their most recent experience as a leave taker as well as their most recent experience needing or wanting but not being able to take time off from work. The unweighted sample sizes shown reflect the number of respondents who were asked about each type of leave.

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Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

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